

THE
Christian's Helper.

“By love serve one another.”—Gal. v. 13.

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ABUNDANTLY SATISFIED.

(Ps. xxxvi. 7-9.)

IN this psalm we have a vivid contrast between the wickedness of the wicked and the goodness of God; and as the former is shown to be exceedingly great, so the mercy of God is revealed as exceedingly precious. And in dwelling upon the latter, the portion of those who trust in God is graphically declared, a portion that is, as it must necessarily be, commensurate with the love and grace of the Bestower.

Bitter, indeed, is the portion of the wicked. For, flattering himself in his own eyes, he eventually finds, when the glamour of flatter has fled away, his iniquity intensely hateful. It is the iron, forged by himself, which eats its way into the depths of his soul; and in the blackness of darkness for ever, "the outer darkness," where no ray of light ever penetrates to relieve the awful monotony, "where his worm dieth not" (Mark ix. 44, 46; Isa lxvi. 24), there, there, iniquity is found to the hating of it. But the hand of mercy reaches not thither.

But blessed is the lot of those who have proved the preciousness of the mercy of God. They put their trust under the shadow of His wings, and can exultingly say, "In Thy light shall we see light." How vast the difference between this and the outer darkness! But in this there is the practical declaration of their own powerlessness. Neither are there any claims advanced as to superior intelligence or attainment, their light being found in His

light. Blessed portion! which we must endeavour to trace out in detail.

After speaking of the heavens as the abode of mercy, of the wondrous heights of God's faithfulness, of the greatness of His righteousness, and the depths of His judgments, the statement follows, "O Jehovah, Thou preservest man and beast." What a combination of attributes! What a glorious display! Puny man might well be cut off but no; for mercy and righteousness, faithfulness and judgment are consistently reconciled, and Jehovah is the gracious Preserver of all.

And following on this, mention is next made of the character of His mercy, which, though it has its dwelling-place in heaven, yet reaches down to men. It is *precious*, precious past telling, and therefore sons of men put their trust under the shadow of His wings. Not *all* the sons of men, for all have not faith; but those who have tasted of that mercy have had a precious experience, and having drawn on it for salvation, they count on the Giver of it for protection, and trust under the shadow of His wings.

And sweet and consoling is the figure. Ruth, the Moabitess, found a shelter under the protecting wings of the God of Israel. She had turned her back on all natural resources, leaving father and mother and the land of her nativity (ch. ii. 11, 12) to find a full reward and recompense of Him in whom her faith reposed. Very different was it with favoured yet faithless Israel. Hear the lament of Him whose heart, spite of their callous indifference and rejection, yet beat in perfect wondrous sympathy (Matt. xxiii. 37). How often would He have gathered them as a hen gathereth her brood, but they would not. Proffered mercy was continually refused; His word they would not hear; and to the faithless His wings were no adequate

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shelter at all. Not thus will it be in a coming day; and for those who have now tasted of the stream of His mercy, the psalmist's "*therefore*" abides, and like Ruth they put their trust under the shadow of His wings.

And there they find their strength in quietness and in confidence (Isa. xxx. 15); and there, thus reposing, they are made acquaint with the fatness of His house. The wealth of blessing of verse 8, recalls to heart and mind the plenitude of the father's provision for the returned prodigal. The husks of the far-off country gave place to the feast with the fatted calf, and his rags were removed for the robe, the ring, and the shoes of his father's providing. He was "*abundantly satisfied.*"

And so here. The wings would provide shelter and protection. But was that all? Nay; God must display Himself; and in a way suited to His own heart must reveal the depths of love there. "*They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house,*" wrote the psalmist. Repeat it: "*With the fatness of Thy house.*" Of what a fulness does this speak! Truly *the best* is the portion of the saint; abundantly satisfied the result.

Soul-hungerings all appeased, pleasures are next provided, but pleasures suited to that scene. And God is there the centre, and all is in accord with His heart. What does He delight in? In that, too, the saint shall delight. "*Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures.*" Thus there is a stream of refreshment that flows for the delectation of the blessed God, and of that stream He makes them drink. And this surely leads to Christ, the One in whom God delights, His elect One, His precious One. And here we have brought to mind the words recorded by the Apostle of the circumcision: "*For you, therefore, which believe is the preciousness*" (1 Pet. ii. 7)—the preciousness

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of Christ to God. And what we can but get in measure here, we shall have in its fulness by and by when at home in the Father's house. For there we shall behold with unveiled faces that Blessed One arrayed in all the tokens of His Father's love, and have presented to us, when walking in white with Him, new phases and features of the pathway of the Son of God through this wilderness world. Is not the contemplation of such a portion soul-transporting? Shall we not then be "abundantly satisfied"? In view of it we can joyously sing:—

"The Lamb is there, my soul—
There, God Himself doth rest,
In love divine diffused through all
With Him supremely blest."

In anticipation we already enjoy this; for by the possession of the divine nature and the indwelling Holy Spirit we are capacitated to enjoy the inexhaustible supply of blessings provided by divine love.

And God alone can satisfy the cravings of the life communicated to redeemed ones by Himself. For He is the Giver of life: "With Thee is the fountain of life" is the psalmist's declaration. A very comprehensive statement is that! for just as the pleasures of the world are associated with sin and death, so the pleasures of God are connected with life and His presence: "At Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. xvi. 11). Then the groaning experienced in these tenements of clay shall be no more. Mortality shall be swallowed up of life; straitening shall be entirely removed; and the life of God shall find its activity in a scene entirely suited to it.

And light, so closely connected with life, is with Him also. "In Thy light shall we see light." Man, professing to see, gropes in the dark. He refuses the source of light, God

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Himself, and hence necessarily abides in darkness. Called by the Lord "out of darkness into His marvellous light," and by the reception of the Word "turned from darkness to light" (Acts xxvi. 18), it becomes true now in its measure that in His light we see light. Not reason but *revelation* is the basis of this; and let men discard it as they will, cast doubt upon its statements if they like, God's revelation remains an unfailing source of comfort and guidance for His own. Men's theories break down; their conjectures prove utterly false; but "Thy word is true from the beginning; and every one of Thy righteous judgments endureth for ever" (Ps. cxix. 160). Blessed be His name for the verity of that precious word, "In Thy light shall we see light."

And now we would conclude with the prayer of faith found in verse 10: "Continue"—"draw out at length," is the marginal reading—"Thy lovingkindness unto them that know Thee." We, who are set to look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life (Jude 21), can appreciate the sweetness of that request, knowing that His lovingkindness will be drawn out over the limits of time into that illimitable eternity of bliss to which by His grace we have been called. Then and there partaking of the fatness of His house, drinking of the stream of His pleasures and seeing in His light we shall be "abundantly satisfied."

H. F.

Self-exaltation is neither possible, nor desired in the presence and enjoyment of God.

WHERE IS THE CHRISTIAN ?

THAT the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is still on the earth so long as he is alive in the flesh should need no argument to prove. It is a self-evident fact. Death sets the spirit free to be with Christ in Paradise ; but the body, an important part of his person, remains on earth, so that the entire person of a believer cannot be in heaven until, at the coming of Christ, the body is raised by divine power, or changed if the believer is still alive. In the case of those raised from the dead, the spirit and soul shall re-inhabit the body, to be parted never again, and then the raised and the changed will be *caught up together* in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so be ever with the Lord.

There is a sense, however, in which the Christian is viewed as already in the heavenlies, in fact the whole race is said to be there. When we say the whole race, we do not mean the entire human family, but the new and spiritual race of which the Lord Jesus Christ, as the risen and ascended Man, is the Head. The entire human race, of which Adam is the head, is formed to live on the earth. The Son of God, in becoming man, was not of the race of Adam, but was a perfectly unique man. None such ever before existed and never will there be such another. Yet was He perfectly human, with a body, soul, and spirit as we have ; with natural human life as we all have. He died, died in grace for sinners, and now risen and ascended up to heaven, He lives. But He has not resumed the old manner of living. No natural human life has He. The blood, His blood, was shed to make atonement, and now He lives as man in the power of that life which was always in Him as

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the Son. "In Him was life" (John i. 4). That eternal life which was with the Father, which has been perfectly expressed and manifested in Him as man here on the earth, that life we share in, have it in fact already for our souls, but await the application of it to our bodies, when, says the Apostle Paul, that which is mortal—or to quote correctly, "Mortality might be swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. v. 4). The whole spiritual race, we have said, is in the heavenlies; for we take it that is what is meant in Eph. ii. 2, where the Apostle wrote of "Being quickened together with Christ, (Jew and Gentile) raised up together, and seated together in the heavenlies in Christ." We know of no quickening true of Christ, but the quickening of His body when dead, of which Peter wrote, "quickened by the Spirit." Spiritual quickening, those dead in sins needed each one; but Christ was never in the condition to need that. "Quickened with Christ" speaks of a quickening true of Him and of us. Christ having died for sinners, and to glorify God, when He was made alive, all His race are viewed as sharing in His quickening and resurrection, etc., although most of those forming that race had no actual existence at the time. Historically each one of that race had to be born into the world, and of Adam's race, and had to be spiritually quickened ere he could become a member of the spiritual race of which Christ in heaven is the Head.

Christ was quickened, having been put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, raised and seated in the heavenlies. He only is there in person, but the whole race is looked at as there in Him. There is the sphere to which we belong. There are the blessings suited to us as spiritual beings, "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ" (Eph. i.). There, too, is the inheritance for which we wait, and there is our eternal home, the home of

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God's Son, the Father's house. It is ours by faith to enter into it now as beautifully expressed in the hymn ;—

“ In spirit there already,
 Soon we ourselves shall be
 In soul and body perfect,
 All glorified with Thee.”

Peter wrote, “ Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God ” (1 Peter iii. 18). This, we take it, contains two distinct parts, one of which is absolutely true when we believe the gospel of our salvation, the other we wait for until Christ comes to take us in person up to His Father's house. Brought to God is a great, moral fact. Paul wrote, “ Made nigh by the blood of Christ ” (Eph. ii. 13). And John defines the position of believers in his 1st Epistle, chap. i. 7, “ If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship,” etc. Note well, it is no question of walking up to it practically, but is rather the sphere in which the Christian is set, where he walks, where fellowship is enjoyed, and where the blood is which has fitted him to be there.

The application of the blood suffices to fit the believer to be before God in the highest heaven. His practical state is quite another matter. If he be careless and unwatchful, he will not be able to enjoy his privileges ; but his privilege, his position, does not depend upon his practice, but upon the pure grace of God, through the merits of Christ's sacrifice. We cannot be too clear upon this. “ Perfected for ever by the one offering ” can neither be improved nor destroyed. We need to be instructed as to what is ours, and to be careful that we do not allow ourselves to be cheated out of the enjoyment of what is true to faith now. Satan's constant effort with untaught saints is to mix up

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something of their doings with their title, and so land them in doubt and perplexity, such as finds expression in the well known lines :—

“Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?”

We are His, not because we love Him, but we love Him just in proportion as we know that He loves us. When souls have apprehended more truly what Christ's precious sacrifice has obtained for all who believe, when such learn that they are brought to God, are in very truth in the heavenlies in Christ, and may enjoy being there in spirit even now, then Satan's effort will not be to make them doubt, but to pre-occupy with things here on earth. It may be our joys, or it may be our sorrows, anything, no matter what it is, to keep them out of heaven as to present enjoyment. Suppose everything here is gone to ruin, suppose the cup of sorrow is running over—and the saint, if true, must drink of that cup and taste of Christ's sufferings—what then? Let him in spirit and by faith retire to the serene atmosphere of the heavens, and let his soul repose in the presence of his God. All there is peace.

We have said morally we are brought to God now, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. We are now in the light as God is in the light. Before God's throne as justified ones, we have our standing. There is nothing fitful or occasional about it. Fit to be there, and abidingly there in spirit, Christ's precious sacrifice has perfected us in perpetuity. Never shall we be more fitted, never have a clearer, truer title to be where Christ is than we have already. No matter how great a sinner a man may have been, when he truly believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, he is

forgiven and justified, and is entitled to know that access to God in the very holiest on high is his. "*Having therefore brethren*"—it is what belongs to the believer as the result of completed atonement. He who has made it is there in the heavenly sanctuary as High Priest. There, too, is the blood by which He entered. Boldness to enter is ours. No word is there about coming out again. The High Priest went in to remain, until He comes out to bless Israel in the coming day. We, too, as priests go in to remain. What to do there is not unfolded by the sacred writer in his epistle to the Hebrews. What Christ has done, and also what He is still doing, is unfolded for our instruction and joy. Do not let us mix up what is altogether ours by virtue of what Christ has done, and the poor, feeble measure of our actual enjoyment of it. E. R. W.

A VOICE FROM THE ISLAND OF ANIWA, NEW HEBRIDES.

TITONGA then rose and said:—"I see many things among us that are not right. There is often bad talk. When you hear a whisper of scandal you bend forward your ear and exclaim, 'Say that again, say it again that I may hear it well.' And then you take it and put it in your heart, and go about looking for some one to tell it to.

"You come to Church and take the Word of Jesus, and open it, and read it. Then you shut it and leave it there. You go to school in the morning and open the Word of Jesus, and read it, and leave it there. You go to your work and forget it. You do not lay it up in your hearts. My friends, this is not right. We must close our hearts and ears to bad talk, and open our hearts and ears to the Word of Jesus."—*From "Lomai of Lenakel," by Frank Paton.*

JOHN XIII.—XVII.*(Continued from page 188, Vol. V.)*

Chap. xvii. 6 to end.

VERSE vi. commences the second division of our chapter.

The Lord addresses His Father about those He calls "His own" (xiii.). He speaks of them as belonging to the Father. He says: "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." He had received them from the Father—that was why He thought of them and watched over them. The blessed Lord needed nothing else to endear them to His heart, and to ensure unwearied service on their behalf. He credited them with loving Him. The Father also did this, as we read: "the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me" (xvi. 27). They did not understand much of all that He said to them, but He knew that they loved His words. He says of them: "They have kept Thy word." In an after day, as He reviews the condition of the churches (Rev. ii. iii.), He says of one, "Thou hast kept My word"; and here in a similar strain He says, "They have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee" (7).

In chapter i. we read: "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (13). This, not a law claiming from man, which, while righteous, man had no power to answer to, but the counsels and heart of God unfolded. He alone knew them. The Son tells us He had made known His Father's name to them, and He adds: "They have kept Thy word."

Do we not read in these words the utterances of His heart about those referred to as expressed prophetically in

Psalm xvi. 3: "The saints that are in the earth, and the excellent in whom is all My delight"? He prays for them. His heart goes up to the Father for them—not for the world. One day, as Psalm ii. intimates, He will make request for the world, but not now. It is a people He thinks of as given Him out of the world. "They are Mine," He repeats, and "He is glorified in them." He is leaving the world, and returning to the Father. He therefore rolls them on the Holy Father that He may keep them through His name (11). While He was in the world He kept them in the Father's name. How worthy of marked attention is the frequency of "the Father's name" in this chapter.

Ver. 6. I have manifested *Thy name* unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world.

11. Holy Father keep through Thine own name those whom Thou has given Me.

12. While I was with them in the world I kept them in Thy name.

26. I have declared unto them Thy name and will declare it.

Should not this oft-repeated mention of the Father's name by the Son raise enquiry in our souls as to whether His desires are being accomplished in us?

I notice also the threefold expressed desire as to "oneness." A Divine relationship had been formed in them by the Father. He had begotten those He had given to His Son by His word: made them according to His purpose His children. The Lord Jesus now prays that they may be one, *as Father and Son are*. This is to be accomplished by the reality of "His name" having practical power in our souls. Let us ponder over this petition given to us in verse 11, so that the Father's keeping may have its due result in us. We

need to be withdrawing ourselves from the many things which come in to hinder the growth in us of "His name," and the adopting as our delight all He declares to us.

At verse 20 He thinks of those who would hear of Him through the testimony of His Apostles. Thus we are included in this prayer as truly as the disciples who companied with Him in the days of His flesh. He had no interest but His Father's will in coming here. He came to glorify His Father. "Lo I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do thy will, O God," and when at the close, it is "Not as I will, but as Thou." But alas! we have got sadly entangled with so much that is of the world that the Father's end in our being here has been lost sight of by us. *He* never for a moment diverged from the path of obedience.

Let us keep in mind daily the word of the Lord in John xx. 21, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." What a momentous consideration this is! It requires instruction from Him, does it not?

To go and preach would not be the carrying of it out. The opening of it to "the eyes of our heart" is found in John vi., 57, "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live for the sake of the Father: so he that eats Me, shall live for Me." And again "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me," Acts i. 8, which, while including Luke xxiv. 48, "Ye shall be witnesses of these *things*," calls for His words, His ways dwelling richly in us, and our being under the constraining power of His love in order that we may know Him, and so live to Him and *not* to ourselves.

He had kept them—none of them lost, but the son of perdition. His task was fulfilled, and He was returning to His Father. These things He spoke in the world, that those He was leaving might have His joy fulfilled in themselves.

He walked while here, in His Father's presence, "where there was fulness of joy."

In verse 34 He says, "I have given unto them Thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world even as I am not of the world." The "word" speaks of the testimony He wished them to bear in the world. Consequently if they did so, the world would hate them even as it hated Him. His great desire is that the Father would keep them from the evil. Praise His name! if we desire to be *kept* we *shall* be. He repeats "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

He desires also their sanctification by the truth (17). He sanctified Himself for their sakes, that they might be truly sanctified. He would have them kept apart from a world they did not belong to—a world "that had seen and hated both Him and His Father." He was going on high that this desire of His heart might be secured. His leaving the world and going to the Father would have the effect of drawing their hearts to where He was. This is the great need of our souls. Our hearts following Him out of this world so that having the savour of His love in us we might live to Him where He died for us. His object, His end ours—in all things.

He thus prays for all "His own." He desires that they "*all* might be one: as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they, also may be one in us" (21): that the world may believe that the Father had sent Him. *Men* can understand people being got together under a creed they arrange, but a "*oneness*" originating in the heart of the Father and the Son, they cannot apprehend—they cannot be formed in their lives by what is in the heart of God. Man must in order to do this be born again. He must be a possessor of Eternal Life. He must be indwelt by the Spirit of God. His heart must

have Christ for an object. Thus it was at the beginning. The early days of Christianity (Acts ii.) witnessed to His desires for "His own." But soon the "fine gold" got dimmed. Ere the Apostles departed all the seeds of "the last days" (2 Tim. iii) had begun to show in marked colours, and for many a long time now it is not Christianity as God gave it and to be found in His Word, but Judaism restored—a system that keeps the soul in practical distance from God. The effect is that the word in Hebrews x. 2, "the worshippers *once* purged should have no more conscience of sins," is not known by the many. Liberty to draw near to God "in the holiest" (x. 19) is not set forth as the privilege of God's children to-day, and the hope of the Saviour's calling of *all His own* from the tomb and from the earth to Himself being that which we should expect to hear at any moment is as a rule practically denied. Still liberty to draw near—entrance into the holiest by the blood of Jesus is what has been secured to all who believe on the name of the Son of God. There are no "classes" in the Church of God. No one has a better right than another. Whoever the Divine writer (the Holy Ghost) means, by those *He* calls "brethren," have free entrance where all is of God. There is the abiding witness that the whole question of our sins has been settled by God for His own glory, and because the Saviour is *there* we may unquestioned follow. *He wants* us, we learn from verse 24. He wills that we should be with Him where He is, that we may behold His glory. He will have a glory we shall not share in—but it will be our chiefest joy to behold Him in it. He loves "His own" perfectly, and therefore counts on their being satisfied by seeing Him where the Father's love has placed Him (24).

The world has not known the righteous Father, but He adds "I have known Thee, and these have known that

Thou has sent Me, and I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them " (25-26). I add no more. But may those wonderful words given to us in John xvii. sink deep into our hearts and there " work in us to will and to do of our Father's good pleasure."

What will it be the first moment of consciousness, in our Lord and Master's presence, never to return to the state we are in at present!

D. S.

MUSINGS.

WHENE'ER I see a little flower—
 A daisy by the dusty road—
 I see displayed Thy hand of power
 Combined with love—Creator God.
 The radiance of yon smallest star,
 A speck 'mid countless orbs of light,
 Declares Thy might outreaching far
 Our finite minds—Thou Infinite.
 I gather up some tiny shells,
 Frail wreckage from a stormy sea,
 To listening ears their beauty tells
 Thy tenderness—Thy majesty.
 The brightness of a summer day,
 Soft music from the field and wood,
 Odours that with the breezes play,
 All tell that God is kind and good.
 To those who know the Father's name,
 Who know themselves through Christ brought near
 Thy works on every hand proclaim
 The glories of Thy character.

Poetry.

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But ah ! if by Thy works alone
Thy heart, O God, had been revealed,
Then sinners never could have known
How mercy can from justice shield.

The Cross of Christ, that does express
The fount of love Thy heart contains,
While Thy unsullied righteousness
Untarnished by Thy grace remains.

The Cross revealed my depth of sin—
Thy depth of love which reconciled
My aliened heart so hard to win,
And made me know myself, Thy child.

The grace of God in Christ alone
Can meet the guilty sinner's case ;
This only melt his heart of stone,
Make it for God a dwelling-place.

Thou, God of grace, art Nature's God ;
Thy children love to trace Thy hand ;
But 'tis by faith in Jesu's blood
Alone Thy heart we understand.

Then, Lord, as curious eyes explore
The wonders in Thy works displayed,
Oh ! teach them never to ignore
The awful breach that sin has made.

And teach them, Lord, to seek Thy grace,
Free grace for such as plead no claim ;
In lowly faith to take that place
Where mercy flows through Jesu's name.

H. S..

18 *Two Things that Jesus Does for "His Own."*

TWO THINGS THAT JESUS DOES FOR "HIS OWN."

THERE are two things that Jesus does for "His own" which have been very precious to my own soul, and I pass them on to you, dear brethren, for your comfort and joy likewise. He "*saves to the uttermost*," and He "*loves to the end*." What a blessed and precious thought! As the Great High Priest who has passed through the heavens (Heb. iv. 14)—who has an everlasting and unchanging priesthood (chapter vii. 24), "He is able to *save them to the uttermost* that approach unto God by Him" (verse 25). It is not sinners coming to the Saviour for salvation, but saints who *approach* God as worshippers; it is the same word as "draw near," in x. 22. It *became* God that Christ should come *down* and be perfected as the Captain of our Salvation (chap. ii. 10). It *became* us that He should *go up* as our High Priest (verse 26, chap vii.) in order to succour us—minister to us in our infirmities—sustain us in our weakness—in a word "save us to the uttermost," and this He is and does, blessed be His peerless Name.

Then, along with that, He "loves to the end" (John xiii. 1). All the warmth and love of His blessed loving heart goes along with the *strength* of His all-powerful hand. Spite of all the difficulties against us—the weakness and wickedness within us—the defilements around us—His eternal, unchanging, untiring love, keeps Him occupied with us and makes Him still our servant to remove whatever would hinder the enjoyment of His presence and love, and our consequent blessing. If He is there as our Great High Priest to save to the uttermost, He is there also as the everlasting lover of our souls, occupied still with "His own that are in the

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world," that all the strength and warmth of His affection may be known and realised through all the weakness and defilements that beset us in this changing scene till we see His face. He served us on the cross—He serves us still while in weakness and need here—He will serve us for ever when He takes us home on high (Luke xii. 37). Matchless, precious, peerless Saviour! Thou art surely enough; what need we more?

W. E.

EXTRACT.

HEB ix. 23, should, I think, be viewed as accomplished; as the contrast is drawn between the *pattern* or *copies*, and the heavenly things. Hence it is of the sanctuary on earth and of that in heaven to which reference is made. As the earthly was purified on the day of atonement, so the heavenly has been by the Lord, who entered into the holiest. The earthly needed it because of the uncleannesses of the children of Israel, though in person they never got into it. So the heavenly sanctuary needed it in a like manner. Lev. xvi. 20 would help us to understand it. The Tabernacle and its vessels were *examples* or *copies* of the heavenly things. You may perhaps have observed the two terms in Heb. viii. 5 "example or copy" (Rev. ver.) and "shadow." In ix the *example* or *copy* is treated of (v. 23), that is the sanctuary. In x. 1, the *shadow* is spoken of, that is the sacrificial ritual. How orderly it all is.

C. E. S.

FRAGMENTS.

IN what is around us, many might say, "Where is any good to be found?" and discouraged and disheartened, despair of finding any; but in and through all circumstances the light of God's countenance is the secure and unchangeable good. His favour is better than life. Besides it secures good. The power of evil is below the power of God. He disposes of it, removes it, turns it to blessing, annuls it as He sees fit. The light of His countenance does this for faith. And the soul rises above evil, and rejoices in God. Hence there is more joy than in temporal blessings. They may be taken away; besides they are not God Himself, and the light of His countenance in trouble is altogether Himself, and gives the secret to the soul of His being for us. Hence he lies down in peace and sleeps—does not disquiet himself in anxious watchfulness against evil, for after all it is God only that secures him in joy or trouble (Psalm iv.).

What the Apostle looks for here (Phil. iv.) is, that their souls should be in the peaceful enjoyment of the things which God likes and loves; and the God of peace should be with them. Now, when we meet in intercourse, are these the kind of things that occupy the mind? It may be mischievous talking—that will not do you any good; or, it may be idleness, vanity,—that is no good either; or, it may be talking about people; but how far can God say, I can go there, for they are talking about things I like? "My heart is inditing a good matter, I will speak of the things I have made touching the king." If the heart is inditing a good matter, we get fellowship and communion; the heart is full and it comes out.

J. N. D.

LESSONS FROM LAMENTATIONS.

(Chap. iii. 18-28.)

THERE are occasions in the paths of most of God's saints when a sense of failure, deep and humiliating, and of distressful circumstances press home upon the heart almost overwhelmingly. The keen cut of a reproachful conscience, and the tinge of a disappointed heart, who have not felt? And this not always on account of *personal* failure; but the soul realizing the responsibility imposed by grace, feels deeply the failure of that, and in spirit assumes the result as its own, and in deepest exercise prostrates itself before the Lord. Those thus cast down He must lift up, and such exercise yields presently a plentiful harvest of "the peaceable fruits of righteousness," golden grains that still produce an abundant fruitage for eternity.

From man's side lamentable indeed is the picture drawn in the Lamentations. Wilfulness and folly have done their dire work, and from her who had been so exalted, so blessed; that "daughter of Zion" so highly esteemed and favoured, "all her beauty is departed," on account of the multitude of her transgressions. Having sown to the flesh the reaping time had come—sinful pleasure brought sorrow and pain.

But upon one heart, at least, all this pressed with tremendous power. Jeremiah the prophet, that "man of tears" whose eyes trickled down without intermission, is led of the Holy Spirit to record his experience in chap. iii, and truly his soul was bowed within him. But he heard

"the rod and Him who had appointed it," and received the consoling message from above, "Fear not" (ver. 57).

"I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of His wrath," he exclaims. Was he chiding God? No; he well knew that "He doth not afflict willingly," that is, from His heart (ver. 33). Necessity is laid upon Him. His holiness He must vindicate and maintain. Was the prophet complaining? His own words assure us he was not: "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" (ver. 39). He was aware of the cause of it all,— "We have transgressed and rebelled,"—but identified with Israel he felt the departure, bore it in spirit before Jehovah, and thus came into the results that departure brought. He would indeed own that he saw it was from the hand of God:—

"It is Thy hand my God,

My sorrow comes from Thee;

I bow beneath Thy chastening rod"—

presently to prove, when sorrow has shown itself to be a fruitful, sanctifying thing, that the faithfulnesses of his God were unfailing.

So retracing his sorrows the prophet tells how that darkness had displaced light; how that his ways had been hedged in, his prayers shut out; desolate and distracted, he had felt the keenness of the Lord's arrows; all good seemed gone; and brought down to the lowest point the verdict of his soul is recorded: "I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord" (ver. 18).

But not for nought was he brought to that place. There is One, our God, who casts down that He might lift up; One who uses sorrow and perplexing exercise, distasteful as those things are to us, to increase our capacity for holding, in communion with Himself, the blessings He has to bestow. Job could safely be trusted with twice as much as he had

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before, when his trial was over, without its ministering to vanity or self-righteousness. He knew whence it came, knew his God better, and himself as in His presence. That had been accomplished which he himself had foretold in one of his bright flashes of faith—"When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold," yet abhorring himself and repenting in sack-cloth and ashes.

What a lesson for us to learn! illustrated again by the case of Jeremiah. When all hope seemed gone, hope revived. He who wounds in love will have His blows felt that we miss not the good, to which end He makes all things work. But reaching the lowest round of the ladder of humiliation, he can go no farther in recording his distresses. What shall he do?—nay, what can he do but look up? and now when expectation has ceased, he conceives confidence and cries, "Remember mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall" (ver. 19). They were still fresh in his memory, and his soul was bowed down within him.

No murmurings were there; no justification of words or ways; and recalling all the exercise, hope springs up within his breast. "Therefore have I hope," he states anticipatively, and then proceeds to give the ground of his confidence—Jehovah Himself and His unfailing mercies (vers. 22-24).

Was there any room for complaint against Jehovah? The prophet would remove even the suspicion of such a thought. What had they deserved at His hands? "It is of the Lord's mercies *that we are not consumed.*" Graciously they had been preserved from the full effects of their folly and sin; and this, not because they deserved it, but because of His unfailing compassions. Oh! the tender pity and compassionate love of that heart. Yearning over them, and seeking their welfare and blessing, He met with scant response, yet again and again granted reviving.

And in these His wondrous dealings the faithful heart found a ground for confidence. As surely as morning followed the night, so certainly did the proofs of God's compassions come with it, giving assurance to the faith that waited for them. And his soul bursts out, as though the joy of the morn had come, "Great is Thy faithfulness." His dealings proved it. Without any qualifications, every true heart will admit the truth of the declaration. Retrace His ways with thee, my reader, and say is it not so?

But another step up yet, and the prophet's heart is reposing in His God:—"The Lord is my portion saith my soul," and with faith settled upon such a foundation, well may he reason therefrom and say, "*Therefore will I hope in Him,*" and how soon would he learn that that was not a confidence cast away.

Our God is our portion. In Him we joy and rejoice (Rom. v. 11). And the prophet's reasoning recalls to one's mind that precious portion in Rom. viii that sets out the Christian's logic (31-39). There the ground is the blessed fact that in perfect, unsought love, God spared not His own Son. And what then? "How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Precious ground! Unanswerable logic! "The path ordained for us," as one has said, "has, no doubt, its roughness, and the cloud hangs over it; but He makes the cloud His tabernacle, and just in the very night it brightens into manifest glory. All differences are in the interests of the journey itself, as was said of Israel, that they might go by day and by night! The record of experience adds to this the assurance, 'they go from strength to strength.'" Truly "if God be for us, who can be against us?" His love, His faithfulness, yea, Himself, is our portion for ever.

And now in our study we find the prophet drawing some

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blessed deductions from his own experiences. "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him;" and, probing deeply into the depths of the heart to dispel any deceits there, he adds, "to the soul that seeketh Him." A living hope, the one who waits for Jehovah must have. There must be the activity of faith displayed in seeking Him. The profession of waiting is thus tested, and expectation is tenderly nurtured. Is not this what is implied here? Hope must be fed, and in "seeking the Lord," the material is obtained for that purpose. To the waiting, seeking soul, the Lord is good.

Proceeding, the prophet next lays down two things "*good*" for man—really patience and subjection. "It is good that a man should hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." Jehovah's salvation set before the soul, it is good to patiently wait for it. Patience is to have her perfect work, and blessed indeed is the condition of soul thus begotten. All frettings, impatient yearnings, so hindering to true progress, are checked, and power to endure is gendered instead. This hoping and waiting are essential parts of the saint's education, though like indolent children, we often endeavour to skip what is seemingly difficult.

And further, "it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." Submission entails suffering oftentimes, and here we are taught that it is good even from earliest days to learn subjection. But current opinion would be dead against the teaching of the prophet; for in the spiritual realm as in the human sphere we who are young are taught to find an easy path, to evade difficulties, to check all exercise, and to strive to find a field where trials come not. But this is to our loss. It is good to bear the yoke for in this way strength of character is cultivated. Evil days come upon us, and if our education has been neglected, they find us unprepared, and the adversary gains the advantage. The lesson of

submission, if early learnt, proves a tower of strength. Then why should that be made to appear so dreadful which after all is a necessity for us? Discipline is good, and the *broken* will, which is implied in bearing the yoke, is a precious possession. Inured to hardship in early days we are prepared for the sterner realities of later life.

Our lot, young believer, falls in the closing days of the dispensation of grace, and though in the midst of the confusion wrought by departure from the Word, as Jeremiah in his, yet believe me it is the wish of unbelief to desire other days. We are for the day—let us be true in it. The truth abides, and though we miss *outwardly* the freshness and unction of a movement inaugurated by the Spirit of God, that need not be true *inwardly*; and as varied trials beset us, let us look up, not seek relief in disobedience, but seek grace to endure, knowing that “it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.” And whilst waiting, seeking, learning patience and submission, we can get comfort, encouragement and help in considering Him, who, “though He were a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered,” and through suffering was perfected (Heb. ii; v).

H. F.

ROMANS XII.

I BESEECH you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service; and be not conformed to this world (age): but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (ver. 1, 2).

The wonderful unfolding of the "wisdom and knowledge of God" in the three chapters preceding the one now before us would doubtless lead the Apostle to claim the attention of the saints he is addressing as he presents the conduct the Spirit of God deems suitable to the recipients of such grace and mercy as chaps. i.-viii. disclose.

At the same time the teaching we have given us in the first eight chapters form directly the claim which the Apostle enforces on the saints at Rome, and if so, on all who have received "the message."

The Epistle starts with a preface of seventeen verses, in which the blessings of the Gospel are shortly dwelt on; the Apostle closing by telling us that he is not ashamed of the Gospel, it being the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

He then proceeds to set forth the terrible condition the Gentile world was in, following that by a clear presentation of the state of the Jew, who, while he was surrounded with many privileges from God, the life he lived in the midst of all, allowed of no other verdict than that he was no better than the Gentile he despised (chap. iii. 52). "*There is no difference: for all have sinned,*" is the only conclusion that can result. Such is God's judgment of man—all men.

The Apostle then begins to unfold the Gospel his soul delights in, and presents the fulness of it, whether it is applied to the sins of the believer, the state he was landed in by his connection with Adam, or the final deliverance from the presence of sin when the Lamb of God will appear as the King.

The *consequences* of the sin of Adam have fallen on his race. Death came in by the sin of the one man, but the *guilt* of his transgression fell on himself alone.

It is held by many that Adam's sin is imputed to us. The popular phrase is, that "we sinned in Adam." Scripture does not speak in this fashion, but it is plain all round and within the knowledge each soul has of himself or herself that the consequences, to the race, of Adam's sin remain to this hour.

We are certainly not *responsible* for Adam's sin. The statement of Scripture is that death passed upon all men, for that *all* have sinned. Each soul has his own sins.

Christ dying *for* our sins, "according to the Scriptures," and our having died *to* sin with Him, with the bright prospect of being freed from the presence of sin when the redemption of the body takes place, sets before us the Gospel which Paul tells us he is not ashamed of. It meets the case of everyone, because that which comes to us in it, sets forth how fully the righteousness of God has been maintained, and all the love which flows in it is in perfect consistency with God's character.

Now the Apostle begins in chapter xii. to set forth the conduct, in a variety of conditions, which becomes us. The workings of that eternal life which has come to us as the gift of God (vi. 23), and should be seen in our bodies which are still in an unrenewed condition, is now dwelt on.

By our bodies we have a connection with the fallen order (as well as through the evil nature in us), but the grace of God has so blessedly wrought that we are exhorted to yield them a living sacrifice, as a reasonable service to the God of our salvation. In a little while the resurrection morn will break, and we shall be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. Further, we are exhorted to "be not conformed to this world (or age)," which has gathered increased force against God from the time we read Cain *went out* from the presence of the Lord and builded a city, wherein the

effort was to drown the sad sounds which got birth through the workings of sin, and to stifle the voice of conscience. The harp and the organ are called in to entertain the precious souls who are on the road to death and judgment, and thus lull them to sleep from which, alas! too many only wake up when all hope of mercy is gone for ever.

Whatever be the aspect the world wears, it is still the world "that lies in the wicked one." It hates God and His Son, and we are exhorted not to be ensnared in its ways. It is not only, however, what we are *not* to do that the Apostle teaches us. We have our own things to seek after—the things above (Col. iii. 2). We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

The Spirit of God who has sealed us until the day of redemption gives us "the bread of life," and "the water of life," that by them we may be nourished and cheered, and so stand against the seductions of the unchanged enemy of God. "The Word of God" is that by which we live. Many of God's children read little of "the holy Scriptures," which make us wise unto salvation. They therefore do not grow in grace—their minds are open to every voice, running here and there instead of abiding in "the narrow way" that leadeth to life.

The mind of the child of God must have daily recourse to the words of God and Christ, the result then will be the *proving* what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. To thus grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, makes us mighty. Not, be it remembered, in making us strong in that which has its spring in our own minds, but like the mighty men of Issachar we shall have understanding of the times, to know what we ought to do. This is learned only by communion with God through His Word and the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Thus far the exhortations are general—now we enter upon detail.

At verse 3, according to the grace of God given to Paul, he directs us “not to think more highly than we ought to think, but to think soberly according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” The words “of himself” do not aid us in the understanding of the matter. Evidently it is an exhortation to dependence on God as His servants. We are not to allow self to come in and lead us beyond what God has taught us. We do not serve our Master by doing so. There are many members in the one body, and all have not the same office. We are to be at His disposal. He must control. If anyone prophesies it is to be according to the proportion of faith. Whatever be the gift bestowed on the members of the body (Christ’s body, the Church) it is to be held, and used, as God may direct. We have first the gifts given to the members of the body (Eph. iv.) which are not found in all (3-8), and then follow what should be seen in every child of God. They can scarcely be described as “gifts,” but those “graces” which belong to us as new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Love (9) is to be sincere. We are to be truthful in our love. There is need for this. The love of God, the love of Christ—both are to be displayed in all who have tasted of the grace of God. “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.” Thus God is seen or manifested in us (1 John iv. 12). We are to “abhor that which is evil.” Evil may be seen in our brother. We abhor *it*, not *him*. To “cleave to that which is good” then follows. We are elsewhere taught to delight in what is lovely—pure—honest—of good report—things worthy of praise in others, and to foster them.

(10). We are to be kindly affectioned one to another.

To "dig channels for the streams of love that they may broadly run," and to remember that one is our Master, even Christ, and all the members of Christ our brethren. They are very dear to Christ, and so should be dear to us. It is healthy to enquire on what ground do we show love to one another. We are taught then to prefer one another in honour. We are to let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than ourselves.

Next (11) to attend to our daily calling. If we are slothful in it, we shall not only suffer, but others will eventually. Let us keep the words of our Master in view, "If we have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" (Luke xvi. 12). We should not embark in that which our Master in heaven has not provided us with the ability or means for carrying out in a way that will be honouring to Him. He will direct us if we consult Him, and not leave us to our own understanding. "Serving the Lord" is the object for all our occupations.

Difficulties (12) abound, but they are limited, and walking on in dependence on the mighty God, hope will fill the soul, and we shall be able to cheer one another with songs of faith and hope. This will succour us in tribulation, and the heart will find sustainment in prayer. The call for prayer is always present.

As there is opportunity (13) and ability the saint of God is to be a giver, not an expectant, and one that watches for the opportunity of aiding the traveller, and the one who is in need.

Then (14) comes the activity of the love of God—we are exhorted to bless them who persecute us, and be superior to the enmity which we are exposed to because of the truth—

in no wise to curse. Delighting in others being joyful (15), gladdened by reason of their prosperity, we are also to weep with those who weep.

Class distinctions (16), which are recognised by God in the world, are not to be sought after in the family of God, and a spirit of self-confidence or refusing counsel that may be proffered, is not approved. No retaliation (17) of evil for evil, but (as in 21) gaining the victory by overcoming the evil with good. We are to provide things honest in the sight of all men. No excuse for owing any man anything is allowed us. With our feet (18) shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (Eph. vi.) we are quietly to pass as endeavouring to serve in the spirit of our gracious Master. Wrong done to us will not be overlooked. We are exhorted (19) to give place unto wrath and to leave the dealing with the evil done to us to Him to whom vengeance belongeth. He will make no mistake. Our part is to feed our enemy if hungry, and if he thirsts to give him drink.

How needful do we not feel these exhortations are ! When we use carnal weapons and do not keep our spirits in control, the opportunity for divine interposition is lost, and we expose ourselves to the Lord's correcting hand. Thus the strife is prolonged. How often this has been so, and we are overcome of evil, instead of overcoming the evil with good.

D. S.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

THE book of Numbers treats especially of God's dealings with His people as they traversed the wilderness from Mount Sinai to the borders of Moab. It opens with the words: "And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai," from which circumstance this book is called in the Hebrew Bible "*Bemidvar*," or, "in the wilderness." In Exodus xix the Lord spake to Moses "out of the mountain," and in Leviticus i, 1, "out of the tabernacle," words which, in brief, express the character or subject of what follows.

From Deuteronomy viii. we learn that the Lord led His people through the wilderness to humble and to prove them, to know what was in their heart, and He did humble them and suffered them to hunger, and fed them with manna that He might make them know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord does man live. It would, indeed, be a matter of surprise if the Israelites did not, ever and anon, make manifest the truth of what the Lord Jesus said, that "From within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." On eight occasions it is recorded that they broke out into murmuring, the first occasion being at Marah after only three days' journey into the wilderness—a journey with regard to which they had asked Pharaoh's permission to take, in order that they might sacrifice to the Lord their God (see Ex. xv, 22-24; iii. 18). On other two occasions before reaching Sinai, they showed a rebellious spirit, viz: "In the wilderness of Sinai which is between Elim and Sinai" (Ex. xvi), and at Rephidim (Ex. xvii).

Each time there was this outburst, God answered them not in judgment, for that is His "strange work" (Is. xxviii. 22), but in grace. After a prolonged sojourn at Sinai, the law having been given there, "They departed from the Mount of the Lord, three days' journey, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them. And the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp" (Numb. x. 33. 34). In the journey from the Red Sea to Sinai, nothing is said of the cloud, though it may, all along, have gone before the people, as in their journeyings from Egypt to the Red Sea (Ex. xiii. 22, xiv 19). Still, in this their first journey since the giving of the law, it is distinctly stated, that the cloud was upon them, and that the ark went before them—a deviation from the prescribed order (Numb. x. 21), as though God in His sovereignty would emphasize His desire to be the guide of His people through the pathless desert.

At Marah, the halting-stage of their first three days' journey in the wilderness, the people murmured, as already observed; and here, at Taberah, the termination of their second three days' journey was marked by the manifestation of a similar spirit. They complained and "it displeased the Lord." At the former place their murmurings were soon silenced by God's merciful intervention through Moses' intercession, and the people were encouraged to diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord, (Ex. xv). Now that the law has been given, will the Lord act similarly? "By the law is the knowledge of sin," and, "Until the law, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. v. 13). What a change, then, has the law brought about! Consequently, God's dealings with His people must take another form. There is at Taberah, therefore, no

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passing over the sin of the people as was the case at Marah ; but judgment, in the shape of fire, fell upon them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. Again Moses intercedes, and the fire is quenched. Verily, what was ordained to life they found to be unto death (Rom. vii. 10).

Chapter xiv. has another tale of murmuring to tell, and the minds of the people revert (as in six cases out of the eight) to Egypt, though in this particular instance, it is not lust which causes them to rebel, but disappointment, engendered by the false report of the ten spies. Sinful as such an act was, no immediate punishment descended upon any save the ten spies themselves who died by the plague before the Lord. A severe judgment was, however, pronounced upon the whole congregation (Joshua and Caleb excepted) ; their carcasses should fall in the wilderness, and their children wander in the wilderness for forty years (Numb. xiv. 28-33).

In chapter xvi. the people, referring to the deaths of Korah and his company, charged Moses and Aaron with having "killed the people of the Lord." This blasphemous act was forthwith followed by a terrible visitation, no less than 14,700 persons besides them that died about the matter of Korah, being destroyed by the plague. Despite this awful punishment, chapter xx. records another outbreak of murmuring, in which is raised the wicked lament: "Would God we had died when our brethren died before the Lord." This conduct so exasperated Moses, that in his just anger, he failed to sanctify the Lord in the eyes of the children of Israel (v. 12), for which, he was not allowed to enter the land of Canaan. Other than this, God withheld His hand of judgment.

In the chapter before us (xxi.) we read that the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. A

glance at the map would make the cause of it evident. They had reached Kadesh, and only a few more miles would have sufficed to bring them to their long-looked for destination. But two things here confronted them—the word of the Lord (xiv. 33) to which they were bound to yield implicit obedience; and the way of entrance to that promised land; that way being, for Israel as the people of God, through the river Jordan. Why it should be so, need not now be stated; but Moses was probably aware of it: hence his sending messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, asking leave to pass through the latter's territory, (xx. 14-17.) This devoted and beloved servant of the Lord had, however, failed only just before (verse 12), and this failure was but the prelude to yet another. His appeal to Edom was pathetic in the extreme. It came from a heart made tender by affliction; for affliction softens the heart, while prosperity (as in Edom's case) hardens it. On three things was it based, (1) family relationship; (2) sorrowful experience in the land of Egypt; and (3) Jehovah's goodness in answering prayer, which last, indeed, accounted for Israel's presence in Kadesh that day.

“Brother” Edom was a man of the world, and in his characteristic way he not only rejected the petition, but also gathered his men together to resist any attempt that might be made to cross his border. For, what cared Edom about family relationship; and little recked he of his kinsmen's travail in Egypt, for he had had, probably, a goodly crop of sorrows himself. Still less would he sympathise with them in their prayers to Jehovah, for he who, according to their own confession, had listened to and answered them in the past, was, in all truth, the One, the only One, to whom they should, in their present trouble, address their supplications. There was weakness, surely, in this appeal of Moses, but it

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afforded to Edom an occasion for the exercise of a little natural affection. Alas, he had none. After such heartless treatment, how rich the grace contained in those words : "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite ; for he is thy brother" (Deut. xxiii. 7).

The episode is full of instruction ; but we must pass on. Refused a passage through the land of Edom, there was no help for it but for the children of Israel to compass or go the whole round of that land—a cheerless prospect for those weary travellers. Disappointed and disheartened they break out into murmuring.

In the records of their past murmurings it was either at Moses, or at Moses and Aaron this "stiff-necked" people levelled their taunts ; but now, grown more bold and daring, they speak against God and against Moses ; "Wherefore have ye (God and Moses) brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness ? for there is no bread, neither is there any water ; and our soul loatheth this light bread" (xxi. 5). No bread ; no water ; only this light bread ; this bread from heaven ! How many in this our day of grace, like these tried Israelites have got tired of it, have loathed it, and gone back into Egypt—into the fleeting follies of the world—to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ? Centuries pass away, and generation after generation go their way to "dusty death," but this murmuring spirit lives on. The blessed Lord Himself enters the scene in the lowly form of a man. As their forefathers had spoken against God, so must they (the Jews) raise their murmuring voices against Him for declaring Himself to be the Bread which came down from heaven, though, in the perversity of their hearts, they, at the same time, boast of the fact that their fathers ate of the manna in the wilderness ; and quote from their Scriptures that "He gave them bread from heaven to eat" (John vi.).

To Egypt, then, they turn their wistful gaze (Num. xxi. 5). They remembered the fish, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlick—all that which was pleasant to the taste. But what of the taskmasters and bitter service which drew from them those cries and groans which went up to God, and with regard to which He could say: "I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry. . . . And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians" (Ex. iii. 7, 8). These they recalled not to mind, nor the grace of Him, who, knowing their sorrows, brought them out of the house of bondage; and purposed bringing them unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. When the grace of God ceases to have power over the soul—and this it readily does when prayer and the reading of the Word are neglected—there is ever a craving after that which is fleshly; and separation from the world (Egypt) becomes then almost intolerable. We cast a glance backward, and sigh for those things which once ministered to our fleshly appetites and propensities. A worldly life is, in some respects, an easy life, as it is without exercise of heart or conscience, because God is not referred to. Lot's wife did what these Israelites were here doing. She looked back, and how terrible and swift the judgment! The injunction of the angel had certainly been disobeyed (Gen. xix. 17), but the looking back was doubtless due to something more than the simple act of disobedience. Her heart's affections were wrapt up in the doomed city; and she would, in spirit at any rate, linger fondly over that scene on which judgment was then falling. And the world is a judged world (John xii. 31), and over it, at this moment, is judgment impending (Acts xvii. 31). Let us then, take heed, to the Lord's solemn

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warning: "Remember Lot's wife." He Himself had steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, where death awaited Him (Luke ix. 51), and nothing could turn Him. Some there were who would like to follow Him, but ere so doing, felt impelled to gratify the desires of their hearts, dictated, it may be, by pure natural affection. To such He could say: "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 57-62). Paul similarly expresses himself: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 13, 14). Looking forward is the normal attitude for God's people to take, though there are times and occasions when they are bid "look unto the rock whence they are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence they are digged" (Is. li. 1). This looking back, this survey of the past, has a very different and wholesome effect, and causes the heart to rise and bless our God for all His grace and goodness. Indeed, the godly Israelite, when in full enjoyment of the blessings of the land, was instructed once a year to look back, and the language he was taught to utter on this occasion may be accepted as the Spirit's view of that land of bondage. "A Syrian ready to perish was my father; and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: and when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice and looked on our affliction: and the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt" (Deut. xxvi. 5-8). Truly we may add: "The flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these things are opposed one to the other" (Gal. v. 17).

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God had heard His people's groans (Ex. ii). He heard their murmurings also. Their groanings had been answered by a gracious deliverance, and their murmurings (chap. xxi) were followed by fiery serpents which bit the people, of whom many die? It is scarcely necessary to say what these serpents and their deadly bites typify. We know that Satan took the form of a serpent, and in such guise deceived Eve. Sin thus entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned (Rom. v. 12). The fiery serpents being busy at their fatal work, brought the people to a sense of the sin which they had committed; and the terror with which they were inspired caused them to go to Moses and confess that they had sinned. They desired his intercession that the serpents might be taken away from them. What a privileged people were these Israelites in having one among them who held personal intercourse with the living God, and who was free to go to Him on their behalf! And yet more privileged are Christians, because a greater than Moses is their intercessor (Heb. vii. 25), even the Lord Jesus Christ; yea, and the Holy Spirit also (Rom. viii. 26). And yet further, there is the intercession of saints for others, whether these be fellow-saints or sinners. So Abraham interceded for Sodom (Gen. xviii.), Samuel for Israel (1 Sam vii. 7, 8.); Jeremiah for the remnant of Judah (Jer. xlii.); and the Apostle Paul exhorts saints that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men (1 Tim. ii. 1). What a position for a poor sinner saved by grace to hold! Who but God can measure the power of a simple Christian's intercession; or who can know the results of such an intercession?

(To be continued.)

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(Continued from page 40).

MOSES at once acceded to the people's request (verse 7). Of the issue of that prayer we are told ; and it is noteworthy that the prayer was *not* granted in the way desired. The serpents were *not* taken away, nor were their bites rendered innocuous ; but a means was provided by which the effects of the bite might be nullified. In this circumstance we may learn, perhaps, the answer to the oft-raised question : “ Why, if sin be so hateful to God, does He allow it to exist ? ” He who knew the end from the beginning had a purpose, which, briefly stated, was the manifestation of His own glory. The way in which that purpose was to be accomplished would, on the one hand, baffle and bewilder the minds of men untaught of God—it is foolishness to them—(1 Cor. ii. 14) ; and, on the other, it would bring peace and joy and eternal blessing to the hearts of those who had faith in God. “ Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole : and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten when he looketh upon it shall live.” Such was the gracious answer to Moses' prayer. What the lifting up of that serpent shadowed forth is known to all ; for, in words of deepest import to every one of the human race, the Lord Himself declares : “ 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" (John iii. 14, 15). We cannot stop to dwell upon these words and the thoughts which they suggest. We can only say that were there no sin (while in no way condoning it) we should have needed no Saviour; and the sweetest love-tale which transcends all that history, fable, or fiction can produce, would never have been told—the love of God to guilty, sinful man as declared in the death of our blessed Lord upon the cross.

God provided a means by which the bitten Israelite might escape the dreaded consequences of the serpent's bite. The responsibility of accepting or rejecting the means provided, rested upon the bitten person himself. If he beheld the uplifted serpent, he lived; if he failed to do so, he died. As "All have sinned" (Rom. iii. 23), so all men are like these bitten Israelites, and God has provided a means by which the terrible consequences of sin—the lake of fire—may be averted, and eternal salvation secured. The responsibility is laid by God upon every man to accept it: to behold by faith the uplifted Son of Man; and whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. God's purpose and man's responsibility are here clearly set forth; and if these two subjects were more carefully observed and studied, many a difficulty in the understanding of the Scriptures would vanish. Gracious was the Lord to those bitten sons of the desert; but where can language be found that can express His love in giving His Son to die for helpless, undone sinners like us?

Moses made the serpent of brass (or bronze), and why of brass may it be asked? Possibly there was plenty of it in possession of the people (see e.g. Ex. xxxviii. 8); it would, if that were so, be convenient to use this metal, which would

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also answer to the term "fiery" (see Rev. i., 5). But it, doubtless, possesses for us some important lesson. "Brass," so writes Mr. Darby, "is the judgment of righteousness as applied to man: hence the altar of burnt-offering was of brass, the laver was of brass—one judged sin in a sacrifice, the other by the Word." The brazen serpent, then, tells of God's righteousness, and sin. These met, in symbol, here; but in reality on the cross. Christ met that which we could never meet—God's righteous claims against us; and "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." So that God now, not only as an act of pure, sovereign grace, but righteously, forgives, justifies, yea glorifies all who turn to Him confessing their sins.

Of this serpent of brass we hear no more till after well nigh 700 years had passed away. We then learn that king Hezekiah, in righteous indignation, broke it in pieces, contemptuously calling it "Nehushtan" (*i.e.*, a piece of brass), because the children of Israel burnt incense to it (2 Kings xviii. 4). How often does the symbol become more potent than the thing symbolised. The truth of God is thereby changed into a lie, and the creature is worshipped and served rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever (Rom. i. 24). How many other things or places around which God has deigned to shed His glory (may it not be said?) have been similarly abused? and, perhaps, nothing so much as the cross of Christ, and the table of the Lord, and what pertains thereto? "All their wickedness is in Gilgal (Hos. ix. 15); Bethel (house of God) becomes Beth-haven (house of nought),—places, so full of deep instruction to Israel (yea, and to us), transformed into centres of wickedness and transgression (Hos. iv. 15, Amos v. 5).

God's people are still passing through this world—a wilderness wide indeed—and they may yet learn from this

Book of the wilderness many a wholesome lesson either by way of warning, or for edification.

“The murmurs of the wilderness
Our hearts so often raise,
Shall cease, and every tongue confess
The comeliness of praise.

“Those Meribahs, those spots of shame,
We'll leave them all behind ;
In Jesus, though each day the same
Our ceaseless joy to find.”

A. C. H.

SIN-BEARER AND EXEMPLAR.

(1 Pet. ii. 21-25).

IN VARIOUS characters, and in many ways, the Lord Jesus is brought before us in the Scriptures ; and when we remember that He is the centre and sum of the exalted teaching of Christianity, a teaching that descends to the commonplace details of our daily life, we can understand why we are directed to Him as our Exemplar to follow, our Model to imitate. His life was the full expression of the life of God ; in it we behold “the truth as in Jesus” (Eph. iv. 21) ; and consequently when the Holy Spirit would press practical lessons home upon our souls, He illustrates those lessons for us with pages from Christ's life.

But only those profit by His life who have first profited by His death. First known as Saviour from sins, He then becomes a Model to be imitated. The Lord had Himself clearly shown that life must precede practice ; for “Except

ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (Jno. vi. 53, 57); and here the Holy Ghost carefully guards against the thought that Christ was only our Exemplar. Where He is so proclaimed He is likewise declared to be a Sin-Bearer—One who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and thus effected a wondrous deliverance, that in the power and liberty and blessedness of it we might "live unto righteousness."

In the chapter from which our portion is taken, the Apostle Peter, viewing Christians "as pilgrims and strangers" (ver. 2) has been instructing them about their proper bearing towards rulers and others. Submission was their duty (ver. 13), and that for the *Lord's sake*: for in being subject to such they were but doing the will of God, really recognising *His authority* in those set to wield the sword of government.

Then next a most important, practical point is dwelt upon, namely, the saint's relation to, and attitude towards, evil. Working from *within* it often involves us in consequences from which we would gladly escape; but to bow to those consequences and patiently endure the suffering entailed upon us by our own doings is an act of necessity and not of virtue: "For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?"

But, on the other hand, evil working in others might bear upon us—what then? A superiority to the evil is to be manifested, and our line of conduct is to be a reflex of Christ's example. His attitude here defines ours. To suffer for well doing, taking it patiently, is acceptable unto God; and not only so, but, "for even hereunto were ye called." It is, then, this suffering and taking it patiently, to be viewed as a part of our *calling*. He suffered for us. We must follow His steps.

But how different is this from teaching abroad to-day, teaching totally at variance with the words and ways of our Lord, and with the tenor of the gospel of God's grace. We hear now of "muscular Christianity" wherein it is declared that it is degrading and demoralising to character not to withstand evil, not to resist it. Such is stated by those who, whilst sailing under His banner, yet reveal an entire forgetfulness of Christ's words, when teaching as "One having authority" He said, "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil" (Matt. v. 39).

But what a travesty of true Christianity! What a revelation of ignorance of the pathway of the Son of God "who has left us an example, that we should follow His steps." Where? in what? In resistance to evil, or in the quiet bowing before it? Let us see. He suffered evil at the hands of men all unjustly. Pure, perfect, spotless, no evil flowed from Him, no deception came from His lips; but having power He used it in ministry to man. Patiently His blessed feet trod the roads of Judea, His hands everywhere bestowing the ministrations of love on needy creatures, alleviating their distresses, removing sickness, and causing sorrow and sighing to flee away.

No cause, then, had man for controversy with Him. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." He was perfect goodness, "virtue incarnate," and grace, which is indeed the perfection of God as manifested, was in His heart. And yet—He was a sufferer here, receiving hatred for His love, and having shame and ignominy heaped upon Him as man's answer to all His goodness, and perfectness.

And it is just here that we have to follow His steps. Here His bearing towards all this undeserved (how poor a word it is!) suffering is revealed, and His attitude—for we are

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CALLED to follow His steps—defines ours. The power to repel man He possessed, but the use of it would have robbed us of Him as an example, placing Him in a position where we could not in any sense follow.

And to what an epoch in our Lord's history does the Holy Spirit direct attention—to the attendant circumstances of the Cross. The One who was there was He "who did no sin," and from whom only good flowed. How this intensifies all the dark doings of man in that dire hour. There is revealed to us the meaning of showing "all meekness to all men." The revilings of man were hurled at Him, but the prophetic word received its fulfilment—"He opened not His mouth." The unjust accusation, the wicked gibe, were calculated to call forth the answer they deserved, but—"He reviled not again." We know how quickly the retort comes to our lips even without due provocation; how easily we speak hastily; and hence the need of studying the Christ of God our Model.

When He stood a prisoner before the proud Roman, and was accused of many things by the heads of the Jewish nation, He answers nothing insomuch that Pilate marvelled. And well He might, oh! patient spotless One, at the meekness displayed by Thee! "For envy they had delivered Him" hating the excellence that was so clearly His; but no word of vindication flowed from His lips. Reviled, He reviled not again.

But their wickedness was not limited to reviling: at their hands He suffered. Was He not buffeted, smitten, spit upon, and then by wicked hands taken, and crucified and slain? But, "He threatened not." Power He had; but the healed ear of Malchus, and His petition from the very horns of the altar, tell a story, not of vindictive feeling, but of pure grace. His great servant Paul, when ordered to be

unjustly smitten, bursts out with the threat, "God shall smite thee" (Acts. xxiii. 3), though he instantly withdraws it. But no such words came from the lowly Jesus. Not a threat issued from His lips, but the rather His cause was passed to the righteous Judge of all. He would leave Himself in the hands of His God, bowing before the unrighteous acts of evil men. The gracious interpreter Elihu, reminded Job when he was repining because there seemed no possibility of vindicating himself, that "judgment is before Him; therefore trust thou in Him" (Job xxxv. 14). Haste to vindicate self betrays a lack of confidence in Him before whom all things are open and naked. Our Model displayed no such desire. He sought no vindication. "Even hereunto were ye called . . . that ye should follow His steps."

Scripture now passes from what He suffered *from men* for us, leaving us a model in the moral perfection that characterised Him under those circumstances, to what He suffered *from God* for us, when as our Substitute He took our place bearing "our sins in His own body on the tree." There He was "alone in His love with our need," and the stripes that were rightly ours, fell upon Him. For us, then, He has exhausted the judgment of God—"By whose stripes ye were healed."

What a mighty deliverance is thus wrought for us. No questions as to our sins will God raise. Our souls rest upon the fact that atonement has been made; upon Christ's finished work (Heb. x. 12-18); and our souls are freed from the consequences that our guilty acts would have involved us in. And here the practical side is dwelt upon—the present result of this stupendous deliverance. "Dead to sins" it is called, for we have nothing further whatever to say about them. All has been settled to God's glory, every holy claim has been completely met.

And now a life unto righteousness is the grand result to follow; for power there is in such a deliverance. The burden removed from the back, the load from the mind, the weight from the conscience, righteousness is practised. In this Christ is our Exemplar. That righteousness will find its display in varied ways, but God's principles of conduct for His saints are fully exemplified in the pathway of the Son of His love. No more of self-will must there be, nor blind following of men. "Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

Thus placed under the care and guardianship of Christ, there to feed and there to rest, progress in divine things should surely be. "Showers of blessing" must assuredly descend upon those there. The two characters here borne by Christ recall the beautiful scene depicted in Ezek. xxxiv., where, when the hireling shepherds fail to feed the flock, Jehovah Himself intervenes in the goodness of His heart on behalf of His poor ones, and declares, "I will feed My flock, and cause them to lie down," after He has sought them out.

As our souls repose in His presence, and feed upon the food He provides, may deeper affection for Him who bore our sins be awakened within us, and more zeal in following the steps of our great Example be displayed by us.

H. F.

A HEART STUDY.

JESUS was the most isolated of men, and, at the same time, the most accessible, the most affable; the most isolated, because He lived in absolute communion with His Father, and found no echo, no sympathy with the perfect love which

was in Him ; the most accessible, the most affable, because He was that love for others.

Speaking of the ineffable work which opened a way for that love through all the sin, He says : " I have a baptism to be baptised with ; and how am I straitened until it is accomplished." That baptism of bitterness and death gave free course to that love in its infinite designs of grace ; for love is of infinite invention for the happiness of that which is loved, and the love of God purposes that which is beyond all our thoughts. It is the spring of the thoughts of the infinite God.

And again, when towards the end of His course the opportunity presents itself, at the moment when the unbelief of *His own* makes Him say, " How long shall I be with you and suffer you ? " (for—and this is what He expects from us in this poor world—there was not, even in His own, faith or the capacity to make use of the resources of grace and power which were in Him) He adds, without even a moment's interval, " Bring thy son hither " (Luke ix. 41). The consciousness of being isolated in His love, so that others did not even understand how to profit by it, does not, for a moment, arrest His energy and activity. The same sentence which contains the " how long," says also, " bring thy son hither."

What was then the life of this Jesus, the Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ? A life of activity in obscurity, causing the love of God to penetrate the most hidden corners of society, wherever needs were greatest ; among those whom human pride repelled, in order to maintain its own reputation, but whom the love of God sought, because He needed not to establish for Himself a reputation, or to keep one. He was always the same, and the more He apparently compromised Himself, the more He

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manifested Himself in a perfection which never belied itself.

The love of God needed not, like human society, to protect itself from that which laid it too bare. It was always itself. The toilsome life of Jesus was passed in seeking souls in all circumstances. It went through everything that could put it to the proof, but we see in it a divine reality which never failed; then—in presence of self-righteousness and pride, and the tyrannical boldness of the contradiction of sinners, or in favour of some poor crushed soul, or, lastly, to justify the ways of God in their favour—we discover in it from time to time a divine mine of touching, exquisite thoughts, a depth of truth which betrayed its perfection by its simplicity, showing a soul always fed with the most intimate communion with infinite love and perfect holiness; the One who could say, “We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.” He weighed evil by the perfection of good which was in Him, and found, in the fearful discoveries (if we speak of discoveries where all was open) which the holiness of His soul made, opportunities for the manifestation of infinite love.

Or rather, it was the love of a Holy Being which made these discoveries, a love which clothed itself with a grace which, by its very humiliation, placed itself within the reach of all the needs of the heart, and which, at the same time, in presence of the pride of man, showed itself at the height of the dignity and majesty of God.

How beautiful to see this Person place Himself within the reach of those whom the world despised, and find, being wearied with His journey, indebted for a drink of water to a woman who scarcely dare show herself with others, meat to eat which the world, and even His disciples, knew nothing of; and that, in the deliverance of a poor heart crushed by the

weight of a bad conscience and the contempt of her fellow creatures, to whom he had given back (or rather, given) the *spring* of life and joy. What a prospect! how much of blessing to sinners this opened to His soul; for He did not disdain such consolation in the midst of a world which drove Him from its bosom.

Thus love consoles itself: the heart that loves the sinner needs it in such a world. But where is this to be found? In retirement, in the labours of a life which had to do with the common needs of souls, but as abiding in the truth; for this life did not shelter itself from the misery of the world, to walk in the midst of that which has an appearance only, but it brought into it—precious grace!—the love of God. He was that which others could write of.

How many needs, hidden even in the most degraded souls, would confess themselves, would come to light, if a love, a goodness which could give them confidence, were presented to them; but for this, one must be content, often to find oneself in the midst of such degradation, being preserved from it only by what is within; and this was the life of the Lord. How many souls are whirling in pleasure, in order to silence the moral griefs which torment them! Divine love not only answers needs; it makes them speak. It is delightful to see the opening out of a soul, and, at the same time, to see the entrance of spiritual intelligence. One may not exactly seek the degradation I speak of, but we find the world knowing that is the truth as to what is found there, and its external forms do not rebuff the soul. But it is a life of labour, of patience, and of happiness, the like of which cannot be found. Christ could say through all, “That they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” Without doubt there are diversities of gifts, but even when God opens this

path before us in His grace, how slow we are to follow the track of the One who draws us there !

Courage, grace is there in the path which He has opened to us ; we find it every day as we go along ; and what glory, when all the principles which have been formed in the heart by faith, blossom in heaven, and are reproduced in the fulness of their results, according to the heart of God. We must wait while walking by faith.

J. N. D.

A SONG OF JESU'S LOVE.

LORD JESUS my Saviour,
How great is Thy love !
I am 'blest with Thy favour,
All favour above.
No worthiness, merit,
Nor goodness I claim,
It is all of Thy mercy,
And all for Thy name.

And I know that this favour
Shall ne'er pass away,
For Lord "whom Thou lovest
Thou lovest for aye ;"
Though oft I'm forgetful,
Thy promise is true,
And because I am feeble
Thou wilt bear me through.

Not of the World.

And oh, bounteous Saviour,
Thy love has bestowed
A glorious prospect
To brighten my road.
The prospect of sharing
With Thee who art heir
And owner by purchase,
Inheritance fair.

But more! For Thy glory
Alone it must be,
The display of Thy mercy
All praise brings to Thee.
And—worlds then admiring
The fruits of Thy grace—
Thou chiefest in glory
Shalt have Thy true place.

H. S.

NOT OF THE WORLD.

NOTHING is so lowly as faith, and faith works by love, the very reverse of despising others or trusting in themselves that they are righteous. Christ is all to the believer, as He is to the Father; and as He is not of the world, so they are not. That they are not of the world depends on the former truth, that they are the Father's and given unto the Son who manifested the Father's name to them and kept them in that name; as He besought that the Father would keep them still during His absence from the world. Christ in

John is from the outset unknown to the world and rejected ; they knew not the Father and the Son. So it is with the children of God. "Therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew Him not." The breach is complete. "The world hated them" as it hated both the Father and the Son.

Never had there been such a breach before. It was not so during God's dealings with Israel of old ; nor yet in their ruin during the ensuing times of the Gentiles. Man was still under trial ; and even while the Lord was here below, the character of His ministry was God in Him reconciling the world to Himself. But the world would none of Him, and is judged in its prince. And as man is now in the light of the cross pronounced lost, so is the saint crucified to the world and the world to him.

They are not of the world, as Christ is not of the world. It is a fact, and not merely an obligation, though the firmest ground of obligation. They *are* not of the world, not merely they ought not to be ; whilst if they are not, it is grievous inconsistency even to seem to be of the world. It is to be false to our relationship, for we are the Father's and given to the rejected Son, who has done with the world.

But if it be said that this is to bring in everlasting and heavenly relationships now, be it so ; this is exactly what Christianity means in principle and practice. It is faith possessing Christ, who gives the believer His own place of relationship and acceptance on high as well as of testimony apart from and rejected by the world below ; which he has to make good in words and ways, in spirit and conversation, whilst waiting for the Lord.

—*Exposition of John.*

PSALM XVI.*(Continued from page 226, Vol. V.)*

HENCE Christ, as seen here, is a perfect model for us—shows what the perfect man is. The first great principle, and that which characterises the whole psalm, is the referring Himself entirely, and with confidence, to the care of God. He does not preserve Himself, take care of Himself, or depend at all on Himself; He refers to God. “Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put my trust.” But this goes far. As God, Christ could have preserved Himself; but He did not come for this. In that sense it was impossible. He came in love to suffer, obey, and so by grace also to save, but to glorify God. From this, morally speaking, He could not swerve; but as to power, He could have preserved Himself, or as to title to favour as Son, He could have asked and had twelve legions of angels. But thus, as He says, He could not have fulfilled the counsels, the revealed counsels of God.

It was free submission and dependence, but perfect submission and dependence—the one right thing *in the position* which He had taken. This was perfect faith. He was the leader and completer of faith, absence of self, dependence, and confidence. And, we may add, the Word of God was the revelation on which He acted, that which He obeyed, the weapon He used, as we see in His temptation in the desert. He was the word and the truth personally, and all He said expressed what He was (John viii. 25). But it is not less true that He used, and acted on, and obeyed the Scriptures as man. But here He takes the place of dependence and confidence. As man, He says, “Preserve me, O God. In Thee do I put my trust.”

The next point, partly anticipated necessarily in what I have said, is entire subservience to the will of God. Here to God as *revealed* among the Jews, Jehovah ; to us it would be the Father and the Son—one God, even the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ. “Thou hast said unto Jehovah, Thou art my Lord.” Remark “Thou hast said.” He had taken this place. He was Jehovah, but not taking that place at all here in His path. In the form of God, thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, He had taken the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man—freely taken, perfectly preserved in, through death, His taken place through humiliation. Freely to take it is a divine title and action. Creatures have to keep their own ; though, when not kept by God, none have done so.

His given, but deserved, place as man is glory (John xvii.). He humbles Himself, and is highly exalted. He had said to Jehovah, “Thou art My Lord” ; that is, I am subservient to Thee. He had taken a *place*, while never ceasing to be God, and which Godhead alone could fulfil the conditions of, outside Godhead ; but in which as man to satisfy God, to glorify God in an earth of apostacy and sin, indeed with all on earth and Satan’s power against Him—at the close even God’s wrath, if to fulfil His glory in righteousness.

Hence the Lord Jesus says : “My goodness extendeth not to Thee—up to Thee.” He was to fulfil man’s place in the condition in which God’s glory was now concerned in it. A perfect man, when a perfect man, was *alone* in perfectness ; none to sustain—none even to have compassion on Him. He must trust God in life and through death, yea, through wrath. But here it is in the path of life, and even this shewn Him (ver. 11).

But, further, there were objects of divine favour from whom He did not dissociate Himself. But He does not

speak of them as chosen by Himself here—as in John of His disciples, “ You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you ” (though there also for service), nor as chosen of God in grace, but as objects of divine delight in the path they trod, as manifested morally—those who were in the path He had to tread in—“ the saints that are in the earth, the excellent.” This is full of interest. It is still His moral place as man, delighting in what God delighted in, as becomes one perfect with God, as we see in full figure in Moses (Heb xi. 24-26). He takes His place with the saints—those really sanctified to God. This we see in fact, and in the way of the most perfect obedience and humiliation, in that the Saviour went to be baptized with the baptism of John, when those moved by the Spirit of God to humble themselves went there. In the first and lowest step of divine life, that of the heart giving itself up to God in the acknowledgment of sin, He who knew no sin went with those who owned it; for their owning it was divine life, and it was consecrating themselves to God. They were the true excellent of the earth. How sweet and consoling in the wilderness to see Christ treading this path victorious over all temptation in it, as shown directly after His baptism by John; binding the strong man, in life possessed and victorious over all the powers of the enemy.

One sees easily here, that though it be the divine life, the fruit of grace, it is not *in se* God manifesting Himself, a goodness in its character in itself reaching to God; for it was owning sin, though it was divine grace in Christ to do it. Just as it was not properly of God, as such, to die; though nothing but the perfect love, that is, One who was God Himself, could have died as Christ did, given Himself, laid down His life, given a motive to His Father to love Him for what He did. We see One acting as man in man's place

(only absolutely, perfectly, and freely, as loving the Father, which He could not have done if not divine) before God and towards God as man had to act. That a divine person should do this has a value beyond all thought, and it is what, as much else, the blessed Saviour did for us, a man in our place, that is, in the perfection of it as God's delight, and according to what it ought to be, in the midst of this sinful world, what glorified God in it.

And it is of all importance for us to see Christ thus an object of delight, adoring delight, for instruction and confirmation to the soul. It is a path the vulture's eye has not seen and that no man's thought could have traced, if Christ, the perfect One, had not walked in it. We have it in life—in a person—as it only so could be the path of life in a living One who was the thing to be loved. No doubt the written word gives us the elements of this life in all details, but at the same time it gives much of it, however many blessed precepts direct our path, in the life of Christ Himself; so that this life is understood according to the degree of spirituality which apprehends that life as depicted in the Gospels or other parts of Scripture, its motives, or rather its motive and nature. Even in precept we find a direction to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. How evidently does this require the true knowledge of what He is!

The view which we have taken of this divine life, perfect in itself, but displayed in a knowledge of good and evil and proved in the midst of evil—in us renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him that created us—is brought out distinctly in positive separation from evil, but especially in the motive and spring of life, the confession of Jehovah. He (ver. 4) repels all that can be called another God. He will have nothing at all to say to it. It is absolute rejection

He cleaves to Jehovah. Fidelity to Jehovah characterises the life of Christ as so walking on earth. We can say fidelity to Christ Himself. Christ is all and in all. Jehovah is not only Lord to obey, He is the portion of His inheritance. He sought nought else; as of the priest of old and yet better, as in heart and desire, the Lord was His inheritance and the portion of His cup, His lot here, which He had to drink: His enjoyment in hope, His portion by the way.

This, I apprehend, is the difference between heritage and cup. The inheritance is the permanent portion of the soul; the cup, what its feelings are occupied with, what comes to a man to occupy his spirit by the way.

J. N. D.

(To be continued, D.V.)

EXTRACT.

“SUCH then is He who is both the Christ and the Son of God’s love, God and man in one Person. And though the two natures can be distinguished, as to neither is there any uncertain sound. Perfectly to be distinguished, yet united are they in one Person. How His death, too, comes before us! Redemption by His blood tells of it, and His title First-born from among the dead will ever remind all of it. Image of the invisible God, He has also been down into death. Heaven, earth, and the underworld have all known His presence. He lives, too, victorious over death, and will yet reign to subject all to the sway of God. All things created by Him and for Him, what power has He in the past displayed? All things by Him consisting, what constant thought, supervision, and energy is implied.

C. E. S.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST'S GLORY.

(2 Cor. iv., v.)

THESE chapters together present the gospel in the way in which Paul learnt all the leading points of it. There was a certain man very remarkable for his self-righteousness—Saul of Tarsus. He thought he could put forth his power mightily to vindicate God's cause against One whom he thought an impostor—Jesus of Nazareth; and when he saw the light of the glory shine down on Stephen, it had no effect on him whatever; it only stirred his heart up to go to the high priest to get letters to Damascus. But all the hard thoughts he had about Christ had a response in the heart of Christ. He looked down and saw that man with those clothes laid at his feet (Acts viii.); and He said, "That is the man I will take up; and I will put him into Stephen's place, whether he likes it or not."

The Lord called him as he went down to Damascus—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Saul's answer was, "Who art Thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." What gentleness of the Lord Jesus! The next word is, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The Lord put that man for the first time into the place of an enquirer about the person of the Lord Jesus. He says, as it were, "The first time I ever asked the question, 'Who art Thou?' was when I saw the divine glory shining down, and heard the voice of Him who I thought was an impostor calling me by name; what could I do but give up all to Him?" Saul gives up all his thoughts, and says, "I know Him, and I am at His disposal."

Now how many of us can say, I know Him? Do you know Him? After what sort of a fashion? With any sort of intimacy? When I was nineteen, if friends talked to me about Christ I knew nothing; but when the Lord came and introduced Himself to me I thought that a person was close to me, and that everything I had done was out in the light; but instead of coming to condemn me, there was nothing but love in Him. I could have told you who Jesus Christ was, and who Cæsar was; but as to knowing Himself I was utterly ignorant. But as He made His passages of love into my heart, out came the confession of what I was. I have had forty-seven years' apprenticeship under Christ, and of all the things on which my heart dwells as to eternity, I say, "I have got One who is gone there before me."

God says, "Let there be light" (verse 6). The One who spoke light *out* of darkness could speak light *into* darkness, as He does into the heart of the poor sinner. God comes into the scene, and man says, "I will not have you." "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." He did not come raking up their transgressions. God saw that reconciliation was what was wanted.

But when this gospel is presented to man, he says, "I do not like God, or His ways." It shows another thing, that the wisdom of God was such that He knew how to take the absolute ruin of man, and make that the means of the greatest glory to Himself. Look at man in the garden: he turned his back upon God, and followed Satan. How did *He* remedy it? Could man? No; God says, "I will step in there, and turn that very ruin to my own praise." How did He do it? His Son comes down to drink that cup of wrath for sinners; the Son of God was made sin. He is the only Person yet who has ever tasted the wrath of God

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against sin, and I am bold to say He was the only One who could taste it fully. Who will measure what He went through? the thought of God hiding His face from Him? Many a believer has tried to measure sin, and he says, "No I cannot; I find the measure in the cross which I cannot measure." He was forsaken of God; and that is the God who sent Peter and Paul with this message—"I have made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for you."

We see a beautiful conscience-work in the Apostle. He says, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;" not the great white throne—that is at the end of the thousand years. Those who appear at the former will never appear at the other. When Christ gathers all His people together there, it is a question of how He shall place them in the kingdom. Paul says, "My doctrine is manifest, and we must all be manifested." People do not like that: what! all come out there? I will tell you why they do not like it—they have not been manifested to themselves yet; but you cannot escape it, if you mean to be in the glory.

But stop; what are you afraid of? Who are you going to meet there? The Lord Jesus Christ. There is no mistake about His having known you as a sinner; and He expects a poor sinner saved by grace. Will it be very painful to be there? Will it be painful if He says, "You owe it all to Me; do not go and say that you did it yourself." Are you afraid to appear before Him there? What does God think about me? What do I think about myself? If I have not weighed myself up in God's presence, no wonder I am not at ease at the thought of being at the judgment-seat. Is your thought about yourself, anything but the blood of Christ as to acceptance? I would rather come cleansed by that blood than in my own righteousness even if it were possible.

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What do I think of all that blessed favour into which I am brought? Christ is gone into heaven, and I am to go in there. It is what I think of Christ, not what I think of myself. Where are poor sinners who do not know they want cleansing by blood? Lost! lost! lost! No matter who you are—either a poor sinner with a Saviour, or a poor sinful man cleaving to his sinfulness, Paul says, “I do not teach you human righteousness, but Jesus Christ who is revealed to you and me.” The eye of that Lord looks down on us now. As He looks down on us, does He see one who knows His blood, His finished work, or one who cares nothing about Him? I am connected with Christ who is the centre of all God's purposes; I know that *all that* is true of a believer, and a great deal more. It is wonderful, God's way of setting aside all that is of the flesh, and making a way that lets naughty sinners down in self-abhorrence, and makes them say, “My trust is in the Lord.” Who else should ruined sinners trust in? Everything in connection with sin about me makes me loathe myself, and cling to Him and say, *Christ for me.*

G. V. W.

HELP us, O Lord, with patient love to bear;
 Each other's faults to suffer with true meekness;
 Help us each other's joys and griefs to share;
 But let us turn to Thee alone in weakness.

GRANT us Thy peace throughout our earthly life,
 Our balm in sorrow and our stay in strife;
 Then when Thy voice shall bid our conflict cease,
 Call us, O Lord, to Thine eternal peace!

A CONTRAST—AND NO CONTRAST.

WHEN the Lord Jesus went up out of the Jordan where He had graciously taken a place in association with a repentant remnant of Israel, “being baptized and praying, the heaven was opened unto Him: 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’ ” (Luke iii. 21, 22).

The Father thus guarded the Son from being looked on as in the same state as the rebellious children of Abraham who had come out to John in the wilderness confessing their sins. This was the one *upright* thing for them to do, and because it was so, the Sent One of the Father delighted in it, and showed His approval of the act by being baptized with them. Heaven showed its delight in Him by opening unto Him as He prayed. No sacrifice for Him required to be offered to secure this, the Father declaring that He was His beloved Son “in whom I have found my delight.”

The same testimony is given to the Lord Jesus Christ when He, on the “high mountain” (Matt. xvii. 1), is transfigured before His disciples. Peter, losing sight of who He was, would put Him on the same level with Moses and Elias. This could not be allowed, and “a voice to Him (Mark i. 11) from the excellent glory” (2 Peter i. 17) acclaims Him as His beloved Son in whom the Father had found His delight.

In the garden of Gethsemane, when the prince of this world was making his last onslaught to turn Him away from the path of obedience unto death, we read that there

appeared an angel unto Him from heaven strengthening Him (Luke xxii. 43).

But

when on the cross of Calvary, after all the conflict with Satan is over, we read not that the heavens opened unto Him—we have no testimony given of the Father's delight in Him—no angel from *heaven* appears to strengthen Him in that awful hour. The holy Saviour triumphed as the obedient One, and now we behold Him taking the cup from His Father's hand and drinking it. He is forsaken of God—His God. No conflict here—the conflict had been with the prince of this world, and there was nothing in Him for this mighty foe. Again we say he was defeated, the victory in obedience was won. It was man's hour and the power of darkness when the Holy One of God asked that the cup might pass from Him if it were possible.

Now on the cross, it is with God alone He has to do, and God having made Him to be sin for us, and laid our sins upon Him, He forsakes Him. This was never the case before. No voice from the excellent glory! No angel appears to strengthen Him! He is alone! He is forsaken by God! What words for a creature, a sinner to hear, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?"

The voice at this most awful moment is from *earth* to heaven. A voice from the holy Sufferer to His God, and there is no answer! We read, "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent" (Psalm xxii. 2). What perfection we see here. But perfection was displayed all along that path from the manger. Here it is completed by Him not forsaking God when He is forsaken by Him. "But Thou art holy," He declares of God who had forsaken Him!

What a contrast between heaven and earth at this

“Not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

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moment! But “*no contrast*” in the Person. We know the One who was forsaken on Calvary to be the same Person *there* as the One on the banks of the Jordan—the same Person as seen on the mount of glory—God and man in one Person. What a testimony that meeting God with our sins upon us it could only be to be cast away from Him for ever.

Now this One, who was the Lamb of God, having glorified God about our sins in death, has risen from the dead. He could not be holden of death. God would not suffer His Holy One to see corruption, and He now sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high as the Purger of sins.

D. S.

“NOT AS I WILL, BUT AS THOU WILT.”

(Matt. xxvi. 39).

CHRISTIANS often use the language of submission while the heart secretly rebels, and profess to submit to that which, if they were in a right state of mind, would involve no submission at all. It was not so with Christ. The cup of sorrow He held in His hand, given to Him by His Father, was a real sorrow; such a cup, indeed, as no one but Himself could taste, much less drink and live. Yet He took it, and meekly bowing His blessed head, said, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” And His submission was real, not a thing of the lip merely; His broken heart filled with love to God and man, His entire being went with His words. He had declared that it was His meat and drink to

do the will of God, and finish the work His Father gave Him to do, and He exemplified what He preached; and bending thus in agony of soul to His Father's will, peace for a time hushed the storm within. And in the calm majesty of faith, His will perfectly one with God's, He went forth to meet and overcome His foes.

Rebellion, arising out of pride and self-trust, against the will of God, is the prolific root of all man's sin, misery, and weakness; and Christ, in the extremity of His most awful grief, shows how that root can be reached, and divine strength gained, by submission to the will of God. Our will subdued by His Spirit and love, His own peace enters the soul, and with it a strength which will never fail us but in opposition to His will. The will of the first man, when exposed to temptation, yielded, and rebelled against God; and His strength departed: the will of the second man stood fast and firm in the awful hour of His trial, as He said,

“Not as I will, but as thou wilt;”

and His strength remained, and His own and our victory was won.

And here we have the secret of constant and abiding victory over all our foes. To the extent that we are conformed to the will of God, our ultimate triumph is secure; for who can finally resist the will of God? Let us see to it, then, that our will, like Christ's, is entirely surrendered to the will of God. To the extent that anything in us is kept back from God, He will not rule or preserve it, and it will more or less rebel against Him; and that which fights against Him will, sooner or later, distract, disturb, and distress us. Oh let us pray for the spirit of Christ, and a heart which will enable us to feel as well as say, “Thy will be done!” A life-

Jehoshaphat's Prayer.

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long lesson this, but, once learned, it will bring us a peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

“To do, or not to do; to have,
Or not to have, I leave with Thee:
To be, or not to be, I leave:
Thy only will be done in me!
All my requests are lost in one,—
Father, Thy will be done!”

—*Balfern.*

JEHOSHAPHAT'S PRAYER.

(2 Chron. xx.)

THE whole history of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, is pregnant with instruction for us. And we have warrant for turning to it for that purpose in the fact that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom. xv. 4). The son of a godly father, he was himself marked by personal piety; and yet, so faithful is the account God gives of each one, that the failures are recorded, and from them we have to learn as well as from the successes.

One failing is particularly noted: he made affinity with the kings of Israel—first the notorious Ahab (ch. xviii. i), and then the no less wicked Ahaziah (ch. xx. 35). Jehoshaphat had not learnt the weakness of wrong association, and was slow to realize the impropriety of setting aside breaches judicially sanctioned of God. The kingdom was split in twain, and the sentence came forth, “This thing is from me” (Kings xii. 24). To act, then, as though such a breach did not exist was certainly wrong; and a perusal of 1 Kings xxii. will show that the heart of Jehoshaphat was ill at ease, whilst the sequel proves that God was displeased, the seer

informing him that "wrath from before the Lord" was upon him because of his action (ch. xix. 2).

But let us turn to his prayer, seeking profit as we observe the principles that guided in its utterance, and the result that followed.

And first, what led to it? There had been a time of rest and tranquility, but now enemies were coming, "a great multitude against thee." Hence arose the necessity for prayer which should precede conflict; and when conflict begins with the true expression before God of dependence upon Him, it ends with praise, and blessing, and abundant victory. God ever responds to the faith that reposes in Him.

But conflict also puts the heart to the test; for there is the danger of substituting man for God; of seeking human aid instead of Divine interposition. Where reliance is placed upon God there victory is already won; as the prophet told Asa, when commenting on the victory over the huge Ethiopian host, "Because thou didst rely on the LORD, He delivered them into thine hand" (ch. xvi. 8).

All Judah gathered themselves together "to ask help of the LORD," and Jehoshaphat standing in their midst lifted up his voice in prayer. He first spoke of what God is,—a God of glory and power, reigning on earth and in heaven, and against whom none could stand. All, then, were at His disposal, and no enemy too strong for Him could be found—surely a good foundation for weak ones to rest upon!

What God is can be pleaded in prayer. But that can be thought of in more ways than one; for whilst He is almighty in power, He is also wondrous in grace. It was deliverance from outside foes that Judah wanted. How seemly then to remind God of His power. To His failing people, sorely in need of mercy and grace, He revealed

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Himself through Moses as "*merciful and gracious*" (Exodus xxxiv. 6); and later on, through Nahum the prophet, the two views are combined: to those who knew Him "He was good, a stronghold in the day of trouble;" to His enemies, "great in power," "who can abide in the fierceness of His anger?" (chap. i. 3-10).

But the king passes from the thought of His *power* to that of His *promise*. The land had been given to the seed of Abraham. And not only so, but Jehoshaphat gives to the patriarch the blessed title "friend of God"—"To Abraham Thy friend for ever," he says. How forceful and precious is this! Upon what an unfailing ground does he now venture! The "seed of Abraham" might be very unlike their father, but could God fail His friend? To him the promise was given.

But would God sanction such a title? and was the king justified in bestowing it? He was treading untrodden ground, for there is no record of such a name being used of any before. Very bold was Jehoshaphat, but reverence and piety marked his plea. Presumption was absent; and God does put His sanction upon the term and endorses its use, for we presently find Him using it Himself, saying, "*My friend*" (Isa. xli. 8). Oh! what a wonderful place of intimacy to be brought into! A mortal man the friend of God—what is there grace will not do? In the entire history of God's dealings with the patriarch, the godly monarch could find his justification surely. Had He not expressly revealed to Abraham what He was about to do? (Gen. xviii. 17). Had He not permitted the freest intercourse in intercession? Ah! most true was it that Abraham was God's friend. What point, then, in its use just here. How intelligent faith is! Here is a shaft shot from the bow of prayer, barbed with the feather of faith, and winged straight away to the heart of God. He is, must be, true to Himself.

So, then, having pleaded His power and promise, Jehoshaphat next dwells upon His *presence*. A sanctuary for Jehovah was there in the midst of His people. There HE had placed His name. "That Thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof Thou hast said that Thou wouldest put Thy name there," prayed Solomon (2 Chron. vi. 21); and God had with His hands fulfilled that which He spake with His mouth to David. A privileged people they were: recourse to their God they could have in their distresses. The Word which He had owned, and which went with His presence in the midst of His people, provided for it. That Word the king uttered in prayer.

Solomon had petitioned that if sore judgments befel the people, and hearts, put to the test by them, were uplifted to Him, would He hear and forgive. Jehoshaphat urges that word,—a mighty lever indeed!—there in His very presence. In their affliction they cried. His help they wanted.

And why? Enemies were upon them; the very people with whom conflict was forbidden (Deut. ii.) when they were coming up out of Egypt were approaching. Now they came to endeavour to oust them out of (not *our*, but) *Thy* possession (verse 11). Notice the word. With the intelligence a lively faith imparts, the king presses every claim that would make his prayer potent and prevailing. His was a direct aim. Out of a full but dependent heart he spoke, and every plea was in beautiful accord with the communications which, as God's people, they possessed.

How much there is in this for us to learn. Bidden to pray "in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20), how many prayers are yet offered that could find no support from the Scriptures. The intercession of the Holy Spirit for the saints is marked by the fact that it is "*according to God*" (Rom. viii. 27).

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The utterance of what is merely our own wishes or fancies should not be called prayer. Our petitions, like our zeal, should be "according to knowledge," that is, God's revelation to us, and would thus be according to God.

Beginning with what *God is*, the plea concludes with a confession of what they were. They were impotent: "We have no might against this great company." They were ignorant: "Neither know we what to do." But they were hopeful: "Our eyes are upon Thee" (verse 12). Not long had they to wait in hopeful expectation. God answers by the mouth of His servant: "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; *for the battle is not yours but God's.*" So without a blow on their part the victory is won. To stand and see the salvation of the LORD, was their portion; and marching forth they go as praisers, not fighters.

And how significant is the word that "*when they began to sing and praise*" the judgment of their enemies commenced. Their action attested the reality of their confidence in the message given them, and Jehovah at once responds revealing the truth of their triumphant "battle-cry"—"His mercy endureth for ever." Their return from Berachah, the valley of blessing, with joy—for their God had made them to rejoice over their enemies—was eloquent with testimony on that point.

But let us note one other lesson. They had prayed, and in answer had received a word for their hearts to rest in peace upon through faith in it. But it is just when we are certain that we are liable to become indifferent; just when victory is assured that the true spirit of trust and dependence is renounced, or the spirit of fear continues to pervade the heart. How beautifully the king seems to anticipate, and guard against this. Ere going forth to battle in the morning, Jehoshaphat stands in their midst and says: "Believe in the

Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper" (ver. 20). He commends them to God and His Word, and both fear and indifference are excluded. Faith in their God would fix them upon a Rock immovable. Faith in His Word, and obedience thereto, would secure their prosperity. Is it otherwise now?

May we, dear reader, get some further insight of the verity of prayer, from this simple study. Mark what is pleaded—God's power, promise, presence and Word, and all these abide for us still. It is ours to pray, and that without ceasing; it is God's to respond, and that He delights to do, turning our places of conflict into "valleys of blessing."

H. F.

NOTES ON PSALMS.

PSALM XL.

CHRIST chants His deliverance in connection with Israel and the earth. Hence xl. is more mixed with judgment at the close than we hear in Psalm xxii. But His coming as incarnate to do God's will, in the setting aside of the sacrificial system by His own obedience unto death, is as plain as all-important.

"To the chief musician: a psalm of David." No one ever waited for Jehovah as Christ did, the eternal Son become His servant on the earth. In the roll of the book it was written of Him: *He* was the object of God's counsels before He became man. But it was His one aim, too. Here the ears "dug" express His incarnation, as "opened" (Isa. 1.) His daily dependence, and "bored" (Ex. xxi.) His devotedness in death and forever. He more than makes good all the

offerings; His delight was to do God's will. He preached righteousness not to the little flock only, but to the great congregation, if it seemed ever so vain; and their iniquities He took on Him (Isa. liii. 11), the true and effectual sin-bearer. Who like Him poor and needy, yet to be "very high?"

PSALM CII.

This psalm is "A prayer of the afflicted one when he is overwhelmed, and before Jehovah poureth out his complaint." It is as full of interest, as of moment incalculable. The Epistle to the Hebrews (i. 10-12) quotes it to prove that the O.T. regards Christ, the Son of God, as Jehovah, Ps. xlv. having just been alleged in proof of His Godhead, and in both psalms by the God of Israel Himself. Yet it is Messiah's depth of humiliation which gives occasion to this expression of His divine glory. Out of that depth the Son contrasts His own wasting away in trouble with the permanence of Jehovah, with the certainty of Zion's rise from ruin, and the fulfilment of hope in the glorious morrow, when the peoples shall be no longer rebellious but gathered together to serve Jehovah. But when Messiah renews His cry of sorrow, the Father declares that the holy Sufferer is, no less than Himself, Jehovah the Creator, Who will change the creature as of old He made it, and is destined yet to have the sons of His servants abiding, and their seed established before Him. The comment of inspiration is as wondrous as the Psalm: none but the Holy Spirit could have given either: and both are worthy of Him to whom they testify.

PSALM CXVIII.

It is the end of the age which will vindicate the God of Israel. Till then appearances are adverse to His name and His people; and faith alone gains the victory

unseen, which then will be manifest to every eye. All men may oppose meanwhile, and never more than at the close; Satan, too, may deceive and destroy as far as he can; and God may chastise right sorely but for good: Christ knew this exceptionally, and much more than is here in view. But the end is blessing and glory, not for us only on high as we know from elsewhere, but for those who will enjoy the kingdom on earth, when it is no longer man's but Jehovah's day. What a blank must be in the outlook of all Christians, who leave out such a scene for the glory of the once humbled but now exalted Man! Then He shall sit on His own throne, as distinct from the Father's before the eternal state. It is the age to come, on which almost all prophecy converges.

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"For ever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in Heaven."—

PSALM CXIX. 89.

THE doom of Tyre is predicted in the twenty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel. A graphic picture is drawn of its siege and capture by Nebuchadnezzar (vers. 7-11). The powerful fleet of Tyre swept the sea, and prevented the complete investment of the city; but, after a siege of thirteen years it was at last taken by the Chaldean army. With this part of the prophecy, however, we do not concern ourselves.

More, however, was predicted. After describing the vengeance which the king of Babylon will inflict, the prophecy proceeds: "And THEY shall lay thy stones, and thy timber, and thy dust in the midst of the waters" (verse 12). Let the change of person be noted. Having spoken of what Nebuchadnezzar will do, it is added, "And *they* shall," etc., as if others were to be joined with him in the work of destruction. Light is thrown upon this distinction in the third and fourth verses. God will cause many nations to come up against Tyre, "as the sea causes his

waves to come up." Shock will succeed to shock, till she is utterly desolate; "and they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock" (ver. 4).

Previous to the fall of their ancient city, the Tyrians had removed the bulk of their treasures to an island in their possession, half a mile from the shore. Taught now by bitter experience, they resolved to trust themselves no more within walls, which had not round them the defence of a watery girdle. Tyre was mistress of the sea, and could defend herself there. The old city was therefore deserted, and no attempt was made to rebuild it after the Babylonian army had retired. So far the prophecy had been fulfilled, but only so far. Tyre was overthrown and spoiled; the noise of her songs had ceased; the sound of her harps was no more heard (ver. 13); the great and joyous city was abased and desolate. But the ruins still stood. The words which declared that the stones and the timber should be **cast** into the sea, and the very dust be scraped from the city's site, had not been fulfilled; and it seemed most improbable that they ever would be. What could the words mean? Nebuchadnezzar had taken a full vengeance, but he had never thought of this. Even in his case, furious though it might be at the long-continued resistance, it would have been the very frenzy of revenge. Who then would be found to wreak such unheard-of vengeance upon the unoffending ruins?

More than two hundred and forty years rolled on, and there was no answer. For two and a half centuries those words of Scripture seemed a vain menace. Then the fame of Alexander's swift and all-conquering career sent a thrill of alarm through the East. The Tyrian ambassadors, who hastened to meet him, were favourably received. It seemed

as if this storm-cloud was about to pass harmlessly over them. But suddenly the conqueror expressed a desire to worship within their city. They knew only too well what that request meant. Alexander would not enter alone; and, once there, those who entered as worshippers would remain as masters. The Tyrians resolved to abide the issue of war, rather than tamely hand over their city to the Macedonian king. Alexander's army marched to the sea shore, and there, with half a mile of blue waters between them and it, stood the city they had come to attack. How could it be taken? Alexander's plan was speedily formed. He determined to construct a solid causeway through the sea, over which his forces might advance to the assault. And now the word, which had waited so long, was at last

‘LITERALLY FULFILLED.

The walls, and towers, and the ruined houses, and palaces, and temples, of the ancient city were pulled down, and the stones and timber of Tyre were laid “in the midst of the waters.” Her mounds of ruins were cleared away; and so great was the demand for material in this vast undertaking, that the very dust seems to have been scraped from the site and laid in the sea. Though centuries had passed after the word was spoken, and had seen no fulfilment, it was not forgotten; and the event declared it was HIS WORD whose judgments, though they may linger long, come surely, and fall at last with resistless might.

It is He that speaks in prophecy whose thought grasps the ages, and before whom the future has no veil, and who, in these proofs of His faithfulness, writes on man's heart the assurance, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away.”—*Wonders of Prophecy*.

“WE must not be surprised to meet with *some* difficulties in

a Revelation which comes from *God*; rather should it surprise us that we meet with so few. Nor is it reasonable that beings like ourselves, who really know nothing more about God and His ways than He has been pleased to tell us, should sit in judgment, as it were, on His Holy Book. Humility is the fitting attitude for the mind which studies divine things: adoration the proper business of the heart; and oh! the peace and joy unspeakable which *they* experience who are content in such a temper to feed upon the Word of Life."

THE PATIENT ONE.

(Matt. xxvi. 67.)

"BELIEVER, keep Him before thee; hang up this picture of suffering patience for thee in the temple of thy soul; engrave it upon the tables of thy heart; let memory hold it up constantly before the eye of love, to call forth her tears, as often, perhaps, in the midst of scorn and weariness thou dost seek to minister to those who, it may be, only despise thy patient toil.

"Earnest worker, thou wilt need to keep this picture before thee; for to the extent that thou dost hold fast and communicate the truth, and become, like Christ, a witness for God, His will and ways, thou wilt frequently be misunderstood, and be despised and rejected of men, and will need to bear in mind the apostolic injunction—'For consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds.' Patience must indeed have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing: through it you are to possess your soul, reach that experience which is the birth of hope, and receive the fulfilment of the promise which feed and sustain faith. The spirit, therefore reader, of God's meek and lowly Lamb must be yours."

CEASE YE FROM MAN.

Isa. ii. 22.—"Those meet with fewest disappointments who expect little from man and much from God. How many mortifications and annoyances would be avoided were there more simple dependence 'in everything' upon Him who hath said, 'Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.' They have made no small progress in divine things who have learned, practically, what it is to 'cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils.' "

Psalms cxlvi. 3.—"Trust in God alone, and lean not on the reeds of human help. Be not surprised when friends fail you: it is a failing world. Never count upon immutability in man: inconstancy you may reckon upon without fear of disappointment. The disciples of Jesus forsook Him. Serve God with all your might while the candle is burning, and then when it goes out for a season, you will have the less to regret. Be content to be nothing, for that is what you are. Set small store by present rewards; be grateful for earnestness by the way, but look for the recompensing joys hereafter. Continue with double earnestness to serve your Lord when no visible result is before you."

2 Tim. iv. 16, 17.—The servant has his Master's experience over again, but in lesser measure. In the hour of our Lord's sorrow He was left alone; in Paul's time of danger and trial all forsook him. But He who knew the joy of having His Father with Him when His followers fled (John xvi. 32), was not unmindful of His servant's danger and weakness, and the Apostle had the blissful consciousness of His Lord's presence with Him. Men may fail us, in trial's hour proving untrue, but "He abideth faithful." Let us count upon Him more, and find the word true which says, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards Him."

“HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES.”

(Matt. viii. 16, 17 ; Luke iv. 40.)

TO MARK and dwell upon the perfections and glories attaching to the Person and path of the Son of God are acts of communion with the Father, into whose fellowship we are called (1 John i. 3). And through the wondrous communications contained in the Scriptures this is our precious privilege, which, if truly entered into, must perforce result in growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

God's Gospel—His good tidings—presents in its *fulness* not only good tidings for sinners, but unspeakable comfort for saints ; it presents Christ, not only as Saviour from sins, but as the gracious Bearer of our infirmities and sorrows. He brought the love of God near to men, and in a way worthy of God and suited to man.

In Matthew's Gospel the Lord is seen filling up the prophetic picture, and hence the many quotations from the Old Testament corroborating His words and ways. So plainly then, God, who scans the whole span of time, has been engaged in past dispensations in foretelling the ways in grace of the Lord Jesus. For it is from Isa. liii., the self-same word from which Philip preached *Jesus* to the eunuch of Ethiopia (Acts viii. 35), that testimony is brought forward which received its fulfilment in His activities of grace and goodness.

Let us follow this out. The main point is His identification with His people in their sorrows. The word of the prophet

is here brought forward to show that, but if we turn to Luke iv. 40, we see it there revealed in the clearest way, and, of course, in keeping with the Spirit's design in that Gospel. The *King* in Matthew, is the perfect, peerless *Man* in Luke; and as there is prophecy in connection with the former, so we have the revelation of suited detail to show the perfection of grace in the latter.

Now what does Luke say that is omitted by the first Evangelist? Many sick with divers diseases were there “and *He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them.*” By His word He healed, and that tells of His authority and power. His hands laid on bespeaks the reality of His identification in sympathy with the sufferers. The word and laid-on-hands combined reveal the love and tenderness of His perfect heart. Would less be like Him, or suit us?

Armed with power, the blessed Lord used it to alleviate many a poor sufferer in response to the appeal of faith; wielded it in unison with the grace of His heart. Miss not the sweetness of this, but just sit down and get a glorious contemplation of Him as thus brought before our souls; of Him who could take a poor blind man by the hand and lead him without the town. We shall rise comforted. (Mark viii. 23).

Picture the scene. The day drew to its close, and with the setting of the sun came many to Him bringing their sick along with them. Their coming evidenced their faith. Would He turn them away? Faith in His power—but what about His love? The poor leper before this had said, “*If Thou wilt*”; but with a faith in His love to equal the belief in His power he would have said, “*Thou wilt, for Thou canst.*” Jesus touches “the defiled one with a holy power that dispels the evil by which it cannot be contaminated, while perfect suited love is revealed in the act.”

“Himself took our Infirmities.”

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So He was equal to the demand. “Beset with sorrow round,” Jesus could not be indifferent to it, and would come very, very near to it. This is precious! One word of His and all were well at once; but could such a display of power prove attractive? Not thus could He act. His heart was always in the action—touched—yes, even when the act was judicial; for He wept over the blind, mad folly that called for the execution of such (ch. xix. 41).

One by one the sick come to Him, and upon each He lays His hands. Grace and power are conjoined. How well this act and the prophetic testimony accord: “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.” Are we not drawn to Him who is the same to-day as yesterday? Many have proved that the exercise of skill by earthly physicians by no means draws out the sympathy of their hearts, but the opposite. The sight of sickness continually deadens the sensitiveness of our nerves, and oft tends to harden.

But arm and heart are in perfect agreement when Jesus acts. He bore in His spirit the sicknesses and sorrows of those He was relieving, that is, fully entered into the circumstances and freely identified Himself with those whom He healed. Oh! what grace! And what wondrous sympathy! for He put hands, not upon some, but upon *every one* of them. This was not an act of necessity, but expressive of the fullest identification with those He healed. His power is thus clothed with grace and beauty; and surely every one of those who experienced healing virtue through Him, would carry away with them a sense that His heart was truly touched with sympathy for them in their distresses. Verily “the dayspring from on high” had visited them!

And, recounting these perfections of our Lord Jesus, we can think of Him in His high-priestly character. The Word speaks of Him as One that can “be touched with the feeling

of our infirmities," and our hearts are assured that that is so when we remember such incidents in His life as we are contemplating :

"All the path the saints are treading,
Trodden by the Son of God :—
All the sorrows they are feeling,
Felt by Him upon the road."

Oh, weary heart! here is a breast for thee to lean upon. Think not that He will cast thee off, nor yet that there is no feeling there for thee in thy utter loneliness and sorrow. Remember that closing day in far-off Galilee when many sick of divers diseases found a Deliverer and a true Sympathizer in Him; and the love that moved His arm here moves His heart up there. He lives—lives to deliver us from the fear of our circumstances—ever liveth to make intercession for us (Heb. vii. 25).

But not only did sickness and infirmities flee before Christ, showing the verity of the saying that "in all their affliction He was afflicted:" He also met the power of Satan in demon-possessed ones, and overcame it. And it is to be noticed that this is the most prominent thought in Matthew's Gospel: "They brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils; and He cast out the spirits with His word." Shall not *the King* dispossess the usurper, and free souls from his tormenting tyranny? Yea; and Israel's blessing will be ushered in by the casting out and binding of Satan (Rev. xii.; xx. 2).

But the "strong man" had been already met, and here is the Victor spoiling his goods, giving indeed a sample of the "powers of the age to come" (Heb. vi. 5), when, not Israel only, but the whole creation, freed from the grinding hardships of the great spoiler, shall be found rejoicing in the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. viii. 24).

"Himself took our Infirmities."

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In Matthew, then, we have authority, in Luke, grace ; and we can turn to Isa. xxxii. 1, 2, and there find these again in combination. In verse 1 a king is reigning ; in verse 2 the tired and weary find a haven and a hiding-place in "a man." Need we enquire who it is of whom the prophet speaks ? There is but One who shall reign in righteousness, and to whom evil—evil in every form and phase—shall be that. He shall judge, but not "after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears" (chap. xi). Could that be said in its fulness of David or Solomon ? No ; it is Jehovah's King, set upon His holy hill of Zion. He shall reign in righteousness, and that spells deliverance and peace for His people. That glorious King is the very same One who, in the days of His humiliation and sorrow, gave, in the freeness of Divine love, such proofs of what He would be to, and for, them. How truly Hiram's words to Solomon will then apply : "Because the Lord hath loved His people, He hath made Thee King over them" (2 Chron. ii. 11). The records of the Evangelists and the writings of the Prophets are in beautiful accord !

And that "*man*" of ver. 2. is "the man of His right hand" whom He hath made strong for Himself (Ps. lxxx. 17), and can be identified with the One before us in Luke iv. What His earthly people will find in Him in a coming day we know now. His path provides us with the assurance of it. Do we not love to view Him with His hands upon poor sick, weary ones ? Well can we understand His being "*a hiding place*" from trouble, "*a covert*" from the blasts of judgment that shall then blow, and at the same time an unfailing *Refresher* for weary spirits, and a gracious *Protector* for all who put their trust in Him.

How powerfully attractive all this is, inviting us to put our entire confidence in Him. Christ is the "altogether

lovely one"—peerless in life, matchless in death. Dying to loose us from our sins in His blood, He lives, lives for evermore, but the same unchangeable One as fills the prophetic picture we have been studying. May we be led to Him realizing that:—

“Touched with a sympathy within

He knows our feeble frame;

He knows what sorest trials mean,

For He has felt the same.”

H. F.

THE KINGS OF JUDAH.

(2 Chronicles.)

God's dealings with the kings of Judah in various circumstances in their reigns are full of instruction for us. We are told, in common with much else that happened to the nation of Israel, that the record has been written for our admonition, and the events happened to them as types (1 Cor. x. 11).

Their history shows that man is the same as before, and now we discover that still there is no improvement, and after all the various dealings of God with him in government, or in the presentation among them of the most unequalled and incomparable grace, man improves not. He has *come short* of the glory of God. The history of the kings does not bring us to this close. In their time the trial still went on, but God wrought in individual souls, and His mercy left its mark to His praise. At times, however, they broke loose from all restraint and trampled on His will. The reign of Ahaz witnessed sad departure, followed, however, by one that showed great energy in doing the will of God, but at a

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certain stage great weakness. But we will not anticipate further, but proceed to consider what is presented to us in Rehoboam's life.

In the days of Solomon there was sad departure. We read that "the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded" (1 Kings xi. 9-13). This state of things brings the declaration from the Lord that He would surely rend the kingdom from him and give it to his servant. The Lord told Solomon that He would not do this in his day for his father David's sake, but He would rend it out of the hand of his son.

God raised up adversaries unto Solomon in Hadad the Edomite, and Rezon, the son of Eliada. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, also lifted up his hand against the king. Jeroboam is the man to whom God gave the ten tribes. Solomon on this seeks to kill Jeroboam, and he flees into Egypt, and was there until the death of that monarch, David's son.

On the death of Solomon, Rehoboam goes to Shechem for all Israel to make him king. The manner of Rehoboam's acting in taking the counsel of the young men to increase the severity of his rule over that of his father, ends in the break up of the kingdom, according to the mind of God as expressed to Solomon, and that the word of the Lord to Jeroboam might be performed.

Rehoboam attempts to subjugate this revolt, but the Lord will not allow it, and sends a message by Shemaiah, the man of God, that they were not to fight against the children of Israel. The break up of the nation was of the Lord, and in order that we may discern how God works to accomplish

His will. Scripture is abundant with proof that God's judgment goes on the principle of works. Death came into the world by one man's sin and passed on all men, but it is added, "for that all have sinned" (Rom. v. 12). Rehoboam harkens to His word. Jeroboam proceeds to rivet the people over whom he has been made king, more firmly to his rule. He sets up a false worship and ascribes to "gods of gold" what Jehovah did by His mighty arm. Open apostacy from Jehovah is established among the ten tribes.

We now learn (2 Chron. x. 11) that Rehoboam having got his kingdom established, and had strengthened himself, forsook the law of the Lord. On account of this Shishak came up against Jerusalem, and a great host with him as the chastening hand of Jehovah on the king of Judah for having forsaken Him.

I have outlined a little the history we have of God's dealings with Rehoboam, king of Judah. The judgment that was to come on Israel, which God had made known to Solomon, falls in the days of Rehoboam, not only for his father's sins, but for his own. There is no unrighteousness with God. But how good for us to note His ways. One thing grows out of another, until at last the hand of God falls on His sinful people.

Abijah reigns in the stead of his father, and we read that there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. Jeroboam's army exceeded the king of Judah's by four hundred thousand men. But God was with Judah. They cried unto the Lord and, as directed by Moses (Num. x. 9), the priests blew with the trumpets, and they were remembered before the Lord their God. God smote Jeroboam, and God delivered the children of Israel into their hand. The children of Judah prevailed because they relied upon the Lord God of

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their fathers. This will always be found true—God will be with His people if they are with Him (chap. xv. 2).

Abijah dies, and Asa his son reigns in his stead. In his days the land was quiet ten years, and “Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. He put away the altars of the strange gods, and high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves; and commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandments.” Though there was quiet in the land for the long space of ten years he remembered the enemy might make an attack at any moment, and he prepared for the foe when he should appear. We should learn in a time of quiet “what God is like,” strengthening our souls in His grace and truth, and thus be able to stand when the battle again begins. God does not always chide. He gives His people quiet, and who then can make trouble?—but it is never to take us off the need of watching. The enemy is unchanged, and wherever he discerns us going to sleep he is ready to make the attack.

The preparation Asa made in the time God had given him and his people rest, is soon seen to have been very needful. The Ethiopians come against Judah with a very large army—Asa retires into the presence of the Lord and strengthens himself in Him. He views the attack as one upon Jehovah. They went out against the foe in the name of Jehovah, and intreat Him not to allow *man* to prevail against Him. Asa measured the enemy by God. This is the proper and only right course. Israel in the days of Moses when they go up to spy the land, measured the giants by *themselves*, and so they judged they were unfit to take possession of the land. Had they measured the giants by God, as Caleb and Joshua did, they would have realised that they were well able to go in and possess the land.

We are instructed in Ephesians vi. to be strong *in the Lord* and in the power of *His might*, and to put on the whole armour of God. Our weapons are not carnal. What we are told to have on speaks of the inner condition, our thoughts, our hearts purified by faith, and our ways all ordered in the sight of God, so that the enemy may not be able to cast us down by the weakening effects of sin. How blessed when the fact prevails in our souls that the battle is God's; when we can count on Him to take the lead in the conflict. This was the place the Leader with the drawn sword (the Word of God) in Joshua's day took. He could occupy no other position. Our ability to contend in such a conflict depends on our motives and practical conduct being ordered in the fear of God. God's Word must be the rule of the strife if we are to have the mastery. Righteousness must be the first condition and then peace. We have seen them reversed to the sad dishonour of the Lord's name and to our loss. May we daily acquaint ourselves with the Word of our God, and thus be strengthened to stand, however lonely, until the Master comes to call us from our posts into His joy.

A great victory had been granted to king Asa, and now the needful word comes to him from the Lord, lest he be overcome. If not watchful after the battle is won, a defeat of a serious order is very sure to follow. The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded, and he claims the ear of Asa, and of all Judah and Benjamin: "The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him: and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you: but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you" (xv. 2). The principle holds to this day. It is the unchangeable principle of God's government. May we learn this lesson and daily practise it. Principles of attack or defence supplied to us from the way of the world may carry us over, in the eyes of men, the difficulty or opposition

we find ourselves in ; but deviation from the Word of God, which is given us as our guide and our stay, will result in our suffering loss. If we are abiding in Christ, we will be found walking as He walked.

D. S.

AFTERWARDS.

“Afterwards, the peaceable fruits of righteousness.”
(Heb xii.)

BELIEVERS sometimes distress themselves because they cannot take pleasure in pain. They read of those who have rejoiced in Gethsemane ; who, like Paul, have “gloried in tribulation.” It is consolatory that the very exhortation to filial resignation in Heb. xii. recognises the fact that “no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.”

“Chastening” means child-training. There would be no training in repentance, patience, faith, if the rod caused no smart. Divine trust does not ignore human nature. Peter writes to the “elect” as those who were “in heaviness through manifold trials.” They are “chosen of God,” “sanctified by the Spirit into obedience,” on their way to “an inheritance incorruptible,” “kept by the power of God,” “greatly rejoicing”—and yet “in heaviness” ! (1 Pet. i. 2-7). “This the Apostle blames not, but aims at the moderating of it ; seeks not altogether to dry up the stream, but to bound it, and keep it within its banks”

Weep then, sorrowing one . . . but let your sorrow be soothed by the “afterwards.” The corn-field, ploughed, harrowed, weeded, storm-swept, snow-covered, shall bear

golden sheaves, not only after but by reason of such culture. The husbandman "has long patience." The vine-dresser with kind care uses the knife, yet sometimes with a seeming severity which makes an ignorant observer think he will kill the tree. But he knows that the abundant pruning will produce abundant fruitage *afterwards*.

Christ said, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." Insincere professors are no real part of the tree, but as branches tied on; not to be pruned, but cut off, unless they repent. "But every branch that beareth fruit He pruneth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Does not the *more fruit* repay the more pruning? Should not the process, though painful, be prized for the result? Is our highest end to display leafage, or to glorify God? "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear *much* fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." Ought we to be satisfied to bear only so much as to secure us from being altogether cut away? Should not every Christian desire to be as fruitful as possible, so as best to prove his discipleship and glorify God? . . .

Affliction, patiently endured, strengthens the habit of confidence in our Father's care, and so we are at peace. Whatever the wildness of the storm we have proved the safety of our Refuge. Perplexing doubts about the mysteries of Providence are lost in the calm trustfulness of love. But this does not come at once. Like other works of God, the process is gradual. Life is given at once, but the full maturity "*afterwards*." Suffering a while helps to "perfect, to stablish, strengthen, settle us."

The early apple is crabbed, the early peach flavourless; but how sweet, fragrant, beautiful, "*afterwards*." When the pain is very acute, the bereavement very fresh, the sufferer may say with Job, "My grief is heavier than the sand of the sea;" or with David, "Hath God shut up His

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tender mercies?" or with Elijah, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life?" But as with those eminent saints, the fruit will gradually become ripe, will ripen afterwards. Trial is not a dead pebble, but a living seed, planted and nurtured by God. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace." "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." (Jas. iii. 18; Isa. xxxii. 17).

After a long war how joyful the proclamation of peace? After the threatening gale how delightful the clear sky, the calm waters! Still more delightful when we can look back at the warfare and the storm, not as injuries but as blessings; when, however fierce the battle and wild the storm, we can bless God for it all.

"Now the pruning—sharp, unsparing,
Scattered bloom, and bleeding shoot:
Afterwards the plenteous bearing
Of the Master's pleasant fruit."

—*Leaves of Healing.*

IMMANUEL, HIS RULE (I.).

(Isa. i.—xxxix.)

STANDING on the top of Pisgah, in the field of Zophim, Balaam, gifted with the spirit of prophecy, peered through the long vista of ages not yet ended, and announced to Balak, awaiting the prophet's curse on Israel, that God had blessed them and he could not reverse it. Hopeless was it to expect he could prevail by any incantation against this people; for "the Lord his God" is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. "Surely," he adds, "there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel; accord-

ing to (or at) this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?" (Numb. xxiii. 20-23).

Years, centuries pass away, when another prophet appears, not to use enchantments against Israel, for he warns them against resorting to such iniquitous practices (Isa. viii. 19), but to announce in language clear, forcible and beautiful, that what Balaam had predicted would surely come to pass, God would work for the deliverance of His people, but in a way which should astonish all. So he traces out the path of the Lord Jesus from His birth to His kingdom, as is attempted to be pointed out in the following pages.

God had brought Israel out of Egypt and into Canaan; had given to David, and Solomon after him, the land promised to Abraham and his descendants, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates. He had shown their fathers in the days of Joshua what it was to have the captain of the Lord's host in their midst. He had proved many times how, when minished and brought low by the incursions of enemies from without, or the uprising of enemies within the land, He could raise up deliverers to set them free.

But as yet the perfect deliverance which He would effect, so that men might say "What hath God wrought," had not been manifested. It is of this Isaiah sings at an eventful period of the history of the kingdom of Judah. Commencing with the year that king Uzziah died, the first prophecy in the book with a date prefixed, and going on to the time when the king of Babylon sent messengers to king Hezekiah after he was recovered of his sickness, the last date given in the book, we get unfolded the condition of the people in the latter days, and the appearance and work of the One by whom their deliverance will be effected.

Some of those by whom the Lord had wrought for His people to rescue them from their enemies were called from

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a humble sphere. Gideon, the least in his father's house, of a poor family of the tribe of Manasseh, was called from the threshing-floor to subdue the Midianites, "so that they lifted up their heads no more" (Judges viii. 28). Jephthah, the outcast and exile from his family, was recalled from the land of Tob to confront the armies of the Ammonites (Judges xi. 33). David was taken from the sheepfold to do battle with Goliath of Gath. So He by whom God's people shall be finally set free was once in this world in lowliness the reputed son of a carpenter. But how great is the difference in this between Gideon, Jephthah, David, and the Lord! They were of low estate and God exalted them. He had to humble Himself, for He is God over all. Accordingly we have in this prophet the Lord presented as God and as man, filling various offices, and appearing in different characters. He is the mighty God, yet a helpless infant; King, yet servant; Overcomer, yet overcome; Intercessor and Avenger; the Holy One of Israel, yet the Bearer of His people's iniquities.

Beginning with the moral condition of the people, with which both heaven and earth are made acquainted, the prophet speedily passes on to the day of the Lord, the commencement of the millennium, when the nation of Israel shall enter on the enjoyment of permanent blessing on earth. Much, however, had to take place ere that era could dawn on the people of God. Unfitted by their moral condition for God's presence, judgment must do its work. So the vision of chapter vi. is recorded. Its date is significant, the close of Uzziah's life. During his reign prosperity attended Judah; for "he warred against the Philistines and brake down the wall of Gath . . . for he was marvellously helped till he was strong" (2 Chron. xxvi. 6-15). This prosperity continued under his son Jotham.

But though outwardly prosperous Judah was not obedient to God, and no more morally fit for the presence of God in their midst than Israel, whose condition at this time was one of anarchy, confusion, and lawlessness; for during the fifty-two years of Uzziah's reign he had seen six different monarch's in Israel, three of whom were murdered. At this juncture it was that Isaiah received his commission from Jehovah, seated on a throne, to announce judgment on the whole nation. Yet a remnant should be preserved. He saw Jehovah of hosts, but John xii. tells us it was the Lord Jesus Christ who then gave judgment against His people, a judgment the righteousness of which none could question after the glory of the only begotten of the Father had been displayed, and His own had refused to receive Him (John xii. 37-41; Acts xxviii. 25-27). But this judgment is not final. It carries on "until," etc. (see vers. 11-13).

Since Israel became a nation, God has raised up instruments to deliver His people, or lead them to victory. Moses, Joshua, the Judges, David, are instances of this. In the days yet to dawn on that afflicted nation we learn He will act in a similar way. But, "by whom," one may ask in the words of Amos, "shall Jacob arise? for he is small" (vii. 2). We get the answer in our prophet, chaps. viii.-xii., accompanied with an account of the inroad and success of the Assyrian of the prophet's day, typical of the king of the north in a future day. The virgin's Son, Immanuel, is the man of God's choice, and the time selected for the prophetic announcement of the manner of His birth was during the reign of Ahaz, when Judah had been brought low, and Ahaz was dispirited, threatened with a confederacy organised against him and his kingdom of Israel and Assyria. "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." To Him the land shall belong.

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The Assyrian might invade Judah, and overspread the country, as he did subsequently in the reign of Hezekiah; he might reach to the neck, but should never overwhelm it. The stretching out of his wings might fill the breadth of the land, but there he must stop; for the land belongs to Immanuel, which is "God with us." The waters may burst their banks, but they cannot rise above the permitted level, for no counsel, no might, can withstand God.

This prophecy, partially fulfilled in the reign of Hezekiah, awaits its complete accomplishment in the latter day (see x. 12, 24, 25). The land being Immanuel's (viii. 8), the people need not fear the threatened attack, nor need the faithful join with the others in desiring a confederacy to ward off the impending calamity; for Immanuel (as we learn from Hebrews ii. 13) speaks words of encouragement: "I will wait upon the Lord that hideth His face from the house of Israel, and I will look for him;" and the remnant, who obey God's voice, He owns as children given Him for signs and wonders in Israel from the "Lord of hosts which dwelleth in Mount Zion."

Nor can the faithful be disappointed. For He, who owns them as the children given Him, owns the land, and will sit on David's throne. The great ones of the earth have titles and dignities suited to their high positions. He likewise has His. Immanuel speaks of God's presence with His people. His names in ix. 6 show how fitted is this child to get the victory, and to fill that throne vacant for ages, but just previous to all this seized on by the usurper Antichrist. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace." A new era must then dawn on this world for the stability and duration of His rule is next declared. "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David,

and upon His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

In chap. xi. we get something more about the kingdom, viz., that which characterises His rule. His title is indisputable, for He is the rod out of the stem of Jesse, a branch that grows out of his roots. His perfect fitness for the duties which, as King, He must perform, is secured, for "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." Faithfulness and righteousness will characterise Him, for "He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." He will be armed with almighty power, or "will smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips will He slay the wicked, righteousness being the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins."

The enmity between Judah and Ephraim removed, their land shall again receive them, and the adversaries of Judah and Israel be cut off. From Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, and the isles of the sea, shall His people be brought back to God's land. Borne "on the shoulders of the Philistines towards the west, spoiling them of the east together, they shall lay their hands on Edom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them." To Him, the hope and head of Israel, shall the Gentiles seek. Once were the Jews the object of scorn, when Pilate said, "Shall I crucify your King?" Now to that King, first crucified, the Gentiles come.

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Nor will the beneficial effect of His reign end there. The enmity between Judah and Ephraim removed, the scorn of the Gentiles for the Jew made to cease, there will cease likewise the enmity between man and beast. For He who then shall reign is Prince of peace, as well as the mighty God. As the latter He has power over creation; as the former all parts of the universe shall share in the blessing of peace, "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Seated on the throne as Jehovah in chap. vi., decreeing judicial blindness on the nation, till a certain epoch should arrive—now that epoch has come, He is seen seated on David's throne as man and conqueror (ix.); rightly there because He is David's heir (xi.), and the only one who can wield supreme power in righteousness over Israel and the earth, because He is the Holy One of Israel (xii. 6); and the descendants of those who heard and read Isaiah's prophecies in the land before the Babylonish captivity, will, when enjoying peace under His righteous rule, see how literally all has come to pass. Ruling in righteousness (xxxii); all enemies cut off, Babylon (xxi), Antichrist (xxx. 33), the nations who besiege Jerusalem (xxix. 7), the Assyrian (x), the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth (xxiv), Leviathan, the piercing crooked serpent, punished (xxvii.); fear which kept the remnant in their stronghold will be dispelled, and they, beholding the land that is very far off, shall also see the King in His beauty. Such is the manner in which the Lord Jesus is brought before us in the first thirty-nine chapters of this prophecy.

C. E. S.

THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.—Eph. vi.

WHAT a place of blessing! God has taken us out of the hand of Satan, and given us common interests with Himself; and my heart's desire is for Him to be glorified in the hearts of His people. Weak and feeble as we are in ourselves, we have the power of God. We are the "Lord's host" against Satan, but we need the whole armour. There is no place for dependence like the forefront of the battle; be assured of this, the more you are there, the more you will need the *whole* armour, because the more testimony there to God's mind. If you lag behind you will not be in the same danger. But if you have fewer snares and dangers you will have less strength. If we are witnesses we must expect snares; but they will only increase our dependence, and therefore increase our strength.

Does all you pass through in the day turn to prayer? Not by-and-bye, but at the moment? I have to maintain Christ's name, His word, and His testimony. All I meet with I have to turn into supplication; and mark the test! "for all saints." Can I intercede for others? Nothing so tests the heart as this. If the conscience is not right, I must think of myself, judge myself, pray for myself, and it is right that I should; but it stops intercession for others. I must be walking with God, not only outwardly but inwardly, in order to take up His service and interests, and so be in continuous intercession for His people in the world.

This, then, is the whole armour of God, which we have to keep on while here, founded upon peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our place is consequent on redemption. Difficulties, snares there will be; but I have got Christ; He is dwelling in my heart. In entire dependence, I can reckon on Him in blessed confidence, until He shall come to receive us unto Himself.

IMMANUEL, HIS SERVICE (2).

(Isaiah xl.-lxvi.)

A CURSORY glance at the book discloses a marked difference between the preceding chapters and those that follow. The former tell us of the circumstances in which the people then were, and will be in the latter days; whereas chapters xl. to lxvi. treat more especially of their moral condition; so the prophecies of the Lord in the latter part of the book present Him, not so much in His official character as King, but in His servant character, not effecting the deliverance of an oppressed people so much as calling out a faithful remnant from the midst of an apostate nation, a preparation for that time when the widowed condition of Jerusalem should cease for ever.

And this is in perfect harmony with God's ways in times of old; He sent deliverers to His people to rescue them out of the hand of their enemies, as Othniel, Ehud, Gideon, Jephthah, David. He also sent prophets to recall them to their allegiance, and to awake in their hearts a sense of contrition for their grievous declension from the right way; so He by whom the final deliverance of Israel shall be effected first appeared as a prophet or teacher. For what duty is there which any of the sons of men have been fitted by God to discharge towards His rebellious people, which He in His goodness and condescension will not Himself stoop to perform.

Turning to the prophet we find chap. xl. opening with a proclamation of comfort to God's people and to God's city

"Her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Jeremiah predicted that God would recompense their iniquity and their sin double (xvi. 18). Isaiah speaks of it 'as accomplished, and so the time of Jerusalem's consolation approaches. Closely following this announcement we have the commencement of those events stated which will end in that happy consummation. The voice of John the Baptist is heard crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Jehovah, the God of Israel, is coming to His people. And as the Lord appeared on the throne as Jehovah before the announcement of His incarnation and descent from David after the flesh was made known, so here, before the character of His service is set forth, His divinity is proclaimed.

Isaiah was charged with a message from God of governmental dealing for a time; John is found in the wilderness of Judea speaking to his countrymen of grace as he preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Ages have passed away since John's voice was heard, but the word must surely be made good; for, though "all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field," the grass may wither and the flower thereof may fade, "but the word of our God shall stand for ever"—so "the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him;" and to the cities of Judah it shall yet be said, "Behold your God." Now, then, there begins to be unfolded the character of the service He must perform ere Jerusalem can rejoice.

He takes the place of Jehovah's servant. "Behold My servant, whom I uphold, Mine elect in whom My soul delighteth: I have put My spirit upon Him; He shall bring

forth judgment to the Gentiles" (xlii. 1). God's servant, God's chosen one, He takes the place of man, of Israel, on earth; endures the contradiction of sinners against Himself without taking vengeance on them (xlii. 3, 4; Matth. xii. 14-21); is dependent on God for everything, though by Himself the worlds were made, and He upholds all things by the word of His power; and all this that He might "open the blind eyes, bring out the prisoners from the prisons, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house;" for Jew and Gentile shall receive blessing through His humiliation.

Surely such grace, it might have been supposed, would have won all hearts. Chap. xlix. tells us how the Jews as a nation were effected by it. Fitted for His work by God Himself, He here calls (xlix.) to the isles and peoples afar off to hear, but what?—the submission of Israel to their God incarnate? Something very different,—the present failure of His mission to Israel. Yet blessed be God we stop not here. Because of that failure, grace now flows out to Gentiles (xlix. 8, compared with 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2), and by and bye a faithful remnant shall be gathered to Zion. What a place has He consented to fill! What treatment has He stooped to receive! Laboured in vain, His strength spent for nought and in vain, despised of men, abhorred of the nation, a servant of rulers, such was His condition when on earth, by whom alone Israel, the Gentiles, the world can be fully blessed.

"To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel" is nevertheless, great as such a work will be and important as regards Israel, too small a sphere for Him to be restricted to. "I will also," says the Word of God, "give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation to the ends of the earth." As far then

as the confines of earth may reach, so far will the benefits of His work extend. Israel's King "shall be great to the ends of the earth" (Micah v. 4). Thus prepared beforehand for the coming of their Messiah, if that substratum of good really exists in man, which so many fondly imagine, His advent would have been gladly hailed, and His rule cordially welcomed. Such, however, we know was not the case. His appearance in the midst of the people gave occasion for the display of what man really is, and how utterly corrupt and alienated is his heart from God. Nothing which under ordinary circumstances would have acted as a deterrent stopped the Jews in their headlong course of bitter enmity against the Lord.

Men are wont sometimes to be lenient in their judgment of the one who can be of use to them, or has added glory to their nation. But though apprised of His future greatness, and reaping benefits from His presence among them when on earth, witnessing "the powers of the world to come," they yet openly rejected Him, and heaped indignities upon Him. This, too, was predicted. Chapter I. speaks of it. Able to deliver, acting with divine power in creation, able to dry up the sea by His rebuke, to make rivers a wilderness, to clothe the heavens with blackness, and to make sackcloth their covering, He yet learnt how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. What service was this! He suffered, too, for His creatures because obedient to God. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." With full power as God to crush His enemies, He yet kept the place of dependence, and waited for God to justify Him.

And wherefore this? That others may know how to act, and learn how to trust; that when walking in darkness and

having no light, they might trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon their God. Then follow three appeals to the faithful remnant to hearken to Him (li. 1-8). They need not be discouraged if few in number; they need not fear if men are against them. He who addressed them shall judge nations, the isles shall wait on Him, and on His arm shall they trust. How beautiful the alternation of complete dependence and supreme power! For He is the arm of the Lord, and so the remnant now call on Him to awake and act as of old.

Further on we get something more about the arm of the Lord. He is the One by whom God's purposes on earth shall yet be carried out (li. 16). Next we get what the great ones will think of Him when they see Him delivering Israel. His last appearance to the world was on the cross, and when taken down from it to be laid in the grave; now they behold Him in glory arrayed with strength (lii. 13-15). Chap. liii. is wholly occupied with the arm of the Lord, but as filling a different position to that spoken of at the end of the previous chapter, and occupied with a very different work. It speaks of what He was, and what He suffered for Israel, for men, the foundation of all blessing, the source of all hope,—His death on the cross and His portion in resurrection. Jehovah of hosts, the Son of God, the arm of the Lord, He was also the sinner's substitute. He died, cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of God's people. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, and on Him our sins were laid. And now, atonement effected, "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand."

What a passage from the throne to the cross, from the manifested glory of Jehovah to the insults and rejection of sinners! And as lii. states what effect His future

appearance will have on the kings when they see Him, this chapter tells us what was thought of Him by the remnant when on earth before. "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." He died: but death, to man the extinction of all hopes for this world, death, which separates him from all that concerns the things of earth, was the appointed path for Him to tread that He should take His kingdom and reign; for us having died and risen He will sit on David's throne, see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied, when surrounded by the countless myraids of the heavenly saints, and make secure to Israel then on earth the sure mercies of David (lv. 3 compared with Acts xiii. 34).

A sketch of His life on earth as the servant of God would be incomplete without a summary of what He taught. This we get in lxi. in a passage He quoted, applying it to Himself as the fulfiller of it, when He sat down with the eyes of all no Him in the synagogue at Nazareth. But then He stopped in the middle of the second verse. He preached the acceptable year of the Lord, but not then the day of vengeance of our God. Yet that He was to speak of. The prophets have predicted it; the Revelation is full of it; and this last be it remembered, is the "Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John." There we get described the day of vengeance which will come, and the signs which shall precede it, with the judgments to be poured out previously, and the messengers to be sent (Rev. vi.-xviii, xi. 3, xiv. 6). Then shall be com-

forted all that mourn, the signs of sorrow be removed, and Israel take her place as the head of the nations, and everlasting joy be her portion (lxi. 2-7).

His birth, His lowliness, the treatment He received, His devoted service, the good news He declared, His rejection and death having been brought forward, and His resurrection intimated (liii. 11, 12), what remains, it might be thought, but to take vengeance on His enemies. He will surely in God's own time; but first He has another work to perform, which He is now carrying on, He intercedes for Jerusalem. Absent from earth where He was crucified, He does not forget the place where God dwelt, and where He will dwell for ever. He intercedes for Zion. "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof shall go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth" (lxii. 1). Nor does He rest with this. He raises up intercessors on earth to pray for this (vers. 6, 7). How He intercedes above is not revealed, but what they say is (see lxiii. 7; lxiv. 12). He is asked to return from heaven (lxiv. 1). He will. And in lxiii. 1-6, we have a description of Him having returned and having executed judgment on Edom.

From the throne to the manger, from the manger to the cross, from the cross to heaven, from heaven to earth as conqueror and vindicator of God, and deliverer of His people, such is the path of the Lord as set before us in Isaiah. "What hath God wrought," we may well exclaim. Many have been the instruments God has used to carry out His purposes on earth, feeble oftentimes have they been, that the power of God should be more fully displayed in them. But here we see something else. We see an instrument, a mighty instrument in the Lord's hand accomplishing His purposes, filling every position His servants could fill, and

some they never could—Jehovah's throne and the cross on Calvary; and that instrument is Jehovah Himself.

God has often wrought by others. Here He works by His Son. He has accomplished redemption from everlasting death for all who will accept it; He will effect the final deliverance of His people Israel on earth. He stooped to death and Satan appeared to have gained the victory. He rose from the dead and went to heaven, where He intercedes for Jerusalem. Satan's conqueror, the sinners Saviour, the faithful witness, the suffering servant, these are the characters which He appears in, these are the works He performs. He does them all Himself, for by Him and Him alone can all these be effectually accomplished.

C. E. S.

HIGHLY FAYOURED.

DOES not the thought of acceptance in Eph. i. 6, as expressed in the A. V. detract from the fulness of what is contained in verses 3-5, to which verse 6 is the fitting conclusion? Acceptance is of necessity linked with the fact of our being sinners. As such we stand in need of that. How a holy God can accept a sinner is a deeply important question.

But acceptance is not, nor can it properly be, connected with relationship. By new birth we are God's children, and it seems therefore out of place to ask whether or not He will accept such. To illustrate. We should not deem it proper to ask a man if he would accept a woman as his wife when she already stood in that relationship. He might be asked if he cared to accept a certain woman for a wife, but that would be a different question.

The verses before us take us back in thought to a period anterior to the foundation of the world, and tell us that it was then we were chosen in Christ. They also inform us of the condition in which the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ purposed to have us, namely, "holy and without blame." We learn, too, of the sphere into which we must be brought—the heavenlies; and of the blessings given to us in that sphere—"spiritual blessings." Then, above all, we learn of the One in whose presence we shall be—"before Him," and of the atmosphere, if we may so speak, in which we shall live and breathe and enjoy—"in love": "That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us to adoption (or sonship) by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (ver. 4, 5).

Then next we learn from verse 6 that the whole will result, as far as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is concerned, in the praise of the glory of His grace. For nothing less could He purpose, plan, and bring to accomplishment than for "the praise of the glory of His grace." Now this grace—the various items enumerated in the previous verses—has been freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. Apart from Him we could not have any of these blessings. But having been chosen in Him, and now being (as all saints in this day must be), of the race of which Christ in glory is the Head, all is ours as in Him. True for faith now, it will be so in actual accomplishment when the Lord comes for His own. To make verse 6, as the A.V. does, treat of believers being accepted in the Beloved, is to introduce a truth of prime importance for sinners into a line of teaching which does not treat of that at all.

Here is a few brief sentences we have unfolded the purpose of God; planned, as we say, in the eternity that is

past for the future, and that future in the heavenlies. Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world does not refer to the election of each individual concerned in time. It has not to do with time. It is not Adam, but Christ; and before there was a man upon the earth, God had settled how He would people the heavenlies with a race of men; a race of which His Son, as man, should be the Head. The blessings are suited to the condition of this race, and their condition suited to Himself and the sphere into which they are to be brought.

All is His who, though a man or He could not be Head of a race of men, is the Beloved, and in Him all is ours. It is as in Him that we can and shall share in it all. Oh what manifest wisdom! Could we be transported into its fulness just for a moment, and see and taste what that fixed and eternal bliss will be, we should better understand the suitability of the sentence, "To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

But then each member of that heavenly race has lived in time on the earth, one of Adam's race, a sinner, needing redemption by blood, even the forgiveness of sins. And this is provided according to the riches of God's grace. But it is one thing to think of grace, God's grace, meeting our deep need as guilty sinners, here on earth by the death of His Son, and quite another to see that same grace lavishing itself upon us as saints in another sphere. "Holy and without blame" tells of a new and perfect state of things. Wonderful indeed! Oh! what a wonderful people, but made so by a far more wonderful God through wonderful grace. All shall be "to the praise of the glory of His grace."

Thus we see that Satan will be not only defeated, but out-witted, all his schemes for God's dishonour turned into

the means of God's fully revealing Himself. So the evil one becomes, against his will, a great contributor to God's glory. Christ was the accomplisher of God's will of set purpose, all His heart delighting in the doing of it. Satan is out-witted, vanquished; and sin is the dark back-ground for the setting forth of what God is in His nature as love and light.

E. R. W.

A REBELLIOUS SON.

UNDER the law a stubborn and rebellious son had to be put to death. To establish the charge, it was necessary that both father and mother should bring their son before the elders of the city, and all the men of the city were then to stone him to death (Deut. xxi. 18-21). "Honour thy father and thy mother" was the distinct command. To be rebellious and disobedient was therefore an ignoring of the law, and death must follow. How hard, how cruel, some will exclaim, and measured according to man's view it must be so admitted. But a righteous God must have righteousness; and a people bearing His name must maintain His character, and be righteous also. So a broken law must be vindicated whether it be God's law, or man's law. Were it otherwise, all order would be uprooted, and anarchy with its attendant evils, would run riot over everything. Death, we repeat, was the penalty exacted in the case of a wilful and disobedient son. That it ever was exacted by any parents we have no record; but there are not wanting instances of failure on the part of parents to cause their stubborn and rebellious sons to be punished in the appointed way. We have a striking example of such a failure in the case of David and his son Absalom.

Absalom had been justly and grievously wronged by the conduct of his brother Amnon, who had committed a crime punishable by death. The king on hearing of it was very wroth (2 Sam. xiii. 21), but refrained from chastising his son—another instance of his ignoring the word of God. Absalom, however, was determined that Amnon should not go unpunished. After two years had elapsed he invited all the king's sons, including Amnon, to a sheep-shearing, and, at the feast which followed, Amnon, being merry with wine, was killed by his order according to a pre-arranged plan. An accusing conscience made Absalom a coward; and he fled from the country and took up his abode with Talmai, the son of Ammihud the king of Geshur.

Three years passed away, and with them the sorrow which Amnon's death had given David. But the father's heart still yearned for the one who had caused the sorrow, and who was still a fugitive in a strange land. Who cannot but admire the constancy of that love which David bestowed on his erring child? But a heart, tenderly strung as was David's, is not infrequently lacking in firmness and consistency. Its very sensitiveness renders it liable to be actuated rather by feeling than by principle. It involuntarily shrinks from any approach to what may appear to be hard or harsh, though, when under impulse or emotion, it will plunge into the wildest excesses of cruelty (2 Sam. xii. 29-31). At one time it will lavish all the wealth of its affections upon the object by which it is captivated; at another it will pour out its execrations and wrath upon that by which it is repelled, or to which it is opposed.

Such is the human heart, and such are human affections. But who would be without human love, let it be never so volatile, never so fickle? The world is dark and dreary enough with all its sin and misery; but take from it this

precious, priceless gift ; drain from every bosom its quota of human love, sullied and soiled as it may be, then, surely, earth could scarcely be less terrible than the black, cimmerician vaults of hell.

Different, oh how different, is the heart of God ! It knows no change, and is unacquainted with periods of despondency and exultation. And the love of God is like God's river which is full of water (Ps. lxxv. 9). It has neither ebb nor flow, but moves on in one grand, imperturbable stream through the realms of Time to the shoreless sea of Eternity.

“He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me,” involves a principle which David had entirely set aside—a principle which, if tested solely by one's natural proclivities, would be judged unnatural. But the Creator, the God of Nature as well as of Grace, who formed natural relationships, could not be unnatural. He is assuredly supernatural, but when the activities of nature pass their proper limits they become offensive. They interfere with, or trench upon, God's prerogative, or the exercise of His own sovereign will. Was it not intensely human—perfectly natural conduct—for Peter to dissuade the Lord from being killed in the manner He had just described ? (Matt. xvi. 21, 22). But how were his affectionate solicitations (as we might have called them) received ? “Get thee behind Me, Satan : for thou art an offence unto Me : for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (verse 23). Peter's natural affections had exceeded their legitimate bounds. It was kindness, it was faithfulness, yea, it was love, deep, strong, and real, on the part of the Lord to answer him thus. Similarly, when the Lord was engaged in speaking to the people, it was told Him that His mother and His brethren stood without desiring to speak with Him. His reply was : “Who is My mother ? and

who are my brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother, and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. xii. 46-50). We cannot here enlarge upon these words so full of grace and beauty, and so encouraging to every true-hearted disciple of the Lord Jesus. But do these actions or words of the Lord cast the least shade of contempt upon natural affections? Do they suggest any loosening of the ties of parental or filial relationships, or any shifting or shirking of the responsibilities which such relationships impose? Far, very far from it. Indeed, the being without natural affection was characteristic of the heathen (Romans i. 31), as it is also of corrupt Christianity in these last days (2 Tim. iii. 3).

There was one of David's servants, an able but wicked man, possessing an "evil eye," who was not slow to perceive that his master's heart was toward Absalom (2 Sam. xiv. 1). He would devise means whereby it should, in some measure, be gratified. Satan-like, he had recourse to the services of a woman, endowed with the wisdom of the serpent (xiv. 2), whom he sent to the king, instructing her beforehand what to say, and how to act—the object being to suggest the feasibility, or rather the duty, of allowing Absalom to return from exile. David had perception enough to trace in the woman's performances the cunning hand of the crafty son of Zeruiah. This should at once have sufficed for him, for "The counsels of the wicked are deceit" (Prov. xii. 5). To parley with them is dangerous; to entertain them is fatal. They were entertained, and consequently the only possible issue was: "Go, therefore, and bring the young man Absalom again" (2 Sam. xiv. 31). Joab was delighted. He "fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and

A Rebellious Son.

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thanked the king: and Joab said, To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant" (2 Sam. xiv. 22). It is a sorry day when the wicked triumph. Happily "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment" (Job xx. 5).

Joab was soon on his way to Geshur, and thence he conducted Absalom to Jerusalem where he was permitted to occupy his own house, but was forbidden to see the king's face. Contrition of heart he had none. And the only effect his being in disgrace had upon him, was to increase his wickedness. This is usually the case where the heart remains obdurate; and what could conduce more to this obduracy than immunity from condign punishment? Two full years ran their course when Absalom thought it time that the stigma under which he was living should be removed. He therefore sent for Joab—that mediator of evil—who refused to come to him. A second request was also not complied with. Whereupon Absalom set fire to a field of barley belonging to Joab. This piece of wickedness had, as Absalom probably anticipated, the desired effect. It brought Joab immediately to his house.

Their interview issued in Absalom visiting the king; not, be it remarked, his father, or even David, but "the king." "He came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king" (2 Sam. xiv. 33). King and subject meet face to face! What a meeting! The former with a heart overflowing with natural affection; the latter with hands dyed with his brother's blood, and unrepentant. Must the law be broken by him whose solemn duty it was to administer it, in order to appease his heart's deep yearnings for his son? Must righteousness—that on which the

throne itself is established—be ignored? (Prov. xvi. 12). Shall the sceptre which the king wields become a sceptre of unrighteousness? The king's next act will answer. "The king kissed Absalom" (v. 33).

Restored to favour, his sin unpunished, and unconfessed, who could be surprised at Absalom's subsequent wicked conduct? He goes from bad to worse! He had caused the death of his brother, and now he will even seek the life of his aged but all-too-indulgent father, and occupy, if possible, the throne himself. To this end he gathers together a large number of the men of Israel, whose hearts he had stolen, probably by the beauty of his person (2 Sam. xiv. 25) and the charm of his manners. But, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain" (Prov. xxxi. 30).

The news of Absalom's conspiracy seemed to deprive David of all power to act as became his position. He entertained no thought, nor made any suggestion as to the advisability of adopting means to avert or counteract the threatening evil. A panic seized the king and his household. "Arise, and let us flee," was his cry, and precipitate flight immediately followed. What a "spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men," is here presented! The Lord's anointed king, the once dauntless warrior, the hero of a hundred fights, the noble leader of a band of mighty men, hurriedly vacating his throne—Jehovah's throne, forsooth (1 Chron. xxix. 23)—and hastening from his unprotected capital in dread of an approaching foe! "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

We can not now follow the king throughout his sorrowful journey, full as it is of interest and instruction. Suffice it to say that, on reaching Mahanaim, he made a halt, numbered his people, and divided them into three companies, placing them under the leadership of Joab, Abishai, and

Ittai, and sent them out into the field against Israel, (xviii. 1-6). But David could not repress that which so engrossed his mind and heart—his poor rebel son, and how it would that day fare with him; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (Matt. xii. 34). So, ere finally taking his leave, he entreated the leaders in the hearing of all the people to “Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man, even with Absalom.” Not for Absalom’s sake, for what pity did he merit? Of what consideration was he deserving? None, surely. But “for my sake” pleaded the sorrowing, loving father; for “many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.”

Sweet and touching was this father’s intercession with the leaders of his people on behalf of his son; but sweeter far, and more efficacious, is the saint’s intercession with God on behalf of others.

The day of battle came. The conspirators were overcome, and Absalom took flight. The mule on which he rode went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth, and the mule that was under him went away (xviii. 9). The news reaching Joab, he hastened to the spot, and, though having been reminded by the messenger who brought the news, of the king’s words respecting his son, without hesitation or compunction, slew Absalom, who, in truth, was “worthy of death,” and rightly was hanged (Deut. xxi. 22). “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

Poor Absalom! Many beside thy fond and affectionate father can grieve over thy sad and solemn fate. The curse is thine. A rebel thou hadst lived; a rebel, unrepentant in heart, thou hast died.

“For thee, no star, no dawning glad,
Only the lasting woe.”

Centuries after, another Son—an obedient Son—who always did the things which pleased His Father (John viii. 29), was adjudged “guilty of death” (Matt. xxvi. 66) by a tribunal of men. He bowed to that judgment, suffered its penalty, was “lifted up” upon a tree, and was made a curse that rebel sinners, repenting of their sins, might receive the blessing of God (Gal. iii. 13, 14).

“He on the cross must die
Or mercy cannot come
To ruined sinner nigh;
Yes, Christ the Son of God must bleed
That sinners might from sin be freed.”

Both Amnon and Absalom paid the penalty of their crimes by the forfeiture of their lives. Would Joab, not the least guilty of the three, escape? Yes, so long as grace (in the person of David) reigned. But God had already appointed David’s successor (2 Sam. vii), of whom it had been declared that he should judge his people with righteousness (Ps. lxxii. 1, 2). On his coming to the throne, unhappy Joab was soon called upon to deliver up his life (1 Kings ii. 28-34).

What a striking type of the man of the world is Joab. Clever, able, successful in his profession; but without God. When a “greater than Solomon” shall judge in righteousness (Acts xvii. 30, 31) none will escape. In view of that “day of wrath” we are constrained to cry:—

“O, Christless soul, awake
Ere thy last sleep begin!
O, Christ, the sinner’s slumbers break;
Burst Thou the bonds of sin.”

A. C. H.

TO-MORROW.

THE sorrows of time are fast passing away,
 The day of Christ's glory is nearing,
 When He in His beauty we'll see in the day
 Of His promised and glorious appearing!
 Made like Him, in us His glory displayed
 To the world in its wonder admiring;
 How the Father has loved, how He has arrayed
 Us in beauty—He loves us untiring!

We shall enter the house of the Father on high,
 The rest of our God we shall share in;
 By the blood of His Son we now are made nigh—
 He the Lamb of God's gracious providing!
 No more shall a tear ever roll from our eye,
 Sin's woes—shall we meet them? no, never!
 For we shall be with Him in that by-and-by
 To praise Him, and serve Him for ever!

"Behold, I come quickly," His word to us is;
 Amen! let our hearts be responding.
 He is coming to lead us to heavenly bliss,
 Our condition to His corresponding.
 His joy, His delight, ours will greatly exceed
 As He looks on the fruit of His sorrow;
 Reward, satisfaction, all honour indeed
 In that glorious, unending to-morrow!

E. R. W.

AN EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.

Llandrindod, Sept. 4th, 1885.

WE learn the wisdom and the comfort of the Word reading such words as Matt. x. 24, 25. How well God knew what would be needed. Then compare that with John xii. 26—the bright side and the future. What encouragement! May we more faithfully serve. Then, too, Luke vi. 22, 23 and 26—*all* men may speak well of one, so did they of the *false* prophets—but *all* will not hate, etc. No disciple should be the only one on earth in his or her day—

C. E. S.

“It is not an easy thing to be content with being simply what we are in reality before God. Times of “Revival” make manifest the thoughts of many hearts; but to learn, in a day of grace, to be *still*, and know that God is God, is completely above the education of the flesh.”

PRAYER calms the mind, clears the judgment, strengthens faith, inspires hope, and so brings strength. By watchfulness we are apprised of danger, and by prayer prepared to meet it. Oh, then, let us pray clothed in the armour of watchfulness, and watch surrounded with the atmosphere of prayer.

IN Matthew vi. 1-17, we get a threefold application of righteousness—manward in almsgiving; Godward in prayer; selfward in fasting.

It is truth which sanctifies: and the life cannot be right which is not governed by it.

ONESIMUS.

PERHAPS, in general estimation, nothing could be more ignoble than the position of a slave. Bought and sold like a sheep or other animal, and compelled, under the iron hand of tyranny, to perform the most menial, the most degrading, and often the most debasing of duties, it were a marvel if the poor slave did not fall in the moral, as he had sunk in the social scale. But, equally with his more civilised and cultured fellow-man, the slave possesses an immortal soul which is infinitely precious to Him who created it. There is no respect of persons with God (Rom. ii. 11); and in the sovereignty of His grace He chooses His saints from every class of the community, and from every tongue, and nation, and people. The Lord of glory Himself, on coming into the world, took upon Him the form of a bondman (Phil. ii. 7); and, speaking through the prophet Zechariah, He could say: "Man acquired me as a slave," thus intimating the lowly service to which He would subject Himself. Taking such a position declared, with a magnificence beyond expression, not only His willingness, but His purpose, to go to the very dregs of the human race—the foolish, the weak, the ignoble, the despised—to seek and to save the lost. What a Saviour!

Onesimus was a slave, the property of Philemon, from whom, for some reason not made known, he had escaped. To whom, or whither he had fled also remains unrevealed; but, while still a fugitive from his master, he had been thrown in contact with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who, at the time, was a "prisoner of Christ Jesus" in Rome. To this runaway slave it must have been a wonderful and startling

experience to hold converse with this aged, chain-bound captive, who displayed a character of such surpassing beauty, and who possessed a heart which beat in deep and constant love for the souls of men, whatever their position or condition might be. Chains for knaves and rebels, or for poor slaves like himself, were in no way incongruous ; but for a man of such gentle mien, they must have been, to his mind, strangely unbecoming.

Tasting—it may be, for the first time in his life—the sweets of genuine love, and experiencing the comfort of being the object of tender consideration and solicitude, his heart's affections would be powerfully stirred, and his soul knit, in the bonds of love, to that remarkable prisoner. Thus attracted to him, with what rapture would he listen to those honoured lips as they told the tale of God's redeeming love for poor perishing sinners—for a worthless, degraded, abandoned slave such as he was. No theme like to it, in song or story, had ever reached his ears. Nothing in this dark world of sin and sorrow had so ravished his heart. Stupendous the truth, that there was One in the bright glory of heaven, none other than the Son of God Himself, who cared for him, pitied him, loved him, yea, (thought beyond all thought !) had gone down into the dust of death to save him, a fatherless, motherless, homeless serf ! His groans as a slave would cease ; and his quivering lips break forth into a song of triumph : “ The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation ” (Ex. xv. 2). Marvellous indeed was that scene in the gaol at Philippi (Acts xvi.), but was this scene in the Roman prison-house less so ?

His heart turned to God, Onesimus would henceforth serve as a bondman (such is the force of the Word) the living and true God as Paul was doing (1 Thess. i. 9). Unserviceable in his past life, he had now become service-

able to Philemon and to the Apostle (Philemon 11), who really was desirous of retaining him (ver. 12). But whatever Paul's wishes in this respect were, he had no hesitation as to how he should act. He had, it is interesting to observe, arrived at a point at which Law and Grace diverge: points which always are instructive. "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee; he shall dwell with thee, even among you in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates where it liketh him best" (Deut. xxiii. 15, 16). So runs the law which comes in, as ever, with its "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not"; and although it is the ministration of condemnation and death, yet it sparkles with the gleams of God's mercy and grace. Could it be otherwise? God must be true to Himself. On the occasion of giving the law, He had proclaimed His name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth." Among all the glorious attributes of God, that of "merciful" stands first, so far as His dealings with man are concerned. He delighteth in mercy (Mic. vii. 18). He desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings (Hos. vi. 6; Matt. ix. 13 and xii. 7), for, of what avail would the law be without these? Hence this merciful provision for a poor hunted slave; escaping, perhaps, from the bondage of some cruel master.

Israel, the very people to whom the law was given, was, when under the Egyptian power, a nation of slaves. Of this they were reminded in the opening sentence of the law: "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage (or bondmen)" (Deut. v. 6). And when in the enjoyment of the blessings of the land, their former servile condition was never to be allowed to pass from their memories. "Thou shalt remem-

ber that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt," was repeatedly urged upon the Israelite (Deut. v. 15, xv. 15, xvi. 12, xxiv. 18, 22).

Had the law not come to an end, Paul, being an obedient Jew, would have been justified in keeping, nay, compelled to keep Onesimus in his service. But grace rises above all legal considerations. It does not insist upon rights, while yielding to the rights of others. So this veteran champion of the Christian faith, this noble bondman of the Lord, would do nothing without acquainting Philemon (Phile. 14), who had, undoubtedly, a moral claim upon the services of Onesimus, and *contrary to the letter, but not, surely, to the spirit of the law* (in the changed circumstances of both master and servant), Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon.

The fact that Onesimus returned, testified to his willingness to re-enter the service of his former master. It was tantamount to his having plainly said, "I love my master," and although he would no longer be required to submit to the operation of having his ear bored, as the law demanded, yet "Perhaps he, therefore, departed for a season, that thou (Philemon) shouldest receive (or rather possess) him for ever, not now as a bondman, but above a bondman, a brother beloved" (Phile. 15, 16). Under the law the bondman, be he never so willing, never so devoted, remained a bondman for ever (Ex. xxi. 5, 6). Grace, however, emancipates. It breaks the fetters of a slave to set him free to become the bondman of the Lord, under whose easy yoke (Mat. xi. 30) there is perfect liberty; while, for the price with which he is bought, the freeman also becomes Christ's bondman (1 Cor. vii.).

The meeting of Philemon and Onesimus must, indeed, have been an interesting one. Since last they had met, how great a change had come over them! Both had emerged

from the darkness of idolatry and passed into the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ. The brother of low degree might well rejoice in that he had been exalted, and the rich in that he had been made low (James i. 9). Each would desire—the grace of God keeping him—to uphold the character expressed by his name. Philemon (affectionate) would regard it to be his sacred duty, as well as his pleasure, to bestow his affections upon his former slave; and Onesimus (profitable) in his turn, would feel that he was now doing service as to the Lord and not to men. So acting, how could he fail to be otherwise than profitable to Philemon?

In the Epistle to the Colossians (iv. 9)—the only other place in the Scriptures where the name of Onesimus occurs—the Apostle refers to him as “a faithful and beloved brother,” consistently with what he had written to Philemon (ver. 16); and with exquisite delicacy he avoids applying the term “bondman” to Onesimus, though free to describe Tychicus as his own fellow-bondman, and Epaphras as a bondman of Christ (Col. iv. 7-12).

Imperishable, though brief, is the record of this lowly servant—this trophy of God’s grace. Who that reads and ponders it can withhold the joyful ascription of praise to Him who delights to bestow His rich, eternal favours upon objects for whom the world has nothing but contempt!

A. C. H.

“The God of peace” is far more than even “the peace of God.” It is Himself the source; it is the enjoyment of His own blessed presence in this way. There is *relief* in having “the peace of God” as the guard of our hearts and minds; there is *power* in having the “God of peace” with us.

THE PATH OF PEACE.

(Ps. cxix. 161-168).

THE Word of God, presented in its various bearings, is pre-eminently the theme of this beautiful psalm. The exercises of the godly man are here brought out in connection with it, as he is depicted as finding the necessities of his heart and soul entirely met by it. It provides light and guidance; gives joy and peace to lovers of it; calls forth both prayer and praise from the heart; and at the same time secures for those subject to it, immunity from stumbling-blocks—"Nothing shall offend them."

Suffering unjustly, persecuted without a cause, the sufferer, nevertheless, exclaims: "But my heart standeth in awe of Thy Word." No licence would he claim for himself on account of the injustice heaped upon him, as we are so liable to do, but increased experience intensified his obedience to the Word of Truth. There was no vindictiveness, no retaliation, no meeting sword with sword, but the Word acting at once as supplying a wondrous check upon the activities of the will, and creating that *trembling* which is of such value in God's sight (Isa. lxvi. 2). Said one to a servant of the Lord, when on proclaiming the Gospel various missiles were hurled at him: "Were you not afraid?" "I have learned," was the reply of the servant, "that the only thing to be feared here is to fear to sin." What a true fear of God and a heart in awe of His Word this displayed!

And ere passing on, let us recall the One of whom it is written that He was hated without a cause, the Christ of God. They were His enemies wrongfully; for He withheld not from man, and restored to God what He had never

taken away (Ps. lxxix. 4). The prince of the world was against Him, and upon the hate of man's heart he wrought, inciting to persecution. But of Christ alone in all their fulness do these words apply. His heart stood in awe of God's Word. He would not act, having no word to act upon, but would be still and let God be God, His will everything. But having a word He would press on, to the amazement of wondering disciples. Then neither the subtlety nor power of the prince of the world, neither zeal of disciple nor frenzy of men could deter Him from reaching the goal before His soul. And reaching that, His dying utterance, "I thirst," still reveals His regard for that Word (Jno. xix. 28). How all pales before the perfection of Jesus!

But this awe of which the psalmist speaks is not the awe of a fettered conscience fearful of the consequences that accrue on disobedience, but the awe of a heart truly in love with the saying of the Lord. Here awe and joy are twin companions, and surely it appears that "each added thought, doth constant yield unchanging fresh delight." The miser coming suddenly into wealth, the weary miner striking a nugget after long toil, the diver into the deep discovering long-lost treasure, have a pleasure and joy but feeble and faint beside his who can exclaim, "I rejoice at Thy Word, as one that findeth great spoil." Is that joy ours?

And further. This awe and joy is accompanied by a hatred and abhorrence of falsehood, and these are put as the direct antithesis of love: "Falsehood I hate and abhor; Thy law I love." Such hatred is a consequence of loving the expression of God's authority, that which commands the heart. For such is *law* as here referred to. The term is at times used in its legal sense—"the law of Moses"; and again as embracing the entire Old Testament (see John xv. 25, where our Lord is quoting from Ps. lxxix. 4); and also as

covering the doctrines or teaching of the Word. In these the godly man is found meditating day and night (Ps. i.)

Need we wonder, then, that his soul revolts from all that is opposed to these authoritative statements of God's mind? The truth has to be in the inward parts, the heart an abode for it, and the intensity of true feeling, hatred, against evil, is according to the measure of power exerted by the Word there. A love of His law must produce subjection to it, nor could we possibly conceive it otherwise. Where a love of it is absent, there obedience is found wanting.

Nor is hatred of evil the only effect of the Word abiding within. There are positive results flowing both Godward and to the individual soul. Full praise ascends and peace keeps the heart. The ways of God, learned through His Word, give occasion for the former, and provide for the latter. His *judgments of righteousness* are, in the words of another, "the decisions regarding right and wrong that give expression to God's righteousness, and carry it into effect," and they certainly testify, that spite of outward appearance and the judgment of sight and sense, evil shall be judged, and the full praise of the faithful heart be justified. Faith ever believes that the Judge of all the earth does right, and that though inscrutable the ways of God may be, hidden from the wise and prudent, revealed unto babes, yet the day comes when He will vindicate His ways and make plain the righteousness of His decrees. Shall a dissentient voice be raised then? or one asking, What doest thou?

Thus the foundation is secure, and consequently the peace that guards the heart is *great*, a peace that comes not to those who merely assent to the Word, but to those who love it and obey it. Their peace is as a river. Full of tranquility they are undisturbed by the puny blasts of criticism, and are not swayed by every wind of doctrine. "They know no

stumbling-block." They have heard what God the Lord will speak, and reposing in His will, are enabled to say now what God's Israel will utter by and by—" *The ways of the Lord are right*" (Hos. xiv. 9), and walking in them their feet are as hinds' feet; and, though circumstances protest, they yet walk upon their high places, the wail of prayer changed into the chant of praise. Unbounded confidence in Him whose law they love gives as its resultant unbounded peace (Hab. iii.).

"They know no stumbling-block." Loving His doctrine, they seek not for a clear disclosure of His ways in the actings of providence, but know that "His way is in the sanctuary," and entering there they see and fully understand. There the mysterious is made simple, there the inexplicable becomes plain (Ps. lxxiii.). Unquestioningly believing that God acts out of the secret depths known only to Himself, they are unoffended, and peace possesses their souls, dispossessing mere speculation, doubt, and distrust. How far is this true of us each?

Then, look at it from another point of view, remembering that what is stated of those that *love His law* is ever true. To-day we have "the oppositions of science" to that "law" more loudly asserted than ever. Science propounds its theories, and dilates on its so-called discoveries that overthrow the very foundation of the faith of the saints, but they disquiet not the soul that has the love spoken of by the psalmist. Hearing the voice of their God both in His Word and in Creation, what further proof need they of the futility and foolishness of the oppositions of science falsely so-called? They have, moreover, experienced in their souls the effect of loving His law, and thus they possess incontrovertible, experimental proofs—and such proofs are dear to the true scientist in connection with his calculations—of the verity

of their belief. Such may be ignorant of many things, but a blind man may know honey is sweet; and so, "having tasted that the Lord is gracious," their *great peace* is their answer to the scoffs of the caviller.

Then, proceeding with our psalm, we learn that *hope* buoys up the heart, and *obedience*, in view of that final deliverance to be wrought for them by the Lord, gives confidence before Him. The testimonies of Jehovah—His witness to Himself and His will—are not simply kept, but loved exceedingly. Oh! what depths of delight in all that concerns his God, are here revealed. And not only so, but since all His ways are before Him, all out in the light of His presence, nothing hid from His all-seeing eyes, obedience is fostered and increased. The psalmist's words are: "I keep"—it is a characteristic of His walk—"Thy precepts and Thy testimonies: for all my ways are before Thee." May the spirit evinced here find its display in us. The path of peace is found in love for, and obedience to God's Word; and found in that path we follow in the steps of Him whose delight it was to do God's will.

H. F.

Ps. lxii.—Twice in this Psalm hath he repeated this, in the second and in the sixth verse, *He is my rock, and my salvation, and my defence*, and (as it is enlarged in the seventh verse) my refuge and my glory. If my *refuge*, what enemy can pursue me? If my *defence*, what temptation shall wound me? If my *rock*, what storm shall shake me? If my *salvation*, what melancholy shall deject me? If my *glory*, what calumny shall defame me?

THE LITTLE CHILD.

Matt 2.

God has a way of working in the darkest days, of making light to shine in the darkest places (Matt. iv. 16), and often, when all has seemed a settled deadness and darkness, He has made the light spring up, a witness of life and hope to a bright future under His beloved Son, when all the power of the enemy shall be broken. We may see, too, in what extremities He loves sometimes to intervene, waiting, it may be, through storm and tempest, till every human effort has been beaten down and has lain futile, till the final darkness has seemed to gather and hope is dead, "when neither moon nor stars in many days appeared" and "all hope that we should be saved was then taken away" (Acts xxvii. 20). Then He will intervene. The hope of Israel may die and the grave close over it, but the sadness of the dark night gives place to joy that cometh in the morning, when from the grave shall rise, as it were, new life and a higher spring of hope in resurrection (1 Peter i. 3, 4). In the dark days of our chapter in Jerusalem this light of prophecy appears again (2 Peter i. 19; ch ii. 6), and along with that other light that God had kindled He takes it and brings them both and makes them shine over "the little child."

It was "in the days of Herod the king," when, in the words of the preacher, one might look "in the place of judgment, and wickedness was there" (Eccles iii. 16), and in the place of government in the "city of the great King," and on the throne of David, was Herod. What wonder then if the sword fall upon innocency? Mary before had proved (as often here) that the first effect of realising the deepest blessing may be suffering (ch. i. 19).

Heaven had announced to Joseph the coming of the Saviour; the scene of Bethlehem and the sweet Temple scene (Luke ii. 15, 16; 27-38) had long since passed away, and the babe had grown to a "little child" of "two years old or under" (ch ii. 16), when these wise men come upon the scene; dimly they move across it and are gone. Little of them we know, but God had spoken to them about the King, and had engaged their hearts in the quest of Him; and theirs it was to see in the events that passed before them, the sad omens of His rejection and that death that He should suffer at Jerusalem.

Jerusalem! How truly (as in God's thought of it) a place to weep over, so loved and favoured, and yet so out of harmony with heaven (ch. ii. 3.). And these wise men come to Jerusalem and ask the question there, "Where is the King of the Jews that has been born?" And it was the announcing where all seemed secure in the power of the enemy, of the One whose right it was and who (how sweet a word in view of what is recorded here) should "shepherd His people" (ch. ii. 6). They ask the question in all simplicity, for what more natural than that they should seek Him there? And it seemed to stir heaven, earth, and the old dragon (ch. ii. 3-13; Rev. xii. 4), to bring down the sword upon Bethlehem, and send Him, under cover of darkness, out of the land (ch. ii. 14). At the sound of it Herod craftily begins to work whilst angels are active to circumvent him. So the high powers engage for such great issues, such eternal destinies hang now upon the fate of the little child.

For how God loves to reveal Himself on the side of grace and condescension, as in the bright scene of Rev. v. we see One who had emptied and humbled Himself to death. To such an One shall be glory and power even from the right hand of Him that sitteth upon the throne, for faithfulness made

Him rejected, and His condescension made Him despised. He stooped low for God's glory and our blessing, a babe that an old man could take in his arms and bless; a little child, yet the One in whom are centred all the hope of Israel and all the means of grace.

Of these wise men we learn that they had been "divinely instructed" (ch. ii. 12). How much this serves to explain of them when God had shown them something of the glory of the King. We understand their joy when they saw the star again, their lack of offence at finding Him amidst surroundings so different to those pertaining to a king. It throws a light, too, on the word worship which they offer to Him only, and though they may not find help or guidance in Jerusalem, in court or learned convocation, God will Himself lead them to Him. When Herod hears he calls together priests and scribes of the people, and we see what guidance is in that which has authority and official sanction. They point to Bethlehem, but long since He has come to Bethlehem and long since gone from thence. The word of the King is with them, but in their hands is but a misleading. They turn from Jerusalem "the place where men ought to worship" (John iv. 20).

We see the Lord here as the King that is to be, but there are many characters in which He shall shine; many lights God shall bring to shine over Him. Oh! the bright future, to which faith looks in dark scenes such as these, when "judgment shall return to righteousness." Then no more shall subtlety and cruelty sit in high places, nor the sword fall upon innocency, but He shall execute righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed (Ps. ciii. 6), and then—

To praise Him in the dance, O glorious day!

The pilgrim's journey done.

C. A. L.

PSALM XXXIV.

ONE note of praise runs all through this psalm. It is to the name of Jehovah—"His praise shall continually be in my mouth." No doubt the language of the psalm is that of many besides Christ; but in Christ Himself we must look for its true fulfilment. This makes it especially precious as the mind of the Lord Jesus; His thoughts when on earth. The prevailing thought in the psalm is the sense the writer has of the excellency of God—His goodness and tender mercy. When Christ came from above, what did He find upon earth to refresh His soul? Nothing. All were gone away from God. There was nothing in which He could delight. It was "a thirsty land in which there was no water." Where, then, was His joy? In Jehovah. So here we have the experience the man Christ Jesus had of the goodness and love of God; the experience of Him who feared the Lord, and the *result* is the heart is filled with praise.

No matter what the circumstances were, since God was before Him, they only became an occasion of praise. The Spirit of Christ has written this Psalm to fill us with the same thoughts of God which Jesus had, that our experience of His goodness in all the diversified circumstances of the path of patience may be the same in character while not in degree, as His was; and that we, too, may bless *the Lord at all times*, and have His praise continually in our mouths. We may say this is our desire, but is it our experience? It was Christ's. He said, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good, but one, that is God."

Verse 2.—"My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof and be glad." This is the very thing we are called to, through grace. God gives us a

place in Christ, and has made Him to be to us wisdom and righteousness, so that we can glory in Him ; and not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We make our boast in God. The Son has declared to us the name of His Father who raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory that our faith and hope might be in God. But here we may regard Christ as the speaker praising God for His deliverance, whilst we are the humble ones (brought low through grace) who hear of this and are glad. And nothing is so refreshing to the heart of the humble as the praises of the Lord. We see this also in the 69th Psalm. When Christ is set on high He praises the name of God with a song. This pleases the Lord better than any sacrifice, whilst the humble see it and are glad.

Verse 3.—“ O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.” Fearing the Lord (4) does not make the heart callous. Christ says, “ He delivered me from all my fears.” Death and judgment were before Him. Love was leading Him into them, and He would not turn back. God was about to smite Him, but He is delivered from all His fears.

Next we have the common experience of all the godly. “ They looked unto Him and were lightened,” and the glory of God left its mark on their faces—“ Their faces were not ashamed.” God does not make ashamed. He brightens the countenance. The great burden of the song is Christ telling out what Jehovah had been to Him, that it might get an entrance into our hearts. “ O taste and see that the Lord is good.” That is the *key* note. Where are we to go for blessing ? Not to the world—not even to the wise virgins. “ They looked unto *Him* and were lightened.” When we have got the blessedness, it flows out. Such joy is diffusive : “ Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

Verse 7.—“Are they not all ministering spirits?” Sennacherib and his army encamped about Hezekiah as the sand of the sea, but the angel of the Lord destroyed them. Peter quotes this psalm when encouraging the saints in times of trial. We, indeed, are not looking for earthly blessing as our portion. We look for Christ to come and take us out of this scene of confusion and wrong, not to set it right. Is evil then to go on unchecked? Is there no resource? Yes; “the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry” (15). We see in David a beautiful illustration of the truth of this. “Hunted as a partridge on the mountains,” he could put confidence in no one but God, but how simple and childlike his trust in Him! “Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? Will Saul come down as thy servant has heard? O Lord God of Israel, I beseech thee tell thy servant. And the Lord said, He will come down” (1 Samuel xxiii. 11, 12). Saul goes this way and that way as circumstances lead him, but David’s eye is on the Lord, and the ear of the Lord was open unto his cry.

Verses 9, 10.—The young lions are the last of God’s creatures that we should think would lack food; but there is no want of any good thing to them that seek the Lord. We now get what it is to fear the Lord. Nothing is more simple: “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile” (13). This is the first part, the bridling of the tongue. James insists on this greatly in his Epistle, because the tongue is the great outlet of the evil of the natural heart, and is set on fire of hell. On the other hand he insists no less on being “swift to hear,” because good comes from God, through His precious Word. It is said of the Lord Jesus that “guile was not found in his mouth.” Deceit is natural to man, but God desires truth in the

inward parts, and truth came by Jesus Christ as well as grace. He has told us the truth about ourselves and our sin, but He has told us also the truth of atonement. Grace cleanses us so as to be in the light with God, and hence in the Epistles one of the first precepts after we are set in Christ is that we should "speak the *truth* every man with his neighbour." This is the first part, restraining the evil which is within. The second is like unto it: "departing from evil" that is without us.

Next we get diligence in what is good; the occupation of the heart and the hand with things that are lovely and of good report. Then along with this we are to seek peace and even to pursue it. "Blessed are the peace-makers." The lowly heart delights in peace. The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then *peaceable*. It is the chastened spirit that yields the *peaceable* fruits of righteousness. Indeed these are the two great characteristics of the Divine life—first, separate from everything not of Christ; and secondly, the enjoyment of all Divine affections in the holy and peaceful presence of God (see i. John).

Verse 15.—He loves the righteous and gives them the testimony of His approval, so that the heart rests in His favour. Of course, it is through Christ this comes *to us*, whether concerning the acceptance of our persons or of our sacrifices. It is a beautiful expression, "His ears are open unto their cry." Take Hezekiah again, and we see the truth of this in his experience. He says, "Lord, bow down thine ear and hear: open, Lord, thine eyes and see, and hear the words of Sennacherib which hath sent to reproach the living God." "Now, therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech Thee, save Thou us out of his hand." Then the Lord sent to Hezekiah, saying, "That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib I have heard." When Peter was sinking

he cried to the Lord, and *immediately* Jesus put forth His hand and saved him.

Verse 18.—Here we get the secret of communion, “a broken heart and a contrite spirit.” It is the joy and delight of God to meet with the broken in heart. He dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit (Isaiah lvii. 15), to gladden the heart that is lowly in His presence. But oh! the patient, unceasing discipline of love which is needful to bring the heart of man to be as that of a little child with his father! Only God can bring the heart low, and none but God (but God can) *gather* it up again.

Verse 22.—There is no desolation for them that trust in Him. And why? Because Father, Son, and Holy Ghost visit them to give them the joy of Divine communion. All through the psalm we get the living interest that God takes in them that fear Him. We often question this because of our failures, but that is *unbelief*. Jesus is in heaven for our failures. If we take a natural parent, how much his love is above that of his child. There is a Divine stamp on those affections unmixed with the selfishness which corrupts everything else. But if it is so with man who is evil, what perfectness of love is with God to His children? It is most alarming the unworthy thoughts we cherish of God (but, indeed, our thoughts are never up to the heavenly manifestations of God through Christ), and when we suffer them to come in, we go heavily and full of discomfort instead of having our hearts filled with Christ and His cross, and the joy of the Lord as our strength. The Lord increase to us this joy of faith.

J. R.

A LETTER.

May 30th, 1905.

DEAR MR. EDITOR,

You are aware of the fact that during the time that I was Editor of the "Christian's Helper," three different articles appeared in its pages from my pen, each of which I have felt it incumbent upon me to withdraw, viz., "Did God Die," "The Man Christ Jesus," and "Christ in the Midst."

It has occurred to me that as these articles still find a place in the bound volumes of the magazine, my withdrawal of the same should also find a place in its pages. My critics and accusers have written much. How far they rightly judged what I wrote, and also how far common fairness was meted out to me, I can well afford to leave. Life is too short to spend much time in self-vindication. In my earnest desire to guard the true Deity of the blessed Lord from what I judged dishonoured it, I went too far, and made statements that I deeply regret. It was God the Son who became Man to die, and whilst I still believe that Deity itself cannot rightly be said to suffer and die, yet we should not appear to separate, nor fail to state that the worth of His Person who was both God and Man must attach to His sufferings and death.

That God, who searches all hearts, will not credit me with a desire to say a word to His Son's dishonour I am perfectly certain. One may, however, err with the best of motives, but when one has discovered the error it is surely but simple righteousness to acknowledge it. I well remember a remark I once heard Mr. W. Kelly make. It was this:—"The

next best thing to never having sinned at all is to own that we have sinned."

Thanking you in anticipation for your courtesy in inserting this letter,

I am, dear Mr. Editor,

Yours very sincerely in Christ,

E. R. WILLS.

Sow ye beside all waters,
Where the dew of heaven may fall ;
Ye shall reap, if ye be not weary,
For the Spirit breathes o'er all.
Sow though the thorns may wound thee,
One wore the thorns for thee ;
And though the cold world scorn thee,
Patient and hopeful be.
Sow ye beside all waters,
With a blessing and a prayer ;
Name Him whose hand upholds thee,
And sow thou everywhere.

Thou knowest Lord, the weariness and sorrow,
Of the sad heart that comes to Thee for rest ;
Cares for to-day and burdens for to-morrow,
Blessings implored, and sins to be confessed :
We come before Thee at Thy gracious word,
And lay them at Thy feet, Thou knowest Lord.

God will put His silver into the fire to purify it ; but He sits by the furnace as a refiner to direct the process, and to secure the end He has in view.

THE SUBMISSION OF JESUS.

“ The Person of the Christ,
Enfolding every grace.”

How very sweet is the thought embodied in the above lines from a simple hymn. As within the enfolded bud are all the beauties of the full-blown flower, as the wrapped-up frond contains the glories of the entire fern, and waits but the *unfolding* for them to be perceived and admired, so—the contrast serves simply as an illustration—every virtue and grace are found in connection with Christ's Person. In His path of humiliation all these are unfolded and laid open to faith's eye; for, though it be yet true that “ He is despised and rejected of men,” the Spirit-led soul finds delight untold in searching out the exquisite beauty of Christ's many acts and ways.

And here the word that “ he that seeketh findeth ” receives its fulfilment. What a galaxy of glories an earnest seeker finds in a single flower! What varied phases of beauty and loveliness faith discovers in even one of Jesus' acts. The multitude of the heavenly host in praising God when announcing Christ's birth, said: “ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men ” (Luke ii.), an intimation surely that He, over whom the acclamation was made, was worthy indeed; and though then a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laying in a manger—oh, marvellous condescension!—yet “ His Person enfolding every grace ” provided the fitting assurance that God's glory, earth's peace, and man's blessing, would by Him be perfectly and consistently blended. No blight could taint tha

"tender plant," though barrenness and blight be all around. Truly the angels know His worth and blessedness, but we? —ah, yes—Lord Jesus, we know Thee in Thy toilsome path of sorrow, where tears dimmed Thine eyes, and Thou didst love though hated, and didst serve though despised!

Said aged Simeon as he held "the child Jesus" in his arms, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation," the exclamation of one full of the Holy Ghost, who with prophetic vision discerned in the presence on earth of that glorious One, though found in so wondrous a condition, the certain guarantee of the accomplishment of that salvation to which reference is made. For he speaks of the *Person* as though the *work* had actually been wrought, and what a volume of truth reposes in that simple utterance. Oh! for such desire of heart that the unravelling of what is therein contained might be sought and found.

But let us trace out the unfolding of the grace of submission in our Lord's peerless life, and note it to be one of the ruling principles of His pathway. We shall find it displayed in connection with His private life, His public service, and His death (Luke ii. 51; x. 21; xxii. 42).

One of the sweetest of Scripture stories, listened to with pleasure in childhood's days, and mused over with great delight after becoming wise unto salvation, is the Temple scene with the child Jesus as the central figure. Of the days before this, all is summarised in the words: "And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him." Perfect ever, yet there was consistent development, from the perfect babe to childhood, from a youth to a man, all attesting the reality of His taking a bond servant's place, and enhancing to our souls the grace that led Him to "become poor."

First informed of the practice of His parents with respect

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to their visit to Jerusalem at the Passover, it is next recorded that when twelve years of age Jesus went up with them. Then follows the simple details of the home-going, and return to the city on His absence being discovered, and the account of Mary and Joseph seeking Him sorrowing, and of their finding Him in the Temple where He was asking questions and giving answers that astonished His hearers. In the words of another we can say verily that "this beautiful picture displays the perfect propriety of the child Jesus. For though He was God, He was man; and not only man, but in this special stage of His manhood, as a youth, He shows all deference to those who were older than Himself."

"Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us?" were the words that came from the mother's lips. They brought from His that wondrous response that reveals the true dignity of the One who spoke though seen by mortal eyes as a boy of twelve: "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" a saying they understood not, though hid in Mary's heart.

Conscious He was then that as Son of the Father, He was above every claim of nature, and His words reveal first and foremost that what was nearest to His heart was His Father's will. That He would make plain, as also at the close with the words, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (Jno. xvii. 4). His Father's business was His chief concern, yea, He lived on account of His Father (Jno. vi. 57), and could declare, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (ch. iv. 34).

We follow these details that we might get some due sense of the submission displayed when He went down to Nazareth "and was subject unto them." The eternal Son of the Father fully owns His place as child of Mary, and in His love and

grace would show what was the proper and fitting attitude for man in the varied positions and circumstances of life. So here this grace of submission begins to unfold itself. What a sight ! Here every feature of the picture is full of testimony to His marvellous humility and lowliness. One bright vivid flash revealing the effulgence of the glorious Person that was on earth, and all is as it was. The divine is veiled in the human ; His glory is yet hid ; and in Nazareth that place so despised and contemned that vain and scornful Pharisees ask, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?"—there in its obscurity, where we can well understand wilfulness had been, and was, prominent, *He became subject unto them*, and lived for eighteen years in privacy a life that, though the details are withheld from us, was full of delight for the blessed God ; for the Spirit's comment is that He increased in favour with God.

Oh proud heart, here is a scene for thee to contemplate. When pride surges there, and elevates to a high pinnacle the things valued by the godless and vain and despises the simple and lowly, let us revert in spirit to that town in distant Galilee, shunned by many as being too low and degraded to dwell in, and think of One who was once subject there, and ponder the fact that there a life of lowly toil was pursued for the good of man and to the glory and pleasure of God by Him who was, and ever had been, the Son of the Father.

Here then is ample material for the hearts of those who have to "become as little children ;" and becoming that may the sweet and precious instruction which is contained in this act of subjection of the Lord Jesus sink into our hearts and lead us to desire only God's will ; and seeking the grace that brings submission may we endeavour to fill our little corners to His praise.

Emerging from Nazareth when about thirty years of age,

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Christ enters upon His public ministry. Acknowledged from heaven as the One in whom centred the pleasure of God, He is next tested of the devil in the wilderness. As Son of God He is tempted. The trial is not, then, to prove His Sonship. He is first approved and then tested, and issues from that conflict triumphantly. Unavailing indeed must all the deceits and devices of the enemy be over Him who would alone sanction what was according to God.

So His ministry begins in Luke, with the scene in Nazareth's synagogue, where the revelation of the *grace* He brought called forth the wonder of many hearts; whilst, under the searching power of the *truth* which proclaimed alike the real national condition of His own, and God's sovereign right to act in mercy wheresoever it pleased Him, "all were filled with wrath" (ch. iv. 22, 28). Swayed by feeling, and not governed by truth, how very fickle is the human heart. But rejection could not stem the outflow of grace, though the manifest unbelief and hardness of heart bayed it back into His bosom in measure. God was amongst men in sovereign goodness, and would act according to that sovereignty. Was it not man's responsibility to recognize both the goodness and the source from whence such could exclusively come?

Teaching, preaching, alleviating pain and suffering, setting prisoners free from Satan's bondage, He verily "went about doing good." But with what acceptance? With what practical effect? His woes pronounced upon the cities wherein most of His mighty works were performed (Matth. xi. 20.) told the sad tale of impending judgment on account of grace rejected and mercy spurned, with the repetition once again that God was refused in the Person of His Sent One, the Son of His love.

But be it so; did it appear as though little had been

accomplished? a few simple folk, babes they are called, neither wise nor prudent according to this world's reckoning, His immediate following—what then? Satan would finally be vanquished, and He shall see fruit of the travail of His soul; for God will give suited answer to His perfect ways and work, though viewing the then-present results of His labours what failure there seemed: strength spent for naught and labour in vain (Isa. xlix). However, reposing in the perfectness of His Father's will, He recognises His sovereignty and bows in submission before Him as the great Possessor and Disposer of all things: "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." The sentence was in no sense the production of overwhelming sorrow working within compelling utterance. Rejoicing in spirit, He gives expression to that word. The work was His; results were God's.

What a glorious picture of submission in view of His unrequited toil from man, and surely in the consideration of it every servant can find food for contemplation. All around rise notes of despondency. Much is done, little seems accomplished. Failure seems writ large on this effort and that endeavour. Indifference to the soul-stirring words of the Christ of God still reigns, and it abides true that whilst "publicans and harlots" are here and there bowed in conviction by His word, the many still refuse even that witness and repent not that they might believe (Matt. xxi. 32). But "the disciple is not above His Master, nor the servant above His Lord," and as submission to the supreme will characterised the Lord Jesus, must not every servant follow in the same path? The Lord make this consideration fruitful to us all.

We pass now to the third point, and the Cross with its depths comes before us. Christ's ministry of love culminates

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there, as there also shines out the perfectness of His submission. Satan's gospel of "Pity Thyself" had been preached to Him on His way to it; but, fully aware of all that was before Him, no self-consideration could persuade Him to abandon what was involved in doing the will of God, and at last Gethsemane is reached, where anticipatively the woe of the Cross is passed through.

Kneeling, He pours out His soul in earnest entreaty. Oh solemn the moment! His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death; for He alone could measure the bitterness of being in that place. Still, God's will should be supreme. If there was the possibility of that cup passing, then His plea was that it might, but "Nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done." A never-to-be-forgotten moment was that, and though we cannot know what being in it meant, yet the sorrow we can note, and the perfect submission following, and discern once more the same principle governing His action when suffering and death were immediately before Him. In how full a way He submitted Himself to God. Our souls are constrained to cry—

"O patient, spotless One,
Our hearts in meekness train,
To bear Thy yoke, and learn of Thee,
That we may rest obtain."

May the spirit of this be the constant breathing of our souls, and our endeavour the "one thing" of the Apostle Paul: "One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 13). This is the energy of a heart animated by the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. May it be ours.

H. F.

THE KINGS OF JUDAH.

ASA (2 Chron. xv.-xvi.).

OUTWARD persecution from the world or the Church, or trials from within, in the home, are intended by the Lord to waken up the sleeping affections of His people. The address to Smyrna following on Ephesus teaches us this. We may gather similar instruction in the Divine record as to king Asa and others of the kings of Judah.

Dependence on God is ever the proper state for His people to be in—it matters not though all be bright within and prosperous without, dependence on God, living by His word and prayer, must be kept up in order to our going straight forward, moulded and directed by His will.

The prophet of God directs the king of Judah to the sad state the nation of Israel had been in “for a long season,” but when they sought the Lord He was found of them. He encourages them therefore to be strong. Their hands need not be weak, for their work would be rewarded. This exhortation was listened to by the king, and he at once sets to work to put away the abominations out of all the lands of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities he had taken from Mount Ephraim. The conduct of the king was effective in gathering not only Judah and Benjamin, but the strangers out of Ephraim and Manasseh when they saw that God was with him, and they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and all their soul, and proclaimed the penalty of death on all who would not seek Jehovah the God of Israel. The king also removed Maachah, his grandmother, from being queen, but the high places were not taken away. It is added, however, that “the heart of Asa was perfect all his days.”

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Temptations for the king are, however, not distant. Baasha, king of Israel, came up against him. Instead of crying to Jehovah, as in the case of Zerah the Ethiopian, and putting his trust in Him, his mind turns to Benhadad, the king of Syria, and he sends silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the Lord, telling him, "There is a league between me and thee as there was between my father and thy father;" "go break thy league with the king of Israel that he may depart from me."

There was no continuity in Asa—there is none in us. Asa had learned his lesson in the matter of the Ethiopian king very imperfectly. At that time he had relied on Jehovah, and in his extremity had cried unto God and said, "Jehovah, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Jehovah our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O Jehovah, Thou art our God; *let not man prevail against Thee*" (xiv. 11). It was no vain thing thus to cry, but unless dependence is maintained a victory, however great, is followed by notable defeat.

This time it was not a great battle, and Asa laid low by an arrow or a stone. A sad moral disaster befalls him on whose behalf Jehovah had shown Himself strong (9). Benhadad goes against the king of Israel, and the pressure on the king of Judah is relieved—but it is defeat. The king of Israel, no doubt, departed from Asa, but at a cost too much for him. He lost the almighty arm of Jehovah as his Protector and Saviour. How often we find ourselves, when a difficulty or trial presses on us, considering how we can get out of the trouble, not enquiring how we got *into* it, and what the reason may be that God has allowed it. We come short of having to do with God in the matter.

This humbling step of Asa's brings the prophet Hanani

with a word of rebuke. He reminds him of how Jehovah had hearkened to him when he prayed and did deliver him out of his danger with Zerah. He tells him that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards Him. This thoughtful love is for all, whether king or peasant. He espouses the cause of the contrite in heart, of the one who trembles at His word. Poor Asa had forgotten the words he had used when Zerah well nigh had overwhelmed him: "*Let not man prevail against Thee.*" How often repeated in Christian times has this declension of Asa's been! Asa is told "he had done foolishly;" therefore from henceforth he would have wars.

Still further does the king fall. Asa was wroth with the seer on account of his faithfulness, and put him in a prison house, and also oppressed some of the people the same time. He is angry at being rebuked for his forgetfulness of Jehovah and His benefits. Have we never known such a condition in ourselves? The word of God has come home to us in the Spirit and has cut us deeply—at the first hearing of it we have been angry. We would not allow that we were angry with God. Oh no! Our anger fell on the servant, but in reality it was with the Lord we were in conflict. Our God sees all, and as has been said, "He has a long look out," and He bears with us, and breaks us down so that we thank Him for that which so sadly stirred up anger within us.

Alas! Asa's heart is not recalled to Jehovah so that he might depart in peace. He is overtaken by exceeding great disease. That does not turn his heart to God, for we read "in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians"—to an arm of flesh which does not avail him. Still while there is much of warning for us in his history as well as

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encouragement from his earlier days, no doubt he was one with whom God had wrought in sovereign grace, and with his and our Saviour we shall find him.

D. S.

"IT IS NOT IN MAN TO DIRECT HIS STEPS."

It is, indeed, natural to us to wish and to plan, and it is merciful of the Lord to disappoint our plans, and to cross our wishes. For we cannot be safe, much less happy, but in proportion as we are weaned from our own wills, and made simply desirous of being directed by His guidance. This truth (when we are enlightened by His Word) is sufficiently familiar to the judgment; but we seldom learn to reduce it into practice without being trained awhile in the school of disappointment.

The schemes we form look so plausible and convenient, that when they are broken we are ready to say, what a pity! We try again, and with no better success; we are grieved, and perhaps angry, and plan another, and so on; at length, in a course of time, experience and observation begin to convince us that we are not more able than we are worthy to choose aright for ourselves. Then the Lord's invitation to cast our cares upon Him, and His promises to take care of us, appear valuable: and when *we* have done planning, *His* plan in our favour gradually opens, and He does more and better for us than we could either ask or think.

I can hardly recollect a single plan of mine, of which I have not since seen reason to be satisfied, that had it taken place in season and circumstances just as I proposed, it would, humanly speaking, have proved my ruin; or at least it would have deprived me of the greater good the Lord had

designed for me. We judge of things by their present appearances, but the Lord sees them in their consequences; if we could do so likewise, we should be perfectly of His mind; but as we cannot, it is an unspeakable mercy that He will manage for us, whether we are pleased with His management or not; and it is spoken of as one of His heaviest judgments, when He gives any person or people up to the ways of their own hearts, and to walk after their own counsels (Hos. iv. 17; Rom. i. 24).

Indeed, we may well admire His patience towards us. If we were blind, and reduced to desire a person to lead us, and should yet pretend to dispute with him, and direct him at every step, we would probably soon weary him, and provoke him to leave us to find the way by ourselves if we could. But our gracious Lord is long-suffering and full of compassion; He bears with our forwardness, yet He will take methods both to instruct and to humble us, and bring us to a confession that He is wiser than we.

The great and unexpected benefit He intends for us, by all the discipline we meet with, is to break down our wills, and bring them into subjection to His. So far as we attain to this, we are out of the reach of disappointment; for when the will of God can please us, we shall be pleased every day, and from morning to night: I mean with respect to His good ordering. Oh the happiness of such a life! I have an idea of it; I hope I am aiming at it, but surely I have not attained it. I profess to believe that one thing is needful and sufficient, and yet my thoughts are prone to wander after a hundred more. If it be true, that the light of His countenance is better than life, why am I solicitous about anything else? If He be all-sufficient, and gives me liberty to call Him mine, why do I go a-begging to creatures for help? If He be about my path and bed; if the smallest

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as well as the greatest events in which I am concerned, are under His immediate direction ; if the very hairs of my head are numbered ; then my care (any farther than a care to walk in the paths of His precepts) must be useless and needless, yea, burdensome to myself and dishonourable to my confession. Let us cast down the load we are unable to carry, and, if the Lord be our Shepherd, refer all and trust all to Him. Let us endeavour to live to Him and for Him to-day, and be glad that to-morrow, with all that is behind it, is in His hands.

It is storied of Pompey, that when his friends would have dissuaded him from putting to sea in a storm, he answered, “ It is necessary for me to sail, but it is not necessary for me to live ! ” O pompous speech, in Pompey’s sense ! He was full of the idea of his own importance, and would rather *have died than have taken a step beneath his supposed dignity*. But it may be accommodated with propriety to a believer’s case. It becomes us to say, It is not necessary for me to be rich, or what the world accounts wise ; to be healthy, or admired by my fellow-worms ; to pass through life in a state of prosperity and outward comfort ;—these things may be, or they may be otherwise, as the Lord in His wisdom shall appoint ; but it is necessary for me to be humble and spiritual, to seek communion with God, to adorn my profession of the Gospel, and to yield submissively to His disposal, in whatever way, whether of service or suffering, He shall be pleased to call me to glorify Him in the world.

It is not necessary for me to live long, but highly expedient that whilst I do live I should live to him. Here, then, I would bound my desires ; and here, having His Word both for my rule and my warrant, I am secured from asking amiss. Let me have His presence and His Spirit, wisdom to know my calling, and opportunities with faithful-

ness to improve them ; and as to the rest, Lord help me to say, What Thou wilt, when Thou wilt, and how Thou wilt.

—*J. Newton (1776).*

THE TRUE SERVANT.

“ *O Lord, truly I am thy servant.* ”—Ps. cxvi. 16.

Oh, not to fill the mouth of fame
My longing soul is stirred ;
Oh, give me a diviner name :
Call me Thy servant, Lord !
Sweet title that delighteth me,—
Rank earnestly implored ;
Oh, what can reach the dignity
Of Thy true servants, Lord ?
No longer would my soul be known
As self-sustained and free :
Oh, not mine own ! Oh, not mine own !
Lord, I belong to Thee !
In each aspiring burst of prayer
Sweet leave my soul would ask
Thine every burden, Lord, to bear,
To do Thine every task.
Forever, Lord, Thy servant choose,—
Nought of Thy claim abate !
The glorious name I would not lose,
Nor change the sweet estate.
In life, in death, on earth, in heaven,
No other name for me !
The same sweet style and title given
Through all eternity. —*T. H. Gill.*

THE FOLLY OF UNBELIEF.

“THE Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom : but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God ” (1 Cor. i. 22-24). The Jews looked for a display of power superhuman in connection with what professed to be of God, “a sign” to meet the unbelief of their hearts. The Greeks, or Gentile nations, brought all to the bar of human reason, and that which did not appeal to their intellect they rejected, in unbelief, as unworthy of consideration. “To them which are called,” Christ answers the requirements of both, being “the power of God and the wisdom of God.” But here faith is in exercise, and wonders and miracles are signs confirming it.

When the Lord was on earth in their midst, the Jews, clamouring constantly for signs to warrant their belief in Him, were unconvinced and unsatisfied though the lepers were cleansed, the dead raised, blind eyes opened, and lame ones made to walk. Doubt was not dispelled nor the self-satisfaction of the Pharisee exchanged for the self-aborrence of the publican at the mighty power of God displayed in their villages and cities. Faith is not begotten in the heart by signs and wonders, nor by intellectual reasonings. To those who “believed in His name when they saw the miracles which He did ” (Jno. ii. 23, 24), Jesus did not commit Himself. All hearts were open to Him. He knew what was in man. Faith is not of ourselves : it is the gift of God (Eph. ii. 8).

And faith appropriates the signs and displays of wisdom which marked the pathway of the Lord Jesus, and rejoices in them as bearing testimony to His Person and His works

as approved of God (Acts ii. 22). But unbelief refused all this, and still sought, through Scribe, Pharisee, Sadducee, and people, for a sign. Such seekers were "an evil and adulterous generation," demanding where they ought to have submitted.

What sorrow this seeking caused the Lord who can tell? But the record of Mark viii. 12, "He sighed deeply in His spirit," tells us something of it. The heart sorrow of the "Man of Sorrows" are contained in the words. It was the time of His rejection, and although He could give thanks that the Father had seen good to hide from wise and prudent and reveal to babes, yet that left unaffected His grief at the loss unbelief entailed on those to whom He had come in pure, unsought love and grace.

For that it hindered the outflowing of the full measure of His grace upon them, the words found in Mark vi. 5, plainly intimate. Well might He marvel because of their unbelief, for though miracle follow miracle, and sign succeed sign, yet no conviction results. Many signs unrecorded were wrought, as John tells us (ch. xx.), and the Lord could say, "The same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me" (ch. v. 34, 36). Refused then, the record of them is nevertheless given "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name" (ch. xx. 30, 31).

Thus faith is strengthened and confirmed as the wonders of the Lord's pathway, with the light of the Word thrown upon them, are mused over. They were the credentials which should have commanded and then confirmed faith in those to whom He came. But "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not," and now "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. xi. 25); and this on account of their unbelief.

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The first act of power at the wedding feast in Cana, how that "manifested forth His glory" (Jno. ii. 11); and Christ's last act ere the cross, performed in Gethsemane's Garden upon Malchus, how eloquent with testimony to His Person and grace. The malicious envy of those with whom the servant of the high priest was, formed no hindrance to this act of power and grace, and His words, "Suffer ye thus far," declare the tenderness of His heart. Faith views all with delight, and standing back, beholding the majesty of grace in the act, amazingly wonders and adores. For even the cross, with all its sorrow, its shame, and the curse looming before Him, did not exclude such a work, upon such an one, at such a time. Oh! the glories of the Son of Man. Let faith scrutinise every detail. The willing obedience He showed in submitting Himself, the love to His enemies, His pain at the action of Judas, the gentle reproof for the disciple, all combine to set Him in His excellence before our souls.

But unbelief is unmoved by all this power and the grace which accompanied it, and the wickedness of men's hearts is unquelled. The cross heads up their iniquity and unbelief, but unfolds still further the mystery of His love and grace. The sign of Jonah the prophet, promised to those who demanded signs, was given, but was all unheeded, and how true the words became, "neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (Luke xvi. 31). Ninevites shall yet condemn them for their unbelief. Faith perceives in Him a greater than Jonah, a wiser than Solomon.

Signs, miracles and wonders there were, then, wrought by the Lord Jesus as testimony to the people of God. They were intended for faith's apprehension, and to confirm it, as we learn from the Lord's message to John the Baptist (Luke vii. 20-23). The Lord give grace that we might

consider His works and wait upon His words ; and, having the witness within because of faith, and knowing the record which God has given of His Son (1 John v. 9, 10), be found growing in intimacy with, and appreciation of, the blessed Son of God.

A. E. C.

LETTER OF INTEREST.

MAY the Lord be with you to strengthen you for the work you have taken in hand. It is not, dear brother, ordinary work ; and ordinary grace, so to speak, will not be sufficient for you to stand *for God* in it. Doubtless you have before this proved that the mere circumstances of being a missionary will not bring grace and devotedness to your soul. No, dear brother, we may, profess or undertake anything ; but it is only as Jesus giveth and strengtheneth our souls to keep what He giveth, that we shall be fit to undertake anything for God. I pray that you may know what it is to be much alone with Him, and to have your soul so filled with His gracious presence that you may be enabled from your heart to say, " Lord, it is enough " ; and that you may know the joy of undertaking any little thing to which you put your hand, as in service to the Lord and Master.

Ah ! dear brother, it is comparatively easy to be *doing*, but it is a great thing *to do unto the Lord*. To set the Lord before us, from our uprising till we lie down to rest again—this is true service and true blessedness. May you have grace to follow after this. You know if we would make any attainment we should seek great things. See Coloss. iii. 1-3. But, dear brother, seek them on your knees. Oh ! struggle with every hindrance to prayer ; and there is nothing in which we meet with greater hindrances : for, as the little

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hymn, I believe, truly says, "Satan trembles when he sees The weakest saint upon his knees."

I would especially urge upon you this waiting upon God, for anything touching your own personal holiness and devotedness, as well as the service in which you are engaged; and be not discouraged, but go on waiting still upon the Lord, until He arise on your behalf.

There has been great study of the Word, and consequent knowledge among brethren; but it is prayer that gives a sweet savour to knowledge, and that gives power to the Word in us; and without this we have seen how poor and weak it is, either to keep ourselves in the hour of temptation, or to minister truly to the souls of others. I say especially to the souls;—I know that it will fill our hearts with notions, but notions are not Christ, and it is with Him, and out of His fulness that we need to be filled. Dear brother *pray, pray, pray!* and the Lord answer you, and make your soul as a watered garden, bringing forth fruit profitable to others, and abounding to God's glory.

December, 1842.

—Writer unknown.

John xvii. 13.—When the Lord says He tells us these things that we might have His joy fulfilled in ourselves, did He really mean so? I believe it. I believe that the Lord meant us to have His joy fulfilled in ourselves. If you tell me that we are poor feeble vessels to have it, that is most true; but He did not speak thus. The possession of life is not power. Power is in Christ, and in Christ alone; for the character of the new man is dependent and obedient. If you say, I have life from God, and therefore I have got power, it is not true; but if you say, I have not got power, it is not true; but if you say, I have got life from God, but

I have got the temptations of Satan and the world, and all that can seduce me away from the range and exercise of this life, and you say, "Father, keep me, I want to be kept," then there will be power. The fact that the flesh is in me is no reason that I am to walk after it. The power is not in the fact that we have the life, but in exercised dependence on Christ (Phill. iv. 13).

J. N. D.

"GOD, MY EXCEEDING JOY."—(Psalm xliii.)

PASS, time, with all thy fleeting joys,
My heart rests not in thee ;
In the clear sunshine of God's smile,
Is joy alone for me !

In gilded haunts where sin allures,
Fleet for pleasure run ;
But my exceeding joy's not there,
And so such paths I shun.

For God is my exceeding joy
Who fills eternity !
Here rests my soul in cloudless peace,
Love, joy, and purity.

Explore the realms of endless bliss,
Heaven's treasures count them o'er,
Unsearchable the glory there—
But God is this, and more.

And here where sin and sorrow are,
And eyes with tears grow dim,
Filled with the fulness of my God
I lose myself in Him !

Yes, He alone, my soul, supplies
The gladness of thy joy ;
Rest at *His* heart, drink in *His* love—
Earth's streams contain alloy.

H. F.

CONSOLATION AND GUIDANCE.

(2 Timothy ii. 19.)

It is but natural for the heart to cast about for some consolation in a day of disquietude, and for guidance in a day of abounding difficulty. Happy, indeed, is that soul that gets its consolation and guidance from a source divine. The comfort that comes from man is often as evanescent as the morning dew, and the guidance given proves totally inadequate to meet the deep exercises of a soul in earnest before God. Not from the depths of human wisdom are the saints of God to obtain their guidance, but from His all-sufficient Word, which is given "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (ch. iii. 17).

The Apostle Paul was warning his son in the faith about the departure that even then had commenced to set in. Formal Christianity was gradually superseding real, vital Christianity, and there were those, who, whilst possessing a form of godliness, in practice denied the power thereof. "From such," the Word says, "turn away" (ch. iii. 5).

But in the Scripture immediately before us, we find mention made of a *foundation* marked by stability, because God's foundation; and the inscription on the seal wherewith it is sealed is deciphered for us. The writing on it is twofold, setting out on the one side the divine aspect of truth, the blessed security of those who are the Lord's—"The Lord knoweth them that are His;" whilst on the other side is found the corresponding responsibility of every one naming the Lord's name. It is incumbent upon every one of such to be separate from evil—"Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

Here, then, as we note the inseparable connection between the electing love and perfect knowledge of our God, and the holiness of walk that is alone consistent with such, we can most assuredly find both consolation for our hearts and guidance for our feet in these days.

But what is "the foundation"? In the immediate context we read of some whose words were subversive of God's Word, and "who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is passed already." Then comes the connecting word, "Nevertheless," with the assurance following that "the foundation of God abideth firm." Is it not then abstractly The Truth, the whole revealed mind of God, wherein is found the perfect unfolding of what God and Christ are, and what He has done? "The word of our God shall stand for ever." It is a rock that cannot be moved, and hence the exhortation of Jude—"Building yourselves up on your most holy faith" (20). The declension of those mentioned before affected some, and their faith was overthrown. They were forsaking what God had laid; "nevertheless," spite of the instability of some who professedly rested upon it, "the foundation of God abideth firm." That is not affected by the unstable sayings and doings of men, though ill consequences follow. One here and another there turn aside; but, blessed be God, His foundation abideth; and though renounced by some and denounced by others, it stands firm as the everlasting hills, and the puny efforts of faithless men to move it are as vain as endeavouring to overturn those hills with a needle. An insecure foundation must render insecure whatever is erected upon it, but firmness marks what our God has laid and our souls here rest in peace. The traditions of men are ever altering. God's foundation abideth firm.

Revealing, then, as it does, what God is—both love and

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light, we turn to consider the seal of the great Architect. Cheering must the fact be to every true saint of God that "the Lord knoweth them that are His." In a day of general decline, often spoken of as a day of progress and ascension in the spiritual scale, when the world has its religion, the real and unreal, those merely professors, who assume the form of godliness having by the knowledge of the Lord Jesus escaped the *pollutions* of the world, are, from a human standpoint, hopelessly mixed with true saints of God (2 Pet. ii. 20).

Have any the ability to discern all who are born of God? But the Lord knows His own. Not those who say "Lord, Lord," merely will find acceptance with Him. Not those who are simply actively engaged in doing what are called good works will receive Christ's approbation, or be known of Him—"Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you," and this after they have declared, "Lord, Lord, have we not . . . in Thy name done many wonderful works?" But whose will had they *done*? Whose will had they *ignored*? (Matth. vii. 21-23).

Ah! the Lord *knoweth* them that are His. Sweet word for every true heart, a part surely of that everlasting consolation and good hope through grace that is being continually ministered unto those He knows. Hidden in obscurity, amidst much that tells of darkness rather than light, they are yet known on high. That word, uttered by One who knew to desponding Elijah, comes afresh to the heart and mind: "I have left Me," says Jehovah "seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (1 Kings xix. 18). Thus the blessed God shows that He marks every individual true in heart to Him, though not identified with, nor known to, the prophet of the Lord.

He will recognise the fruit of His own grace, and will yet make them manifest, displaying every one in glory. Precious words on God's seal, setting us more firmly on God's foundation. Every unreal soul will be exposed in "that day," but not one of His own shall be lost, for "the Lord knoweth them that are His." Glory be to Him for that countless throng that shall declare the worth of the Lord Jesus throughout all eternity.

But grace imposes responsibilities as well as conferring privileges; and on turning God's seal we read of what is incumbent upon *every one* who names the name of the Lord. In its scope, then, it embraces every one professedly a Christian. Could it be less wide? Responsibility in such a matter must necessarily devolve upon all who acknowledge the Lordship of Christ. All do not obey, for from some the saint has to purge himself.

Now iniquity (or unrighteousness) is what is contrary to God's Word; righteousness is what is consonant with it. To possess Truth and yet act contrary to it, is to hold it in unrighteousness, a sin of which God's ancient people were guilty (Rom. i. 18). To reject God's Word is iniquity; to subvert the order of God's House is overthrowing the authority of God, and is rebellion; and so when evils prevail, and systems are built up contrary to the express Word of God, the godly man has the way from such shown him. The presence of pious men in any position does not of itself constitute such position right; nay, but if the system be wrong, their presence will give vitality to it and perpetuate the wrong upon which it is founded. To love the saints is commanded us; but here again God has pronounced for us: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments (1 John v. 2).

"Depart from iniquity" is, then, His Word; and where does Scripture reveal to us the way back to it? The rather it lays down that to build again the things once destroyed is to make oneself a transgressor (Gal. ii. 18). Those who name Christ's name, must not associate it with iniquity; so none are permitted to connect His name or presence with any form of unrighteousness. It must not be allowed to appear as though His sanction was given to such. That is an evil against which Scripture guards, and hence the imperative injunction here recorded. For, bear in mind, the question is not of recognising or owning saints, but of permitting God to be supreme in heart and conscience. Obedience is thus the necessary requisite, and plainly truth not feelings, God not the saints, must govern us. To leave Him out of this and take counsel with our own hearts is to court disaster.

Considered soberly, then, this precious seal would point the way to deliverance from varied exercises respecting various evils; and a ready obedience rendered to the urgent word we are considering, to which God calls special attention by putting it on His seal, would effect deliverance from those evils. Here are maintained what is fully consistent with God's holiness and heart, making, as it does, for testimony to what the Lord is, and for the truest blessing of His own. Spiritual discernment and deepest joy are lost in fellowship with evil. Does it seem otherwise? Verily the words of our Lord here apply—"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John vii. 24). Facts and feelings both must be reviewed in the light of the Word.

And again, this Scripture raises no question of condonation of the evil; it simply enjoins *separation* from it. But clearly to *condemn* iniquity, and yet remain in association with it, is, after all, to *condone* it, and to be found guilty of disobedience to this plain injunction. And it is well to

remember that by obeying God's Word no one converts real ignorance into wickedness, though that Word "compels separation from many truly His. Such are known to Him and the soul finds relief in glorifying Him in praises for every blood-bought one; but, we repeat, the issue is not of recognising saints,—“The Lord knoweth them that are His,”—but of permitting God to be supreme in heart and conscience.

And the application of this principle, not needed in Pentecostal times, but in days of decline and apostacy, maintains a truly divine unity; for God Himself defines the position of every one professing godliness. That this will be in perfect accord with Matt. xviii. 20, is apparent, for those found round the name of Christ do not gather themselves, but “*are gathered*” there. The act is a divine one, and not any human agreement. Hearts actuated by the same divine principles find themselves divinely together.

So GOD Himself enjoins *departure from iniquity*, and then gives the suited instruction to regulate our walk: “Follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.” May we, then, strengthen ourselves in the principles of God's Word, and whilst enjoying what it teaches may we be found obeying what it commands. The exhortation sounds forth now: “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” Shall it not be our endeavour, spite of all Satan's devices, to listen to that voice divine and be numbered with those overcomers?

“The Lord knoweth them that are His.” Blessed assurance! “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” Solemn injunction!

H. F.

THE FATHER'S CARE.

To-day look up and trust,
God is at hand ;
He cares and watches now
O'er all the land.

Distant and near alike
His eye sweeps o'er ;
Guiding, directing all
From shore to shore.

Planets and worlds unknown
He holds above ;
Yet thou He'll ne'er forget,
Child of His love.

Dearer art thou to Him
Than ought beside ;
Did He not spare for thee
His Son, who died ?

Who to the Father's heart
Shall count that cost—
His Son delivered up
To save the lost ?

A sacrifice for sin,
Offered for thee,
Sinful, undone and lost—
The spotless He !

Who to the Father's heart
Shall say *how dear*
The one the blood hath bought
And brought so near !

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1 Corin. xi. 28, 31, 32.

Then is it nought to Him,
When sore and faint
Thy heart, in life's rough way,
O weary saint?

Look up! for His great heart
Yearns over thee;
Trust! and His saving power
Thou then shalt see.

To-morrow is with Him,
Bear not its load;
Grace for to-day He gives,
Rest thou in God!

Lift up thy heart in praise
To Him above,
For, though His power's so great,
Greater His love!

A. S.

1 CORIN. XI. 28, 31, 32.

"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

THESE immensely important words are preceded by a record given from heaven by the Lord to His servant Paul as to His supper (20). The Lord—ere He went to the cross, and for ever there took out of all symbolic form what was first enacted by divine command in Egypt, and then again in that upper room at Jerusalem—proceeded to give them His own supper.

We read "As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and

blessed it and brake it, and gave to the disciples and said, Take eat; this is my body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, saying, Drink ye all of it" (Matt. xxvi. 26, 27). To Paul, as we have said, the Lord from heaven gave it afresh. It was a feast *for a remembrance of Him*. It was also "an announcement of the Lord's death until He come." This last statement is made by Paul speaking by the Spirit of God.

The intimation of this feast is recorded in the most touching way for the heart.

It was on the night of His betrayal that He sat among His disciples and spake to them of His love about to manifest itself in His giving Himself for them that God might be glorified about sin. The Son of God dying to reconcile enemies to God! (Rom. v. 10). Dying—for His friends too! (John xv. 13, 14). Dying—shedding His blood that there might be a righteous ground laid to carry us over the awful breach sin had made, and in righteousness introduce us into the glory where He was, that we might behold Him in it (John xvii. 24).

But my special object is not to plant myself in the presence of the most wondrous moment in the past or in the coming eternity and let the mighty and changeless depths of divine love roll into my heart, but to call special attention to the deeply important words with which I began.

Conduct, in this wonderful day of grace, flows from relationship formed and made known as existing by the mighty action of the grace of God.

These Corinthians had been taken out of great depths of sin, but they were "sanctified, they were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." They were told also that their bodies were temples of the Holy Ghost, and that they had been bought with a price (1 Corin. vi, 9, 10, 19, 20). The Apostle lays hold of these

mighty words as a lever to work upon the hearts of the Corinthians in order that they might be stirred up to consider how carelessly and sinfully they had been walking.

They are exhorted to "examine each one himself, and so let him eat"; "Prove himself," and see if the evil nature was being or had been allowed to work. The presence of sin *in* us, is not prohibitive of our partaking of the supper. But allowed, unjudged activity of it is.

If I judge *myself*, sin is not active. If I suffer in the flesh sin is not working; it has ceased activity for the time (1 Peter iv. 1). I am reckoning myself to be dead unto it. I am carrying out in practice the fact that I have died with Christ (Rom. vi. 2. 8). Judging myself is not the same as judging my actions. Judging myself prevents the acting of sin. Judging myself saves from the necessity of being judged by my brethren. Such action calls for constant daily remembrance in order that Satan may not succeed, by temptation, in causing us to fall. We have the Lord telling us to "watch and pray lest we enter into temptation" (Matt. xiv. 38). Again we are exhorted to "continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. iv. 2).

The exhortations we find in the Scriptures given us since the Holy Ghost came, support a power in us which has given us ability to perform what is enjoined. Our model or pattern to judge by is Christ (1 Peter ii. 21), and our power is the Spirit of God (Rom. viii. 13).

Christ hath suffered for our evil doing (1 Peter iii. 18). We, by judging ourselves, are thrown on dependence on the Lord, and are thus kept from falling into sin, and the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ is saved from dishonour. When self-judgment is wanting our brethren have to judge us for our evil ways, so that the holiness of the Lord's house may be maintained. This in turn becomes chastening from

the Lord that we should not be *condemned* with the world.

Often also the Lord's hand falls upon His erring people. They have been wandering in heart from Him long, it may be, ere it was manifested by wrong conduct.

Ecclesiastical correctness is good, but watchfulness over our hearts wherein are the issues of life must be maintained in the first place.

There is no legality in this, but what the Scriptures of truth in one form or another abound with.. Let us not then forget that if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged.

D. S.

SIN AND SORROW.

STEPHEN, an honoured instrument, is introduced to us in Pentecostal times as truly serving the interests of our adorable Lord both privately and publicly, and coming into greater prominence in a time of early trouble—an element never absent from those who will live godly. Was not the lowly Nazarene “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”? The One who could teach, “Blessed are they that mourn,” must needs be a mourner Himself. How choice a servant was He! an infallible Teacher in whose spirit was no guile; whose preaching and practice were alike harmonious; and One who could invite the slow of heart to believe both from the standpoint of word and work.

Did we go back to the days of prophets, judges, patriarchs, Abel, we should conclude that sorrow, suffering, affliction, were not limited to any dispensation, but rather have their measure and variety in individuals, families, and nations. God's servants suffer, and verily those who serve sin and Satan are not exempted. And for these latter, time, with

its ever-varying scenes, will not end the dismal wail and mournful woe—suffering goes on beyond the confines of human history. Will there not be a keenness to the character of suffering for those who, in unbelief, chose their good things when a people of faith—a Lazarus (Luke xvi.)—was in affliction before the bosom opened, so to speak, for comfort and rest? for it could not be found here. For a people outwardly near, yet having no link by faith with the living God, to live in ease and indifference and to die in unbelief, is to enter on suffering such as never can be measured, and can but gain in its intensity and volume after the reckoning time comes, and a faithful recompense for the deeds done in the body has been received.

In an intensive way the Spirit puts the matter to the now wide range of profession. After reading Heb. i. there goes on the reasoning that is rational and reasonable in chap. ii. : “For this reason we should give heed more abundantly to the things we have heard, lest in any way we should slip away. For if the Word which was spoken by angels was firm, and every transgression and disobedience received just retribution, how shall we escape if we have been negligent of so great salvation” (New Trans.).

There is something very solemn about suffering, especially when it is the righteous who suffer—how marvellous that Christ should suffer! God’s elect are not to take as strange the furnace or the fire of persecution allowed for us in grace. To share in Christ’s sufferings, to be associated with contempt and reproach for His name, is honour conferred from highest courts. An end will come to this disorder, and then glory where He is and no pain, tears, or sorrows are, will be the good part for those who receive ill along with confessing and owning Him here. We have not even to wait for the home-going for some features of rest; for His

yoke is easy and His burden light ; and rest as already found coupled with the balm of a conscience purged is a priceless boon to possess while labouring to enter the rest that remains to the people of God.

The foregoing should indicate for us that suffering is by no means new or peculiar to this period of grace when God, by His Word and Spirit through His servants, is pre-eminently working among Gentiles ; and whether we view it in the first or twentieth century, it commenced and it continues through that offence so grave of disobedience to God's Word. Sin is lawlessness. And in looking back over the pages of past days, we read of duly consecrated priests offering strange fire, and of the anger and expressed indignation of the Lord. With the expressive words, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Lev. x. 3), we do well to become versed.

Then again, ponder Num. xv. 27-31 : "And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she-goat of the first year for a sin-offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the Lord, to make an atonement for him ; and it shall be forgiven him. Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them. But the soul that doth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord ; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off ; his iniquity shall be upon him."

We also read, in New Testament times, of sin unpardonable, and view those who lied against the Holy Ghost ; and

further of Saul consenting unto Stephen's death, of the great persecution against the church, of the scattering of the disciples, and the havoc Saul made, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against them (Acts v. 4; viii. i). Saul was "taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous towards God." Much he had that he could boast of (Phil. iii. 4-6). Who could say a word against Saul morally? Who could accuse him of insincerity? In zeal he out-stripped priests and people of his day.

If only a person is sincere in what he believes, will it be all right with such? Alas! how blinding, how deafening, and how hardening is zeal and sincerity when not divinely directed. With what pitifulness would Paul afterwards view his own countrymen in their unbelief, and testify "they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom. x. 2).

The Lord Jesus, the greatest of all sufferers, was yet the most potent Pleader. He would and did plead, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And Stephen, a chosen vessel, yet like His Master, had also false accusers. Men could say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." False witnesses with vehement attestations were not allowed to blanch those cheeks. There was peace and calm within, and the countenance, the testimony, and the prayer tell of suited grace and divine support for the servant in his day. Brief was his request—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," but what nearness to the Master!

How serious all looked. Did prayer avail? Was that of our blessed Lord and His servant Stephen to avail much? Was the case of Saul too far gone for His grace? Must it be termed wilful sin, presumptuous sin, sin that hath never

forgiveness? Let us hear. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Here the Spirit records the character of Saul's sin as that of unbelief. The sacrifice of Christ was needed to procure pardon for the chief of sinners.

It was not for Saul to plead his consistency of life and conduct in keeping with the religion of his fathers. God had a work going forward on earth. Individuals were linked with Christ and were regarded as members of His body. So, "Why persecutest thou Me" was a revelation to that then ignorant, zealous man, and he did his worst in persecuting the Church of God.

Have offenders of this type become extinct because the chief of sinners has been saved? Is there such a thing as sin against light, conscience, revelation, and the Spirit in our day? Yes; but in order not to sin, the fullest enlightenment is open: "If any man will do His will, He shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." It is good to be preserved from blasphemy and every evil work, and this can be by that knowledge which, however, alone saves as it is held in communion with Him who vouchsafed it.

May it be the part of writer and reader to exercise ourselves according as God has made known His mind and will in His Word that the circumcision are such as worship God by the Spirit (Phil. iii. 3), and that the Father must be worshipped in Spirit and in truth (John iv. 23). Viewed in this light we would not simply say how weak is ritualism, but also how wicked. It is a weak and inefficacious; it cannot touch the question of sin. It is wicked as it opposes God, supplying religious forms and thus resisting the truth in a religious way.

When God says, "Give none offence to Jew, Gentile, or Church of God," it is most certainly implied that in His Word directions are to be found for suited behaviour in God's House. May there be true confession of our uneven ways, and earnest enquiry for paths of righteousness for His Name's sake.

W. B.

"WHAT IS THAT TO THEE?"

(John xxi. 18-23).

THE Lord Jesus had just been engaged in openly probing the heart of His disciple Peter to its depths. His profession of love superior to all the other followers of Jesus had broken down in the hour of trial, and as he openly had failed, publicly he should be owned again of his Master, who bestows upon him a line of service that perhaps all but his gracious Lord would have deemed him eminently unsuited for.

But remember that ere this the failure had been judged, and all was open between Master and servant. For private restoration to communion precedes public restoration to labour and loving service. *Alone* Cephas had seen the One he had so openly denied (1 Cor. xv. 5), and here the haste and energy displayed by him to be first on land to greet his Lord, plainly betokened that his conscience had been purged and his heart set at ease. The bitter tears he had shed were not forgotten by that One whose look had called them forth. In His heart grace dwelt, and He had prayed for His erring follower.

And now, having experimentally learned the worthlessness of the flesh, and the inability of the natural man to stand where spiritual power alone availed, Peter is probed to his heart's bottom, and has entrusted to his care the feeding

and shepherding of Christ's sheep and lambs. The Lord likewise reveals the end of his path of service, and shows by what death he should glorify God.

Energetic in disposition, Peter had been accustomed to go whither he would. Impulsive, he spoke and acted without any distrust of himself. But he should yet be old; and then, when infirm and no longer able to boast of natural power nor speak of fleshly courage he should be carried whither he would not. What an ending! Martyrdom awaited him at the close of his career of service, and that not sought—it was a privilege granted—for he should be carried whither he would not. Self, then, was not in it. What a difference from the occasion when he had *doughtily* said, “I will go with Thee to death.” That was to his dishonour; this should be to the glory of God.

But in the meantime, “*follow Me*” was his Master's command. Turning and beholding John, Peter is led to enquire of the Lord as to his career: “Lord, what shall this man do?” an enquiry that elicits from the Lord the words, “What is that to, thee? follow thou Me.” A plain intimation this surely is that the servant's business is individual obedience to his Lord's words. He must not pry into what really constitutes the Lord's prerogative; for He gives to each his service, and to Him each one stands or falls.

Let us, then, briefly follow out three points that are prominent here—the Lord's sovereignty, the servant's business, and what service is.

First then, the Lord is sovereign. His will is supreme. “*If I will*” indicates that, and excludes authoritatively any interference with the Lord's prerogative. It is He who equips His servants; He who sends them forth to do His bidding, and assuredly blesses them in it; and to their Lord

they are directly responsible. Solemn remembrance and yet blessed! The balances will be duly adjusted when He holds them.

Nor does He send all forth to the same service. One goes here, another there; one is equipped for preaching, another for teaching, according to their several abilities, and Christ has the same right to set one to wait as to send another forth to martyrdom. If this were borne in mind, how many seeming difficulties it would explain. Hearts languish over apparently fruitless effort, whilst others appear to be strikingly blessed in their labours. Why so? the question is asked. But that is not a spiritual query, and comes not from hearts that are consciously and contentedly engaged in doing the Master's work. Has not the Lord the right to add His approval where His work is done, or to withhold when His servants enter upon self-appointed spheres and lines of service? Shall David build the Lord a house because he desired to do so, right and good though that desire be, without a word from Him? Shall Jonah dictate to his Lord where he shall speak and what he shall say? Shall John forbid one that casts out devils in his Master's name? Nay; this trenches—and the principle is always true—upon the Lord's sovereign rights, and places the servant in a position not rightly belonging to him. It would, if sanctioned, engender arrogance and pretension amongst men, and independence of, instead of dependence upon, the Lord.

Let each saint but intelligently recognise and gratefully own—for how much each one owes to it!—the sovereignty of the Lord over His servants, and all imitation, clashing, and jealousy would cease; and the recalling to mind that in *“that day”* those that sow and those that reap shall rejoice together, would fill the heart with joy and praise.

For, after all, increase is alone of God, though Paul planted and Apollos watered (1 Cor. iii. 6).

Then, secondly, is it not obvious that the servants business is to walk and act in obedience to the word of Christ? “Follow Me” was the order addressed to Peter, and “Follow thou Me” is the peremptory reiteration of it when he addresses his enquiry about John’s path to the Lord. And that simple following demands the energy of the renewed heart and mind. In this there is scope for the display of true spiritual power. “Follow *thou* Me” shows how intensely individual is *this* “serving the Lord Christ.” The soul is put in direct relationship to Christ as Lord, and is to Him alone responsible. This makes for true independence of conduct, and excludes imitation, without in any sense calling for forgetfulness of what is involved in being “members one of another.” “Follow *thou* Me” shuts out creatures as objects to be followed, but brings Christ alone forward as the one object of pursuit. If we know these things, verily happy are we if we do them.

We pass to the third point, and define true service as obedience to the Master’s bidding, whatever that may be. The principle enunciated of old laid down plainly that obedience is devotion of the highest type, for it sanctifies the Lord in the heart, and glorifies Him in outward act. Was king Saul serving his Lord or himself when he interpreted according to his own thought the order given to him? The answer—“To obey is better than sacrifice” and its sequel (1 Sam. xv) showed that it was not the Lord he had sanctified or served.

And how very liable are we all to this very error—of interpreting instead of obeying the Master’s behests ; or, on the other hand, we only discern the Lord’s will in our own or kindred activities. But who, then, is foremost—the Lord

or ourselves? Peter's shepherding and John's tarrying were both in the line of the Lord's will. He has varied spheres for His own, and not all public by any means. From one He withholds the activities of work, and surely in submissively and uncomplainingly moving on in the appointed, if humble sphere, true service is rendered to Him who is, after all, above all human instrumentality even though He deigns to use such in His service. Devotion is not measured by noise, nor success in service by the crowd that follows the preacher.

Milton the poet, in a beautiful little sonnet on his blindness, reasons as to whether he would be held responsible for "day-labour, light denied," and first deduces the truth that "Who best bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best" for this is obedience; and then concludes that "They also serve who only stand and wait." If Christ sets them in that attitude how real the service to truly occupy it!

It has been observed that whilst in the heart there may be the truest desire to be used of the Lord, He may decree differently. "Well, a man who holds his tongue when Christ tells him to do so, is glorifying Christ more than if he opened his mouth and broke the Master's commandment. There are some of the Lord's people who, by a quiet, holy, consistent manifestation of what the Lord has done for them, glorify Him more than they would do if they went from place to place telling out the gospel in a way that would make the gospel itself obnoxious to those who heard it."

How very true this is. Oh, let us then recognise Christ's sovereign right to direct as He pleases. That will mean seeking His will; and, in the sphere in which He sets us, may we obedient be, remembering that He marks as service the being still as well as the activities of labour, when it is His will that so it should be.

H. F.

CHRIST IS ALL.

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus (John xii. 3).

While the King sitteth at His table my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof (Song i. 12).

Where two or three are gathered to My Name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. xviii. 20).

THESE Scriptures are connected. A divinely formed chain binds them indissolubly together.

At Bethany the Lord was often to be seen. It was a place where He found a few who welcomed Him. Lazarus who had been raised from the dead was there, and Mary also, who had the thought of His death resting on her spirit. He is all to her. She sees with an eye to which love imparts keenness, the hatred of the elders and chief priests growing, and nothing could be of too great value to bestow on Him, knowing that soon their envy and hatred would end in putting Him to death. Mary belonged to another world. She had been drinking deeply into His mind as she sat at His feet and heard His word. In this atmosphere difficulties disappear and dark sentences get filled up with light. She had been at the grave of her brother and witnessed to His being "the Son of God with power" in Lazarus coming forth from the tomb at His call.

The box of spikenard, "very costly," is broken and His feet anointed. The rude soldiery were soon to pierce His hands and His feet, but Mary anointed His feet with the ointment and then wiped them with her hair. The result was that the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Matthew and Mark tell us that she poured the ointment on His head. She had done both.

He was the King of kings in the heart and purpose of God, and by grace also in her soul; and as He sat at the table *her* spikenard sent forth the smell thereof (Song i. 12). God controls everything that this act might be performed—an act to be made known for a memorial of her wherever the gospel of the kingdom should be preached. How gracious of the Lord to speak such words. She honoured Him. He honours her. He does it before that day when He will be seen in His rightful place and have His saints around Him in His glory. He put His sheltering hand over her, but He Himself goes on as a lamb to the slaughter, the object of every indignity man could level at Him, but the Beloved of the Father full of grace and truth. How every one of Adam's race has need to stand still and look at the One Scripture here writes of. Alas! how few have believed the reports preached by the Holy Ghost who came down from heaven at Pentecost, and who in the long-suffering of God continues to seek the attention of His creatures to His thoughts of His Son who lived and became dead, and who is alive for evermore. Teachers of various schools of thought gain an ear from the needy sons of men, but what is listened to does not satisfy. The soul is left groping after something still to be found. They grope in the dark.

Mary had taken in the wondrous fact that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were in Him. The fulness was pleased to dwell in Him. He was to her, as expressed by

Mary of Magdala, "My Lord." Mary responded in heart and life to those words not then uttered, "Christ is all" (Col. iii. 11).

We repeat, *the* King was in that house at Bethany, and there surrounded by "the excellent of the earth" (alas! there were others also), the spikenard in that little box when poured on His head and His feet, fills the house with its odour. What a thought for Mary that her service was accepted by the King and had already secured a place in the records of His worth which would never be obliterated.

All kings and nobles of the earth would be wise did they make friends with the King as declared in the Psalm (ii. 10-12).

We pass on. The King was put to death, was buried, but He is risen from the dead. He has *sat* down as the purger of sins, on the right hand of the majesty on high. He sits there also as the One who will have His enemies made His footstool (Heb. i. 3, 13).

God's Spirit came down near two thousand years ago, as promised, consequent on Christ's ascension, and He has been gathering to the earth-rejected One, a people to His name. A great deal during these many hundreds of years has been connected by man with Christ's name that He will not own. But Matt. xviii. 20, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," still lives with all its Divine value unimpaired. Many in all ages of Christianity have adored Him, have suffered the fire of His and their enemies, and have passed from "the world's rude scorning," and from the fiery trials the Apostle Peter speaks of, "to the fellowship of home." They have proved His presence, and realised the fragrance of His name. "His name is as ointment poured forth." At the beginning many thousands responded to His name—His fulness filled the

soul, and there came a rushing mighty wind from heaven and it filled all the *house* where they were sitting (Acts ii). Great grace was upon them all. They were satisfied. They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Alas ! soon they began to get wrong and forget who they had in heaven. Their first love began to wane. One thing after another comes on the scene and other ways than what was divinely provided to secure an appearance of order in the House of God. The fragrance of His name gets narrowed in its circle. *It is still for all "His own,"* but His professed people are wanting in the state that allows the King to display Himself as at the beginning. Self-will, change, and a thousand other things develop from the mind of *man*. We have lost sight of the fact that the Christian "has the mind of Christ"—a mind in us which does not originate, but delights in *receiving*, its thoughts from the Head.

Contriteness, brokenness of spirit, self-judgment, are lacking. We are something when we *are* nothing. That we are something in our own thoughts has prevented our participation in "the grace and truth" which is never lacking for all occasions. All is in Him, ever in Him. Someone wrote long ago, "We do not know how to be weak ; that is our weakness." The world, and the world-church, grow on spreading the spirit of self-will. The world-church receives varied additions to its ranks. Great swelling words are uttered ; self-proclamation and self-vindication crowd out "the spikenard," and because this is our state, He is about to come to take us home.

I know His presence has been proved over and over again, and praise His name until He does come the wonders of His presence "in the midst" will be known in the way He is pleased to disclose it. Some one has written, "God's

presence is power whether to build up or to break down."

"His word and His name," we need to remember, are what we have daily to keep closely in view. His word abides the same, "the thoughts of His heart unto all generations." His Spirit remaineth among His people as at the beginning, but He is hindered in His manifestations of Christ to our souls.

We read that at Bethany they made Him a supper (John xii. 2). But is it not the essential element of the story that the Guest still provided the best part of the feast. This was so here and ever will be, by virtue of *who* He was. In chap i. 14, John the Apostle writes, "we beheld His glory." In chap. ii. His glory was manifested forth, as He began His public service, and here at the close when about "to lay down His life that He might take it again," the spikenard sendeth forth its odour.

The Lord grant that He may truly be our object. The saints are not given to be our object, but as at the beginning, Christ first, and then all who are His.

D. S.

THE Lord says to him, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The effect of Christ's work was to transfer that man from the deepest misery to the greatest happiness. See what he was transferred *from*, and what *to*! By the efficacy of the death of Christ, that man passed from the lowest, deepest, darkest place of misery, into the brightest, holiest, most blessed place of ineffable bliss with the Lord. That is the transition.

PSALM XVI.*(Continued from page 60).*

THIS I apprehend is the difference between heritage and cup. The inheritance is the permanent portion of the soul ; the cup, what its feelings are occupied with, what comes to a man to occupy his spirit by the way. He gives the cup of wrath to the wicked to drink ; the blessed Lord had to drink the cup of wrath on the cross. “ My cup runneth over ” —was filled to overflow with blessing ; so we say, habitually, it was a bitter cup. It is not merely the circumstances we pass through, unless the soul be subject to them ; but that which we taste in the circumstances, what our spirits feel, that which presses on them in the circumstances. Thus in Psalm xxiii., the circumstances were all sorrowful, but Jehovah being shepherd, all through them, his cup ran over with joy and blessing. Thus Jehovah was the permanent portion of the heart of Christ, and as walking through this world, that on which His heart rested ; what formed and characterised His feelings more than the sorrow He went through, save on the cross. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work. Men (no, not even His disciples) never entered into His thoughts. One who sat at His feet once in affection felt that to which He could give a voice but only to bring out more sadly the failure of all else ; but He had meat to eat they knew not of. Jehovah was the portion of His cup, nearer than all circumstances which otherwise could have pressed upon His heart as man, and which He fully felt, if we except the cross, or rather indeed more than ever there, for it was the wrath of Jehovah Himself that pressed upon His soul in the cup He then drank.

But otherwise so truly was Jehovah the great circumstance and substance of His life in and through everything, that He could only wish that His joy might be fulfilled in His disciples. But then it was from Jehovah only, and therein His perfection ; the world was absolutely a dry and thirsty land, where no water was ; but Jehovah's favour was better than life, and was His life practically through a world where all was felt, but felt with Jehovah realised ; Jehovah and His favour, the life of His soul, between Him and all. So the Christian, forsaken perhaps and imprisoned : " rejoice in the Lord, and, again I say rejoice." Nature has circumstances between itself and God ; faith has God between the heart and circumstances. And what a difference !

No peace like the peace, which hiding in the tabernacle from the provokings of all men gives. But this is a divine life through the world ; Jehovah—we say the Father and the Son, a brighter development through the Son Himself—the permanent portion of the soul, its inheritance ; Jehovah, the present joy and strength that fills the soul and gives its taste to life. (Compare Psalm lxiv. xxiii.). And, thirdly, the blessed confidence that Jehovah maintains our lot.

We trust not ourselves, not favourable circumstances, not a mountain which the Lord Himself has made strong, but Jehovah Himself. Delight thyself in Jehovah, He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Faith leans on Jehovah, on the Father's love and Jesus ; for the securing, infallibly, happiness and peace we need not look to circumstances, save to pass through them with Him. This was perfect in Christ. He had only this, nor looked for aught else. We see it brightly manifested in Paul. In principle it is the path of every Christian ; and sometime or other he is exercised in it.

The life of faith is this ; God Himself the portion of our

inheritance and of our cup; He maintaineth our lot. This is blessedly developed for us in the knowledge of the Father and Son. But the great principle is the same. It is the life of Christ, and this is enjoyed in contrast with and to the exclusion of all else that could become the confidence or the portion of the heart; expressed here in Jewish relationship, but always essentially true.

* * * *

We need in divine life the positive instruction of wisdom—counsel; wisdom, a divine clue and direction in the confusion of evil in this world; to be wise concerning that which is good; not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time; not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. Jehovah gives counsel. So if any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to every man liberally and upbraideth not. There is the immense privilege of the positive direction and guidance of God, the interest He feels in guiding the godly man aright, in the true path suited to God Himself, across the wilderness where there is no way. For innocence enjoying the blessings of God, there was no need of a way. In a world departed from God what way can be found? It would be to return, but this is impossible; no sinner ever returned to innocence. The way of the tree of life is shut up on that side; but how a way in a world without God? But God can make a way, if He gives a new life, with a new object to that life—Himself as known in heaven—if there is a new creation, and we are new created. Now Christ is to us this new life, and passes through the world according to this life, to a new place given to man; and He does so as man, dependent man. God has prepared the path for man endowed with this life, and so for Christ who was this life, and so the light of men. He has even prepared the special works

suited to it—"good works which He hath afore prepared that we should walk in them." This last thought indeed goes somewhat beyond our psalm. It at any rate includes the activity of divine nature in man, and is not limited to the right and holy path of man having this life before God, a thing as important in its place as the other. So Moses asks not, "Show me *a* way across the desert," but "Show me *thy* way, that I may know thee, and that I may find grace in thy sight." What Moses sought, Jehovah gives—the counsel and guidance of His love. So Christ walked; so He guides His sheep, going before them; and now we are led of the Spirit of God as ourselves sons of God. It is the divine path of wisdom which the vulture's eye hath not seen: the path of man, but of man with the life of God, going towards the presence of God, and the incorruptible inheritance, in an incorrupted way—the path of God across the world; but God gives counsel for it. There is dependence on God for this, and Christ walked in it. "Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel," says even the remnant of Israel; as Jehovah in Psalm xxxii., "I will guide thee by mine eye," I repeat, He is interested in the guidance of the man of God, and the soul blesses Him. In this path Christ trod. The written word is the great means of this; still there is the direct action of God in us by His Spirit.

But there is also divine intelligence. "My reins instruct me in the night season." The divine life is intelligent life. I do not separate this from divine grace in us, but it is different from counsel given. We can be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Col. i., 9, 10). "Why even of yourselves," says the Lord to the Pharisees, "judge ye not that which is right." Thus, when removed from external influence, the

secret workings and thoughts of the heart show what is suited to the path and way of God in the world. A man is spiritually minded, and discerns all things. It is the working of life within (in us through grace) on divine things, and in the perception of the divine path, that is well pleasing. In Christ this was perfect, in us in the measure of our spirituality; but that to which the Christian has to give much heed, that he neglect not the holy suggestions and conclusions of the divinely instructed life when freed from the influence of surrounding circumstances. It may seem folly, but if found in humbly waiting on God, will in the end prove His wisdom. It can always be discerned from an exalted imagination.

In the first place, the state of the soul is exactly the opposite, for pretension to special spiritual guidance is never humble. But, besides, the controlling judgment of God's word, which overrules the whole divine life, is there to judge false pretensions to it. To this divine life is always absolutely subject. Christ, who was this life, yea was the word and wisdom, yet (and because He was) always wholly honoured the written word as the guidance and authority of God for man.

But guidance by the Lord is not quite all the practical process of the exercise of divine life. It looks entirely to the Lord. "I have set," says Christ, walking as man on earth, "*Jehovah always before me.*" He kept Him always in view. How have our hearts to own that this is not always so! How withdrawn from all evil—how powerfully morally in the midst of this world—should we be, were it always so! There is nothing in this world like the dignity of a man always walking with God. Yet nothing is farther from failure in humility: indeed it is here it is perfect. Self-exaltation is neither possible nor desired in the presence and enjoyment of God.

J. N. D.

FAITH.

WHAT has faith to do but to let the blessed God take His own way, and shew Himself in His goodness and glory? The heart that believes is silent before Him while He passes by. He is pleased by this altar which He has raised and revealed to provide for sinners; and who are we that we should stay His hand, or narrow the flow of His rich mercies? Let Him do His pleasure: He is the Lord. If the gospel propose to let us sinners see Him in the exercise of unspeakable goodness, it is the duty of the sinner just to look at Him; it is the way of faith to do nothing else. Faith thus in filthy Joshua allowed change of raiment without a question. He never broke silence, but just accepted the blessing and the glory. (Zech. iii.). Faith in the convicted adulteress was silent while Jesus passed by in the still small voice, writing the memorial of her shame as on a sandy floor, which the next breeze would efface for ever. (John viii.). Faith in the camp of Israel, after they had sinned away all their blessings by the golden calf, followed the patterns which were, one after another, unfolding the pledges of God's salvation in the golden sanctuary (Ex. xxxv.—xl.). All this was faith, which ever lets the Lord take His own way with the sinner, taking His own blessed revelation of Himself without a question, and thus honouring Him above everything, allowing that He has a right to bless even sinners if He please, and ourselves as well as other sinners.

And this was the voice of the basket of first-fruits. (See Deut. xxxvi.). On the nation being settled in the land, they were to fill a basket with the various fruit thereof, and offer it before God's altar; acknowledging at the same time that all His promises had been made good, that

He had accomplished all the goodness and mercy of which He had spoken to them, of which this mystic basket was now the witness and sample. And then they were to rejoice before the Lord their God, the nation thus simply owning all He had done for them, and all that He had been to them, and that they, poor perishing Syrians in themselves, could indeed rejoice in Him.

And this is just the pattern of a perishing sinner's faith, be he Syrian, Greek, or Jew. We have to lay out our basket before the Lord. This is faith. Conscience may confess sins that we have done; love may bring service and obedience: but faith tells what God is, and what He has done, in a rich and varied and overflowing witness. Liberty of conscience, joy in God, assurance and ease of heart, hope, largeness of desire, with other exercises suited to a soul consciously brought home to God, these should be the holy fruit to fill our baskets before the Lord. Affections, such as our altar may well awaken, should fill the heart and run over; affections that become pardoned sinners, the one fruit of that land to which the Saviour brings us. This is our "first love," our basket of first-fruits. Ephesus lost it. The fruit in the basket there had withered a little. For let come what sacrifices may into God's house, this first offering should be always there in its freshness. Faith should always rejoice in what God has done, and thus the first love may be ever young and lively.

But this is far from being the way of the natural heart of man. His mind is not of this order. He clings to the law. Grace is too great and generous a thought for him. Work, rather than faith, is his master-principle. And this separates between his mind and God's mind.

But faith ever allows God to take His way and shew Himself. What right has man to stop the way of the Lord?

Shall he say to the Lord, when the Lord rises to unseal the sources of the river of life, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther"? If goodness will glorify itself, shall unbelief dare to dim it? Who shall close the hand of the Lord of the vineyard, if He be pleased to give the penny? If they talk of law, is it not lawful for Him to do what He will with His own? God is the Lord of the well of life, and may He not turn its streams, if He please, to water the dreariest lands? He owns the springs themselves; and therefore let His rights as such owner be weighed and tried even in the balances of law, and it will be found that it is lawful for Him to use them as He may—He has a right to bless sinners if it please Him.

Faith simply gives Him His rights, and allows the lawfulness of God, acting in grace to us. For the less is blessed of the better; and as God justly claims for Himself the place of the better, faith fully owns the claim, and receives the blessing from Him, even the richest blessing, the blessing of eternal salvation, life and glory. Thus it is faith which chiefly glorifies God, for it sets Him in the place of "the better." Service renders to God; faith receives from Him; and thus faith honours Him in the holiest place that He graciously fills for us. In a sinner walking before Him, in the artless liberty and confidence of faith, God is especially honoured. For, "God is love," and to glorify such an One we must be free and happy in Him. Love can be satisfied by nothing less than that. Of course love knows how to "comfort the feeble-minded"; and where there is "little faith," it can well come and "support the weak," for it tells us to do so. But still our joy in Him is His will, and even His commandment. The bread of mourners was not to be eaten in the sanctuary; it would have defiled the presence of God, as the offering of an unclean heart would

have defiled it. For if holiness becomes God's house, so do liberty and joy. And it is faith that brings in this liberty and joy, for it apprehends God engaged for the sinner in a love that is perfect, so as to have nothing in the soul inconsistent with itself, as the bread of mourners would be. It casts out fear, and fills the temple within with its own clear, free, and refreshing element.

May our faith, then, beloved, grow exceedingly! May we know the repose of heart, the silence of conscience, the triumph of hope, and the song of praise in the Spirit, which it gives, more and more! The revelation which our God has made of Himself is so blessed, that it is only such a faith that can duly honour it. O, that in connection with our subject we were more in harmony with the spirit of those sweet words which we sometimes have sung together—

“ Look forward to that happy place,
Beyond the bounds of time and space,
The saints' secure abode :
On faith's strong eagle-pinions rise,
And force your passage to the skies,
And scale the mount of God ! ”

J. G. B.

MAKE my life a bright outshining
Of Thy life, that all may see
Thine own resurrection power
Mightily shown forth in me ;
Ever let my heart become
Yet more consciously “ Thy home.”

REFLECTIONS.

JUDE 22-23.—Much misconception exists with respect to the truth stated here, and its misapplication is responsible for many actions that the Word itself condemns.

There is no thought of ecclesiastical latitude or inter-communion in it. The reverse, rather ; for here the prominent feature is an unflinching, unwavering attitude of hatred towards evil, whilst the heart, kept in God's love, yearns over those *ignorantly* drawn away, and seeks their restoration.

There were, there are still, those who, not perceiving the evil in certain things, would contend for them. Were such to be harshly rejected? "*Some who dispute, correct,*" is really how the *difference* of verse 22 is made. It is compassionate love imparting instruction, to correct wrong thoughts, to those liable to be carried away through dallying with evil. It has no reference to reception to fellowship, for they are already there. The spirit of Jas. v. 19, 20, may well encourage here ; for success in this service brings blessing beyond human computation.

Then, in verse 23, salvation is effected for some by "*pulling them out of the fire.*" This is plainly enough, not assuming their position, nor yet by any action or word leading such to become indifferent to the claims of righteousness ; for "*hating even the garment spotted by the flesh*" tells of the repudiation of the outward association formed, and bespeaks a proper care for holiness and truth. But, oh ! what solemn work. "*Pulling out*" shows the need for love that won't let go ; whilst "*with fear*" intimates the need of strictest self-judgment.

And the remembrance of two words will help in this work. For the former, urging to untiring labour, remember

that "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. xii. 3). For the latter, may Paul's exercise be ours—"Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and man" (Acts xxiv. 16).

It is not the amount of Truth possessed simply that works deliverance, but the application of what is known to the path. Saints of God may find themselves in new circumstances and without any definite instruction as to how to act. What then? The application of known truth will effect much. For instance, the Corinthians had no definite instructions to guide them in connection with the wicked person of chap. v., and yet, had they applied what they knew of their God, it would have been clear that the presence of such an one with sin unjudged in their midst could not be right. Mourning rather than rejoicing, activity against instead of indifference to, the evil, would have been characteristic; and exercised hearts looking up to God would have had light given and deliverance effected (ver. 2).

Samuel the prophet declared to Saul the king that "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft" (1 Sam. xv. 23). This rebellion was the spurning of God's authority expressed in His command. The substitution of human thoughts for divine commands ever means the rejection of God in His Word. Had the prophet told the king that he had been guilty of witchcraft, he would possibly have strongly repudiated it by referring to what he had done; for he "had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards out of the land" (ch. xxviii. 3, 9). And yet how solemnly true were Samuel's words, In the rejection of God in His Word that sin was in principle, as subsequent acts proved. What shall stay the soul when once God's authority is renounced?

Light is then sought from darkness, revealing gross darkness indeed. The Lord give us as profit from this the will to do His will, and help us to "fear always."

Genesis xix.—How vast the contrast between the moral elevation of Abraham's ways and those of Lot: the one treading the path of separation and maintaining the character of pilgrim and stranger, the other finding eventually a place in the gate of Sodom. And as the feeble faith, and moral incapacity, with lack of true discernment are made apparent, what a tale of loss incalculable is told. Evil associations had truly produced evil effects, though there was no condoning of the dire deeds perpetrated in that abandoned city.

2 Tim. ii. 21.—"People are ready enough to purge themselves from the doctrine, but where the trouble has occurred in many cases, is the endeavour to exonerate themselves because they were clear of the doctrine. To be clear of the doctrine is not sufficient; you are to purge yourselves from the vessels. You are to be vessels unto honour, and to follow "righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart." This indicates that there never would be a time when there would not be a purged people calling on the Lord."

Matth. xviii. 20.—"This is not a promise, though it is very often quoted as a promise. It is a consequence; and a consequence is not a promise."

"Many may assume to be gathered to His Name, but it is impossible for them to be gathered to His Name if not walking *according to His Name*. "Let every one that nameth the Name of the Lord, depart from iniquity." When a company is not walking according to His Name, one cannot accept it as gathered to His Name." H. F.

DAILY MUSINGS.

HE, of Whom Moses and the Prophets have written,
 He, Whose blest praises the Psalmists have sung,
 He, Whom the righteous Jehovah hath smitten,
 Is the joy of my heart and the theme of my tongue.

He, Who was cradled in Bethlehem's manger,
 Because that no room could be found in the inn,
 He, Who amongst men was a homeless stranger,
 Proved faithful to God in a world of sin.

He, Who at Sychar sought to drink of its water
 From the woman whose people with His were at strife,
 Dispensed in rich grace to Samaria's daughter
 A draught from the source of the Water of Life.

He, at Whose word evil spirits were subject,
 And surrendered their charge at His word of command,
 He, at Whose voice death relinquished the object
 Whom its Lord had desired in His presence to stand.

He, by Whose power every world is existing,
 And in Nature has fixed her immutable laws ;
 He, Whom His creatures are ever resisting,—
 They hate and reject Him without any cause.

He, Who of life is the source and the centre,
 Who hath brought to the light incorruptible bliss,
 That could not be known, till by death He did enter
 The glory—true basis of truth such as this.

He hath loved me with love that shall ne'er have an ending,
 He hath blessed me with bliss that will never grow stale,
 And for me He will come from the glory descending—
 I know this is true, for His word cannot fail.

J. H.

“ MY INFIRMITIES.”

(2 Cor. xi. 30-33).

“ OTHERS had been bold, and he also ; and by comparing his apostolic tokens, as a persecuted witness for Christ, with those of his opponents, his brethren in the faith might judge to which side truth, and the honour which is due to truth, belonged. He had spoken thus far of things which, if they largely exemplified the malice of the adversary and his instruments, reflected only honour on the sufferer. But he has another kind of boasting to produce. He will speak of things which marked him, indeed, still more emphatically as a chosen vessel of the Master, but which should prove also, in his own person, the nullity of all self-commendation in the sight of God. He will boast of that of which men naturally are ashamed ; in a demonstration, namely, of his weakness. In the presence of these self-appointed lords over God’s heritage, he will exhibit himself in an attitude and circumstance which indicate, indeed, most convincingly, his true standing in the scale of value, as an efficient minister of truth (for cities are not garrisoned and watched, by the rulers of this world, for the apprehension of obscure and insignificant opposers of their will), while disclosing, at the same time, the ignominious shifts to which a true minister of God may be reduced, in order to escape his foes.

Before recounting his first recorded peril for the gospel’s sake, and thus finishing the lengthened commendation of his ministry, by tracing it and its effects to the beginning, he makes this solemn adjuration, “ the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not ”—not only to enforce attention to his words, but as if—like one who felt ashamed at the semblance even of mere egotistic boasting—he would hide his “ folly ” from their eyes, beneath the glorious majesty of

that great name. Let others judge him, he has still this last appeal, and from that presence he was well assured his sentence should at last triumphantly come forth. Were his competitors prepared to sustain their allegations by a similar appeal? Had their preaching ever placed their lives in jeopardy, or excited anger in the heart of King Aritas, or any other king? Had any of them dangled in a basket in the midnight air? They professed to be apostles; had they gained or lost, temporally, by their mission? And if exempt from such humiliating trials as Paul gloried in, was it because they held a higher place of honour in the Master's eyes?

At Damascus Paul had first declared His gospel, by testifying in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God; and from that city he had, after many days of faithful but contentious ministry, escaped as a fugitive, in the humiliating fashion here described. From thence to the martyrdom which closed his earthly days, his course lay through constant but varied sufferings and afflictions, cheered, however, by a yet more abundant measure of joy in the Holy Ghost. Let us remember, when contemplating this life picture of apostolic grace and faithfulness, that the path in which he found both his sorrows and his joys was not prepared for his feet only. He walked in Christ, and thought only of the will of God. His own assurance to us all (in this repeating only what the Master said) is, that in our case, no less than his, a like aim and motive will work out, in their measure, like results."

A. P.

ERRATA.

Page 160, second verse, second line. Read "Fleet" for "Flee."

Page 170, line 11 from bottom. Read "supposes" for "support."

CHRIST FOR LIFE, COMMUNION, SERVICE.

(John vi. 53-58.)

THE simplicity, sublimity, and fulness of John's Gospel is well calculated to impress upon the heart the greatness and glory of the Incarnate Word, and to arrest the conscience with His wondrous teaching. It is the Son of the Father, with the Father's words, that is before us; and as that august Messenger came "full of grace and truth," so His words would express that.

In the chapter before us, we have the record of that miracle which proclaims Divine fulness meeting human need, and Christ shines as the One who could satisfy Zion's poor with bread, and abundantly bless her provision (Psalm cxxxii.). And that He will do perfectly in the day when Zion is established and all is according to God.

But here the felt need is that alone of the body, and many resort to Christ to have that need supplied. "Ye seek Me," said Christ, "not because ye saw the miracle"—not because they were intellectually convinced that He was the Messiah, the King of Israel, but for a momentary selfish gain—"but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." So spake He that could read hearts. They were utterly oblivious of any deeper need, and even here God was not in their thoughts.

The Lord, however, proceeds to adjust these matters. There was meat that endured unto everlasting life, and who was expending labour upon the obtaining of that, albeit that it was after all the gift of the Son of Man? To work God's works faith was a necessary requisite; for it began with

believing on Him whom God had sent (verse 28). The unfolding of this subject brings insuperable barriers before a people in whose hearts unbelief had an abiding place. Three such there are in this chapter—His incarnation, His death, and His ascension.

His people required *bread* to satisfy a vastly deeper need than that of the body merely, and Christ was that bread from heaven. A stupendous fact indeed! but yet only a startling fancy to those whose hearts, devoid of faith, simply reasoned from facts that were patent enough to their senses. "Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know," was as high as they could rise; and well might *they* query, "How is it that He saith, I came down from heaven." They saw not behind the veil which hid His proper glory, and so perceived not the wondrous grace which led Him, truly "born of a woman," to identify Himself with a legal father.

But their difficulties increase, and His hard saying should become harder yet, putting His professed disciples thoroughly to the test. In utter amazement, striving amongst themselves, they put the question, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" How indeed! It was, nevertheless, the direst necessity; for, apart from the appropriation of His death, they possessed no spiritual life.

How inseparably connected are the incarnation and atonement of the Lord Jesus; for partaking of the *heavenly* manna could only be consequent upon Christ giving Himself. The former verily meant God coming down to man in the person of His Son, but the latter meant man being brought to God, and capacitated to feed upon, enjoy, and delight in Him who was the all-satisfying bread from heaven.

The Lord anticipates the third difficulty, namely, His ascension. The Son of Man would ascend up to where He

was before. Could they accept that? Flesh could not make that good: here the Spirit alone avails, and human wisdom and reason are clearly out of court. Some believed not; and finding no power to walk with Him in their intellectual convictions, abandon entirely the path of faith, leaving it to them whose eyes had been opened by a revelation from the Father, and whose affections, however feeble, were indissolubly linked up with the Son of the living God.

But let us trace out and note the thoughts in our Scripture. And first we learn that life is obtained by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man; for emphatically, solemnly, the Lord declares, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." In this is set out the appropriation for oneself of Christ's death. For eating and drinking are surely figures of that appropriating faith which grasps the peerless sacrifice of Christ.

And the Lord's reiterated *Verily*, most surely attests that "the way of Cain," though many still tread it, is not the way of faith. Life and salvation come not but through His all-sufficient sacrifice, which must be appropriated to personal need, thus owning that life comes to us but through death—His death. How humiliating to the pride of man all is here! Doting on his progress, vaunting his good works, professedly appreciating the marvellous beauty and simplicity of Christ's life, yet the knell of all this is sounded by one truth—and nothing avails apart from it. "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him"—not "in Him" as an historical personage—but "on Him" as your own personal Saviour, "whom God hath sent." Nor can there be any substitute; for none have life who eat not His flesh and drink not His blood. It is His death, the central theme of God's glorious Gospel, glad tidings which tell of death

abolished and life and incorruptibility brought to light, that brings life, and hence human merit and works are excluded.

Then life needs sustaining and that continuously, and so our Lord passes to that point. And hence the terms change from "eats" (rather "have eaten") to "eateth" the continuous present. Can one have once eaten of this heavenly food by faith and remain therewith satisfied? Nay; the renewed man's craving must be met; and as the body's sustenance must be according to and in character with its requirements so must the one born of God be nourished by this *flesh* and this *blood*, which are meat and drink indeed. What else is suitable?

And as a consequence of this eating, certainty becomes more certain and assurance more sure. Apart from having partaken of His flesh and His blood there was no life; but the blessed truth, "*hath eternal life*" becomes more apparent as faith is confirmed and the value of Christ's death becomes more fully known and appreciated.

Accompanying this certainty is the gracious assurance repeated again regarding the future, "I will raise him up at the last day" to have his blissful portion in Christ still. Does it appear as though death comes in to blight the blessedness? The *last day* comes; eternity appears in view; and those claimed before by Divine love and grace shall be then claimed by Divine power; and, caught up to the Paradise of God, shall there truly feed upon the Tree of Life. Faith's anticipations grow as the soul dwells with delight upon the love shown in Christ's giving Himself, and learns increasingly the wondrous effects wrought by His atoning death. Soul-thirst can alone be met and satisfied by Christ, the Son of God, known not only as incarnate, but in death. "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed."

But more. Not only have we possession of life and joyous anticipations in connection therewith; deep abiding communion is the present portion of whosoever eateth of this flesh and blood. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me and I in him." Oh! what do we know of the unspeakable nearness in this intimated? If foreign to us, why so? For in this is set out the undoubted portion of all Christians. By the possession of life we are linked with Him, and communion is maintained as Christ abides the food of the soul. To know Him in death, as the One whose work alone avails before God, brings out the truth and value of His Person, so incomprehensible and yet accepted and enjoyed by faith, as this path of fellowship is trodden.

Muse over those words, "Dwelleth (or abideth) in Me, and I in Him." What a wondrous intimacy! alone maintained as the constant portion of the heart whilst Christ is ceaselessly fed upon. Here is heaven upon earth indeed! a joy, not for any set season, nor dependent upon any peculiar circumstances, but for all the way.

Nor can this be without result. What will such close communion produce? What effect will be manifest? Just this: service and walk after the pattern set by Christ. Active in love and grace the Father, "the living Father," sent the Son, and here amidst sorrow, rejection, and scorn, the Father's interests and glory were His chiefest concern and care. "So he that eateth Me, shall live because of Me." Self is excluded whilst Christ is the all-in-all of the believer, and thus are we fitted as He is our motive, to walk "well-pleasing unto the Lord in all things." Important issues hang upon having Christ before heart and mind; for all things, fellowship, walk, service, then assume their proper proportions, and are viewed in their relation to Him. No

self-chosen paths, no self-imposed tasks, no unholy associations, when we "live because of Him." What loss of present joy and future reward when it is otherwise.

The points in our verses are then life obtained (53), life sustained (54), communion maintained (56), and results (57). Verily He is—

"Our whole resource along the road,
Nothing but Christ, the Christ of God!"

H. F.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.

(2 Cor. v. 10, 11.)

It is not a question of rewarding service as in 1 Cor. iii. 8, 14, but of retribution in the righteous government of God according to what each did, whether good or bad. This covers all, just or unjust. It is for the divine glory that every work done by man should appear as it really is before Him who is ordained by God Judge of living and dead. Only as the believer is by grace exempted from judgment both as a partaker of everlasting life and as having in Jesus a perfectly efficacious Saviour, his standing before the judgment seat assumes the character of manifestation, and in no way of a trial with the awful possibility of destruction. There is not the smallest compromise of the salvation he now enjoys by faith; and he is accordingly glorified before he stands there. He will give account of himself to God and be manifested; but there is no condemnation depending on the issue then, as there is none now to those that are in Christ. This may not be reasonable in man's eyes, but it

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suits the God of all grace, and is due to the glory and suffering of the Son of God, and harmonises with the testimony of the Holy Spirit, whose seal will not be broken or dishonoured in that day. And as it is for God's glory, so it is for the perfect blessing of the believer that everything should stand out in the light, and he himself should know even as he is known.

Nothing will blind the eye then, no unsuspected motive warp the heart or mind before the judgment seat of Christ. The merciful care, the over-ruling power of God in all our ways will appear in their astonishing wisdom and goodness, no longer concealed by the mists of this life. We shall know perfectly what debtors we were to grace, and the resources and activity of that grace in our chequered history and experience even as saints, and the boundless patience of God to the last, as well as His rich mercy at the first. Even now what a comfort for us to have renounced the dishonesty of the natural heart, to judge ourselves unsparingly in presence of love that never fails, to be in the light of God, and have no guile in our spirit as those who know Him who by redemption can and will impute nothing to us.

And this is true to faith now that we believe in Him who suffered once for us that He might bring us to God: not a cloud above, not a spot within. The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. Perfect love casts out fear. We love Him who first loved us, and shrink not, but welcome the light which makes everything manifest. "We have been—we are—manifested to God." It is the mighty and abiding effect of Christ's work, which made us meet for sharing the inheritance of the saints in light. We no longer walk in darkness as once when we had no true knowledge of God; we walk in the light as He is in the light.

Yet there are times when what is always true in principle is applied powerfully in fact to the Christian whom God gives in quiet retirement, often in a sick chamber, to review his ways and examine himself alone with God, when energy or self-love or flattery, do not enfeeble a holy self-judgment; and all the more deeply, as he firmly holds to the assurance of God's changeless favour. What is thus verified in a high degree by the way will be complete and perfect at that day, when we already caught up and glorified in the body, shall be manifested before the judgment seat without a trace of the shame that either hides or with pain confesses. It is great gain to have such times on earth, though the process be but imperfect, greater still the more it approaches an habitual state. How full the blessing when all is absolutely out in love and light with Christ.

But, as we have seen, the manifestation has an end here described, that each may receive the things [done] in [or, by] the body, good or bad. Even in the saints all had not been good; and all has its result, though not to jeopard the grace that saved by Christ. But as God is not unrighteous to forget the work of faith and labour of love, so failure and wrong entail loss; and the soul itself will in full intelligence and un murmuring adoration bow and bless Him who orders the place of each in the kingdom, and who (while never abandoning His own sovereignty) will take note of the greater or less fidelity and devotedness of each in service or ways. Thus will God be vindicated, displayed, and enjoyed in all that He is and does; and thus will the saint have perfect communion with all, in not a single detail any more than as a whole missing the joy and blessedness of what He is to all His own and to each for ever.

—*Notes on 2 Cor.*

DAY BY DAY.

DAY by day, as the hours go by
Guide me my Father.
Remove the unsubmitive sigh,
The "I would rather."

Hour by hour, let me hear the word
"Abide in Me."
Then answer to the loving Lord,
"So let it be."

Day by day, I still would hear
"What the Spirit saith."
To Him ungrieved would bend my ear
In listening faith.

Oh how blessed to be "preserved
In Christ" by God—
Kept for "inheritance reserved"
And His abode.

To be by Him even here made meet,
Cleansed by His blood.
Then given a crown to lay at His feet
In the glory of God.

H. S.

"Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at His word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for My name's sake, said,

Let the Lord be glorified;
but He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed."

“NOT PEACE BUT A SWORD.”

(Luke xii. 49-53.)

IN the Gospel by Luke there are three significant passages which speak of peace—“peace on earth” (chapter ii. 14); “peace in heaven” (chapter xix. 38), and in chapter xii. 51, where not peace but division is shown to be the effect of Christ’s presence on earth in grace.

In chapter ii. the proclamation of the angels is given as they praised God—a proclamation that set forth what would be, all in due time, accomplished by the One whose birth they were celebrating. Momentous issues must hang upon the incarnation of Him who was none other than the One “whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Mic. v. 2). What did His presence here mean but that the full accomplishment of the Divine counsels to the infinite satisfaction of God must come. The angelic host saw in that little Babe, then lying in a manger, the sure guarantee for the fulfilment of those purposes, and looking adown the stream of time, as it were, they record their completion.

And not the least part of their saying is that which tells of “*peace on earth*”—not true then, nor yet true now with wars and rumours of wars abounding—as one of the final effects of Christ’s work. With beautiful propriety, “Glory to God” comes first; and that adequately cared for, man’s need is met with peace ensuing, “abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth” (Ps. lxxii. 7). Appearances were all against it then, but that did not baulk the heavenly host nor hinder their declaration. True, the proud Roman reared his haughty head and crushed nations in his mighty

grasp, yet, nevertheless, peace should be, and when He should assume the "rod of empire," who, though first King of righteousness, is also King of peace, then the prophetic word, "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end," shall receive its fulfilment. Peace, boundless peace, bounded only by the limits of eternity for all His own, who "rest in undisturbed repose." In Christ's golden age "Creation's groans will be hushed, travail removed, fear banished; the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and nations will learn war no more." "Peace on earth"—blessed, glorious prospect!

In the next instance (chap. xix. 38) our thoughts are carried on to the entrance of the King into Jerusalem, hailed by the whole band of His disciples with, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven and glory in the highest." How remarkable and striking the alteration from the angel's saying! *They* spoke with divinely-given wisdom of the full, final effects of the work of Christ, setting forth in outline the purposes of God; *these* tell, also divinely instructed doubtless, of the first effect, as it were; for rejected and despised here, He is nevertheless received as Victor there, and is seated at the right hand of God. Having made peace by the blood of His cross, He is our peace in heaven, and peace is now ministered from on high to those on earth who have proved the value and efficacy of His precious blood. "Peace on earth" is yet future; "peace in heaven" is now; and hence the scene of God's counsels is transferred from earth to heaven, and hearts are linked with Christ in that blest place, and consequently with the deep counsels of God respecting, not earth nor men merely, but His beloved Son, preparatory to the display of His glory and the glory of His grace in the day of the manifestation of the sons of God.

But, in the meanwhile, what was (and is) the effect of Christ's coming into the world? That is unfolded in chap. xii., where the dire consequences when hearts are tested by Christ are seen to be the fire of judgment and division.

The opening words of this section (ver. 49) are the direct opposite of what is stated by the angelic host—but there is no contradiction. The Lord here speaks of the effect of His presence amongst men. "I am come to send fire on the earth." Men were in a state of alienation from God, enemies in their minds by wicked works, and Christ's presence, the very perfection of love and grace, brought this out fully, uncovering their state and showing it, in the light, in all its utter vileness.

Not bowing to the truth, the antagonistic will of man is found opposing it, and refusing the very grace present to meet need. He was on earth as a Saviour, but the refusal of Him would necessitate judgment, and man by his rejection of Christ was kindling a fire already.

However, grace was in Him, and spite of what man was it would be manifested. So the Lord proceeds to speak of a baptism with which He was to be baptised, referring to the Cross with its load of suffering and woe. Man was against God, yet God was for man, but against sin. The twofold truth shines out most vividly at Calvary; for there the fulness of divine love in Him could no longer be pent up, but flowed out the very spring-tide of love. Before that time came Christ was straitened, pained, within Himself. His life revealed God in goodness amongst men; His death the full vindication of God as to evil.

The Cross brought out the strength of Christ's love towards man, and His entire devotedness to God, "a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour." Hatred and envy found their fullest expression against Him, but the many waterfloods

served but to prove the perfection of love that could only adequately be expressed by the Cross. And there God was revealed to be God indeed, intrinsically love and light; there Satan's malignity was exposed; and man was proved to be truly away from God and under the domination of "the prince of this world." But the Cross removed every barrier, and the pent-up love flowed out to go circling round to earth's remotest bounds. "The Father sent the Son the Saviour of the world."

Would man's hatred disappear before such proofs? Proceeding, the Lord asks, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth?" and answers it Himself—"I tell you, nay; but rather division." It must not be supposed that grace and truth engender strife; nor that Christ was responsible for the state of division. But He, who is the truth, is the test that God applies to the heart to prove it. Hence the acceptance of Him would mean being spurned even by kindred—"father against son, and son against father," etc. Christ came that peace might be on earth according to God; the strife and envy is "because man's evil fights against the truth which puts it in the light, and man's hatred refuses the love of which it does not feel the need."

And this is as true to-day as then. Could it be otherwise in a world where sin is, and is unjudged? The acceptance of Christ was surely of God, and yet it meant, in how many cases God alone knows, repudiation by kindred, and scorn from friends. And to-day, whilst the heart is filled with sweet heavenly peace, those who live godly suffer persecution. But Christ must be first, and loved more than one's own life (chap. xiv. 26; Matt. x. 37); and it is in such a path that it is proved that "all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies" (Ps. xxv.).

A rejected Christ still puts the hearts of men to the test, and the truth proves as unsavoury as ever. But truth must be the mainspring of one's action, for a good conscience cannot be maintained upon feeling for or by following men. The wisdom that is from above is first pure, and is not peaceable except pure. *Peace and safety* will be the cry of many who have neither the enjoyment of the one nor assurance respecting the other; but let us who have both, walk as "sons of light"; and as our souls enter into the anticipations of coming peace for earth, and enjoy peace from heaven, may we by the manifestation of the truth, commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God (2 Cor. iv. 2), walking in truth for the truth's sake.

H. F.

SERVING AND WAITING.

(2 Thess. iii. 5.)

THE brief petition recorded in the Scripture noted above gives us at once what is verily an incentive to true Christian service, a preservative from despair through abounding iniquity, and a formative power for the making and moulding of true Christian character.

The saints to whom this was primarily addressed, were experiencing—what Scripture often shows and common experience always confirms—that when God works in grace the adversary excites opposition to arrest or spoil that work. Inwardly the fervency of first love glowed; outwardly persecutions and tribulations were endured (chap. i. 3, 4); errorists were also labouring in subtle, sinuous ways to mis-

lead the minds of the Thessalonians by confusing the distinct truths of *the Lord's Coming* and *the Day of the Lord* (chap. ii. 1, 2). The latter could not be until the former had been.

Called to serve God, and yet liable to be turned aside and stumbled, what could be more calculated to keep constant the soul with full assurance like an ever-present, pressing sense of the fulness of God's love. For loving Him because first loved by Him, love is the alone source of service acceptable to God. To wait for God's Son from heaven defined their attitude, and naught surely could so maintain the heavenward gaze and support their constant expectation like having for a continuous meditation the attitude of Christ Himself. Hence the appropriateness of the prayer, "the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ."

And directed into that love, in what varied ways it will present itself to the heart. Let us think first of its *sovereignty*. Emanating from His heart, its source, it comes down to the objects of His choice "pure and changeless, rich and free," a mighty flood, sweeping before it every barrier. And can reason account for God's choice? Let the heart ask a thousand times o'er, Why has He loved *me*? and it is cast back each succeeding time upon the very crest of that reason given to Israel so long since, and reiterated in another form when God's people were questioning that self-same love. The Lord set His love upon them, because He loved them (Deut. vii. 7, 8). Not because they were great and mighty—far from it; not because they were meritorious, noble, and good—for they were not; but—"Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Yet I loved Jacob" (Mal. i. 2). He acts within His own sovereign rights, and who shall say Him nay? Blessed rights! that brings Him such glory and creatures such joy and assurance. Not

dependent upon our changeful selves, but upon His unchanging choice, the triumphant challenge issues forth, Who shall separate from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? (Rom. viii. 35-39).

The very words, "*in Christ Jesus our Lord*," reminds at once of the way God took to declare His love in all its fulness, and turns us to the *manifestation* of it. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John iv. 9). Love must out, must reveal itself, must prove itself to be love; and God's proof must be commensurate with what He is. And how has He made plain the love of His heart? By the gift of His only begotten Son. Every saint might well say as one said to Cæsar when he bestowed some signal mark of approval and honour, "This is too great a gift for me to receive." "But it is not too great for me to give," was the Emperor's reply.

Oh, the immensity of God's love gift! In what terms shall its value be expressed? Who can measure the delight of the Father in the Son of His love? Who can understand the love that, in the face of direst evil and bitterest opposition to honoured servants, sends "an only Son"? Such contemplations lead to our being lost in the ocean of His love; love that sent His Son into this world, and "as a sacrifice for sin" (Rom. viii). For, "that we might live through Him" necessitated His death. Then let Calvary and all its surroundings be eloquent to our souls of the love of God. There comes out the triumph of God's love.

And God takes it up from that point as it were, the very glory of His love. Marvellous the fact that the Word incarnate should be found in humiliation in a world of sin, but thrice marvellous the truth that that "only begotten

Son" is found yet more deeply humiliated, with "every mark of dark dishonour heaped upon His thorn-crowned brow," dying the death of the Cross. There love reached its highest pinnacle, and *that love* God commended to us and commends to sinners still.

What parallel to the action of God can be found in the annals of men? "For a good man some would even dare to die," but God acted in an entirely different way from that, "in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8). The love thus expressed He commendeth towards us. With what force this appeals to our hearts! God did not wait until we were worthy, for never could it be merited by any creature. Death and judgment were before, but while we were yet sinners Christ died to deliver us and that we might be reconciled to God. Under the law God commanded love to be rendered to Him; under grace He commends His own love to sinners. How like Him! How worthy of God!

But yet another point comes up as we are directed into His love. Not only are we saved from wrath, but are brought into closest association with Christ, fruit of God's boundless love. God rich in mercy—Calvary seals the truth of that and puts it beyond question, though alas! often questioned—"for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ," and given us a place in the heavenlies in Him that by and by the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us might have an adequate testimony (Eph. ii. 4-8). Surely it is *great love* that lavishes blessing in this manner upon its objects. Would anything else suit Him!

Fruitful in blessing must the answer be to that petition, as directed into the love of God it passes in review in its

various aspects and spreads its fragrant balm over the soul. Engagement with it will keep our answering love from waxing cold because of the abounding of iniquity, and will prove to our hearts that it abides in all its immensity, and that it will know not complete satisfaction until that day when He will rest or be silent in His love, rejoicing with exceeding joy over those who, though despised here and shunned, He nevertheless set His love upon. (Zeph. iii. 17).

The second portion of the prayer is in connection with their attitude: "The Lord direct your hearts . . . into the patience of Christ." Christ has gone on high and awaits His Father's word for Him to return. So, then, He is the waiting One, and we have, in the meantime, the word of His patience to keep (Rev. iii. 10). He waits that God's work in grace might go forward. The Thessalonians' affections were set on Him, and their thoughts were bound up in their proper hope, but their waiting was not to become anxiety and feverish expectation. The heart pondering Christ's patience would be set in the full enjoyment of the Christian's hope and yet be freed from mere human speculation. Faith and love would be matured too; for it is *waiting* that tests both. Christ waits for the time when

"His loved ones all complete

In glory round Him there with joy shall meet."

"Keeping the word of His patience" does not mean delaying His coming, but rather communion with Him, and entrance into His thoughts, concerning the *seeming* delay. Bright anticipations of coming glory are ours, but now it is "the patience," then "the kingdom of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1, 9); and until the consummation of our hope may we be found serving God and waiting for His Son from heaven with undivided heart. Directed into God's love our efforts will be labours of love; directed into the patience of Christ, our ways

will be in keeping with the fact that "our citizenship is in heaven," and we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

H. F.

PRAISE AND PRAYER.

MEN pray, they receive an answer to their prayers, and then forget to praise. This happens especially in small things, but we should remember that whatever is worth praying for is worth praising for also. The fact is, we do not recognise God in these small things as much as we should; if we do praise it is for the receipt of the blessing, with which we are pleased, leaving out of account the One from whom the blessing has come. This is not acceptable to God; we must see Him in the blessing if we would really praise. The Psalmist says, "I will praise Thee, for Thou hast heard me;" he praised not only because he had *received*, but also because he had been *heard*, because the living God, as a hearing God, was manifested in His mercies.

And when we know that God has heard us, let us not delay our praise. If we put off our thanksgiving until perhaps only the evening, we may forget to praise at all, and if we do praise, it will in all probability be with only half the warmth which would have animated our song at first. God loves a quick return for His blessings; one sentence of heartfelt thanksgiving is worth all the formalism of a more laboured service. There is a freshness about immediate praise which is like the fragrance of the early morning, which is like the bloom upon the fruit; its being spontaneous adds ineffably to its price.

Trace, then, a connection between your God and your blessing. Recognise His hearing ear as well as His bounteous hand, and be your's the Psalmist's words, "I will praise Thee, for Thou hast heard me."

Let us not try to manage our *little* troubles by ourselves, lest greater ones spring out of them. Little troubles are like little seeds, they are small enough in themselves, but they are capable of producing great and important results. The oak is the produce of the acorn, the tangled briar comes from a seed on which no thorn is to be seen ; the Christian who will manage his little troubles by himself, will soon find that he must manage much greater ones than he bargained for at first.

Let us not allow ourselves to be kept from prayer by the great disproportion between God's resources and our little needs. Satan is able to argue at times apparently on God's behalf ; he is all for God's honour, if by magnifying His honour he can keep the poor sinner away from Him ; it is for this purpose, and for this alone, that God's honour is ever magnified by Satan. Let us, however, see through this cheat ; let us be thankful, instead of being daunted at the vastness of God's resources, at the great disproportion between them and our wants. By this disproportion we are all the more secured, and we may rest assured that, however small our troubles or our need, a Father's love will always make God consider them as great."—*Power*.

"Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

AFTER!

AFTER the billows roar,
And the tempests awful might,
The stillness, and the calm
Of day that knows no night.

After the battle's heat,
The fighting hard and long,
The rest of yonder Home,
The conqueror's glad song.

After temptation's power,
The conflict and the sin,
Cleansed by His precious blood
All white to enter in—

Where Satan, sight, and sense,
Shall ne'er deceive again;
The land of perfect bliss,
Free from all spot and stain!

After indifference, slight,
From those who should love us well,
Balm for our aching hearts,
Comfort words cannot tell.

After the nameless pain,
Oft being misunderstood,
Knowing as we are known,
Fellowship sweet with God.

"Not One Thing Hath Failed."

After the anguish keen,
Heartbreakings, blinding tears,
Joy, deep, beyond all thought,
Peace, calming all our fears.

After the wrongs of earth,
All to be righted there
Where all is peace, and love,
Where cometh no more care.

After bereavement sore,
When to unresponsive air,
The arms are stretched in vain—
No beloved form is there!

Gently His tender hands
Draw then down on His breast
The sorrow-stricken heart,
Soothing the storm to rest.

After life's loneliness,
His blessed face to see,
To walk with Him in white
Through all eternity.

A. S.

"NOT ONE THING HATH FAILED."

(Josh. xxiii. 14.)

OCCASIONS arise that call for the taking of a retrospect, seasons that especially invite a review of our paths. There are of course two ways in which this can be done—the soul can be engaged with the unfailing goodness, tender consideration, and ever-present faithfulness of the Lord, or occupied with its own doings. A sad contrast indeed! If

short accounts have been kept with the Lord; if failure has been followed by self-judgment and restoration; then the first is the proper, profitable, beneficial retrospection, recalling to heart and mind the wondrous record of "the ways of the Lord," and inspiring the soul to go forward with confidence in Him "who fails not," if with a deepened sense of responsibility.

Joshua, successor to Moses as leader of God's people, had brought them into Canaan and settled them there in their inheritances, and the Lord had given rest from all their enemies round about. Well stricken in years, the day of Joshua's death now drew near, and with that in view he calls for the people of Israel, and retraces briefly the gracious dealings of Jehovah their God with and for them, ways so full of apparent good that heart and soul could not but be convinced that not one good thing had failed of all the good things which He had spoken concerning them.

"Not one good thing"—how much that embraced! But who could question it? Rather their presence there that day went far in confirmation of the fact. The vicissitudes of the wilderness journeyings were over, during which, though extending over forty years, the manna had continually fallen up to the very day when the old corn of the land took its place (Josh. v. 11-12), their raiment had not waxed old, nor had their feet swelled (Deut. viii. 3-4). Jordan had been crossed, enemies had been vanquished, and they were in possession of the promised land. Who, then, had been on their side? "The Lord your God is He that hath fought for you," is the answer of Joshua (ver. 3).

So if the wilderness put them to the proof and bore witness, as it certainly did, to their unfaithfulness, it had a contrary witness to record concerning their God whose faithfulness shines in marked contrast against such a back-

ground. And now the Land repeats that story over again, and the fact is established—"Not one good thing hath failed." A corresponding responsibility is pressed upon that people, who, brought into the land through the untiring mercy of God, held it conditionally. Obedience must be rendered or scattering would ensue.

But how blessed to have the soul cast in confidence upon the never-failing goodness of God, at a time when the reminder is in prominence that seasons are speeding quickly by, and each succeeding morrow brings us nearer the dawning of the glory if farther into "the last days." Timely was Joshua's word to Israel, reminding them of the fulfilment of all Jehovah's promises. Opportune, it surely is, to have the same truth before our hearts. "Not one thing hath failed," recalls the Apostle's words, "God is faithful" (1 Cor. x. 13), and, "He abideth faithful" (2 Tim. ii. 12), constant and unchangeable. Scorners arise still who call in question His promises, but faith heeds not such. It believes, implicitly believes, that "He is not slack concerning His promises," and every-day experience tells over the fact again and again that "He abideth faithful."

And with that sweet reminder, "Not one thing hath failed," cast the mind back over the past, distant or near, and say—Is it true? You point to the conflicts, difficulties, trials, and needs. Yes; but have you forgotten that into *your* waters of Marah HE cast the tree that caused sweetness to come, and then led you to Elam His haven of rest? What was it that proved so conclusively that God was for you but conflict? Was it not difficulty, needing solution, that led you to His Word? Need brought the manna from heaven and water from the flinty rock—literal pictures of the blessed fact that Christ is the One in whom the needs of the soul are completely met. If we read our mercies

aright we shall find glowing everywhere proofs of the kindness and love of God who is good (Nah. i. 7), all things working together for good truly.

But trials are yet abundant, you say. Then, "Watch ye, stand fast, quit you like men," for there is to be a blessedly precious ending to the trial of faith, an issue that brings what no gold or silver could ever purchase—that grace in the lump, so to speak, bestowed at "the appearing of Jesus Christ," when the trial of faith is found to result "in honour, and glory and praise" (1 Pet. i. 7). Not one good thing whereof our God speaks shall ever fail, and we are "kept by the power of God through faith" for that glorious inheritance that is incorruptible, that sin cannot stain, and beyond time's flight, its glory remains undimmed. The desert might indeed yet be the scene of many a conflict and many a strait, but still designed by God to teach us real dependence upon Him. How true are the words:—

"In the desert God will teach thee
What the God that thou hast found,
Patient, gracious, powerful, holy,
All His grace shall there abound."

That not *one thing* hath failed must surely inspire us with renewed hope; and if inclined to look around upon the boistrous waves of circumstances, then remember God's charge to Joshua—"Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (ch. i. 9). With these assurances regarding past, present, and future, let us step out boldly, trusting not in ourselves, "but in God who raiseth the dead," and receiving again and again the fulfilment of the Word, "As thy days, thy strength shall be."

H. F.

THREE LINKS OF LOVE.

Wait on the Lord: Nor deem thy prayer forgot;
 Silent He may be, but He slumbers not.
 Power tarries; Power can well afford to wait:
 The buds of Promise will not blossom late!
 Joyous the Harvest Home will prove, but see!
 "Handfuls of purpose" now He drops for thee!
 His love attends thee while the days are dim,
 For "Blessed are all they that wait for Him."

Psa. xxvii. 14. Isa. xxx. 18.

Trust in the Lord: His promise He'll sustain;
 He fainteth not; trust on, 'tis not in vain.
 Hast thou asked much? Ask more, and be more blest—
 "Much land remaineth yet to be possessed."
 Let faith then claim her own as every year
 Silently passing tells the end is near;
 The leaves of Autumn whisper as they fall:
 "His word for aye endures, trust Him through all."

Josh. xiii. 1. 1 Pet. i. 24-25.

Rest in the Lord: Such sweet, secure repose
 Only an all-confiding spirit knows!
 Unbosom thy desire, and in His breast
 Thy suppliant heart will find her glorious rest.
 Oh rest divine! No earth-born solace this—
 It is the wellspring of Heav'ns depths of bliss.
 E'en here thy soul it richly will suffice,
 But oh, the fulness waits in Paradise!

Psa. xxxvii. 7. Psa. xvi. 11.

J. M. G.

PSALM III.

THIS Psalm gives us, as it were, the first walk of the godly man in the path of faith; and from this one on to Psalm viii. we have faithful ones walking in dependence upon Jehovah but learning in the midst of trial and difficulty.

Historically, it was David's experience in connection with his traitor son Absalom and his treacherous conduct, that led to its utterance, as the title informs us; but the Spirit of God uses the occasion for putting on record the general principles concerning the trials and triumphs of the saints; the cry of distress from a troubled heart is silenced by the truth of what God is to His own, and then confidence reigns where disquietude had been. Is it not always so?

It opens with the thought of many enemies and many troubles, the keenness of which would be increased with every remembrance that a traitorous son headed the rebels; and what sorrow so bitter as that occasioned by one near and dear? What pain so excruciating as that inflicted by a traitor? And David's experience outlines the experience of God's people; of each of whom rejected, despised, and humiliated, with seemingly no hand from above stretched forth to aid, it is said, "There is no help for him in God."

And it is not without interest and profit to note that conscious of a relationship existing, formed by God Himself, the psalmist uses the name which expressed that, a name which called for every confidence in Him and His word, and the burdened heart unburdens itself with the cry, "Jehovah." He ran into that name and found it a strong tower indeed, and safety therein (Prov. xviii. 10). Of this the enemies are entirely unconscious and simply use the name which tells of creatorial power—Elohim. But the blessing hidden in

Jehovah, and the power belonging to Elohim were both his, and in his cry he combines them—"Arise, O Jehovah; save me, O my Elohim" (ver. 7).

Troubles that drive us to our God are sanctified to us. Stormy billows raging without us that increase our confidence in our Deliverer as He pilots us safely through them and makes the storm within a great calm, prove friends indeed! And the psalmist gives utterance to the magnificent word which reveals his fears disappearing as hoar frost before the rising sun. It tells of what Jehovah is to him: "But Thou, O Lord, art a shield round about me," behind which security is found. Thus hedged in who could harm? and boasting in Jehovah his glory, his head (though for a brief moment bowed) is triumphantly lifted up.

And what had effected this? Prayer brings Jehovah down to the aid of His distressed ones: "I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill." Nor does this reveal, let us remember, a lack of confidence in his God: prayer is the proper expression of dependence and the greater the urgency the more the heart goes out, not to man but "to the Rock that is higher than I."

So the psalmist, realising that God had heard him, was entirely at rest, resting in God's great hand. "I laid me down and slept." A sweet sense of security was his, shown in peaceful slumber. No worry, no distraction, no thoughts of enemies—all have disappeared. Here truly was "quietness and confidence." And from an undisturbed repose he awoke, having been sustained by the Lord whose eye never ceases its watchful care over His saints.

Fear ceases to distract when there is a simple confidence in God; and faith is then very bold and free. Enemies!—well, let them be increased, but "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me."

round about." Plainly his fear has fled ; and just as plainly is it to be seen that this confident language is the result of his thinking of his God instead of his enemies. And how different the proportions our difficulties assume when we remember our God and put our confidence whole-heartedly in Him. Here was the secret of the psalmist's success. Does not ours lie in the same place ?

But Jehovah has been the Sustainer of His people. He will likewise be their Saviour. " Arise, O Lord, save me O my God," is his cry ; for faith anticipates and can speak as though He had actually put down every oppressor, and completely emancipated His distressed servant—" Thou hast smitten all my enemies upon the cheek bone." Thus enemies are dispersed ; deliverance is effected ; and Jehovah's blessing rests upon His people. Salvation belongs to Him, and He crowns His people's paths with that great joy, and they " dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places " (Isa. xxxii. 18). Much is accomplished when confidence is fully placed in God ; and we do well to remember that all He has done, and does still for us, invites implicit trust in Him. Let us cast our cares and fears upon Him that we be garrisoned against the assaults of the adversary by the peace of God which is to keep both heart and mind. There is a depth in the Psalmist's word—" I laid me down and slept ; I awaked ; for the Lord sustained me," which we do well to endeavour to fathom.

H. F.

"I am My Beloved's."

"I AM MY BELOVED'S."

A poor and feeble thing am I,
Yet Lord I suit thee so ;
Thy strength is mine to lean upon,
And hence with Thee I go.

I'm like a very foolish child,
But Thou my Lord art wise !
I see but such a little way—
All is before Thine eyes.

Base, too, and one of no account,
My Lord is good and great ;
He is both God and Man in one ;
I'm His, on Him I wait.

All that He is, He is for me,
He bears me on His heart ;
No power in heaven, on earth, in hell,
From Him my soul can part.

And so I rest in peace, content
Feeble and nought to be ;
I glory in the Lord alone—
In Him, He lives in me.

Winds blow, storms rage, Satan assails,
The mighty waters roar ;
The saint who knows the Saviour's love,
Above them all can soar.

Peace, rest and joy—a trinity
Of blessings mine e'en now ;
My heart can sing of Jesus' love,
Whilst reverently I bow

Before His face, my Lord, my God
 Who came to earth to die,
 Whose glorious person must remain
 For man a mystery !

E. R. W.

REVIVALISM.

IT requires little understanding to note that great changes are being wrought in the Christian profession to-day. Many and insidious are the attacks of the enemy upon what he so persistently hates, and not the open warfare which his subjects carry on is so disastrous, as when he comes as an angel of light. It needs that we have on the whole armour of God, if we would escape the wiles of the devil.

Open resistance to the Gospel being ineffectual, his method is to patronise, and thus whilst robbing the truth of its edge, to corrupt and take away all that he can.

From its first appearance years ago the writer of this has believed that the system of Revivalism was destined to work destruction of the faith wherever it got a foothold. Unhappily it has been cherished and supported by those who should have known better. Attractive because of apparent results, many have been led to adopt in part its methods, when they should have been resisted and refused. Now we have from every quarter tidings of Revivals which are to sweep (so they think and wish who are promoting them) over the whole Christian world. That a widespread religious sensationalism is growing and advancing with rapid strides there is no doubt, and whilst the Spirit of God may in sovereign grace be drawing some souls to Christ, the mass of this sensationalism, if judged by the word of God, is but

an effort like that of Jannes and Jambres of old, to withstand and corrupt, and deter people from believing the word of God. That God may work in some souls amidst the confusion is possible, and those whom the Father has given to the Son will surely be drawn to Him for salvation. God's purposes cannot fail as to the final result, though the devil and man be leagued against God.

But looking at the movement as a whole: What, I ask, is there in it that is really of God? All the truth of man's future condition, if a rejecter of Christ, is in abeyance; no plain speaking to warn people of the lake of fire; and the wrath of God which is revealed from heaven, against man's sin is left out. Give your heart to Jesus, Decide for God, etc.—these seem to be the main elements of the preaching, whilst the measure of the truth declared will vary with individuals, for all has not yet been quite destroyed, although inevitably it will be, for those who are caught by the sensationalism of the day.

God has connected with salvation the confession of the Lordship of Christ, who is exalted to His right hand as the dispenser of repentance and the remission of sins. But the unhallowed use of the Name of Jesus, which is so universal, shuts out this confession, and drags Him down in thought to a mere human standing, though His being God is not always denied. For most He is the "elder brother," and linked with the family of man thus.

Besides all this, what an unhallowed mixture of errorists, and those more sound in the faith, is there to-day? Can it be of God that this should be? About this there can be but one true answer.

However, to go on with Him, and shun all complicity with it, is the only path open to those who wish to honor the Son of God—not because of being better than others,

but because it is God's path for the faithful in these closing days, when He stands ready to spue out of His mouth that which is so offensive to the One who walks amidst the seven golden candlesticks.

—*Missionary Gleanings.*

COMPASSIONS AND ENCOURAGEMENT

(See Isa. xl.—liii.)

“THE nearer a man is to God *externally*, if his soul has not *living fellowship* with Him, the worse he is. Judas is worse than the Pharisees—the Pharisees than the Samaritans. Hence the profession of Christianity, where there is not its living power, is the very place where the most terrible evil is to be looked for.”

To reflect upon this, and to view some of the results, and hear a little of the effects of this external nearness without corresponding truth in the inward parts, must produce deep, deep sorrow amounting to perpetual pain, like a wound incurable.

God's people have ever been an afflicted people. Prophets' eyes ran with tears, and lament and wailing could be publicly heard. And this was real as testified by prophets, apostles, and various servants in different ages, though alas! the feigned and formal there could be even in this.

No doubt much that is accounted dismal and uninviting in Christ and Christianity is portrayed by the sobriety which Scripture enjoins,—by the unfeigned dependence and patience with which affliction and suffering are to be endured, whilst unwearying in well-doing and finding evil ever

assailing from without and from within. Those who are Christ's must pursue good only, and carry on a work of faith and labour of love, following righteousness, faith, love, peace—the Scriptural programme for such as bear His name.

The Man of sorrows was acquainted with grief. One ever needy, homeless, hungry, unpopular,—it would take more than sentiment to keep step and continue from commencement to close in such company. There were no present ease and honours held out. Most searching tests were put. To love one's life, or father, or mother more than He; to fail to take up cross and keep to narrow way were solemnly disqualifying points to discipleship both then and now. With a people in affliction, adversity, and poverty, Christ identified Himself. Something surely would be needed to sustain and command more than a passing interest in this One, who, to the many, had no form or comeliness.

The brush of the skilful painter, the chisel of the accomplished worker in stone, the pen of the worldly-wise who know not God, the eloquence of the professional orator, have all been pressed into service to depict, and express, and account foolishness the preaching of the Cross and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

How then has it been possible for fearers of God to avow through ages their confidence in Him and in His Son, in the very face of all the silent suffering, the ever-increasing tide of ills that fall to the lot of those of whom it is written that He is not ashamed to call them brethren? He is indeed their Head, Captain, Apostle, High Priest, Advocate, Saviour, Redeemer, and Lord—this and much beside appears to be challenged. Salvation is viewed very differently by those in unbelief from those who are of faith. We find the latter not accepting deliverance from torture when a word would have secured it. “Save Thyself, and come down from the

cross" was railing uttered to Him who lay down His life.

The just suffering wrongfully sounds peculiarly mysterious, and how many by act and word, then and now, have resented and suggested that God is too long in delaying His aid. Many have gone off this scene apparently unanswered. Wrongs to Abel and so on down to Christ and to His lowly followers now are recorded. It is true that the world of the ungodly perished, for God intervenes at last in judgment. We know too of those once God's people who are still under sorrow and suffering for their sins, still dispersed and not a nation though not lacking in gold or intellect. Some who believe bow to the discipline of God in the heaviness of the stroke, whilst others resent and blaspheme Him.

But we come to other sorrows—those of our own day; and we desire to be impressed with the title: "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" as one intended to have some force to such as keep His Word, and Name, and company.

Other evils than that of crucifying Him, have been persevered in by a people professing to own and follow Him. Yet He owns us as God's House "if we hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope, *firm to the end*" (Heb. iii). He owns those who do His Father's will as His "brother, and sister and mother."

The New Testament, with death of Testator, with blood of covenant, with Spirit of grace, is not simply open and accessible to creatures here below; it has its seal, its letter, and its spirit, its jot and its tittle to be marked and obeyed. Zeal and sincerity will not of themselves avail. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" And there are the furnace and the sieve. Judgment must begin at the house of God; the righteous are with difficulty saved.

But God comforts His household, and He does it by His Word. "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of our God shall stand for ever." There is no mistake—comfort indeed is in this! What He will be to His worm Jacob, and what has and will go forth of Zion is for encouragement; for how good to know that He superintends and has His way in feeding and leading, in giving His Word, and by His precious promises enabling His own to escape the corruptions which are in the world through lust.

We can do no more than intimate that the grand secret of victory, of spiritual stay and support, and eventual triumphant entry and unceasing joy will be found to be owing to His Word enduring. Reverence of God's Word, called at times "the fear of the Lord," will enable saints and servants to be undismayed. He has promised. We see will, lawlessness, and apostacy ripening, but we have God and His Word. Although sorrow such as we have never previously been called upon to pass through or to witness comes before us, yet forget not God so blessedly revealed as the Comforter of those in trouble. To the patient, to those who wait upon Him, who bow to His will, who submit to His Word, who own He is not behind time, the Scriptures yield comforts. And while you take the cup of consolation He gives, rise up to the sober, lowly toil before you, doing all to His glory, and there will be experienced some of the blessedness spoken of in that Word—"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation" (Jas. i.), in which none are viewed who are seduced and yield.

W. B.