

# THE Christian's Helper.

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

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### NOTES OF A LECTURE ON REV. III. 7-13.

I READ the address of the Lord to the Church of Philadelphia. This truth stands very simply on the Scripture: no exhibition of ruin, no exhibition of weakness in those who love the Lord, is in any wise incompatible with the fulness of Christ being made perfect in them: His fulness in their emptiness, His strength in their weakness, His riches in their poverty. I call your attention to remark the position which you and I are in now. Turn back to Pentecost. Christ had ascended into heaven. He had shown the speciality of His love to His people in sending down the Holy Ghost to them. There was really a people of God upon earth who were thoroughly unselfish, thoroughly unworldly, whose hearts had been carried away from earth into heaven with the Lord Jesus, and they were waiting here on earth till He came back, a people whose hearts were absolutely up there like a lake which reflects upon its surface the image of the object above it. They mirrored the Christ who was before their hearts. Now, I find nothing of the sort. I may find *souls*, but no such *company*. I could not say, if you know the face of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven you will find all His lineaments reflected in a people down here. In Thessalonians we get a company waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of ripening evil.

That which was set up ecclesiastically has utterly failed, but the blessed Lord does not fail. We get the same thing in Rev. xxii. 11—a strange mixture of light and darkness, profession and inconsistency, and a little further on the

Spirit and the Bride inviting the Lord's return. This brings to our mind distinctly a state of things like the address to Philadelphia: awful confusion on earth, a mixture of good and evil, the word of God come in suddenly to call His people; and I find that, in spite of the confusion and the ruin, there are those who are enabled to be responsive to the mind and thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ. We hear around us a great deal about "the Church, the Church, the Church," "the temple of the Lord are we," and that which assumes to be this is that which is characterised by the power of Satan (Rome) or the power of the world.

It is remarkable and comforting, we don't get here the Lord walking in the midst of the candlesticks, holding the seven stars, *i.e.*, we do not find any of these characteristics, but have quite another character, not an official one, that which was His own, and could not be put off: "He that is Holy, He that is True." These two titles are evidently divine. We could not say of John, he was the holy and the true one. He was called to be holy and to walk in the truth. But when we come to the blessed Lord, it is exactly Himself—His separatedness from evil, His faithfulness in all that belonged to God when on earth, now in heaven, and when He comes back again will still be the same. He is presented in a time of failure, of weakness and exhaustion among His people down here, still as the One expressing the character of the Father.

We are called, when put in a place of responsibility in the power of the new life, to meet it. If all has failed, God has not changed. I can look to Him, the giver, and receive something which changes not.

Christ is the giver—in every respect Holy and True. It was not saying now, "I have done with you," but "Behold, I have the key of David," and "I have set before thee an

*Notes of a Lecture on Rev. iii. 7-13.*

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open door." He had got the key just at the time when all was failing. He could not present one of the insignia of the Church, because they had all been lost, betrayed away; but He could say, "I am not changed." He was the opener and the shutter. Mark the extent of Christ's two services. If Christ opens, who can shut? He had opened, He has opened. It is not "Come and see"! There was no display of power, nothing outwardly wonderful, but the course was opened to them, and "Shutteth and no man openeth." He is not here speaking of His sovereign prerogative: "I have set before thee an open course, and if you do not enter in I can shut it up again." Quite true; but here it speaks of being shut to the adversaries. He can come in when all the power of Satan seems rampant, and can put a stop or overturn either in grace or providence, *i.e.*—take for example the late events in Spain—He controls the passions of men; "Even the wrath of man shall praise Him, and the remander of wrath will He restrain;" or in our own land, Henry VIII. Remark how beautifully He comes out just after, and meets their hearts—not one word about *their* works, and all about Himself. He had begun by saying, "I know thy works." Well, about works. What were they? There was nothing that man could take notice of (verse 8). Only two things: "Thou hast kept My words and hast not denied My name," and what have you got to show? Nothing for man's eye to notice. Who knows if I have kept His word and not denied His name? I ought to know, and the blessed Lord knows it. If His word is something treasured up in your soul, and if in spite of feebleness, you have not denied a certain character which was displayed, you have on you the tokens of that character which first gladdened your heart. It is exceedingly precious in a day of weakness and feebleness to know Himself as the fountain of all blessing,

the source of all strength, His strength like a river flowing into our souls. Will our consciences bear the challenge about the "word of God dwelling in us richly"? They ought to. Does He see the word dwelling in you? God's eye marks, and not only this, but the practical dwelling on the character of the blessed Lord which that word reveals.

They took Him for *everything*; in their weakness they found Him at their side. In verse 9 we get, in connection with the adversaries, the expressive hand of the Lord, and this is not an unusual thing. Even now He brings the opposers down to own that these very people whom they had despised are a people loved of the Lord. And knowing His mind, the result will be, "I will write on you the tokens that I have loved you." There are tokens even the world cannot deny. It is often forced to confess, "Certainly these people have the favour of God upon them." Verse 10: You have been identified with Me in the wilderness, you have kept My patience, you have recognised that I am in no *hurry* to rise up and take the kingdom, and you are waiting with Me. There is an hour of trouble coming to try "the dwellers on earth," such as those spoken of in Phil. iii. 9; but "you who have not denied My name, and hast kept My word, have not seized on anything as your rightful portion; but you are waiting for the portion I have to give you, and are counting on it. You were willing to wait till I rose up; you were not satisfied with all the good things here without Me, but you waited till you and I could be together. I will keep you from that hour." Verse 11: There was a crown. What had they got to hold fast? Not their crown. Christ has got my crown; I have not got it. They were to hold fast that which characterised them. There was the difficulty of overcoming when iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxing cold. How at such a time does the faith



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act which overcomes? By two things: by treasuring up the word of Christ and not denying His name. Then it will be like a river flowing in from the blessed Lord Himself and keeping—not will keep—your heart bright and fresh while you are holding fast that word, that name, and that patience.

Then He brings out royal, divine, blessed words to cheer their hearts, especially characterised by association with Himself. There is something peculiar in the promise, ver. 12. It is very different to that given to Laodicea. Supposing this had been addressed to Laodicea, it would have been out of keeping. They were a carnal people, boasting of their riches. He gives them something that even the natural mind can appreciate. They were seeking the highest place on earth, so He says, "Follow Me, and I will give you something better than it all—you shall sit with Me on My throne." But here were these poor weak things who had got no excellence. He knew every one of them, and He says, "I have got certain things very near to Myself, and I propose to place you in permanence"; then when the time comes many will be placed in the temple of God who have been thought little of here. He puts them in the place of blessing to go no more out. I will write upon him the name of My God: not merely a stone here, but the most precious of all things to His heart, "My new Name." What were the thoughts of the Lord Jesus about the name (Eph. i. 21; Phil. ii. 9)? The name of the City of my God. God has got a character which He shewed out there. You shall bear that character. Many thoughts are crowded together here—a dwelling-place, "a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," the special name, New Jerusalem, which none but He could give. Jehovah will provide perfection—the place where all His character can shine out.

They might be oppressed with difficulties. What did it signify if these poor Philadelphians and Christ were of one mind together? The very difficulties were found by God to display the riches of His grace, to show forth the fulness that is in Christ. I suppose all the churches had contemptible thoughts about Philadelphia—a poor set of things, weakness within and difficulties without. Christ looks upon them—evil is ripening around—and He says to these poor weak things, “I can let my heart flow out to them, the grace that is in Me flow out, and there will be no mistake.” It is very important to see that man has spoiled all, and will spoil everything God has put into his hands, and even till the Lord comes it is just the same. God has not changed: He can make the most desolate place to blossom and bud. Christ is not changed: He is coming forth to change. His people now are suffering on the earth. When He comes this will be changed. There ought to be a people waiting for Him to come. Have you tasted the unwearied freshness of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ? Are your thoughts moved by His thoughts? What is thus connecting you in all your weakness with Himself in heaven? We want stirring up. It is a time of weakness; man’s mind is full of pride and exalting itself. It ought to be a time when the blessedness of what Christ is to His poor weak ones is more and more tasted by us. This leads us to know His nearness. Christ can keep nothing back from you; He has not forgotten His poor people down here. He counts nothing too good to hold out for their benefit and encouragement.

J. N. D.

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**THE WAY TO BLESSING.**

(Hosea xiv.).

THE study of Prophecy should be of very deep interest to the saint of God. In that portion of His Word we have revealed God's unfolding of His people's past, and the revelation of His thoughts concerning their future; and thus with prophetic eye the saint can look along the river of time and see the trending of events towards *that day*—the day of the Lord—so often spoken of by the prophets.

But it is not simply the recognition of the *facts* revealed that makes the study of the *Prophets* interesting and profitable to us: the noting of God's ways with His people, the deep concern manifested for their blessing consistent with His holiness shown in *earnest entreaty with them to consider their ways*—in a word, the bright outshining of God's character whether in connection with grace or judgment, makes prophecy of deep, moral import to our souls as well as pregnant with instruction.

In Hosea, the first of the so-called Minor Prophets, we have shown the reason why Israel was scattered, and the ground on which God both can and will yet again bring them into blessing. The last chapter, a beautiful summarising of the book, brings out both—abounding iniquity called for the scattering; mercy, after their repentance, accompanied with divine love, will accomplish their restoration. Consistently God will reconcile things so seemingly irreconcilable, and all shall be in perfect harmony with what He is. The wise and prudent in heart shall acknowledge this and say, "The ways of the Lord are right."

The chapter opens with an exhortation to return to

Jehovah. Could they justify their ways or blame their God for the plight they were in? If they were without the pale of blessing whose fault was that? "Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity," pleads the Spirit of God. "Take with you words, and return," is urged upon them. What words?—of self-justification? Nay; the divine ear would necessarily be closed to such; but rather words indicative of deepest repentance, of a complete absence of self-confidence, of full surrender to His mercy alone.

Words are put in their lips then. Not a detailed confession of their doings, but nevertheless a confession that spoke eloquently of the need of mercy for reception and aid for deliverance. The great bar to their blessing was their iniquities, and though oft recalled to their minds by the prophets of the Lord, they yet upheld and continued in them till there was no remedy. But now their words are, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." Jehovah must intervene. Nothing can they say for themselves; the ground of confession, the way to blessing, is the only one they could righteously take. They had turned every one to his own way, and had found it full of briars and hedged with thorns. Here there is no plea of being Abraham's seed, no counting upon promise, save as in faith they heed the urging of the Spirit and betake themselves to Jehovah. They had by their iniquities fallen and forfeited all right and title to blessing, except through the exercise of sovereign mercy alone. Upon that they count. "Receive us graciously," is their petition; and then in the conscious enjoyment of the favour of the Lord their God, the result should be the free outflowing of the fruit of their lips: "So will we render the calves of our lips." Not simply would they draw near with their offerings, a barren formality often, but out of the abundance of their hearts praise should well

up, and they would render "the fruit of their lips, giving thanks in His name."

And having God as the object of their praise, they find a sure resource in Him. Their sin had been threefold—Assyria's aid had been sought (v., 13; vii., 11; viii., 9); Egypt and its horses had been requisitioned (i., 7; x., 13); idols had been relied upon (iv., 17; viii., 4). But all is changed. "Assyria shall not save us: we will not ride upon horses," is their resolve. The futility of their past ways was apparent; man was but man—of the dust of the earth—after all, and not EL, the one mighty, all-victorious God; and the horse was flesh and not spirit (Isa. xxxi., 3).

So after all their unavailing efforts to do without God, the blessedness is theirs of proving the availability of His resources for them still. Failure here, disappointment awaiting them there, they were verily as the fatherless, and in Him such found mercy. Could they not count upon that? Hence, repentance and confession, opening the door of blessing, are followed by repudiation of human aids, and entire renunciation of their idols. Idolatry was at the bottom of their distress. The history that began at the foot of the Mount (Ex. xxxii., 4), was oft repeated in their careers, and the sin of the wilderness found oft reiteration in the land. Judgment came from Him who chastens because He loves, but *self*-judgment did not follow. The clothes were rent, but not the heart (Joel ii., 13); and so the down-grade continued, until humbling themselves under God's mighty hand, they realise their defenceless, undone condition, and turn to the "Helper of the helpless," and cry, "In Thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

And how, alas! our history comes out here. Restoration is but partial often because self-judgment is so shallow.

What a difference when, the end of the tether reached, the sentence of death is passed upon the flesh and its doings, God is turned to, and His mercy sought and found. Sweet are the words, "In Thee the fatherless—the helpless, the defenceless—findeth mercy."

And response cometh from the Lord. Who shall cast themselves upon His mercy and meet with rejection? Bent upon backsliding from Him (xi., 7), that should now be healed, and the stream of divine love should flow freely and cause for anger no longer exist. "I will love them freely," love them, not for what they give, but because of what He is. "The calves of their lips" would be acceptable, but love should flow gratuitously from Him.

And now that their God has His rightful place, the fulness of His grace for them reveals itself. He would be "as the dew unto Israel," the source of all their refreshment and fruitfulness. As the lily for beauty, and the cedar for stability, so should Israel be, their deformity taken away and their backsliding healed. Prosperity should return to him, and blessed himself, he should be a source of blessing to others. Expressive figures are used by the prophet that will be eloquent to the Israelite, to set this forth. A writer remarks of Lebanon: "How often have I myself luxuriated on banks of sweet thyme, and in deep dells where the myrtle and honeysuckle give forth their odours, and in gardens where the damask rose and orange blossom fill the air with perfumes, amid the heights of Lebanon." How well then the words, "His smell as Lebanon," may tell of the diffusion of the odour of grace so freely bestowed upon him.

Then reviving "as the corn" (verse 7), well serves to set forth not only their resurrection, but, as the words intimate, abundance of life, and this is coupled with the blossoming of the vine, which foreshadows permanent fruitfulness.

Ah! how great the loss when repentance is delayed and confession withheld.

And now we have what appears to be a dialogue: Ephraim speaks and Jehovah responds. The first utterance of the former is—"What have I to do any more with idols?" What had been so instrumental in effecting his downfall is entirely thrown over for ever. And this, the first breathing as it were, of a repentant heart, does not pass unnoticed above. "I have heard and observed him," says Jehovah. Then conscious of favour and acceptance from there, the uplifted heart declares, "I am like a green fir (or cypress) tree." How significant this word, when it is remembered that the cypress is not a fruit-bearing tree, with what follows, "From Me is thy fruit found." God is the source of all fruit-bearing, and now consciously in communion with Him, Israel's sad course of down-grade and departure so graphically depicted in this book, is for ever over. The way of blessing, entered upon with repentance and confession, is consummated in this, "From Me is thy fruit found"—fruitfulness through living contact with God. "Severed from Me, ye can do nothing"—there must be vital union with the fountain of life ere the results of life can be manifested.

Hosea's prophecy now closes with a justification of Jehovah's ways and a word for the wise and prudent. True wisdom is shown in practical obedience, and prudence in humble submission to His will. Such shall understand and know the revealed ways of the Lord. "For the ways of the Lord are right." So *they* will say who thought them unequal and inexplicable. The first act of wisdom is to own the truth of God's word about ourselves; the first act of prudence to humbly bow in submission and self-judgment thereto. Then, governed by the right ways of the Lord, the just walk in them! they go forward prosperously. The

transgressors stumble still, refusing His word, and fall to their injury here and irretrievable ruin.

The Lord add His blessing, and make this simple study profitable. If in heart away from Him may we find the way of blessing, and be found walking in His ways to His praise and our exceeding joy.

H. F.

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## **JOTHAM'S PARABLE.**

(Judges ix. 7-21).

ABIMELECH sets himself to exercise authority over the people of God, and in order to do so he builds his throne upon violence. There must be violence if there is rule of that kind; if there is the rule of man, it must be by violence. Therefore, he slays all his brothers, all the many sons of Gideon, with a single exception. Having thus cut off all rivals, he goes to Shechem, the town of his mother, the town according to nature, which is significantly in that very tribe of Ephraim, which is always, as you know, reaching out for rule, and gets the men of Shechem to endorse and recognise him as king. Then it is that his brother Jotham, the one who had escaped, propounds his parable, which is most striking, and embodies the whole lesson of this chapter. This parable on rule and government explains all that has occurred, and shows what human government always is in the house of God.

The trees of the wood ask for a ruler, and they naturally turn to those bearing fruit. First comes the olive; they ask it to be king over them, and the olive's answer is that of all the other trees, "Shall I leave my fatness, wherewith



they honour God and man, and go to wave over the trees?" In other words the olive declares that fruit-bearing is its work, and not ruling. The fig-tree and vine return the same answer. When we apply the parable to the government of God's people, it is beautifully simple.

Who is going to rule over God's people? Naturally, the saints turn, of course, to those who are bearing fruit for God. Here is one, for instance, who will represent the olive. The olive with its oil suggests the energy and illumination, the power and fruits of the Holy Ghost. They say to those who are manifesting the fruits of the Spirit in their lives, "Brethren, do you be rulers." Or, singling out one particular brother, who is full of faith and the Holy Ghost, they say, "You take charge, and be governor of God's people." He says, "Ah, brethren, I am too much engaged in the things of God to attempt to rule His people." "I am too much engaged in the blessed communion of the Holy Ghost, in that which refreshes the people of God, that which is an honour to God (for God is honoured and glorified by the fruits of the Spirit in His people), too much engaged with bearing fruit to be a ruler or a lord."

The fig-tree represents more particularly all that gracious nourishment and healing which is ministered through fruitfulness to God. The fig-tree, producing sweet, wholesome fruit, says, "If I am to rule I must stop being fruitful, and I would far rather provide food for the people of God than I would govern them." And so if the Spirit of God has empowered one in any way to bear fruit that nourishes and refreshes, heals and sustains the people of God,—suggested in the pastor and teacher—who would exchange that kind of place for any pre-eminence over them as master or lord?

The reply of the vine is only another lesson of the same kind. The vine, perhaps, reminds us more particularly of the gospel ministry, that ministry which emphasises the precious blood of Christ, of which wine is a type. Here is an evangelist, one whose delight it is to hold up the cross, the finished work of Christ, and the people say, "He is the right one to rule: give us a good evangelist to rule over and govern us, to take charge of the saints." Ah! he says, shall I leave that which refreshes God as well as man? Shall I leave that which cheers the fainting heart of the dying saint, brings peace to the guilty conscience, and glory to the grace of God? Shall I give up my ministry of the gospel of His grace for an empty honour of ruling over the people of God?

Who, then, is to rule over them? If those who are bearing fruit for God will not be rulers over His people, who really is to be the ruler? Ah, the lesson, dear friends, of government is the lesson of service, and he rules best who serves best. He is really, practically, a head of the people, who is at their feet serving them; the ones who bring them the precious fruits of God's grace, the olive, the fig, the vine, these are the ones, and the only ones, by their service, who rule or lead the saints of God.

The spirit of rule is the spirit of service. The moment it passes into that of rule merely, it passes away from that of service and of fruit-bearing. The moment you get away from fruit-bearing you get emptiness, and that is what you have here. A bramble bush is elected to be the ruler of the trees, and the bramble's answer is a very significant one, "If I am to be ruler, then you have either got to bow to me, or fire will come out and burn up all the trees, from the cedar of Lebanon, in its height, down to the smallest of them." It is rule or ruin.

What is a bramble but a mere fruitless thing that, instead of giving its energy, sap and vigour to bearing fruit, has shrivelled up and turned in upon itself. Just as the thorn, it is the curse of the earth, an abortive branch. That which might have, if it had opened out, been a branch and borne much fruit, has shrunk up and centred upon itself. So the bramble, nothing but a thorn-bush, figure of a self-seeking, self-desiring man, becomes now a ruler. This rule is of that character which says, You must bow to me, or be burnt, no matter who you may be.

What a lesson as to what rule is amongst the people of God! How it searches our hearts as we think of it; how it makes us realise how easy it is to become mere brambles, and to seek a place, not at the feet of the saints, but over their heads. Beloved brethren, he rules who does as Christ did,—ministers amongst them. “Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as He that serveth.” Do you want saints to look up to you? Ah, you are a bramble if you covet that. The people who are looked up to are those who do not take the place, but who are seeking to bear precious fruit for God, and for the blessing of the saints. Let us be occupied with that fruit-bearing in our own souls.

—*From Lectures on Judges.*

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## **PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY.**

EVERY truly converted man will at least acknowledge in theory that the two things which form the title of this paper must go together. In practice, however, there are but few who really acknowledge it, and of these none who do so at all times and in all circumstances.

The idea that grace gives license to sin is from beneath ; that a truly laudable ambition justifies the adoption of this or that for which the word of God gives no sanction, is, at bottom, from the same source. This is clearly evidenced by the words quoted by Christ to Satan, "Man shall not live by bread alone ; but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live."

By the exercise of power the blessed God was pleased to bring the world into existence and to place man upon it. It pleased Him to create. As the Creator He owns all things, and is entitled to the ready and perfect obedience of every intelligent creature. Satan sowed the seed of unbelief in the heart of Eve. She and Adam fell under his power, and from thence disloyalty to God and disobedience to His will have marked the whole race. The Creator's right abides ; either the creature must fulfil his obligations, or he must suffer whatever penalty the Creator is pleased to impose. Man's opinion will not be asked, nor his approval be sought. What God thinks is due to His majesty as supreme, and what harmonises with His own nature and attributes, will be, and must be, maintained.

God's grace has provided a Saviour, and there is salvation for any who desire it ; but it is by means that maintain to the full the Creator's rights. These suffer no diminution. But grace and salvation are not our present themes, save as they give, where truly received, a large increase of responsibility. James wrote—"Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures" (chap. i. 18). Creature responsibility was ours before and abides still, but is enlarged by the new exercise of God's will and sovereign power in the new birth. He is our Father, and to Him belongs the obedience, suited to the new relation into which we are brought, with the reverence

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due to His holy name. We love, and rightly, to dwell upon the largeness of divine grace and love; we lose ourselves in the boundlessness of the theme; but do we ardently desire to take up each separate responsibility that flows of necessity from each distinct privilege conferred and relationship enjoyed? A new-born soul is in the relation of a child to God. He is its Father. The child has the privileges appertaining to the new relationship, but knows as yet very little of what they are. So, too, all the responsibilities flowing from it are likewise his. The two must go together. Ignorance and inability do not change this fundamental fact.

The great business of the true minister of Christ is to unfold the one and to insist on the other. Satan has succeeded in introducing the clerical element into the assembly of God which is formed of God's people on the earth during this dispensation, which, beginning at Pentecost, ends with the rapture of the saints at Christ's coming for His own. This element exalts certain individuals above what is written, and degrades the people of God in general. It brings them into bondage. The clergy and the laity is how the distinction is expressed; and the former have a distinctive dress and certain class privileges.

But all believers are priests—both holy and royal priests. A person set apart as a priest by man as being something that other true believers are not is in flat contradiction to Scripture. It is a complete delusion, and where tolerated exalts the individual at the expense of God's people, who thereby suffer. "For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face (2 Cor., xi. 20). Yet God's people to-day tolerate a system of things that is most harmful to this exalted class, and it robs them of the best and sweetest privileges that God

has given to them. Bondage is theirs ; and they are robbed of their heritage in good part at least.

What is a Christian ? One who has been the subject of the new birth and who is a child of God and a son of God ; one whose sins are forgiven and who is sanctified, justified, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit ; one who is a holy priest and a royal priest, and who is a member of Christ's body, and so joined to the Lord ; one who is an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ, and who is anointed and sealed with the Spirit ; a person with an inheritance in heaven, and who shall reign with Christ ; one who is a new creation in Christ, being of that new and spiritual race of which Christ in glory is the Head.

Helps God has given. Gifts to His assembly have been bestowed and will be continued as long as it remains on the earth ; and if not all the gifts which were bestowed at Pentecost and soon after it, still such as are necessary to instruct and edify His saints will be continued (Eph. iv.). These various gifts mark special favour to the individual recipients, but carry with it a most solemn responsibility. Let the reader ponder the words penned by Paul to the Colossian saints (chap. i. 24, ii. 4). Perfect in Christ Jesus, was his aim for each believer with full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God. Full assurance of salvation is deemed by a large number of converted people as an attainment to which only a few ever reach, whereas it is what all should have at the start. It is the beginning properly of the Christian course and not the end as so many think.

Now God's people may be divided into three classes :— Some are, as it were, in the nursery, the proper place for babes ; some, as it were, in the hospital, the proper place for the sick and the wounded and the unhealthy ; and some, as

it were, in the barracks, whose business it is to fight for the good of all, and to be in point of fact, "good soldiers of Jesus Christ." These must be well armed, and observe the laws of warfare, or they will suffer defeat, and then the immature and the sick become exposed to the power of the enemy. How often is the motto paraded about our country expecting every man to do his duty. Have we, as saints of God, a less worthy one? The babe must grow; the sick must get strong; the man of God must be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. He must know the truth and maintain it at all costs. He must not think of himself, nor fight for his own reputation. If reviled, he reviles not again; if persecuted, he must bless; he must be patient and endure hardness; the changes of climate, be it hot or cold, he must get inured to. It is Christ, not self; Christ, always Christ. The clerical element, and our fallen nature loves it, seeks a place for self, using gift if possessed for that object at least in part, and thus contributing to the enfeeblement of God's saints, instead of their true advancement in the faith of God's elect.

What is wanted, if we think of the body of Christ, is the articulation of each member, each several part fulfilling to the full its proper function. Not one exists for itself, but each one is in relation to the whole. Gifts do not exist in the body; my hand, for instance, is not a gift to my body, it is a part of it. It is to the assembly as such that gifts are given, for its edification and instruction. These, when rightly exercised, lead saints to understand their privileges and responsibilities, but no one can fill another's place, or do another's work. Then, too, the assembly has certain responsibilities. She it is who receives; she it is who puts out or excludes. The moment certain individuals take a place of deciding grave matters which concern the assembly without

its being informed and its decision given, it is pure clericalism, and is an infringement of the sovereign rights of the Lord by the Spirit in the assembly. "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person," was not addressed to eminent individuals, but to the assembly at Corinth (1 Cor. v.). Helps and helpers we should recognise and be thankful for, but these must help the assembly to act up to its responsibility, and not in anywise assume the corporate responsibility. If an individual does wrong, he should repent and confess the wrong; and the same is equally true if wrong is or has been done by an assembly.

E. R. W.

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### GLEANINGS.

EVEN failure in evil, under God's hand, thus work often with us that humiliation in which is the secret of future blessing. Out of defeat comes victory; out of the experience of weakness, strength; the discipline of the wilderness is the training for the battles by which, in the end, the land of the inheritance is to be possessed. Nothing could be a more needful lesson than that which here is taught us by the lowly moss, dying to take possession of the earth.

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How wonderful a property is this of a lowly plant! and spiritually, the thought is quite easy to be read. It is the humble to whom God looks; the proud He knoweth but afar off. It is our emptiness, when apprehended in the soul, which makes us fit vessels for the Spirit of God to dwell in,—fit channels by which His fulness can be poured out for the refreshment of others. This is a simple thought, and as sweet as simple, while assuredly we need to be reminded of it. The insignificant moss may help to impress upon us what is of inestimable value for our souls.

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Thus in the lowly moss we learn the weakness which is strength, a humiliation which implies exaltation, a discipline which is a Father's hand, and how our need and nothingness attract the dew and ministry of the Spirit.

F. W. G.



## THE KINGS OF JUDAH.

### JEHOSHAPHAT.

(2 Chronicles xvii—xx).

WE are now introduced to Jehoshaphat the son of Asa. The first thing noted to us concerning him, is that he strengthened himself against *Israel*. This was wisdom. We read (xvi) of Baasha coming against Judah in the days of Asa. This resulted in disaster to Asa because he turned to Syria for help instead of to God. The division between Judah and Israel was of God, therefore it was simple obedience to the word of Jehovah to regard Israel as an enemy. It was not at the caprice of the king that such a state of things could be altered. The Lord had to lead, not the king. Jehoshaphat must be prepared to meet Israel if they should come against him. We read that he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah and in other cities which his father Asa had taken (2).

Surely in all this the Spirit of God has much for our instruction. Our enemies are not flesh and blood, therefore no mere outward correctness in position or doctrine will give us victory over our foes. We are exhorted first of all to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

It is needful to remember that our enemy is the god of this world, and his hosts are "legion." Who then can sustain us in the fight and make us overcomers? None but God surely. Our enemies are always the same. The

instruments or wiles he uses against us vary doubtless, but we are taught to reason, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" It has been remarked, "that it is not in the time of combat, in the evil day, I am to put on my armour." This preparation for "the evil day" is what we may observe present with Jehoshaphat. The "drill" the soldier has to learn is to prepare him for the battle-field. When the conflict comes on, God would have us know what to do. Our loins have to be girt about with truth. We must keep in mind that we are "lawfully subject to Christ." Subjection of our inner man to Christ is the first requisite for entrance on conflict with Satan and his hosts. I do not pursue the various parts of the armour as given us in the Epistle to the Ephesians, but remark that we can only be "overcomers" as we allow that Scripture its full possession of our souls.

We read (3) that "the Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not to Baalim, but sought to the God of his father and walked in His commandments and not after the doings of Israel." Obedience had its blessed reward—"Therefore the Lord stablished the kingdom in his hand." We may gather from all this that the maintenance of the division between Judah and Israel was still approved by Jehovah.

We are encouraged therefore to hold fast the word of the Lord and not yield to the proposals for a wider path which have appeared with frequency in the history of the Church of God. "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

In the history we see elements of danger in such a moment as is before us, from the fact "that riches and honours were in abundance with the king." Happily we read that "his heart was encouraged in the ways of the Lord." Here is our "strong tower" for safety from an ever watchful

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foe who is on the alert to bring us low and draw us away out of the narrow path. The want of continuity in man is greatly used to make inroads on saints of God, and arguments are ever at hand to enforce a change to a more popular path. At present Jehoshaphat is pursuing the only true and faithful course.

The spiritual requirements of the people are not lost sight of by the king. He sends his princes, levites and priests to teach in the cities of Judah. "They had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and they taught among the people" (8, 9). He aims at keeping his people acquainted with the will of Jehovah. An effect was produced by this course on the nations round about Judah, for we read that "the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat." A proof of the truth of the word that "when a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. xvi. 7). Nothing, however, but abiding with constant exercise of heart and earnest desire to God to keep in His way will secure against a breakdown. Evidently the king was experiencing a season of forgetfulness as to this which soon lands him in sad and manifest departure from ways of truth and uprightness.

Chap. xviii. opens with the statement that "Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab." Earthly blessings characterised the portion of the saint in that day, but separation from the enemies of God was incumbent on them also. Now, it is more imperative for saints in the present day even to desire separation from the world. "The whole world lieth in the wicked one" (1 John v. 19). "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of

the Father, but is of the world" (1 John ii. 16), and again we are told that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James iv. 4). Suffer the reminder to enter your heart dear young Christian. Conformity to the world, its maxims and ways, paralyses the mind and heart, preventing one accepting the way of the Lord.

We read of Ahab that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him," and again that "he did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him" (1 Kings xvi. 30-33). With this wicked king did Jehoshaphat join himself.

When the word of God is not ruling us in our private life we are a ready prey to Satan's seductions. How sad to find one who had begun well so easily drawn from the path of obedience, and to hear him say to the wicked king of Israel in answer to his request to go with him to Ramoth-Gilead, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people, and we will be with thee in the war" (xviii. 3).

The king of Judah is not satisfied, however, that he is taking the right course, and he suggests that the king of Israel should enquire of the Lord. Ahab gathers his prophets to the number of four hundred and asks them if he should go up. They replied as they knew their master wished them to reply, and said, "Go up: for God will deliver it into the king's hand" (verse 5). What the king of Judah required from Jehovah was salvation from a wrong position that he had got himself entangled in. But Jehoshaphat's heart was with Ahab. He had no business to have any intercourse with Ahab. The path of divine wisdom lay in entire separation. At one time doubtless the king of Judah judged what the only way should be for him to be found in, but an easy path took him aside from dependence on God and he departs from the way of truth. Let

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us learn in all this to judge our ways by the unerring word of God which never changes.

Ahab's prophets are Baal's prophets—they are Satan's servants, and Micaiah, a prophet of Jehovah, is hated by Ahab. Micaiah spake the truth. *His* Master was and is no respecter of persons. What his Master would tell him to say he would say, let the consequences be what they might to himself. The messenger who came from Ahab to this prophet of Jehovah advises him to fall in with those who had already spoken, "Micaiah replied, As the Lord liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak" (ver. 13). As he comes into the presence of the two kings he *appears* as if he is to take the evil advice given to him. But it is only in appearance. Ahab had been accustomed to Micaiah thwarting him, and when on this occasion he appears to fall in with the prophets of Baal he exclaims, "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou say nothing but the truth to me in the name of the Lord" (ver. 11). On this Micaiah waxes bold and declares, "I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains as sheep that had no shepherd: and the Lord said, These have ~~no~~ master: let them return every man to his house in peace" (10). Micaiah further declares that lying spirits (21) were acting on Ahab. "Jehovah hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these *thy* prophets. The Lord hath spoken evil against thee" (22). The servant of Jehovah is smitten for his faithfulness, and is committed to prison to be fed on bread of affliction and water of affliction until the king should return in peace (26). This he never did. Jehovah had spoken by Micaiah and his word receives the Divine confirmation in Ahab getting his death wound on the field of battle. Ahab had sought the aid of Jehoshaphat, but he put him in the place of danger. Jehoshaphat is in a wrong position, but in the hour of

danger he cried and the Lord helped him. In all ages the one common enemy of God and Christ has been at work, but we need not be afraid if only "dependent and obedient."

The prophet of Jehovah has spoken words that may well trouble the king of Israel, but he is led captive by the devil to his own destruction, and in the face of all he listened to from the lips of the prophet of the unchanging God he goes on and falls on the field of battle. He is essentially a selfish man, and cares not, though his ally falls, if he himself should escape. But he does not escape.

We reach now the moment when the king of Judah must listen to the message of rebuke by Jehu the son of Hanani. The word was short but incisive, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord" (xix. 2). The child of God may expect that when he departs from the Lord he will be chastened; this we are told will be the case that he may not be condemned with the world (1 Corin. xi. 32). Making common cause with Ahab, whose course had been markedly ungodly was a sad blemish in the course of one "in whom so much good had been found." But again and again from the teaching of Scripture and the conduct of the child of God do we learn that there is no continuity in the truth to be found in the saints of God. "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" (2 Chron. xv. 2), was the lesson set for Jehoshaphat's father to learn from the lips of another prophet of Jehovah, and the departure in the case of Asa's son finds that the word of the Lord had not changed.

Jehoshaphat at this stage (xix. 4) of his reign is considerably revived, and gives attention to the state of his kingdom. He finds there was considerable departure from Jehovah

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among his people. This was not to be wondered at, seeing he had been so far led astray as to help the ungodly king of Israel, as Ahab was, whom Jehu described as of those who hated the Lord (2). He, however, had prepared his heart to seek God (3), and having acquainted himself of the state of his people, he set judges in the land, city by city. He charged them that they were to remember that they judged not for man, but for the Lord. Jehovah had not changed. There was no iniquity with Him, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts. It was the law of God they had to administer. The chief priest's office was remembered also.

They were as a people exhorted to be of good courage and Jehovah would be with them. To God and His word the saints of God are always turned. The Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The Church has fallen from the condition it was placed in at the beginning, but until our Lord comes He will succour every one who in truth relies on Him. He remains the same. His Spirit remains with His people as at the beginning, and the word of our God remains also.

This revival was soon tested. A large army appears making their way to Jerusalem to give Jehoshaphat battle. The king of Judah's first step is again the right one. "He feared," we are told, "and set himself to seek Jehovah." He also proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. He stands in the congregation of his people, in the house of Jehovah, and makes confession of what he learned of God, their God (5-12). None was able to withstand God—and this mighty God was their God. The land they were in possession of had been given by their God to the seed of Abraham, His friend, for ever, and he earnestly entreats God to look upon the combination of foes coming against them. He entreats God to judge them, for they had no might; and they did

not know what to do, but they say "Our eyes are upon Thee." Their faith was in God. Happy condition to be found in, in the day of trial.

It was a condition that affected them all. Behold them! See the reality as it is presented to us (13). All Judah go forth to meet the enemy—no staying at home. Their little ones, their wives, and their children go with them. Reality as to their own state, and their sense of who God was, and that if God was for them they need not be afraid, was manifest. The secret of all this was, they knew the battle was God's, not theirs. The multitude, no doubt, was great, but God was greater. Again they witness the wonderful intervention of God. His name, His glory was at stake, and He heard them and saved them.

The Lord produce in His people in this day of much departure from His word the same spirit. Certainly, if we keep with Him, He will not fail us.

They think of God, measuring every opposition by God. "God and the word of His grace," as in a later day, are assured to them. If they believed in Jehovah their God they would be established; if they believed His prophets (the word) they would prosper.

For Judah this was a glorious day. It had a grand ending. They had begun with Jehovah and they finish with Him. They bless Him in the Valley of Blessing. They return to Jerusalem in triumph, and we read that the *fear* of God fell on all the kingdoms round about them when they heard that Jehovah fought against them.

How blessed if the king of Judah had finished his course in this dependent condition, but, alas! again his heart seeks fellowship with Ahaziah king of Israel. Of him we are told, "he did very wickedly" (xx. 35). May we learn to watch against the seductions of the evil one. His "wiles" we



have daily to wrestle against. There is much encouragement to be gathered by us in the life of Jehoshaphat, but there are also dark pages in his history which should operate as warning to the people of God to-day.

D. S.

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## **2 TIMOTHY III. 16, 17.**

TRUTH is always important, and its possession at all times a desirable thing. But in times of exceptional trial and difficulty its indispensability becomes more marked, and its value more enhanced to those who esteem and regard it. Amid the varying shades of darkness, through which history has conducted our benighted race, its light has ever shone for those in whose hearts it found a welcome; but the darker days have always been occasions when exceptional power and brilliancy characterised it. From the beginning, in that region of his existence where man cannot live by bread alone, this element has always been present; but periods of crisis and apostasy, when the moral atmosphere seemed charged with noxious error and falsehood, have continually emphasised the purity and wholesomeness of this constituent.

Now, of times of trial and difficulty, of days of darkness, of a period of apostacy, the beginning of this chapter speaks to us. In the "last days" they are to be present. The concluding years of the present dispensation are evidently the time referred to, when the terrible state of matters spoken of shall overspread the scene of Christian profession. But as a sudden irruption of evil we are not to imagine this civilised reproduction of heathenism. The germ and origin of it all was already present when the Apostle wrote, and, having cognisance of their presence in time for exposure of

the unholy principles, and, being given by God prophetic insight as to the culmination to which they would lead up, he was able, by the Spirit, to recommend the course to be taken as they developed, and the safeguard to be held to by the faithful. In the truth, given by God, were they to find their resource, and, as always, we may be sure the darkness, difficulty, and error around will serve to bring out in stronger relief the reliability and value of that in which they put their trust. If, then, estimation of the importance of the truth may be expected to increase in proportion to the opposition it encounters, how should we esteem it, who find ourselves at such an advanced stage in the declension and apostasy heading up in the last days. The exhortation to Timothy will not fail to suit our case; but will surely come with added force to us.

In opposition to the vacillating course of error, Timothy was recommended to continue or abide in the things he had learned. That which he had been fully persuaded was the truth of God, he was not to surrender. Remembering of whom he had learned them, of those whom God had used as the means of making the truth known, formed one of the reasons for his persuasion of their divine origin. The Scriptures, "able to make wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus," knowledge of which from childhood he had enjoyed, was the other ground of assurance.

The first, knowing of whom he had learned them, was a privilege peculiar to such as Timothy, who enjoyed personal acquaintance with the chosen vessels of New Testament revelation. To them only would this, in any special sense, appeal; although the principle abides, as John in his epistle declares—"We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

But the second assurance, the written word, is absolutely common ground. We come here to that which is permanent, the abiding standard of all that is revealed, alone possessing authority for us. This assurance of its decisiveness, this authority, from whence are they derived? The apostle, in the two last verses of the chapter, is now careful to show. He affirms two things concerning the Scriptures, the first of which decides as to their right to be heard and obeyed; the second, showing their use and benefit to those who do accept their guidance. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." True, Old Testament scripture is that which is being directly treated of; but, if we recall the fact that to the title "Scripture" New Testament writings themselves lay claim, can that claim be refuted? or the inspiration affirmed of all that comes under that title be denied to them? The profit found in the Old Testament—of which, as it has been said, the use in Hebrews is an instance for "doctrine," in Galatians for "reproof," in Corinthians for "correction," and in Romans for "instruction in righteousness"—this profitableness in surely still greater measure extends to the New.

"Every Scripture is inspired of God." A positive statement this, and a momentous one. It alone explains, while it fully guarantees the validity of their title, the "Word of God." Invalid must their claim to that title be, were they not "God breathed." Their inspiration by the Holy Spirit amply justifies everything we may affirm of them as to their perfection and infallibility. And besides assuring us of their divine origin, and therefore authority, does it not enforce also what other Scriptures teach of their generative power, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, in new birth and

spiritual life? Is not this what is already claimed for them in verse 15?—"Which are able to make thee wise unto salvation," undoubtedly, of course, only "through faith in Christ Jesus."

Further than this, their profitableness for certain purposes, needful in view of the strong current of evil and error spoken of, is assured to the man of God, to him who, in God's strength and grace, pulls against the stream. And who, that in these days takes a stand for God, even from the first step in the path of faith, does not find it so?

To such, then, we read, it is "profitable for doctrine." Teaching in spiritual things is the first and most pressing need of those whom grace secures for the Saviour. To have unfolded, in due order and proportion, the elementary truths of the gospel is the best service a young Christian can have rendered to him. To be led on to fuller acquaintance with, and appreciation of the things of God is the desire of every healthy Christian, however old, or well established in the present truth. To meet this need, from which none are exempt, the Scriptures are given.

But the minds of all are not a blank sheet, whereon the fair characters of truth may be traced. From various causes,—the lack of earnest teachers to instil the doctrine spoken of, for one thing—the enemy is often beforehand with us, and, by his deception, has obtained betimes an entrance for error, and in a surprisingly short time it becomes firmly rooted. For the disillusionment of such deceived ones, nothing can be better than the careful perusal of the Scriptures, for they are also profitable for "reproof" or rather "conviction," in the sense of disproof or refutation of that which is false. Both positively and negatively then, the word of God enlightens the path of him who seeks its rays. Has present-day Christianity, in its wisdom, outgrown

the need of this enlightenment? Or rather is it not the case that, in a day of such unparalleled activity of mind as the present, the use of the Scriptures is more than ever called for, in the way of "teaching" as preventive of, and for "reproof" as reclaiming from the error that abounds?

But its uses do not end here either, any more than the artifices of Satan for the ensnaring of God's people are exhausted when mere orthodoxy of belief is secured for them. The abuse and perversion of that, from whose living power our poor hearts have, for some reason, withdrawn themselves, necessitate often the adoption of a sterner tone, and on the suited occasion the "correction" needed is administered by that word, which besides containing "the comfort of the Scriptures," is at the same time "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword . . . a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

"Righteousness," too, is a subject we must have light upon. We have it not by nature inwardly, nor is the walk naturally characteristic of us one of righteousness. Far otherwise. But from the word we learn, as part of the "instruction" unobtainable from any other source, that "we have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," and, following the directions of the word, in the path to which that new nature inclines, we are instructed or disciplined in righteousness. The end in view of all that discipline to which His word subjects us, often with the accompaniment of His governmental dealings with us, is just this, the yielding of the peaceable fruits of righteousness. For the breastplate of righteousness could not be on, were the loins not girt about with truth.

The "man of God" is thus neither left to fall a victim to his own inherent weakness, nor imperfectly provided for;

but to enable him to maintain perfectly the character and deportment that title implies, the Scriptures are given, receiving and holding which he is "thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

To earnest attention to the word of God this passage therefore calls us. The character of our times increases its importance to us. The inspiration affirmed of it commends it as a reliable safeguard. Its profitableness for the purposes stated assures us of help in those matters in which the combat is likely to discover to us our deficiency.

J. T.

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## **PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING.**

Two men of God in the prison of Rome were anxiously praying for the saints at Colosse, whose spiritual condition was such as caused them much sorrow of heart and exercise before God, for the enemy had succeeded in turning the Colossians aside from Christ to "philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world." These men were the Apostle Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Epaphras, one of the Colossians (Col. i. 7; iv. 12), who was styled by the Apostle a fellow-servant (i. 7) and a fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus (Philemon 23). Not only were these two united in prayer for saints dear to both, but the Apostle was led by the Spirit of God to pen the Epistle to the Colossians in order to correct them and turn them again to Christ.

The whole tenor of the Epistle shows how seriously the Apostle looked upon their defection. He could see that, since they were occupied with ordinances and philosophy, they had no longer a single eye to Christ, and therefore they were, as he says, "not holding the Head." This is why he

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expresses himself in chap. i. 28 as preaching Christ, "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom ; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." For the same reason he exhorts them, " As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him " (chap. ii. 6). In other words he insists that they must walk by faith, and will not allow them to seek to be perfected by the philosophy of the world on the one hand, or its religion on the other. " For," he adds, " in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in Him," etc. (chap. ii. 9, 10).✓

What encouragement we receive from these two servants ! Both are engaged in ministry towards the Colossian saints, one in written, the other in spoken ministry. But this is not sufficient. Both labour in earnest prayer for the same object, viz., " that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God " (chap. iv. 12) ; " that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," etc. (chap. i. 9). This does not mean that they had lost their true standing and blessings as saints. Oh, no ; they had faith in the Lord Jesus and love to all the saints. Their standing before God and their relationship to Him could not be affected by their declension, but their sense of these blessings, their apprehension of what Christ was to them was affected by their declension, and as a consequence they could not in their walk give a true representation of Christ to the world. Thus had the enemy succeeded in impairing their walk, their fruitfulness, and their growth as Christians, and hence it is that Paul and Epaphras in prison unite in prayer for their restoration to Christ.

But not only does the Apostle pray for them ; he also *gives thanks* for them. We should not fail to consider that

point. The prison had not lessened the confidence which the Apostle had in God any more than it had his joy. Indeed we might almost say both were increased by his imprisonment, so that he is himself an example of "being strengthened unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." He can, therefore, always and in everything give thanks. Not so, alas! the Colossians. How far they were conscious of their declension we cannot say, but this we know, that they were not in the happy condition that results in "thanksgiving," for they had frequently to be reminded to "give thanks" (see chaps. ii. 7; iii. 15, 17; iv. 2).

Coming to the Apostle's prayer, we observe that he does not pray that the Colossians should be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, or that they should be brought into the kingdom. These blessings were what made the Apostle give thanks, because the Colossians already possessed them, even though their condition might prevent them from the full enjoyment of them. But what he does pray for is that they "might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," and this in view of a walk "worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." We must know His will if our walk worthily represents Him to those around. If we are to be able to please Him, surely we must have a full knowledge of His will. For this we need a single eye to Christ, a heart occupied with Him, and a will subject to Him. Thus we go to the word for an acquaintance with His will. Filled with the knowledge of it, we have no doubt, no hesitancy, but positive walking in His way, pleasing Him, bearing fruit and growing by the knowledge of the Lord. How much in keeping with this is the word of the Psalmist, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the



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horse or the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee" (Ps. xxxii. 8, 9).

"Worthy of the Lord," is the word here. Elsewhere we find "worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called"; "worthy of God who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory." (Eph. iv. 1; 1 Thess. ii. 12). Here we notice that the Apostle is led to put the Lord Himself before the saints, as the all-sufficient One, and as the One whose practical ways they are to reflect. As a result we have fruitfulness in every good work, and growth by the knowledge of God, so that the saint under these conditions, like the blessed Lord Himself, "bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." (Ps. i. 3).

There follows in the prayer language that implies fulness of strength. The saint needs to be switched on, if we may so speak, to the divine source. "Strengthened," we read, "with all might, according to the power of His glory." What a store of power have we here for the weakest of saints! And each may draw from this infinite resource. But mark what it is for. It is not to work miracles, nor to accomplish great things, not even to engage in energetic Christian work; it is "unto all patience (or endurance) and long-suffering with joyfulness." Suffering more than anything else, I think, marks the believer's pathway in this world. Long-suffering he most surely should display in a scene of evil. We are linked on with this source of power in order to endure and show all long-suffering with joyfulness.

From what we have been considering it will be seen that Paul and Epaphras were in full harmony in praying for the saints at Colosse. They appear as answering to the con-

ditions of Matt. xviii, 19. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven," and we may safely conclude that they were heard and their requests answered. But there is another way in which the renewed heart expresses itself besides by prayer. "Behold he prayeth," was said of Saul of Tarsus (Acts ix, 11). Prayer is the turning to God and crying to Him, it may be from a sense of trouble, but in any case, from a sense of need and dependence on Him. In keeping with this James says "Is any afflicted? Let him pray." But he adds, giving us the other way in which we unburden our hearts, "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." Here God is still before the soul, and tempers our joy, while He delights to receive our thanksgiving, which is the expression of a heart made glad by Himself. In the fiftieth Psalm we find a people full of their own resources, self-satisfied and bringing offerings to God in great abundance. God finds fault. He does not want such sacrifices. What was the abundance of sheep and goats to One who possessed the cattle on a thousand hills? They must learn the first lesson, and that is deliverance in the day of trouble (verse 15). It is equal to saying "learn your need, receive from Me, and offer thanksgiving." Read vv. 14, 23: "Offer unto God thanksgiving." "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me."

Now this is what we have in the portion before us. Elsewhere the Apostle points out that they should engage in this exercise, implying that they were not doing so. Here he is an example to them. He offers thanksgiving for blessings which these Colossians possessed in common with all saints. "Giving thanks unto the Father"—this showed that they were children, that a birth tie had been formed. They had given to them the right to be called children of God,

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even to them that believed on His name (John i. 12). But more: they had received the adoptions of sons, had the Spirit of His Son in their hearts teaching them the children's cry, "Abba." They had the feelings and intelligence of children. But more follows—"Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (verse 12). Of this portion Paul speaks elsewhere. The saints inheritance, according to Eph. i, embraces both heaven and earth; while Peter looks specially at the heavenly portion in the first chapter of his epistle. Here the question is not its locality, nor the entering upon it, which is evidently future, but moral fitness for the inheritance in light. And—what is remarkable—we are said to be "made meet" for it now. This meetness implies a spiritual work in us, including the reception of eternal life and the Spirit of God, indeed all that is meant by new creation, as we find it in 2 Cor. v. 17: "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation" (see R.V. margin). The atoning sacrifice of Christ has met our guilt, and we know all our sins are borne away, never to be imputed to us. Thus cleansed from all sin in virtue of a work done outside of us, we are made meet to be partakers. And we should notice that we are not called upon to pray for this. We cannot be made more meet, but we can pray that we may have a fuller apprehension of what the blood of Christ has done for us.

Next, he gives thanks for "deliverance from the power of darkness." This also is a completed act. Just as Israel was delivered from Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and had the Red Sea put between them and their oppressors, so are we delivered from Satan's authority, and taken clean out of the sphere in which he rules. His kingdom is well designated "darkness." "Translated," we read "into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (R.V.). The portion of the saints is

“in light,” and the kingdom into which we are brought is that of the Son of His love. We recognise the authority of Christ and that marked by a name that shows the new element into which we are introduced—love. Under the old regime it was unknown in its true sense, now it is the element that pervades the new sphere. We are led to own the Son of His love as Saviour and Lord, we are taught subjection to Christ’s claims in grace.

But further we read: “In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” We are familiar with the meaning of redemption in connection with the condition of a slave. One may purchase a slave without any consequent change being made in his condition. But if the slave is purchased in order to set him free, that is redemption. The Lord has purchased the whole world. “He tasted death for everything” (Heb. ii. 9). Those who by grace have been led to believe on Him as their own personal Saviour are not only purchased but redeemed. As purchased, He has a claim on them, because “bought with a price,” they should glorify God in their body which is His. As redeemed, they are set free to serve Him and answer to the claim which purchase gives Him over them. But redemption includes “forgiveness of sins,” and also—though that is not asserted here—justification. The wondrous relief which this means gives us to understand in some measure how we are set free to serve Him. God will never call us to account for our sins. He has forgiven them—all of them. “Forget not His benefits,” said the Psalmist, “who forgiveth *all* thine iniquities.” “Why,” we asked of an old woman, “does the Psalmist mention this one first?” “Because,” was the reply, “it is the greatest.” We shall ever praise Him that, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.”

A. S. F.

## AN OBJECT IN LIFE.

An object is anything thrown in our way to arrest attention—something presented to the mind or heart to awaken interest or to excite the feelings. It may therefore serve one of two purposes: either to impede progress, or to so captivate the heart or mind as to ensure or facilitate it. Numberless are the objects with which our pathway, through this life, is strewn; some of which attract us but momentarily; others impress or occupy the mind for periods varying much in length; others again yield constant and absorbing interest. Diverse and complex, also, are the effects of these objects around us upon our senses, feelings, and conceptions. Every chord which the heart possesses is, at one time or other, struck; hence joy, sorrow, hope, despondency, hilarity, depression, certainty, suspense. Rapid, varied and often extraneous are the modulations of the music of a human heart! Many an object is but a weight—often a salutary weight—for the back; whilst other objects arouse, to a greater or less degree, the passions of the heart. And it is well to discriminate as to this; for we are called upon to “Keep the heart *with all diligence*; for out of it are the issues of life.” Who is there among mortals without a burden to the back; without a desire of the heart. It is important, I repeat it, to consider what objects form the burden of the back, and what bring into play the desires of the heart. Take one example: our business. Where does that find its lodgment? On the back as its burden, or upon the heart as its object? But whence these objects? From God or Satan? To work for our daily

bread is absolutely necessary and right (Gen. iii. 19)—it is the burden, laid by God, upon our back; and for the heart He has presented one blessed Object: “*This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*” (Mat. iii. 17). The thousand other objects which press around us are, most surely, permitted by God, in order to test our hearts, but who casts them there? Is it not the devil? Indeed it is worthy of note, that the very name “devil” has its derivation in a word signifying “to throw across”; and is he not ever throwing things athwart our pathway either to stumble or to beguile our hearts, that we may *not* fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith? (Heb. xii. 2.) May we take heed to this!

Now most men have what is called an “object in life.” They form some inward resolve to achieve some act, to embark in some enterprise, or to rise to some position. They are ambitious in a cause which they, perhaps, deem correct. But what avails it in the end, though success crown their efforts, if not measured according to God’s unerring standard? If riches be the summit, the attained summit too, of their ambition (like men of the world who have their portion in this life, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes, Psalm xvii. 14), “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark viii. 36); or if it be knowledge, “it shall vanish away” (1 Cor. xiii); if it be glory as men count glory: “all the glory of man is as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away” (1 Pet. i. 24); if it be to *make a name*, the history of Gen. xi. should serve as a solemn warning (see verse 4). Many a time have men, according to their own measurement of things, reached the goal of their aspirations, and man’s “book of remem-

brance"—his scroll of fame, is filled with their names. Poets, historians, orators, statesmen, heroes of the sword, pioneers of commerce and civilisation, are there recorded by the hundred. And what of all this blaze of human greatness? "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke xvi. 15). "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God *only*?" (John v. 44). What a judgment upon all that man delights in, aspires to, and honours! But God, as well as man, has a "book of remembrance." For whom is that? All praise and glory to Him! it is for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name, "and they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels" (Mal. iii.) His jewels, His "special treasure" (as the margin reads) in eternal glory, delighting in the things of God, when all the honours which man has heaped on man have long since perished. Cry, O saint of God, burdened and troubled as you may be by many perplexities, "Hallelujah." Let your shout for joy rise above your wail of sorrow, for though despised and spurned you are one of His jewels, a special treasure to Himself, an object of His everlasting delight.

And what of him who has chosen God's beloved Son as his Object in (as well as of) life? The Apostle Paul, than whom, perhaps, no more intelligent or learned man ever trod this earth, was such an one. What does he say, after years of intense suffering for Christ? "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. iii. 7, 8.) This was no hollow sentiment, but a stern and blessed reality, with him. From

a prison cell enduring, who can say, what agonies under one of the most cruel tyrants that have ever lived, with death, a martyr's death, close at hand, does this beloved man send this striking message. It comes like a sweet melody, proceeding not from lips, nor from the point of an iron pen, but from a heart made tender by long experience of the matchless and unchangeable love of Christ, and softened by sorrows such as few (if any) men have ever passed through. In Christ he had found unsearchable riches; in Him, too, he had learnt by the Spirit of God, are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. ii.); and a glory was his which could never fade (John xvii.); and so far from making a name for himself, he knew but one, and that was Christ—for "Christ was all" (Col. iii. 11). In short, his whole life, since his conversion, may be summed up in his own words: "For to me to live is Christ."

Reader, what is *your* "object in life"?

A. C. H.

If we knew more of Christ's sympathies, the children of God might have more for one another. If full of sorrow yourself, go and sympathise with another, and your own will be gone.

I SHALL find One in heaven nearer and dearer to my heart than any one I know on earth. Nothing is so near to us as the Christ that is in us, and nothing is so near to God as Christ.

PEOPLE complain that there is little outward power in their walk. Ah! that is because they are receiving so little from Christ.



**THOUGHTS ON JOB.**

God whose purpose is only disclosed at the end in the profit done to Job's soul (though His being the source of all is revealed), leaves Job, in a measured way, in the hand of the adversary for temptation and trial. Such is the scene and spring of action from within. But all comes on Job from without by apparently ordinary causes. The predatory hords of Sabeans, Chaldeans, and the like, make razzias on his flocks and herds—a violent wind from the desert throws down his house when his children are feasting—and at last a disease of the country attacks his own body—rapidly accumulated, no doubt; but all ordinary events however trying.

What was Job's own character? He was a godly, upright, gracious man, fearing God, eschewing evil, and gracious with those around him. Why should evils, if there be a Divine government, fall on such an one? If this world be simply the present manifestation of Divine government as such, then, indeed, it would be incredible. But though Providence overrules all, and God delights to bless even temporarily, and though in result, when He takes to Him His own great power and rules, the blessing of the righteous will fully arrive; yet now, in a world of sin, He is carrying on another purpose—*the perfecting of saints for the full enjoyment of Himself*. This, since sin and will are come in, is wrought in two ways—judgment of self, and submission to God.

Now Job needed, and God saw that he needed this. He was gracious and pious, but he did not know himself; and he had never so seen God as to be brought to a real knowledge of himself in His presence. God deals therefore with

him in a way to bring his sinfulness fully out, and then places him with it manifested to himself in His own presence. Job had acted well, for grace had acted in him; but he did not know himself before God. Thus he speaks: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me. Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him, the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness and it clothed me; my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor; and the cause that I knew not, I searched out." All very right and gracious; but was it all that was in Job's heart? What did the thinking of it do? What did it show? Men waited for Job no doubt. But where was Job's heart? What was it? Well, God allows Satan, in his malice, to sweep all away; and here more good is displayed. He is patient in his sorrow: he blesses God, and bows his head to Him who gave and saw fit to take away.

But Job's heart was not yet reached. Its reflections on itself there was nothing to change. Men would have said: "What more can you want than grace in prosperity, and patience in adversity?" Such a knowledge of myself as makes God everything to me, and me morally capable of enjoying Him. Had God stopped here, though outwardly preparation had been made, Job would have been better pleased with himself than ever. Had God restored him now, mischief would have been done. Satan had done all he could. His friends arrive, and sympathy or shame (for God will have His blessed work fully done) reveals Job to himself; and he, who has become the type of patience, curses the day in which he was born.

The surface is broken through, and Job and his friends, too, come out in their reality. His friends take the ground of the present, certain government of God manifest in all His ways; in which they are wholly and in every sense wrong. Did He directly govern, He could allow no sin at all. He who could suppose this present world the expression of the just and adequate results of God's character in government, must have an awful idea of God Himself.

In Job two things are brought out—an unbroken, impatient will, which set up to judge God, and say that he was more righteous than He; but, at the same time, a heart which had a sense of relationship with God, though in rebellion against Him, and writhing under His hand—a perception of qualities in God which showed a personal knowledge of Himself, which only longed to find Him, and knew when he did He should find Him such. There was that confidence in Him, that he counted upon His heart towards him. When he can get rid of the stupid importunities of his moralising and heartless friends, he turns to cry after God with an “O that I might find Him”! In justice, he sees it is no use. How can a man plead with God? But in heart he will trust Him if He slays him.

Nothing can be more beautiful than the way he turns thus, casting aside his friends as he may, to throw himself into the arms of Gods, if he could only find Him. But all was not ready yet; the confidence would be sustained, but the will must be broken—self-complacency destroyed. In this process all manner of feelings come out—impatience presumptuously arraigning God, acknowledging present government in pious justification of his ways, clearly proving that it was no present adequate proof of what God thought of a man, a deep, personal heart-sense of what God is, expressed in confidence in Him. The heart was fully

exercised, its evils brought out, its good, its faith in God brought into play ; but the riddle was not yet solved.

Elihu then comes in, an interpreter "one among a thousand," and brings in this truth—that God deals personally with man. A general superintending government no doubt there is—a God that judgeth the earth ; but there is another kind of government—that of souls. He turns man from his purpose. He hides pride from man. He hideth not His eyes from the righteous. They are with kings ; but He binds them in affliction and cords of iron, to show them their works, their transgressions that they have exceeded. He chastens and restores. He governs with a view to blessing. He was not God to terrify Job ; yet Job could not answer when God, acting in respect of an unjudged conscience and unsubdued heart, was brought out.

Yet while judging the conscience, and shewing the sin of the will and pride of heart, such reasoning shewed God's active condescending, pains-taking grace to a soul that had the integrity that was found in Job. Thus God's *ways* were revealed by the interpreter and self-righteousness totally set aside. Still one thing remained, where gracious ways had softened the heart of the wilful one for submission. God's own majesty was to be revealed to shew Job his utter folly—worms and sinners that we are. Hence God is displayed in majesty and power, and Job acknowledges his vileness, first by shutting his mouth before God—staying his presumptuous words, and then opening it in unfeigned confession before the gracious God who dealt with him, in whose presence he now stood in a truth and reality he had never been in before. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Then God can fully bless him, and pardon his friends, putting each in his place.

These were, so to speak, the parties in question—self-righteousness referring to present government now ; a saint, yet unsubdued and not knowing himself as a poor sinner before God ; and the God of majesty with whom they all had to do.

J. N. D.

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## RECONCILIATION.

THE subject of reconciliation is an important one, and it is of real consequence that every believer should learn what Scripture teaches with regard to it. Much of theological teaching is founded upon misapprehension, and serves to present a false view of the blessed God. Before the need for reconciliation arose there must have been at some time or other friendship, and then there must have come in by some means an estrangement, alienation, separation, and even enmity and hatred. Sometimes alienation arises between friends by misconception and misunderstanding, and it is often brought about by the tongue of slander. Sometimes, too, reconciliation is effected by the intervention of a third party or person who is able to clear up the whole subject, and thus remove the wrong thoughts and re-establish former conditions between those who had become estranged.

We are, however, now concerned to learn what the word of God teaches about the subject of sinners becoming reconciled to God ; for we must bear in mind that the alienation is entirely on man's side—all the enmity, all the hatred, all the hard thoughts, all the running away, is from us. God the Creator ever was and ever is the best and truest friend that man, His creature, ever had or ever could have. The mischief was wrought in the Garden of Eden by the tongue of slander. The serpent first insinuated to Eve that God

was withholding great blessing from man ; and having gained her ear, he lied to her, and flatly contradicted the word of God. Well might the Son of God say of him, " When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own ; for he is a liar and the father of it." Eve believed the lie, and lost her confidence in God. She disobeyed God's command and tempted Adam, who weakly succumbed to her influence, and from that moment the lie has lived and prospered in the hearts and minds of each member of the race of which they were the parents.

A whole fabric of lies, an entirely false view of God, so lives in the heart of man, coupled with fear of Him as a Judge. Men think Him often vindictive and cruel, yet hate Him all the more for every clear display of grace. Sin has so clouded the mind, so darkened the understanding, that what is known of God is perverted, and twisted, and made to say the opposite of what is the truth. Who can deal with all this? One, and One only, and that is God. Never has He lost interest in His creature. Never has He ceased to care for, and to love him. God becomes the Reconciler. No third person is needed to bring about a change in His heart and mind ; for He is not in need of reconciliation. He must, however, deal with the whole question of sin. Its existence in His dominions is a grave dishonour to Him. He is morally bound to deal with it and to remove it.

But how will He deal with the sinner in his alienation and hatred? He will send His beloved Son. The only begotten Son of God comes into the world as a man. We can view Him as a man, but God was in Him. Paul writes in 2 Cor. v. : " God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them ; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." What

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a wonderful fact is this! God was on earth, God was in Christ, not to judge and condemn, not to impute trespass, but to win the heart of man back to confidence in God. But men would not be reconciled. They spurned all the advances of God in grace, and at last crucified God's Son. Now comes the supreme action of God's love. For that death of God's Son, which was the crowning act of man's hatred against God, was also the gift in purest grace on God's part to meet the sinner's deepest need. God's love and man's hate meet in the death of Christ. Man's wicked animosity against God is fully shown. God's infinite pity, compassion and love are perfectly displayed. And where this becomes apparent to a sinner, he becomes overwhelmed with the magnificence of God's love. He simply cannot hold out any longer, but prostrates himself in utter amazement and with deepest self-aborrence before God, believing the love of God at last. He is reconciled to God by the death of His Son. God it was who laid sins upon Jesus. God it was who delivered Him for our offences. It was for sinners Christ died. It was for those who had no strength to serve God, and who were enemies and ungodly. All was done in love, without even a prayer on the sinner's part. What love! How irresistible! It crushes the enmity. It wins the confidence. It produces love. It turns the heart into an instrument of sweet music to God's ears, and God's Holy Spirit comes to dwell in the reconciled one and sheds the love of God abroad in his heart, bearing witness, too, with his spirit that he is a child of God. The holiness of God's nature compelled Him to deal with our sins, but His love provided all that was required. So we read: "For He (God) hath made Him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. v. 21).

So far we have looked at reconciliation in connection with persons, but Scripture also speaks of the reconciliation of things. We shall find it stated very clearly in Col. i. 19, 20: "For it pleased (the Father) that in Him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace by the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." A correct translation makes the passage clearer. It runs thus: "For in Him all the fulness was pleased to dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things unto itself, having made peace by the blood of His cross—by Him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens." This is to be the glorious outcome of Calvary, and will find its complete fulfilment in the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; for then shall all material things now defiled by sin be made to accord with the pure and holy nature of God. The blood, the death of God's Son, is the basis. All the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him, and the work is here viewed as being that of the Godhead. A divine work surely, and Christ's death the means for accomplishing it.

But He who was the Christ was also God. He was both divine and human. In Heb. i. He is spoken of as purging sins *by Himself*. A work this, which only He who was God could do, but had He not become man this work could not have been accomplished. As a work it was divine, but effected surely by blood, even as our consciences are said in chap. ix. to be purged by the blood of Christ. So here it is by blood, the blood of Christ. Blood properly is not divine but human. He who was God became a man that He might be thus capable of dying, shedding His blood to purge sins. In Heb. i. He Himself does all: Blood shedding is involved—death, resurrection, ascension, all His own work.



He gives His life, He dies, He rises from the dead, He ascends and takes His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high. God only could do all this, yet was the purging of sins effected by means of blood. Human it was, but as being the blood of Him who was and is God, God the Son, its virtue, its moral worth cannot be separated from His glorious person.

Col. i. then views reconciliation as the work of the whole of the Godhead, effected by Him in whom all the fulness was pleased to dwell. All are concerned to remove every trace of sin. Surely we can see that the reconciliation of things is still future, whilst that of persons is a present fact, for, adds the Apostle, in verse 21: "And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled, in the body of His flesh through death." Presentation is future. When that takes place we shall be holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in God's sight; not only enmity gone, but all gone that witnesses of sin, and we shall be in the condition marked out in the counsels of God before the world was, "Holy and without blame before Him in love" (Eph. i. 4). The reconciliation of persons as a present fact deals with the heart and mind; but we take it that in its full scope it embraces the material as well as the moral or spiritual part of our persons. We shall be like Him. Blessed prospect! for we shall see Him as He is.

E. R. W.

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"To Him that loveth us and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto His God and Father: to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

## SITTING AT HIS FEET AND HEARING HIS WORD.

WHAT was it that led up to the attitude and occupation of Mary of Bethany as she sat at the feet of the Lord and listened to His words? What conduced to the quiet, restful composure so strikingly brought out in the picture at the end of Luke x.? Why she had taken in the lesson given us, not only in the man who fell among thieves, though a deeply instructive and important one, but in the part taken by the journeying Samaritan. He came *where the man was*: and when he saw him, had compassion on him, went to him, and bound up the wounds of one in the most helpless and (but for this timely aid) most hopeless and deplorable case possible. Then, having poured in oil and wine, he put him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, where, besides caring for him, he made arrangements for the future, intimating that he would return and clear up every indebtedness.

Mary had learned that a heart pent up with grace and compassion must have its outlet. The journeying Samaritan was fully prepared for the emergency, and nothing needful was lacking in that ambulance.

Mary had learned, too, that ready acceptance of proffered help, and real appreciation of favour shown, was not so undignified, since it reflected such credit on the Bestower. For, after all, this is the grand point, and to revel in the grace of the Lord, as it shines out in the doings of the Samaritan, which follows so closely the declaration of the universal sovereignty (by gift) of the Son, whose Person is an impenetrable mystery to all except the Father. What a subject!

Yes; to sit at the feet of the Lord, and receive from His

hands or lips, is to be conscious, like one of old, that "the less is blessed of the greater"; and to be a listener at His feet is an everlasting portion assigned those who are attracted to, and satisfied with One who, whilst here, had not where to lay His head. Wondrous, wondrous grace!

The moral order in which parable and picture, figure and illustration are linked and grouped together in this part of Luke's Gospel is very marked, and, I was going to say, drives us to the conclusion that self-abdication is indispensable to healing and sustaining—for sinner or for saint, for that poor man or for Mary; and to see ourselves in the former is the sure way to obtaining the portion of the latter.

J. P.

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## THE COMFORT OF PRAISE.

*"I will bless the Lord at all times."*

To "praise the Lord for His goodness" is comforting music in every garden of grief. If we fix our thoughts on the many blessings He gives us, we shall think less on those He withholds. If we praise Him for what He is as well as for what He gives, we shall feel more sure that the sorrows He ordains are themselves reasons for thanksgiving.

It is easier to pray than to praise; because we are more conscious of our wants than of our wealth, of our pains than of our pleasures, of the moment when the stream of enjoyment is interrupted than of the hours during which it flows with unrippled surface. We pray for what we want more than praise for what we have. Praise belongs to a higher order of devotion than the mere asking for favours. Praise is the life of heaven, and saints on earth may share the privilege. The Bible enjoins it, the example of believers

encourages it, the Divine Spirit in the heart prompts it. If saints of old said, "I will sing praise to my God while I have my being," shall not we, even when most sorrowing, bless the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus"? . . . . .

Patience under trial becomes easy while we bless the Lord who sends it. How can we be murmuring at or distrusting Him whom we are praising? It must also needs guard us from temptations which might plunge us into greater grief than that of affliction. We cannot be engaged in breaking God's laws when engaged in God's praise. A superior homage will prevent degrading alliances. Genuine praise produces genuine gladness. The exercise and expression of gratitude are in their own nature pleasurable; how emphatically so when the object is God. When we praise "we rejoice in the Lord;" and "the joy of the Lord is our strength." The happier we are in Him, the more patient in trial, brave in difficulty, diligent in service.

But when are we to bless the Lord? David says, "I will bless the Lord at all times." But suppose our hopes are disappointed, our requests denied, has He changed? If at all times we may say, "Father;" if Jesus is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" if at all times He intercedes, and is preparing mansions for us, and if at all times the Holy Spirit is our Comforter, should we not bless Him at all times? If the promise is true, "When thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee," in these rivers we will bless the Lord! So long as the word stands, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," we will never leave off praising Him. If "all things work together for good," then in all things, painful or pleasant, we will praise Him. Daniel, when he knew that the decree was signed, "kneeled upon his

knees three times a day and gave thanks before his God." Paul and Silas, in the inner prison, at midnight, "sang praises unto God." The great Apostle, awaiting martyrdom, wrote from Rome, "The Lord will preserve me to His heavenly kingdom, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." God's saints, in all ages, have blessed the Lord at all times. So will we.

When not a ray lightens the path, and I know not where my next footstep may fall, in the midnight of anxiety and grief, as well as in the noontide of confidence and joy, I will bless the Lord! In the winter of fog and frost, when bitter winds of disappointment chill the heart, and the streams of consolation are frozen, and the ground is iron, and the heavens lead, and the garden is without a flower, and the tree without a leaf; as well as in the springtide of blossoms, and the summer of roses, and the autumn of rich harvests and fruits, I will bless the Lord. Amid the raging tempest, when lightnings gleam through the rifted clouds, and thunders make the mountains tremble, and wild waves threaten to overwhelm my frail bark; as when the sky is cloudless, and not a ripple disturbs the smoothness of the sea, I will bless the Lord. When the trumpet calls to war and the conflict is fierce, and I have to fight for very life, as well as at the festal banquet of spiritual joy, I will bless the Lord.—*Extracted.*

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THERE is nothing I feel more in going out to visit than the desire that Christ should be so there, that the thing should come out that would come out of Christ—not my own thoughts. We do not know half how blessed it is to have the mind of Christ; but the mind of Christ was to go down to the cross.

**THE HUMANITY OF THE LORD JESUS.**

JOURNEYING on foot, it would be not earlier than some time on the second day after leaving Jerusalem, that the Lord could have reached Sychar. Then wearied with His journey, He sat thus, *i.e.*, as He was on (or by) the well. It was about the sixth hour. The sun would be at its height; not long, if at all, after noon. Alone was He there, the disciples having gone to the city to buy food. And now the deep need for His passing through Samaria, and for His sitting by the well, was to become apparent. But He was weary with His journey—a note this is marking His true real humanity.

Of the Son of Man being in heaven whilst upon earth we have learnt in the previous chapter (iii. 13). Now, though Divine, and therefore in heaven, He was truly a man upon earth. This mystery of His person none of us can fathom (Matt. xi. 27). Nor are we asked to do it. We have to believe it. “Perfect God, and perfect Man: of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting”—such has been the language of confession of the Western part of Christendom for many an age. Now there are some conditions incident to humanity. There are in addition others connected with *fallen* humanity, such as liability to sickness, to decay, and even to death. To these last, of course, the holy Son of God was not, though a man, subject; yet, as being a man, He was able to die, and willingly gave up His life for His people. But to sickness and bodily decay, as the Holy One, in whom was no sin, He was not, and could not have been subject.

On the other hand, from conditions incident to humanity, as hunger, thirst and weariness, He was not exempt. In the wilderness He was hungry. On the cross He was

thirsty. Here at the well He was weary. Into what circumstances, then, had He voluntarily come, and that in obedience and love to His Father, and in love to His own sheep! He, by whom the worlds were made, was sitting a weary man by Jacob's well, and there at first alone. One word from the throne, and the whole angelic host would have flown to minister to Him. That word was not spoken. For God's purposes of grace to souls in Samaria were to be worked out at Sychar.

C. E. S.

*From Tracings from the Gospel of John.*

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### SCOPE OF EZEKIEL'S PROPHECY.

THE structure of the book is evident. The first half consists of prophecies in strict chronological order before the final destruction of Jerusalem, when Zedekiah brought on himself the just punishment of his rebellion and perjury (ch. i.-xxiv.). Ezekiel shows, under magnificent symbols followed up by the plainest charges of sin, the hopelessness of every effort to shake off the Babylonish yoke, which Zedekiah was essaying through Egypt. But no; it was Jehovah who was judging Jerusalem, He who dwelt between the cherubims, though He might employ Nebuchadnezzar. Morally, it could not be otherwise. The doom of the city, temple, king, and people are all shown in this first half.

The second opens with a kind of parenthetical transition in which he denounces seven objects of judgment among the nations surrounding or near the land, neglecting the time when these burdens were delivered, and grouping them in moral unity (xxv.-xxxii.); after which the prophet recurs distinctly to Israel, opens the individual ground on which God henceforth would deal with them (ch. xxxiii.), denounces

first the guilty shepherds or princes (xxxiv.), and then the hatred of mount Seir (xxxv.), next pledges first the moral (xxxvi.) and then the corporate (xxxvii.) restoration of all Israel, the overthrow of Gog and all his hosts (xxxviii.-xxxix.), and finally the return of the glory of God, with the re-established sanctuary, ritual, and priesthood in the land, now indeed holy, as well as the re-arrangement of the twelve-tribed nationality under the prince; for the name of the city from that day shall be Jehovah-shammah (the Lord is there). (*Chaps. xl.-xlviii*).

Whether in judgment or in peaceful blessing, it is the day of Jehovah for the earth, not at all the foreshown blessedness of Christianity as the allegorists teach. Such doctrine is misleading and a delusion. These extremes meet in the common error which robs Christ and the church of that answer to His heavenly glory which it is the Holy Spirit's function now to make good here below, and which shall be enjoyed yet more, yea perfectly, when the Lord shall have come, changing our bodies into his likeness, and causing us to appear with Him in the heavenly glory of that day.

—*Notes on Ezekiel.*

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ONE danger for Christians, at the present moment, is the desire for stimulants in teaching. This also characterised Israel (Amos ii. 11). But stimulants are not food, but in the end, they create a distaste for it. They serve only to excite the imagination, intellect, or nature, and never reach the conscience or the heart. The evidence of this desire is the itching ear (2 Tim. iv. 3). Christ, and Christ alone, is the food of His people.

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IF I can fathom God's heart, I can fathom grace.



## THE ELECTION.

*“What is Man.”*—Psalm viii.

To answer this question, may I ask your attention to a few Scriptures? You will notice when the work accomplished by our Redeemer is spoken of that though the DEATH, the CROSS, the BLOOD of Christ are used to express it, they are not confounded as synonymous, but are accurately employed by the Holy Spirit. For instance, in Romans, we read of our being “dead to sin,” “dead to the law.” Why? Because the *death* of Christ, followed of course by His resurrection, settles the question (see Rom. vi., 3, 8–11). If you desire to be acquainted with God’s thoughts of being IN CHRIST, read the words He has selected on this subject between chap. v. 11, and viii. 4. These, obeyed from the heart, will give you an intelligence of His ways that you have possibly lacked since you professed your faith in Jesus as your Saviour.

In the Epistle to the Galatians, where resurrection is only once mentioned, and that in the first verse, we find apostolic instruction with regard to “deliverance from this present evil world” (chap. i. 4), and note that in this Epistle from beginning to end the *cross* is before us.

Now the Cross according to 1 Cor. i. is the balance of the sanctuary, whereby all things must be weighed by those who are waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and have been called by God into the fellowship of His Son. By it the wisdom and the strength of man are found to be vain; for it still pleases God by the foolishness of the preaching of the Cross to show that “the foolishness of

God is wiser than men," and "the weakness of God stronger than men." So that we may well enquire with the Psalmist, "What is man?" and recall the "Cease ye from man" of Isa. ii., 22.

An important challenge to the man *in Christ* is given by the writer of the Epistle to the Galatians, when he calls attention to the source of his authority, "Neither of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from among the dead."

The word "bewitched," in chap. iii., is another challenge to those who, having had the Cross before them in the simplicity and extent of apostolic ministry, had then turned to law for the rule of life. In chap. iv. we are taken to the earthly metropolis, Jerusalem. We cannot forget that God's politics, as given through Daniel the prophet, will end in the judgment of the kingdoms of this age, but the present purpose of God based upon the resurrection and ascension of Christ is that we may be lifted up from the earthly to the heavenly Jerusalem, here said to be "our mother," and in contrast with which we are shown the bondage of the earthly under the system of the law given through Moses. Practical deliverance from this bondage is seen to be in the power of the Cross (chap. v. 11-24; vi. 14).

From history we know that when this Epistle was written Jerusalem was soon to be destroyed by the Romans. As a fact, too, the Jewish nation had been subjected to the Gentiles ever since the day when Nebuchadnezzar burned the temple and carried the elect nation captive to Babylon; but we still await the accomplishment of this king's vision (Dan. ii.), when "the stone cut out from the mountain without hands" shall strike the feet of the image, and all the Gentile powers represented by it, Chaldean, Persian, Grecian, and Roman, shall come to destruction.

The Jews accentuated the motto of the Roman Empire when they chose Barabbas instead of Christ, and afterwards said, "We have no king but Cæsar."

The city that refused and hated Christ who wept over her, "loves death" (Prov. viii. 36), as in effect they themselves declared, saying, "His blood be on us and on our children." This city is last seen at its old practices in Rev. xi. 8, 10, and lest we should by the lapse of time forget, it is added in verse 8, "Where our Lord was crucified."

The Cross, in this connection, cannot be confined to what John Bunyan truly expresses as the experiences of those who, at the Cross of Christ, see no more than the bundle of their sins going into the grave of Jesus; for the Phillipian converts are solemnly warned against being "enemies of the cross of Christ." This comes after the description of the experiences of one who has allowed himself there to be set aside, and has nothing, and seeks nothing apart from Christ. How appropriate here is the expression "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20).

The Apostle John says, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." To one who deliberately chooses the world it would be useless to address this paper. But for the household of God, their citizenship ought to be a simple matter; and if any of these be "otherwise minded," may we not find comfort from the Apostle's word in Phil. iii. 15, that "God will reveal even this unto them"?

When the Spirit speaks through Peter, to whom our Lord had entrusted the keys of the kingdom of the heavens in its present "mysterious" form, we find he refers to the *blood*. On his nation's birthday the blood had been the separating line between those saved and those judged. The history

given in Exod. xii. is surely a figure of what we now possess as delivered from the cruel oppression of this world's task-master.

The Apostle sets forth God's present ways in government, showing how we, who have to suffer for righteousness sake as well as for Christ's name's sake, can pray in the Spirit for "the powers that be," and not content ourselves with prayers framed according to our varied wills. "The end of all things is at hand," he says, "be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer" (chap. iv. 7).

"*Behold he prayeth*" was a word understood by Ananias when our Lord spoke to him of one who had doubtless often said prayers after the manner of the scribes (Luke xx. 46). Let us not forget the Apostolic injunction in 1 Tim. ii. 1-6, where we learn how one who is of the household of God can prevail by prayer, like Abraham, and accomplish more than he could by an activity like that of just Lot, who, we are told, "was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)," (2 Peter ii. 7, 8).

How is it with you, dear Reader? Are you "*In Adam*" or "*In Christ*"? (1 Cor. xv. 22.)

Yours in the holy brotherhood, of which it is said that Jesus Christ "was not ashamed to call them brethren."

H. T.

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"We have to remember that if we would be in the current of God's thoughts we must have before us God's Christ above God's people; God's ground, not man's organisations; the unity of God's Spirit, not the union of Christians; Christ's glory, not Christian likings."

**BLESSING THROUGH FAITH.**

IN the Epistle to the Galatians Paul is heard recalling those saints to the Gospel as preached by himself, from which they were departing grievously. His Gospel unfolded a complete deliverance, wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ according to the will of God our Father, and told of a righteousness that came, not by the law, but through Christ's death. Under Judaising teachers, by whose communications they were being corrupted, they were substituting *doing* for *done*, law for grace; the opposed principles of which they were endeavouring to mix, and were consequently corrupting and destroying the Gospel of Christ.

And in recalling to first principles, of necessity much must be made of Christ, of His Cross, and of faith. Christ is the peerless object presented, the Cross the delivering power, and faith the principle of appropriation. To follow either of these lines of truth through the Epistle is an edifying study, but we now turn to the last—the blessings that come through faith.

It is a fundamental of the Gospel of God that justification is by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; and in withstanding Peter, the Apostle Paul reiterates in no uncertain terms the already recognized principle. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" is his emphatic assertion (chap. ii. 16), absolutely ruling out *the law* as a means of justification. Setting out the just demands of God to men, if they would by human effort, by works, attain to righteousness, the law only condemned; for it revealed at once both the weakness and wickedness of man—showed his utter inability to perform what it required, and brought out plainly and prominently the ruling principle

of the unregenerate heart—rebellion against and independence of God. So sin was made to appear in its true character as lawlessness, and the law, condemning all under it, shut all up to Christ, “that we might be justified by faith” (iii. 22, 24).

*Justified.*—What a blessed ring there is about the word, telling us as it does of a judicial clearance of all guilt, God righteously exercising His prerogative and counting those righteous who believe on Jesus (Rom. iii. 21, 26). He acts in perfect consistency with what He is.

“Every charge our God refuses,

*Christ has answered with His blood.”*

For upon that ground, the blood of Jesus Christ, justification rests, and assurance in full is ministered to those who believe on Him. Then “*by faith*,” the principle upon which the blessing comes to us, excludes completely all fleshly boasting, and leads to the conclusion that the works of the law play no part in obtaining it. The glory is secured for Him. Sweet are those words of Paul—“The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God”—for it is centred and nurtured by that heavenly object—“who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Oh to know more deeply the intensity of feeling and affection underlying that expression of the Apostle’s heart!

Then, as still keeping before them the inability of any to obtain blessing on the lines of the law, the Apostle calls their attention to another important truth (chap. iii. 2). Acting as though they were bewitched, so foolish was the attitude they had assumed, so contrary to what they had learned, Paul writes, “This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” An important question surely! and the

answer they could supply should effectually dispel the mists of error that were enshrouding them.

To a failing people, with a very unsatisfactory walk, the Apostle was writing, but yet to them as consciously in possession of this vast blessing—the Spirit of God. Had they fulfilled the law and received the Spirit as a consequence? None of them would answer in the affirmative. Rather it was true of them that “*after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.*” By the hearing of faith, then, this blessing had come to them. There was no question of attainment either to obtain or to keep, though of course they were responsible as living by the Spirit to walk by the Spirit (chap. v.).

Hence, realising this, how manifest the lack of spiritual intelligence; yea, what ignorance to turn to what had brought blessing to none, when already fullest Christian blessing was theirs, apart altogether from the works of the flesh.

And yet further to develop this truth of blessing through faith we come next to the Christian's peculiar position and relationship, a place clearly demonstrated to be wondrously superior to that of believers under law. They were as infants, though heirs (chap. iv. 3), but “ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (c. iii. 26). What the law could then in no wise confer they obtained by faith. Under law was bondage; under grace is truest liberty. With the former went a condition of infancy; the position of *sons* is alone compatible with the full grace of God revealed in Christ.

So then believers now are not simply children but sons of God, and “placed in full possession of all the title deeds of their heavenly position, and are admitted also into the Father's confidence, and know His mind and counsel

through the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." For manifestly "if a son then an heir of God through Christ."

What wondrous doctrine is here! Such positive ministry was surely well calculated to correct the condition of the Galatian saints, and such as anywhere turn aside from grace. For apprehending that they were thus "*known of God*," how turn again to weak and beggarly elements? Instead there would surely follow, evidenced by a life of separation, the enjoyment of the deliverance spoken of in chap. i. 4, deliverance from this present evil world (or age), and the co-relative truth that the citizenship of the saint is in heaven (Phil. iii. 20) whence our eyes are directed by the indwelling Holy Spirit whilst awaiting the consummation of our hope.

And this brings us to another point, expressed by Paul in these words: "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (chap. v. 5). Solemn warnings had been uttered in connection with circumcision and the law (see verse 2-4), and then comes this word, bright, if brief, revealing, in direct contrast to the position they were assuming, the Christian's anticipation and attitude. "*We wait*," are words that set out the bearing proper to us; waiting, not for righteousness, but for the fulfilment of the hope to which it is attached. Heavenly glory is our portion. Called to the obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. ii. 14), and predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom. viii. 29), God will, in righteousness, fulfil His Word. And that our faith and hope might be fully reposed in Him we are pointed to Christ risen and glorified (1 Pet. i. 21). Thus does God invite our confidence; and faith, grasping His Word as a blessed reality, peers into the future, and sustained by the Holy Ghost rejoices in view of the fulfilment of the hope. This we are clearly entitled



to do, knowing both the purpose of our God as revealed in the Scriptures, and also that to Christ it is due, for He died that He might not abide alone but be the first-born amongst many brethren.

What losers the Galatians were then by substituting the principle of works for that of faith for blessing. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." This is not the production of the law but fruit of the Spirit, the activity of the new nature. What losers too are saints to-day by refusing to heed what God in grace addresses to them. But still the Scripture says, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

H. F.

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### **"HE GAVE THANKS."**

"AND could'st Thou, Lord, Thy thanks express  
In prospect of Thy deep distress,  
And at the table spread to show  
The symbols of Thy coming woe?"

"And could'st Thou bless Thy God on high,  
That He had sent Thee thus to die,  
And for our sins thus gave Thee up  
To drink wrath's overwhelming cup?"

"O what a love must Thine have been  
To praise in view of such a scene,  
When broken bread and flowing wine  
Portrayed those bitter woes of Thine!"

ANON.

**OUR ENFRANCHISEMENT.**

THE franchise is regarded by most people as a very great privilege because, by its exercise, the person enfranchised has a voice—let it be never so feeble—in the government of his country; and he thus ensures, to some extent, his own liberty. Strange, then, it may seem to many, that any intelligent man, or patriot, should refrain from voting, when the sole object is to secure what is generally conceived to be good government. But let any one faithfully and honestly examine any such good government of the past, or the aims and proposals of any present good government, and he will have to confess that it is a government without true reference to, or real recognition of God.

The Lord Himself said: "The ruler of the world cometh and hath nothing in Me" (John xiv. 30, new trans.). This being so, we may expect to find the governments of the world bearing a similar character, influenced as they must be, by its ruler. And so, since those who compose these assemblies are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them; hence their success at the hustings. "We are of God," says the Apostle, "he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 John iv. 5, 6).

Then in what relation to the world does the Christian stand? By the Cross of Christ the world is crucified (judicially condemned) unto him, and he unto the world (Gal. vi. 14). He is, to use the language of another, a denizen of the world, and not a citizen thereof—a stranger and a pilgrim. To God he was once a stranger, but now "no more a stranger nor foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with

*Our Enfranchisement.*

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the saints" (Eph. ii. 19). Saints, or believers, are citizens, but not of this world. Their interests are elsewhere. Their commonwealth (not, properly, their citizenship) has its existence in the heavens, whence they look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. iii. 20). No vote in that commonwealth will be needed. No difference of opinion, no party politics will exist, where

"Ev'ry knee to Jesus bending,  
All the mind in heaven is one."

In connection with this subject it is instructive to observe that to the overcomer in Pergamos a white stone is to be given (Rev. ii. 17). This stone has reference, probably, to the pebble used for voting (and occasionally for other purposes), which was thrown into the voting-urn. Not, however, for such an object will the white stone be given; but, having a name, sacredly secret, engraved upon it, it will be held and kept as a token of the Lord's precious and faithful love, yielding unfeigned joy to its happy possessor. That which characterised Pergamos was its worldliness, for, mark: "I know where thou dwellest, where Satan's throne is" (Rev. ii. 13). Where is that? Evidently upon the earth, and not, as Milton teaches us, in hell. They were dwelling, that is, settling themselves down at their ease in that place where Satan held his sway.

Is this truth sufficiently borne in mind, or is it even known to the majority of those who call themselves Christians? One marvels at the abounding darkness of Christendom, where light has so richly been shed, and where, forsooth, the darkness which now envelops it is held to be light. "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness" (Matt. vi. 23). Paul wept over those who had set their minds on earthly things (Phil. iii. 19), and he urged the saints at Colosse to set their minds, or affections

(same word as in Phil. iii. 19) on things above, and not on things on the earth (Col. iii. 2). Would he do otherwise were he now with us?

A pertinent question then arises: What should be the attitude of the Christian as he passes through the world? Should he be stoically indifferent to all that is passing around him? By no means. Being in the world, he should yet *not* be of it (John xvii. 15, 16). So knowing his right position before God, and his true relationship to the world, he would take a deep interest, not in its politics, but in the souls of men, being filled with the desire that Christ, the Saviour of sinners, should be made known to them. "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved; and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. ii. 1-4). What a grand interest in the world do these words evince. May such an interest be ours!

"Lord, since we sing as pilgrims,  
 O give us pilgrims' ways!  
 Low thoughts of self, befitting  
 Proclaimers of Thy praise;  
 O make us each more holy,  
 In spirit pure and meek:  
 More like to heavenly citizens,  
 As more of heaven we speak."

A. C. H.

**A NOTE ON THE HOUSE OF GOD.**

THE assembly of God upon earth, whether looked at in its local or in its general aspect, is His house and His temple. Viewed *locally*, 1 Cor. iii. 9 and 16, are Scriptural grounds for the statement. The Corinthian assembly was God's building and God's temple. Viewing the assembly in its *general* aspect, viz., comprising the whole professing company on earth, 1 Tim. iii. 15, and 2 Cor. vi. 16 (accepting the reading there by many accredited as correct, "We are the temple of the living God"), are Scriptural authority for saying that God's assembly on earth is His house and His temple. As the house it should be ordered as He directs. It is for the owner of the house to say how he will have his own house ordered. Has not God done that for His? As His temple holiness should characterise it. Hence Scripture, not expediency, is our only right guide in this matter.

Viewing the assembly in its general character, as there is but one assembly, so there is but one house. For however many local assemblies there may be on earth, each privileged to call itself God's building and God's temple, when we think of the whole professing body on earth we think of it as one assembly, one house, and one temple.

Now this truth will be found to throw great light on much that to some seems so perplexing. Since the whole assembly is but one house, and that God's house, it is plain that what He enjoins and approves of in connection with the government and holiness of one part of His house He will not teach His people to ignore or resist in another. The fact of there being only one house forbids the thought of divergent principles or opposing rules being sanctioned by Him who owns it. Hence if discipline has been rightly carried out in

accordance with Scripture in any local assembly, the members of which form part of the assembly in its general character and thereby part of the house of God, the discipline so carried out should be upheld in every part of the house. This is obvious. And were it not that another line of action is by some contended for, it would seem superfluous to insist upon it. It is fully granted that the local assembly should be willing to allow its acts to be examined and its reasons investigated. How could it do otherwise, seeing its members, in common with all other professing Christians, form one assembly and one house on earth? What, however, has been Scripturally done in one part of the house should be owned and upheld throughout the house. The figure of the house surely requires this. And what is rightly done will, on investigation, commend itself as such to the "many" (2 Cor. ii. 6), if party feeling or self, etc., be not working.

Were this seen a world of misunderstanding would be removed. People talk of other assemblies. This is true in one way, but do not those who thus speak too often forget that the members of *all* the local assemblies *together* form one assembly of God and one house of God? The existence locally of assemblies must be admitted, and their competency and responsibility to act locally must be upheld if Scripture is to guide us. But when we get beyond the local into the general it will not be of assemblies, of houses, of temples that we are to speak, but of the assembly, the house, the temple, if at least our thought and speech are moulded by the Divine word. Now who would contend that in any local assembly, after a matter had been Scripturally decided or discipline carried out in accordance with the Word, that those within its limits who chose it might ignore all that altogether and remain in full fellowship with the offender?

*A Note on the House of God.*

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How would such be regarded? And if they persisted in their course how would they be treated? It would be a house divided against itself if such conduct was allowed unchecked. Now a house divided against itself the highest authority has told us cannot stand. Shall then what would not be permitted in the house viewed *locally* be permitted in the house viewed *generally*? To ask the question is surely enough.

Is it not clear now that the term *house of God* is calculated when thought upon to condemn that looseness and licence which is but too often pleaded for under the mistaken thought of showing Christian charity? We should indeed cultivate largeness of heart in the direction of all saints, and largeness of desire for the spread of the Gospel far and wide under heaven. We may need much stirring up as to this. The tendency of man's mind too often is too narrow, and the spirit of man *naturally* is generally a sectarian one. But let it be remembered that we are part of God's house, and we cannot get out of it, hence submission to His word about it is to be rendered, and it is to be understood that contradictory rules and opposing practices in the one house cannot for one moment be entertained.

Doubtless the mass in Christendom has never thought about this. The divided state of the professing body is but too manifest. The re-union of Christendom is a dream, which its advocates will never see realised. All this is fully owned. But are we to advocate a policy of despair? Are we to drift with the tide and to float with the stream? Is the house of God upon earth? So long, then, as it remains, it is for us to own it, to act in accordance with Scriptural teaching in connection with it, and, as we can, to help others to learn about it also. It is a key which can unlock more than one difficulty; and it can be a guide to souls in per-

plexity as to Christian fellowship in more ways than one. It is a house, so opposing rules cannot be sanctioned in it. It is God's house, so His mind about it should be sought for in His Word; and this last thought should surely guard us from settling down into quiet indifference, as was the case in the time of the judges in Israel.

C. E. S.

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### **BROTHERLY LOVE AND LOVE.**

THE common notion is that brotherly love is charity (love), and indeed its most perfect form; this is a mistake, as this passage (2 Pet. i. 7) shews. That brotherly love is a most sweet and precious fruit of grace is most true—precious in the heart that is filled with it, and precious in its mutual development; but it is not charity. We are told to add to brotherly love charity. The reason is simple: if brotherly love, brethren are the object, though when genuine and pure it surely flows from grace, it easily in us clothes itself with the character which its object gives it, and tends to limit itself to the objects with which it is occupied and be governed by its feeling towards them. It is apt to end in its objects and thus avoid all that might be painful to them or mar the mutual feeling and pleasantness of intercourse, and thus make them the measure of the conduct of the Christian. In a word, where brotherly love ends in itself as the main object, brethren become the motive and governing principle of our conduct; and our conduct as uncertain as the state of our brethren with whom we may be in contact. Hence the Apostle says, "Above all these put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness;" and another Apostle, "Add to brotherly kindness charity."



*Brotherly Love and Love.*

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Now charity is love; but will not this seek to exercise brotherly kindness? Undoubtedly it will, but it brings in God. "God is love." "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him." Hence it brings in a standard of what true love is, which mere brotherly kindness in itself never can. It is the bond of perfectness; for God, and God in active love, is its measure. Brotherly kindness by itself has the brother for the object; charity is governed by, exists in virtue of, the conscious presence of God; hence whatever is not consistent with His presence, with Himself, with His glory, cannot be borne by the heart which is filled with it. It is in the spirit of love that it thinks and works, but in the Spirit of God by whose presence it is inwardly known and active. Love was active in Christ when He said, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers;" in Paul when he said, "I would that they were even cut off which trouble you."

Charity, because it is God's presence, and that we feel His presence and look to Him in it is intolerant of evil. In mere brotherly kindness, the brother being the object before my mind (and if God's presence be not felt we do not realise it, nature coming in so easily and here in its most unsuspected and kindly shapes), I put man before God, smother up evil, keep kindness going, at any rate so far exclude and shut out God. Charity is His active presence, though it will be in love to man, but it gives to God all His rights. He it is that is love, but He is never inconsistent with Himself. His love to us was shown in what was the most solemn proof of His intolerance of evil, the Cross.

There is no true love apart from righteousness. If God is indifferent to evil, is not righteous, then there is no love in grace to the sinner. If He abhors evil, cannot suffer it in His presence, then His dealings with us as sinners shew the most perfect love. If I have ten children and they go wrong,

and I say, "Well, I am to shew love to them," and I take no account of their evil ways, or if some of them go wrong and I treat them as if there was no difference to my mind to their well doing or evil doing, this is not love but carelessness as to evil. This is the kind of love looked for by unconverted men, namely, "God's being as careless as to evil as they are ; but this is not Divine charity which abhors the evil but rises over it, dealing with it either in putting it away or in needed chastenings. Now if God were indifferent to evil there is no holy being to be the object of my love—nothing sanctifying. God does not own as love what admits of sin.

J. N. D.

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### **GATHERED THOUGHTS.**

REV. iii. 10 : "Christendom has yet to answer to God for its use or abuse of the light vouchsafed and for privilege bestowed. Christianity will judge Christendom. Conscience and the testimony of creation shall judge the heathen. But there is one class singled out, and one of ominous signification—'*them* that dwell upon the earth.' This singular expression of moral import has its root in Phil. iii. 18, 19. These enemies of the cross have settled down in the earth, making it their home, the things and interests of earth bounding their horizon. As a class thus morally distinguished they are frequently referred to in the Apocalypse (chaps. vi. 10 ; xi. 10 ; xiv. 6, etc.). Having deliberately chosen earth instead of heaven, they shall be especially tried in that coming hour when the rights of Christ to, and over the earth—the special prophetic testimony of this book—shall be made good in judgment."

*Phil. iii. 20, 21* : “Events are hastening on, and yet as to us we are waiting for but One, that our Beloved, our Saviour should come. His Coming becomes a resource, as it has long been a joy to us, and a reality still more precious, and more near. May we expect it continually; God alone knows the moment. The Christian takes cognisance of the events which are taking place, as a testimony to the one who understands; but his thought, his desire, his portion, is much more within the sanctuary than all that. But is it not true that this voting, as an act of identification with the world (in the very forms which it assumes in the last days), ought to be avoided as a snare by all Christians who understand the will of God and their position in Christ.”

“I think that at the end of *Phil. iii.*, the way in which we wait for Jesus Christ as Saviour, is to deliver us finally from the whole course of this world, such as it is.”

*Gal. i. 4* : “What more could Christ give for our sins than Himself? and what else would have availed? He bare the sins of many, and they are gone, cast into the depths of the sea. But was the putting away of sins the only object of His work? Nay, there is more—‘That He might deliver us from this present evil world (age).’ Is it strange that such a word should come in here? By no means. It was needed urgently in Galatia. To follow the law is an aspect of worldliness, however startling it may sound to some. Law was given to correct and restrain flesh, and to direct man viewed as living in the world. But the Christian has died and is risen; so that Paul could say, ‘Why as though living in the world?’ etc. (*Col. ii. 20*). Where this is understood the heart is proof against legalism, because it enjoys a heavenly Christ as its only object.”

## **THE DIVINE GOODNESS.**

Psalm iii. 4 ; xix. 1-6.

How sweet the dreamless sleep  
Which God in love bestows ;  
The mind, as silent as its shell,  
In calm and deep repose !

How bright the stainless sky  
Of God's own azure, cast  
Over a careless, thoughtless world,  
Perishing, perishing fast !

How strong the restless sea,  
No power but His it knows ;  
Its bosom heaving nature's sighs,  
Its history writ in woes !

How fair the cloudless scene,  
The landscape God hath made,  
Shred of a beauteous, by-gone world,  
Its sheen now hid in shade !

How good that God Himself  
Nature and grace display ;  
How kind, how wise, how great—both now  
And through eternal day !

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## THE COMING ONE.

A CERTAIN forecast of the distant future is beyond the ken of men. Some, more observant than others, may discern at a little distance off that which is about to happen. But how often the prognostications of men have been falsified through hidden influences exerting a sway, or diverting the popular current into a channel of which they had taken no account. Just as a storm, predicted to be on its way from the Gulf of Mexico, may be diverted by unforeseen ærial forces from its course, or may expend itself before it reaches our shores ; so many a human calculation of coming events, though based on reasonable deductions, has proved to be erroneous, owing to man's limited powers of observation, and his imperfect acquaintance with forces which are at work. Not so is it with God. He sees the end from the beginning, and is ordering all things after the counsel of His own will. Hence, with His word in our hands, though we may not be able to present a true forecast of the morrow, we know with certainty who is the coming One, and the effect and consequences of His coming on the world.

For ages has that been announced, and His person and personal appearance have been described (Ps. xlv. ; Rev. xix.). The effect on men when they shall see Him—the feelings of creation when it beholds Him—the joy of His suffering saints when He is revealed—all this has been recorded centuries ago. Kings will be astonished (Isa. lii. 15), men will wail (Matt. xxiv. 30 ; Rev. i. 7), and be angry (Rev. xi. 18), creation will manifest her joy (Ps. xcvi. 11-13, xcvi. 18).

7, 8), and the afflicted, harried saints will be glad (Isa. xxv. 9). Who, then, is this One, that His appearance should thus act on men and on creation? In that day no one on earth will manifest indifference to what will be taking place. All will be aroused, some alarmed, some rejoicing, kings astonished, none unconcerned. A day like that has never been known; an advent equal to it has never been witnessed. But who, and what is He whose coming will act thus positively and powerfully on all?

In Rev. xix. 11-16, His coming is described, and who He is is declared. Heaven is opened, not to let the angelic host look down on an object on earth, but to allow Him to come forth with the armies of heaven in His train. He comes from heaven whose advent will reveal the thoughts of men's hearts. The heavens were opened for Ezekiel, a captive by the river Chebar—probably the modern Khabour—to see visions of God (Ezek. i. 1). The heavens were opened to the Lord at His baptism in the river Jordan (Matt. iii. 16), and from them the Holy Ghost descended on Him. To Stephen the heavens opened, as he stood the solitary witness for Christ in the presence of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, and saw there the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts vii. 55, 56). These are past events. Again will the heavens be opened, but for a purpose wholly new. For Ezekiel and Stephen they were opened to look in; to the Lord, they were opened for the Spirit to descend upon Him. By and by they will be opened for the Lord to come out; and, what has never been known before, for men—saints—to re-appear, coming out of heavens in His train.

He comes on a white horse, in righteousness judging and making war, with His eyes as a flame of fire, on His head many diadems, clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and

*The Coming One.*

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with a sharp sword proceeding from His mouth with which He will smite the nations. He comes as one invested with supreme power, for many diadems are on His head; and as the administrator of divine judgment, His garments attesting it, His eyes expressing it, and the sword from His mouth executing it.

But who is He? What is He called? How is He known? He has many names, for one could not fully describe Him. And first He is called (11) Faithful and True. Now, if we desire to understand this, we must turn back to Rev. iii. 14, to His own description of Himself as "the faithful and true witness." Faithful and True is He called who comes out of heaven, for He was the faithful and true witness on earth, ere He ascended, and sat down on the right hand of God. "Faithful and true," then, recalls to mind His path on earth in testimony for God. Of His humiliation, therefore, it is that these titles speak. They are His, rightly His, for His life on earth shewed Him to be the faithful and true witness. But the One who was here in humiliation will come out of heaven in power and glory. His life in humiliation will never be forgotten amid all the splendour of His glory. Seen in glory, surrounded by the whole court of heaven, all the holy angels attending Him, invested with a majesty such as earth has never yet witnessed, none will be allowed to forget His life of obedience, devotedness, and love when He tabernacled amongst men. Those names will recall it; those titles will for ever proclaim it.

Next we read, (12), He has "a name written which no one knew but He Himself." No one—no man, no angel, no creature—knows it, but He Himself. A secret from all creatures, but fully known to Him. Who, then, is He? A man, surely—the faithful and true witness. But not only a

man. This name written, which none knows but Himself, marks Him out as distinct, separate from angels and from men. True, indeed, is that, for He is the Eternal Son, the incarnate One, the mystery of whose Person no creature can fathom. For "No one knoweth the Son but the Father" (Matt. xi. 27). The eternal life was manifested, men could see it, and handle Him who is it (1 John i. 1.); yet there was, there is, there ever will be a mystery about His Person which no creature can understand. And when He appears in power, who has been here in humiliation, all will see, and will have to own by that name written, which no one knows but He Himself, that the once despised Son of the Virgin is the only begotten Son of God—Son of God and Son of man—two natures in one Person never to be confounded, yet never to be divided.

Further, we find (13) that He has a name which all can read. "He is called the Word of God." By Him God has been expressed. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John i. 18). Of the mystery of His Person the unknown name reminds us. Of His divinity and everlasting existence this name instructs us—"The Word of God"; for "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (John i. 1-4). No doubt, no hesitation will there be in that day concerning His divinity; His name, "The Word of God," will proclaim it. All will see it, and all will recognise the meaning of it. God, then, has declared Himself. He did of old, in the display of creative power by



Him who is the Word. He has done it, likewise, in the life, walk, ministry, and death of the Word who became flesh.

Lastly, we are told (16), "He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of Kings and Lord of lords." This speaks to us of coming victory (Rev. xvii. 14) and of earthly supremacy, both as yet future.

What a history, then, is there in these names, and in the order in which they are given us! Turned first to the remembrance of His humiliation, we are reminded next of the to us inscrutable mystery of His Person, of whose divinity we are further told there is no doubt, and whose coming day of power over earth as a man is certainly on the way. It is His history as connected with earth, from His life of humiliation to the display of His kingly might, and acknowledged supremacy over the world.

Awfully real to men, to His enemies who will thus see Him, will be His presence within this sphere of human activities. A mythical personage some have tried to persuade themselves and others that He is; a living Person it will then be apparent that He is—no mythical, fabled personage. The one who was here will re-appear. Then, too, the difficulty expressed by some, when they saw Him of old, how He who was a man could make Himself God, will be a difficulty no longer. His name "The Word of God," will silence all human reasoning, and disperse the cobwebs and mists now engendered by wilful unbelief. No one in that day will doubt that He was here in humiliation; no one in that day will pretend that He is not what He declared He was—the only begotten Son of God. But why wait till the day of His power to own what, if true then, is true now—that "God sent His only-begotten Son into the world"? And why that mission? Let the sent One Himself declare:—"God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world,

but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not judged; but He that believeth not is judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God" (John iii. 17, 18).

How blessed, on the other hand, will it be for His saints to behold Him in His glory coming to reign! Blessed for those on earth who will witness it, and hail it. Blessed, far more blessed surely, for those who will come with Him—His heavenly saints; the line commencing with Abel and terminating with—but here we must leave a blank; for who of men yet know the name of the last saint who will die, ere the heavens will open for the coming One to appear with the many diadems on His brow?

C. E. S.

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### **1 SAMUEL II. 30.**

"THEM that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." In how many departments of Christian life and experience may we prove the truth of the statement here made. It is a principle in the dealings of God with men, the righteousness of which must be apparent to the least instructed, the unchangeableness of which the most enlightened in knowledge of His dealings and character are assured of. Rendering of honour to whom honour is due has the sanction of Scripture for even a lower platform. With how much greater force therefore must be enjoined upon us the thought and concern of what is due from us towards that One, to Whom the inspiring Spirit so often ascribes honour and glory everlasting. The gracious promise of God here given assures us of a return,

a payment in kind, an honoured place in His thoughts and esteem, a place of honour too, it may be, in His cause and service. The warning appended also is to be regarded, and the recompense is just—"Them that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." What place in God's estimation would we covet? May we prize the one promised. His grace bestows it in return for that fear of God, and trust in Him, that in our thoughts, actions, and character, in every walk of life, best honours Him.

"How can ye believe," said Christ to some, "which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only." To be held in some measure of honour, to be esteemed, to be thought of with, at least, respect by others is a natural feeling each is possessed of. And, in the world around us, this regard for the good opinion of their fellows certainly bulks large. Unacknowledged in any of the ethical codes, it is, and from the beginning has been, one of those under-currents that so largely determine conduct and character. In how far the receiving honour from men, which the Lord Jesus for Himself could disclaim, affects us, in what measure it controls the actions of men, or regulates human society, let any one for a moment consider. The seeking or receiving honour one from another, without adopting in the least a cynical tone, we may almost claim as a first principle of the ordinary ethics of society as at present constituted. The Christian happily knows a higher consideration, and, in seeking for the honour that cometh from God only, may bid for a higher and more enduring prize. And can we expect, can we be truly said to value that honour, if we are not prepared to give God that place in our hearts, in our lives, which this honouring of Him, that is first of all our due service, implies?

The promise is that "them that honour Me I will

honour," and in every path of life the principle applies. We meet it in fact at the very outset of our Christian career, for our change of attitude towards the Saviour, from despising and rejecting, to in faith receiving and honouring Him, forms a first acquaintance with its operation. Our acceptance of His salvation, does it honour Him then? Ungodly sinners as we were, it was at least the only honour we could render Him. The best appreciation of His worth as Saviour we could show was to accept Him as such, to honour Him first of all with our confidence in that capacity. And who shall describe the returning honour poured upon us, in that we should henceforth be called His disciples, His servants, His brethren, sons of God! All of grace no doubt it is, yet surely an instance of the fact that "them that honour Me I will honour." Is it to be wondered at that "they that despise Him shall be lightly esteemed"? Honoured He shall be universally, even if it be only in their condemnation; for all judgment has been committed unto Him for this very purpose, "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." "He that honoureth not the Son," it is further stated, "honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him."

In his path through the world where his Lord is rejected, the disciple of Him who was meek and lowly in heart encounters rejection also. But if, like His Master, in honouring His Father, he is dishonoured by the world, he shall find also the recompense He enjoyed. "I seek not Mine own glory," said Christ to His rejecters, "but there is One that seeketh and judgeth." His honour, in view of the calumny and indignity men heaped upon Him, taking occasion, as they did, of His coming here in humiliation, the retrieving of that honour He could safely commit to Him that judgeth righteously. "If I honour Myself," He said,

and their pride and self-complacency was of that pattern, "My honour is nothing." From another source He could look for testimony—"it is My Father that knoweth Me"—and that honour for Him was everything. How fully vindicated has He been by the Father, whom He honoured and glorified in life and death. How full the return in answering glory now to "every mark of dark dishonour, heaped upon the thorn-crowned brow." How bright an instance, may we not say, remembering at the same time all that makes it a unique one, of the truth that "them that honour Me I will honour."

"It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord." "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me," again He has said, and the path, one of rejection, suffering, uncheered by earthly smiles, shall yet be such as honours both Himself and the Father. In return, the link that joins while sorrow and suffering are our lot here below for His sake, shall not be severed in that higher, happier scene, for "where I am, there shall also My servant be." "If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour." That honour, who shall declare it? Blessed indeed are they whose portion it is to follow and serve such a Master, even through shame and loss here, for how fully recompensed is any honour to Him our poor service supplies. Are we prepared thus to honour God in everything? for to every sphere the principle applies. Throughout our whole life and service, to seek alone that which suits the will and glory of Him whose name we bear, this is to honour Him. Alas! that God should even now have to say, as heretofore with Israel, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master. If then I be a Father, where is My honour, and if I be a Master, where is My fear?" (Mal. i. 6). Are we not all too guilty of practically despising Him, by excluding all

reference to Him in our affairs by neglect of what is due to His glory in our several paths? Oh, that we should prepare for ourselves so much of loss and shame; for, loving our life we lose it, whereas, hating it, we should keep it unto life eternal. We need not think to withdraw ourselves from the scope of that principle of His holy government—"They that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."

Many are the departments in which the truth applies, besides the one that the occasion of its utterance gives an instance of. But to see it in its original setting, special consideration must be given to that occasion. The passage where it occurs gives a striking illustration of its weight and importance in the sad story of Eli and his sons. Personal, family, and national history, all appear in the first four chapters of 1 Samuel, and failure on the aged priest's part, sin on his sons, and weakness and defeat for the people, make its page a dark one. Eli, the priest and judge of Israel, had two sons officiating as priests in the temple service. A privileged family surely we may say they were. But the zeal for God manifested in an earlier day by one of the priesthood (Numbers xxv. 10-13), and the righteousness, equity, and peace becoming such a privileged position (Malachi ii. 5-9.), were very far from characterising that family, the father failing in the first, the sons in the second respect. "Sons of Belial" the young men are called, and the sinfulness and profanity of their conduct towards God is only matched by their tyranny and violence to the people. Eli, judge of Israel as he was, and one who personally no doubt was truly pious, was yet lacking in that firmness for God indispensable for such a charge, and even upon the lower plane of his own family affairs this appears, for in so many words we are told that his sons "made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." The honour of God, to such an

one as Eli the priest, should have been surely the thing of greatest moment, of highest account. And here, undoubtedly, in his own family circle, should have been the place of all others where that consideration ought to have been paramount. But poor Eli, his spiritual sense as weak and dim as his failing sight, and as feeble and decrepit in spiritual as in bodily vigour, fails, from either the one reason or the other to acknowledge and maintain the rights of God in his own household, and thus comes under the charge of honouring his sons above God. And now God in His holy government, opens the question with His servant. Dealt with in regard to his failure Eli must be. But ere judgment falls, God, as is His wont, tells of its approach, and by two different instruments is the warning given. A man of God, his identity undisclosed, is first sent with the message to Eli, in which our verse occurs. Through the child Samuel the decree of judgment is further supplemented. Displeasure with Eli, and judgment on his house both are sent to announce. A remarkable feature of this judgment also appears in that it falls just where the failure has been. Truly, for one side as for the other, whether we honour or despise Him, the return is paid, generally speaking, in the department where it was incurred. As it was in the service of the priesthood Eli's descendants had failed to honour God, but wantonly despised Him, so from that office they would be deposed, and in that very sphere they would yet be so lightly esteemed, as to be obliged to humbly crave its lowest service for the humblest of its emoluments—"a morsel of bread." And as in his family it was that Eli had dishonoured God, so on his house after him it was made known to him by Samuel, God's judgment was to fall. And fall it did as the Lord had spoken, and, for the family he had so badly governed, for the people he had given so bad an

example to, the day of battle ended most disastrously, while amid the darkest prospects for both, amid the wreck of all his poor heart clung to, Eli himself departed, his retreating steps accompanied as it were by these solemn dirge-like tones—"Ichabod! the glory is departed." How remarkable an instance of the truth that while "them that honour Me I will honour," yet "they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."

How different with Abraham, in whose case family character and religion find so bright an illustration. God Himself declared concerning him, as a feature well pleasing to Him—"I know him"—and that not merely in a general way, in His omniscience, but from particular and intimate acquaintance—"that he shall command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment"—exactly the opposite this of Eli and his sons—"that the Lord may bring upon Abraham" not judgment, but "that which He hath spoken of him." Honoured here Abraham was of such honourable mention. Honoured he was too by God's confidence; for from such a "friend" God declared He would not hide the thing He was about to do. And honoured in a special way he certainly is in that very sphere where he thus honoured God, by seeing that the way of the Lord was kept. May it be ours to honour God in this sphere of our lives, and not through weakness, or lack of sense of what is due from us in home life and household affairs, practically despise God, by honouring others above Him. Whether ours be the subordinate or more responsible position, and however incumbent upon us the loving care or obedience becoming each, His honour must be that which has first consideration, "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than Me is not worthy of Me."



*"I Commend (Commit) You to God."*

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A simple, practical case in point, 1 Samuel supplies of the operation of a principle of God's holy government. We have to do with it in every sphere, and meet with it at every point of our Christian life from the outset to the close. As an encouragement to us amid the suffering, shame, and loss of our present pathway, how cheering is the thought of being all the time held in high estimation by God our Father; how precious is this promise from Him whom we seek to honour,—“Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.”

J. T.

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**“I COMMEND (COMMIT) YOU TO GOD AND TO  
THE WORD OF HIS GRACE.”**

(Acts xx. 32.)

SIMPLE, yet beautifully pathetic, is the inspired account of the farewell meeting of Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and the elders from Ephesus, at Miletus.

He had spent three years amongst them; three blessed years, in which they had learned much concerning their own state by nature, and what they were now “in Christ Jesus,” yea, he had declared unto them “all the counsel of God.”

But, like everything in time, his stay with them had come to an end. He left Ephesus and went into Macedonia; stayed three months in Greece, and was now hastening to be at Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost. So, touching at Miletus, about thirty miles from the church he loved so well at Ephesus, he sends there and calls the “elders” to him.

What a moment for those Ephesians! There stood the man who, a few years before, had laid his hands upon some of them, no doubt, and they received the Holy Ghost. Then

later on he had separated the disciples from the Jewish synagogue, and showed practically that there was now in God's eyes Jew, Gentile, and the Church of God (1 Cor. x. 32). Much opposition there was; but he, strong in the power of the Holy Spirit, had led that little band on in "the truth as in Jesus" against it all; they in turn, no doubt, leaning upon him and feeling strong, too, because of his presence.

Now, what is this he tells them? "I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more" (ver. 25). The effect this had upon them we know from the close of the chapter:—"Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more."

But does he leave no little word of cheer, appoint no successor, leave no instructions how the work, commenced by him, should be carried on? Is there no hopeful prospect put before them to lift up their drooping spirits? Alas, no! Paul, taught by the Spirit of God, has to say, "I know this, that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter in amongst you, not sparing the flock." And worse still,—  
 "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them" (vers. 29, 30). All the fair scene was to be blighted. The start had been good, but it was not to continue. The "wolf" would scatter; the one-time "elder" and shepherd would be found drawing some after himself. Such it has always been with the things of God when committed to man's care.

Was there then none to whom the Apostle could turn their eyes and hearts? Blessed be His Name, there was! "I commit you to God." Change and decay there was to be, but the unchanging One remained, and he directed their minds to Him, to God—the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Who had "chosen them in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4). He would surely take care of that feeble flock did they but flee to Him when wolves assailed and elders failed.

But there was another stay—"the Word of His grace." God and His Word—two unchanging and ever-abiding supports and resources for faith to fall back upon. As they read and meditated upon that Word, under the power of the Holy Spirit, it would have the sanctifying and cleansing effect spoken of in Eph. v. 26, and thus make them realise practically now, what will yet be seen in divine perfection, when He who so loved the Church as to give Himself for it, shall "present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

If an attack was made upon them, then it was the "sword of the Spirit" by which the adversaries were to be held at bay or repulsed. Thus we see, although they were not to behold any more the face of the beloved Paul; and despite the fact that times of testing, and alas, failure, were ahead; though every human prop failed, *God* remained, His Word was in their hands, able to build them up, and give them an inheritance among the sanctified. How well equipped and cared for were they.

But to live in the power and the enjoyment of what was left to them, meant exercise upon their part. If committed to God, to be always owning their dependence upon Him was surely the attitude becoming them; so the departing Apostle kneels down and "prays with them all"; and in writing to them later on he sums up by saying, "Praying at all seasons with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching unto this very thing with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints," (Eph. vi. 18.) Here is the true secret of power, because the fullest expression of weakness.

But it is just here that failure first shown itself; the affections grow a little cold, prayer is not then the real thing it once was, and ought to be; reading the Word becomes much a matter of form; things get worse and worse, until a climax is reached and God allows some circumstance to reveal our barren condition, and our unfaithfulness, to our shame and loss.

This is what seems to have taken place, if we read the address, in Rev. ii., to Ephesus. It is not the purpose of this little paper to give an exposition of dispensational truth, but simply to notice, from what Scripture tells us concerning that highly exalted assembly, something for our admonition and warning.

Everything seemed to be in perfect order. They had “works,” but it does not say “of faith”; they “laboured,” but it was not altogether the “labour of love” spoken of in 1 Thess. i.; they had “endured,” which would leave room to infer that testing of some kind had taken place; spiritual energy there was to even test apostolic pretenders; but the grand fundamental was wanting—they had left their “*first love.*”

Things were done now formally—much because they had been accustomed to do them. Right that they should be done, but altogether vain and hollow when the outcome of anything else than the mighty impelling power of love. Nothing, it is said, is so hard to bear as unreciprocated love; so He Who loved to the extent of giving Himself, as the inspired Apostle had written to them, would have nothing less than love in return.

No amount of zeal, patience or labour could make up for the lack of that; so, unless they repented, and did the first works—that which was the overflow of full hearts—He would remove the candlestick; they were not fitted to bear

proper testimony to such an one. Their affliction having cooled, they do not cling to the Lord as their only support, their “all in all”; and His Word failed to have its proper weight with them; so we learn not of any repentance; nay, rather, as far as Ephesus itself is concerned, the candlestick was, soon after that warning was given, removed and has not to this day even been reinstated. A recent visitor to what remains of the ancient city remarks: “We thought of the contrast between Paul’s visit to that city and ours. In those days there were saints, there was a *church*, in Ephesus. We found no saints, no church, in Ephesus. And this is the more striking when we remember that in Smyrna we found both.”\*

We lift our eyes from briefly surveying the decline and fall of the little Ephesian assembly with a sigh, and ask, “Is it always thus?” If we are to be guided by what is written for our instruction we must with shame answer, “Yes.” From Adam downwards the human race has always lowered the standard. There was but one unique exception, and we gladly turn for a glance at His wonderful pathway to find the secret of success. When the Son of God comes into this world as a man, we hear Him say, “Lo I come to do Thy will, O God” (Psalm xl.), and at the commencement of His public career we behold Him “praying” (Luke iii. 21.) He would acknowledge, at the very beginning, His dependence upon God. Time goes on and a moment comes when public feeling is strongly against Him. What do we find? “It came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued *all night in prayer to God.*” Again, the pendulum of public sentiment swings to the opposite extreme, and when the people “would come and take Him by force to make Him a king,

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\*A. E. Booth in “*The Land far Off.*”

He departed into a mountain Himself alone" (John vi. 15). Nothing could change the attitude of that perfectly dependent Man. This was the one side; the other was equally perfect. Is He hungry? The devil will tempt Him to display His power and cause the stones to form sustenance for Him. Now the Word is used. "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God" (Luke iv). Do men seek to entangle Him in His talk? He replies "Ye do err, *not knowing the scriptures*, nor the power of God" (Matt. xxii. 29). Then at the very last, amid all the sorrow, pain and shame of Calvary, we read "Jesus . . . that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst" (John xix. 28). Surely we may well exclaim, "Oh, that precious, blessed, holy, obedient Man!" The One Who alone could say, "I do always the things that please the Father" (John viii. 29), and "I have glorified Thee on the earth" (xvii. 4).

Herein, then, lay the failure of the Church at Ephesus, and herein lies our own. No amount of truth, be it ever so heavenly, or occupying us with the heavenlies, will keep our hearts fixed upon Christ, unless it lay hold upon us to the end that our lives are animated and governed by it. To have a heart void of truth is poor enough; but to know truth intellectually, without the desire to walk in the power of it, is to court disaster, and incur the penalty of having to answer for failing to realise our responsibility before God.

Let us learn then, from God's own Word, what is His mind concerning us; and let us seek grace to act upon it, in dependence upon Himself, knowing that

"We've now to please but One."  
 "Lead on Almighty Lord;  
 Lead on to victory;  
 Encouraged by Thy blessed Word,  
 With joy we follow Thee."

H. C.

**LOVE.—1 COR. XIII.**

“Love one another.”—

Such the command of Him who walked this earth  
Once, long ago, His company a few lone followers,  
Whom, by that power so irresistible,  
He had attracted unto Himself,  
Holding their hearts by His resistless love,  
As captives bound to Him !  
But they were men, all human like ourselves,  
With treacherous hearts, and love oft growing cold  
To one another. Fain would He have their hearts  
Together knit, by strength of deep affection ;  
For well He knew the power of love  
To hold and keep, binding in oneness  
Hearts that else untouched had strange and hardened  
grown.

“As I have loved you.”—

And who could tell the depth, strength, tenderness  
Of love like His, unquenched by death  
And all its unknown terrors, when o'er His head  
That mighty tempest broke, spending its fury ?  
In that dread hour, His soul a sacrifice  
Was made for sins of men, e'en for our sins  
Beloved, mine and thine ! such grief befel  
That holy, spotless One. Bruised and forsaken,  
Yet undimmed His deathless love shone forth  
Brighter and brighter yet ! Speechless we muse  
And wonder ; love so deep, so strong,  
Passeth all human ken ! . . . .  
Over our low bowed heads a whisper steals—  
“As I have loved you, love one another.”  
Yea, e'en to us He speaks, although to love

May cost us sorrow and oft bitter tears.  
Love that is true aye meaneth sacrifice  
If it a copy of His love would be !  
Shall we shrink back and let our hearts grow cold  
Because so often no response we find,  
No answering love to meet our own ?

“ As I have loved you.”—

When there was nought in us to call it out,  
That mighty love flowed forth with overwhelming force ;  
Not all our coldness or forgetfulness  
Could stem its tide. Then shall not we  
With hearts all warm by contact with Himself,  
Speak the kind word to others ? seek to our utmost power  
To minister to those in need ?  
Meeting the coldness, frown, with patient grace,  
Believing, bearing all things for His sake,  
Walking in love, seeking to follow  
In His blessed steps, remembering  
His “ Inasmuch ye did it to the least,  
‘ Twas done to Me.”

“ I have loved you.”—

O blessed refuge for the hearts oppressed !  
To know ourselves poor sinners loved by Him ;  
To claim e’en now that nearest place  
As John of old, upon His breast, sweetest  
Of resting places, all else forgotten  
Beneath the sunshine of those glorious eyes,  
Whose matchless depths speak love unutterable.  
This—this to know in deep communion  
Whilst yet on earth. Who then shall picture  
*What* that heaven of glory, when His great love  
In all its depth and strength, unchanged, undimmed,  
Through all the ages long, is fully known ?

A. S.



## **SOME THOUGHTS ON MATTHEW XXVI. 3-12.**

IN the scripture before us we have two scenes : the one in a chamber in the high priest's palace at Jerusalem ; the other, in the house of one Simon a leper, in quiet Bethany. In the former were assembled the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people ; in the latter, Jesus and His disciples.

Caiaphas and his comrades were met in solemn conclave to consider by what subtle means they might take Jesus and put Him to death. Not on the approaching feast day would they carry out their nefarious intentions, lest an uproar of the people be caused. Their fear of man was very manifest ; though their fear of God was nowhere evident. The counsels of the most cultivated men must be destitute of any right knowledge or true wisdom where the fear of the Lord is lacking, because the fear of the Lord is the *beginning* both of wisdom and of knowledge (Prov. i. 7 ; ix. 10).

It was, no doubt, the attractive power of Jesus Himself which brought together the company assembled in Simon's house, though in that company there was, apparently, only one person who had right thoughts concerning the Lord. That person was a woman, whose name, even, is not here disclosed. She came to Him having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head as He sat at meat. Her heart and mind were centred upon Him. Her eyes, her hands, her feet were consecrated to His service. There were other guests at the table, but they faded from her view. One Guest, without companion or

compeer, claimed her undivided attention, and her whole-hearted devotion. Such an example moves us to cry :

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

Much as had been unfolded to her, and great as was her intelligence as to the person of the Lord; other and higher revelations of Himself awaited her, for “ Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance ” (Matt. xxv. 29). And it seems to us that in the scene depicted in John xii., we have development or progress in the true inward knowledge of the Lord, so that it is no longer the honoured Guest receiving the attentions of a nameless woman, but the Son of God accepting the homage and adoration of Mary, who could no longer stand in His presence, but, on bended knees would place her tribute, together with such glory as belonged to her (1 Cor. xi. 15), at His feet. Mary had been at His feet before (Luke xi. 39) as a learner, drinking in the words of life from the lips of the Teacher ; but here she is a worshipper, with something to give, having learnt the lesson that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts xx. 35). It must have been a season (though a very brief one) of inexpressible joy to the blessed Lord and to Mary. What is “ shaped upon the anvil of the heart, sometimes fails upon the tongue.” Could her heart have articulated, it would, doubtless, have expressed itself in language of similar import to that used by another Mary : “ My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour ” (Luke i. 46, 47). How fitting, then, the reference to the odour of the ointment, for “ Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart ” (Prov. xxvii. 9).

*Some Thoughts on Matthew xxvi. 3-12.*

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The conduct of the woman aroused the indignation of the disciples, who asked: "To what purpose was this waste, for the ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor?" What ignorance of the person of the Lord; what want of appreciation of His love and tenderness are here brought to light! It was waste to bestow so costly a thing upon the meek and lowly Saviour! The rich might purchase it for some selfish indulgence, and the poor might reap some benefit from the proceeds of its sale; but rich and poor must be considered before Him, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor that we, through His poverty, might be rich (2 Cor. viii. 9). How like selfish man! Can we not see our own hearts mirrored here?

While these things were taking place in His presence, the Lord was aware of all that was passing in the council-chamber of Caiaphas' palace, and had full cognizance of the thoughts and intents of the heart of Judas. He had the most perfect knowledge of the ways of Satan, who, at that very moment, was marshalling all the forces of evil at his command in order to make a final attack upon His holy person. Floods of ungodly men were surging around Him; the sorrows of death encompassed Him (Ps. xviii.); and over Him were gathering the dark impenetrable clouds of judgment, which in a few days would burst in all their power upon Him. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts; all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me" (Ps. xlii. 7), He might truly say. How little could the beloved disciples who begrudged the expenditure of a box of ointment upon Him, know of Him! In the full light that now shines, we are bound to confess how poor and mean are our own conceptions of the blessed Lord, and of the suffering He has undergone for us.

Notwithstanding all these things, the Lord exhibited no trace of displeasure at the grave slight to which, in ignorance surely, He had been subjected. But the breathings of His spirit testify how keenly He felt the unkind treatment which was meted out to Him. To man He could not unburden His soul; His relationship to him forbade it. To God, to whom He ever turned, He could (in spirit) thus express Himself: "Thou hast known My reproach, and My shame, and My dishonour. . . . Reproach hath broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness" (Ps. lxxix. 19, 20). The grace of the Lord, however, triumphs over everything evil, compelling our admiration and commanding our homage. His thoughts and care are for the woman, and not for Himself; and on her account He rebuked His disciples by asking: "Why trouble ye the woman?" As taught of God, she had been led to honour Him in this way, and what she had done that day to Him, should be declared wherever the gospel was preached, as a memorial of her. She had wrought a good work on Him (of whom else was it ever so said by the Lord?), and it would never be forgotten. In ages past it had been recorded: "Them that honour Me, I will honour" (1 Sam. ii. 30), and here is God, in the person of Jesus, faithfully adhering to His written word.

The manner in which this woman comported herself is also worthy of our attention. In the simple and touching service which she rendered to the Lord, no words passed her lips. The presence of others would not stay the silent outflow of her heart's affections. Language of any sort would have marred the beauty of that service so precious to the Lord. And when the disciples complained of the use to which the costly ointment had been put, silence again marked her conduct. If any justification were needed, she could confidently leave it with the Lord who read her heart.

*Some Thoughts on Matthew xxvi. 3-12.*

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“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth” (Rom. viii. 33). Did the Lord fail to justify her? How comely is all this, and how perfectly in harmony with the spirit of 1 Cor. xiv. 34!

In Mark (chap. xiv.) we read that the woman brake the box. It was, verily, a “devoted thing,” and therefore most holy unto the Lord (Lev. xxvii). It could not, rightly, be put to any other purpose. It was for His burial that she had so acted towards Him. She had anticipated His death. Appropriate to the occasion, therefore, was this breaking of the box; for does not this broken vessel speak to us of that body given for us, one great and glorious result of which being the descent, on the day of Pentecost, of the Holy Spirit; whose coming, indeed, is spoken of as a “pouring out” or “shedding forth”? (Acts ii. 17, 18, 33; x. 45.) “As ointment poured forth,” so came the Holy Spirit upon those who believed.

And now we have arrived at a point where a magnificent expanse of truth meets the eye of faith: the ministry of the Spirit—God the Holy Spirit, deigning, in unspeakable grace, to undertake the marvellous service of convicting the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment on the one hand; and on the other, of unfolding the beauties and glories of Christ to subject hearts, and evoking therefrom praise and adoration and thanksgiving.

Here we pause. We can only wonder and adore as we meditate on what God has done and is doing for the souls of men as they pass onward to Eternity.

A. C. H.

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“IN His law doth he meditate.”—Meditation chews the cud, and gets the sweetness and nutritive value of the Word into the heart and life: this is the way the godly bring forth much fruit.

## **CHRIST OUR LIFE, AND CHRIST OUR WAY, OR OUR MANNER OF LIFE.**

It is the spirit and substance of practical life, as those who live and are therefore children of God, not to live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again.

Sovereign grace has quickened us. God has in His good pleasure bestowed on us the wondrous gift of eternal life (Rom. vi. 23), and this life is in His Son (1 John v. 11). This is absolute. All living to God, and to Him who died for us, starts with this marvellous gift. Now, as those to whom this life has been given, we want to live to Him. The life we received from Adam, the Lord Himself tells us in John xii. 25, we are not to live—we are to hate it. It is not merely that we are to hate the evil *fruits* of that life, but we are instructed to hate the life that lives without God, that is alienated from God—a life that acts in us without any reference to God or Christ. This life may manifest itself in “giving all our goods to feed the poor” (1 Corin. xiii. 3), and even going to the stake to maintain some principle that the natural man can contend for; but if we have not the spring of devotion in Christ, it is only that life which I am called on to hate. It is all loss. My desire in penning a few lines on this important and deeply searching matter is in the hope that I may present what Scripture (God) tells us is the power for so living as to be acceptable to God. I may feel the need for it, and be myself under law, but if so, I cannot live to God.

In Phill. ii. we are exhorted to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,” but the Spirit of God adds “for it is God who worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure.” In our pathway after Christ there are

many things which come to impede, but none of them, when we consider the power which is on our behalf, need hinder.

The *ground* of all the grace bestowed on us is the death and resurrection of Christ. "He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25). As thus cleared in righteousness, so as to be justified by God, God righteously brings us into the blessings of "new creation in Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 10). His purpose to do this was before sin came in. On the coming in of sin, His purpose to bless us "in Christ" seemed blocked, but He gave His Son to die *for* us, and so by His death, by His blood shedding, our *sins* are gone. In this He was entirely alone. Our sins were laid *on Him* by God, and He gave Him the cup of judgment to drink (John xviii. 11), and now the judgment having been borne, the sins that called for the judgment are gone. The perfect sacrifice has exhausted the fire.

The ground being laid for peace *with* God, Scripture tells us what we have received further by the death of Christ. Christ has died *to* sin (Rom. vi. 10). It is *sin* now that we meet with in this portion of the Word. Christ has died *to* it. He has completely done with sin, save to banish it by His power when He comes in His Kingdom. We are also told in Coloss. iii. 3, that we have died *with* Him. Consider this dear friend, and note also Rom. vi. 2: "How shall we, who have *died to sin*, live any longer therein." This is a fact which is known as we receive His word. *Receiving* it, we learn how deliverance from the power of sin which is in us may be effected. Again we are told in Rom. viii. 15, that we (believers) have received the Spirit, and that if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live (13). It is a matter for our faith, a fact that God treats

His children as those *who have died with Christ to sin*, and therefore when *I reckon that I am dead to sin*, I am not sinning (though *sin* is still in me), but living unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord (11).

We do not know that Christ died *for* our sins and rose again, but as the Scriptures are received by us. On the same ground we must receive the word that *we have died with Christ to sin*. God says so. We have not attained to it. It is not presented as a matter of attainment. Attainment follows on the belief of the fact. I do not press it as an article of belief which may be received by dint of study *by the mind*, but to be received from God. He has told us this blessed fact, and told us in order that His purposes *here* in saving us may daily be carried out.

The flesh is in the child of God, and pleads to be allowed its way—to be allowed what it likes. Sin in me is personified as a master in Rom. vi., and as the Lord speaks to us in John xii., *it is my life in this world*. The rule for my living is the Christ who is my life.

Often, often we are ministering to our “life in this world.” We can do it not only by allowing evil ways, but by pressing self forward, or by sheltering ourselves from the cross. The Lord was going to death, and the disciples were in strife as to who should be accounted the greatest. He told them, and as we read His words, He is telling us “He that is greatest among you *let him be as the younger*, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve . . . . I am among you as he that serveth” (Luke xxii. 24-26).

Abidingly we have to keep watch that the Spirit of Christ may have place in us and not self. The danger is great. We may meet flesh in another by the flesh which is in ourselves. Thus we lose ground, as we then have to be concerned with our own failure. O let us make it our aim that



*Christ our Life, and Christ our Way.* 109

we may be acceptable to God, and that means that Christ is lived out, and not self.

The Lord grant us to have regard to the word of 2 Corin. iv. 10, "*Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body.*"

Thus we shall be acceptable to God.

D. S.

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GREAT troubles are more easily recognised as His will than trifling ones. Torrents, precipices, storms, belonging to the mountain we climb, are cheerfully accepted; but not the blistered foot, the sprained ankle, the broken staff. We joyfully address ourselves to what we think our proper task, but fret at interrupting circumstances. Let us regard these as also the will of God, and therefore our true work, and so delight in them. Taking a trouble, large or little, from His hands, transmutes stone to gold. We surrender easily what we value, in proportion as we surrender it to *Him*; and drink the cup of sorrow more cheerfully when we remember our Father has given it. Not by assisting or avoiding the correcting hand, but by reposing in it, find we peace.

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PSALM iv. 8:—He will commit all his concerns into that faithful hand that hath hitherto wrought all things for him; and he means not to lose the comfort of one night's rest, nor bring the evil of to-morrow upon the day; but knowing in whose hand he was, wisely enjoys the sweet felicity of a resigned will.

**GOD'S DELIGHT : ISA. LIII. 12.**

A MYSTERY beyond the powers of the human mind, however keen, to fathom, is that of the Person of the Christ of God. Of Him it is written, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father" (Matt. xi. 27). An impenetrable, yet blessed mystery it is, for truth about Him is truth dear to the hearts of those who receive Him, and what baffles the keenest intellect, entrances the hearts of God's elect.

All scripture speaks of Him, but those portions that specially portray Him in His excellence as Man, are portions that the longing soul devoutly loves to linger over. Oh! the matchless halo of glory that surrounds the words, ways, and works of that blessed One, the Man Christ Jesus, defies description. He who was with God in the beginning, *and who was God* (John i. 1), became flesh, impoverished Himself (2 Cor. viii. 9), emptied Himself (Phil. ii. 7), and humbled Himself to death—all that is recorded of Him enhances the grace which characterised Him.

But not alone to us; for those perfections and that grace known but in part by us, are fully appreciated by Jehovah. In the closing verse of Isa. liii., that wondrous portion that has provided untold spiritual delectation for those to whom Christ is "the altogether lovely," the record of that appreciation is found. Pondering such a portion in communion with Him will reveal that "the joy of the Lord is our strength." The first mark of Jehovah's delight is that of glory and exaltation conferred. The Spirit in the prophets testified, so writes Peter (1 Pet. i. 11), of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. Varied sufferings must bring manifold reward. Of all He is worthy. In life instructing a people far from prone to listen, in death He bore their

iniquities (ver. 11). What follows? Exaltation—"a portion with the great" (ver. 12).

But what a portion is His. Here again He must have the pre-eminence; and the glory of all kingdoms must be swallowed up in His. So we read, "There was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. vii. 14). Before the once-despised and rejected One shall all kings fall; to Him shall they, the great of the earth, bring presents (Ps. lxxii. 10, 11); for when manifested it will be as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. xix. 16).

But not alone will He reign, "He shall divide the spoil with the strong," reveals that the fruit of His triumph He will share with others—"the strong." Who are they? In Ps. xlv. 7, He is spoken of as anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, and the mention of companions, fellows, reveals who the "strong" are. Grasping by faith the sure word of the unfailing God, they hold the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end, and companions with Christ (Heb. iii. 14), they share in the glories of the triumphant victory which He has won. Of reigning over the earth that "new song" of redemption speaks (Rev. v. 10), and those that reign are those that have been by His blood redeemed to God.

It may be that we have an illustration of the twofold truth set out in the first part of this verse in Zech. vi. 10-14, where Joshua, with the crowns set upon his head (typical indeed of the Man whom God delights to honour, the One alone personally worthy), is found in association with those of the Captivity who are signally honoured of Jehovah.

Then the words, "He shall divide the spoil with the

strong," must surely recall to our minds what is recorded in John xvii. 22, where the Lord utters that memorable saying, "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them." This, the gift of Christ's own sovereign love and grace, is verily fruit of His marvellous love. Wonder we must, but realise now since knowing Him, that less *He* would not do who loved us and *gave Himself* for us. In the Gospel the heavenly saints are prominent, as more specially His earthly people in Isa. liii.

And in marking His appreciation, God sets out reasons for the same and the resulting bestowal of glory. So firstly we read "Because He has poured out His soul unto death." Christ's own voluntary act it was, and one peculiarly delightful to God—manifest evidence of oneness in effecting redemption as in all else. And peculiarly precious are our Lord's words in John x. 17, adding light to what is here vouchsafed us:—"Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life." How deep the wondrous interest evinced, in this revealed fact, by the Father! Surely it was the act, the supreme act, that attested the absolute perfection of the Son's obedience; but, oh! the intensity of feeling it betrays when we remember that Christ was giving His life for the sheep. What a page in the divine counsels is here opened for us to read! What an insight of the hearts of both Father and Son is laid bare! Going on to the cross Christ says, "That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do" (John xiv. 31), and in that Obedient One His heart found its rest and joy; and, though ever the object of the Father's love, He was nevertheless loved because He laid down His life. Death had no claims over the Holy One of God. Upon Him that governmental brand could not rest. But He humbled Himself and became obedient unto

death, laying down His life, but without vacating the position and relationship into which He had come ; “ for as Man, He will not dispose of His own life without the Father’s consent.” And another has remarked of this : “ On the other hand, even in this, which might have been justly deemed the most strictly personal of all acts, He abides the obedient man, and would do only the will of His Father. He was come to do the will of God. This is perfection, and found in Jesus alone.” He says, “ I have authority to lay it down,” and as the obedient servant, though Son, He adds, “ This commandment have I received of My Father.” Oh, for hearts attuned to enjoy the sweet melody of such strains !

First and foremost, then, amongst the reasons for God’s appreciation comes the fact that Christ poured out His soul unto death. Thereby God’s glory is fully vindicated ; the sinner’s need fully met. But we pass to the next reason.

And here we find the perfect Servant, the Son of God’s love, in strange company indeed. “ He was numbered with the transgressors,” is the prophetic scripture which received its fulfilment when with Him “ they crucify two thieves,” Jesus in the midst (Mark xv. 27, 28).

Such an arrangement told out the thoughts of many hearts most clearly. There was the verdict recorded, ineffaceable indeed, of man upon Him, the Holy Sufferer. No degradation too great for them to inflict upon Him. But in vivid contrast stands out the great and marvellous grace of the One in the midst. Invested with power, He could by His word have vindicated Himself there and then, but to their destruction ; invested with love He patiently bore all, that many might be saved.

And such grace was entirely in accord with the heart of the blessed God who was revealing Himself to His sinful

creatures. To win them He reasoned: "I will send My beloved Son" (Luke xx. 13), their answer to which was the numbering of Him with transgressors. But vindication will come, and as He has suffered much so shall He be greatly glorified (Isa. lii. 14, 15).

Then in the third mark given, we have Christ's substitutionary work brought out. "He bare the sin of many." By His stripes healed, we know that "no wrath God's heart retaineth to usward who believe." He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and dying for us has loosed us from our sins in His blood. Oh, marvellous love that for us couldst pass through sufferings inconceivable! Well may our hearts cry out in glad accord with heaven, "He is worthy."

One other point is noted. "He made intercession for the transgressors." This was literally fulfilled when the Lord cried, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34). Think of that life of patient ministry and toil, and then man's answer: the indignities, cruelties, shame and mocking to which He was subjected, with finally the nailing to the tree.

But many waters could not quench His love, and the bruising but brought out the sweet savour of the incense of His grace. In His love and pity He petitions the Father, pleading their ignorance. How like Him! Heaven's vengeance might well have fallen then, but no! The grace there displayed has its due and proper appreciation in the heart of Him who alone knows the Son.

How far do *we* enter into these things? We may well ask. This wondrous chapter which tells us of Christ's rejection (1), His ways of grace amongst men (4), His death and results accruing (5), His innocence (9), ends with the clear marks of God's appreciation set out thus: "There-

fore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death; and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Well may we sing:

"Oh, what love, what grace was His!"

H. F.

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OF an aged Christian's departure to be with Christ many years ago, the following few lines were written: "After she had spoken to one and another, she seemed to settle herself *in* for what was between her soul and God, and planted her feet upon Psalm xxiii, as uttering the experience of one on *this* side the valley, and upon the lxiii. Psalm as expressing the real desires of a soul on *the other side*, and so she crossed over, saying "The Lord is my light and my salvation." Many a time she had asked that the Lord would detach her "from everything inconsistent with Himself," and so at length she stepped out from her only remaining inconsistency, by putting off the image of *the earthy*, and leaving it behind her, and *with this* we have since been occupied, having sown the precious seed at S. with her father and mother, in the sure and certain hope of a resurrection in glory."

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BUT title to *serve*, what will give that? If there be power for it, and heart, nothing else is needed. Serving is love's prerogative, wherever power and need are found together. Power cannot fail the Son of God; and love is demonstrated in the fact that the Son of God is become the Man Christ Jesus.

### **MY DESIRE.**

LORD keep me near Thee, for the day declineth,  
Night with its darkness draweth very nigh ;  
Let Thy blest presence with its cheer and brightness,  
Wrap round my spirit till with Thee on high.

Earth seems receding, all below is fading,  
Heaven with its glory opens out to view ;  
Thou the blest centre of enwrapped devotion,  
Worship eternal, all things pure and new.

Faith pierces gloom, and sees the sun's face shining,  
Clouds intervene, but they shall pass away ;  
God and the Lamb, in scene of purest splendour,  
Saints all adoring through eternal day.

Fain would my spirit join the heavenly choir,  
Sing hallelujahs to the great Divine ;  
See with my eyes the face of Christ my Saviour,  
For I am His and He is also mine.

Never a sorrow shall my heart experience,  
Never a tear shall from my eyes then fall ;  
Time's mighty woes through sin then past for ever—  
God and the Lamb will there be all in all !

Oh, precious Saviour, wilt Thou not be coming  
Soon, very soon, to call Thy saints above ?  
Glad wilt Thou be to have Thine own all with Thee,  
In the embrace of Thine eternal love !

E. R. W.



**OBEDIENCE.**

*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work (John iv. 34).*

*If any man serve Me, let him follow Me ; and where I am, there shall also My servant be : if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour (John xii. 26).*

OBEDIENCE, it will be admitted, is the right characteristic for a dependent creature to manifest. But the life of the natural man, of man in the flesh, is lived in disobedience. Sons of disobedience Christians once were. "Among whom," says the Apostle, "we also all once had our conversation in the lusts of our flesh, doing what the flesh and the thoughts willed to do" (Eph. ii. 3). "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be" (Rom. viii. 7)—such is the definition God gives of man in the flesh.

God enjoined obedience in the garden in Eden, but man disobeyed and ate of the forbidden fruit and was cast out, and lost, through disobedience, the pleasures of an earthly paradise. Then came a period in which man was left to himself, and the activity of hearts afar from God was manifested in the lawlessness which prevailed, calling for death, as the just retribution from the hand of God. Then out of the midst of a scene of darkness and idolatry, God calls Abram, to make of him a great nation, which should be a peculiar people unto Himself. To them God gave the law, another test of man's competency to render to his Creator, what, as such, He must rightly claim. Many were the blessings promised to Israel if they obeyed, but we know from the record given in the Word of God, how signally they failed to fulfil the law which was given. The law only demonstrated man's true condition and his utter inability to

fulfil it, so it becomes plain that man in his natural state can never render unto God that which is acceptable to Him; for he possesses, by virtue of his association with Adam, a fallen nature, a nature at enmity against God.

There was but One who ever trod this earth whose life was the expression of what He Himself declared, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." He was the perfect Man. How then, shall God obtain from His creatures that which He delights in, and is His due? For this there must be a new creation. The life of the flesh is a life of disobedience (1 Peter iv. 2, 3); the new life is a life of obedience. A new life then must be imparted, a new nature too and power, and for this we are cast upon the sovereign grace of God. He has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. viii. 29). We are born anew, "His workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. ii. 10), and we belong now to a new creation of which Christ is Head (1 Cor. xv. 47-49).

The life which we now possess flows to us from Himself. He is our life (Col. iii. 4). We are united to Him (1 Cor. vi. 17), and our ways and actions should be but the manifestation of that nature we have received from Him, just as once we manifested the fruits of a fallen nature received from the first man, Adam.

The manifestation of this life, too, is not the result of a law enforced, for we are not under law. The Apostle James speaks of "The law of liberty," and the spontaneous actings of the new life within, and every desire of the new nature (for we are made partakers of the divine nature) are the fulfilment of this. We must thus naturally so to speak, desire just that alone which meets the mind of God. And accompanied with this there is the sense of our own

weakness to answer practically to what is true of us through grace. We need power. This, we who possess the Spirit, have. By the Spirit we are enabled to mortify the deeds of the body (Rom. viii. 13); or, as 2 Cor. iv. 10 puts it, "Bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body." The fruit of the Spirit's operation in us is detailed in Gal. v. 22, 23. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control.

We admire the life of that One, the blest Son of God, who while here below "sought not His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him" (John v. 30), and through grace we are enabled to say that we possess life from Him. God's purpose concerning us (Rom. viii. 29) shall undoubtedly be fulfilled, but the Christian is called to manifest that life even here, a life of obedience. Christ has left us an example (1 Pet. ii. 21), and following His steps is the way that leads to richest blessing. In it the revelation of Christ to the soul is known now (John xiv. 21), and likewise His approval and reward by and by.

Having a revelation from God, may we seek to be obedient thereto, leaving the apparent consequences of such a step with Him whose Word we obey. Obedience simplifies our pathway and is the way of peace. The time is fast approaching when nothing but that which is Christ-like shall characterise us (1 John iii. 2). We may and do fail here in exhibiting that life which we possess, but let our aim and object be to represent Him here below, and as redeemed unto God, delivered from our sins and sin, yield ourselves unto God as those alive from among the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

W. M.

**THE COMING OF THE LORD.**

THE Thessalonians were not converted above a month. The Apostle was only a few weeks with them; a persecution arose, and he was sent away, yet there he had fully brought it before them. There is no Epistle so full of the Lord's coming as the two to the Thessalonians; the first as to the joy of the saints (the Lord taking them to Himself); the second, the solemnity of His coming in judgment. They were quite recently converted to God, yet they had learned all this. It was the thing brought before their souls: "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." Two things characterised them: they went out to meet the bridegroom, and they served Him meanwhile. They were like unto men that wait for their Lord. As we all know, even unconverted men know perfectly well, if saints were waiting for Christ their whole lives would be changed. There is not a man does not know it. Do you think people would be heaping up money, or dressing themselves in finery to meet the Lord? If this was acted upon, it would change everything in our lives; that is what the Lord gave it for. "Let your loins be girded about"—a figure for all the heart in order, the state you are always to be in—like a porter at the door, "that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open unto Him immediately." That is what the Lord looks for in the saints.

J. N. D.

**ERRATA.**

Page 91, 10th line from bottom, read "had not only failed"

Page 94, 13th line from bottom, read "flock" for "flesh."

Page 97, top line, read "affection" for "affliction."

## DEPENDENCE.

LORD let me know the shelter of Thy wings,  
And as the infant to the mother clings  
So let me cling to Thee.

For there are dangers in this desert path,  
And safety only is with him who hath  
The faith that clings to Thee.

The foe hath spread his toils and snares around,  
The narrow path leads through enchanted ground,  
And I am weak, unwise.  
Then let me watch the guidance of Thine eye,  
Remembering "our calling is on high,"  
Our rest beyond the skies.

There are so many paths that look so fair,  
So like the straight one, if I am not ware  
I'll surely go astray.  
But help me as mine eyes still look straight on,  
To follow in the path my Lord hath gone,—  
Preserve me all the way.

And then so many voices calling too,  
To all these devious paths they seek to woo  
The unsuspecting soul.  
Lord make me as Thy faithful servant "deaf"  
To all the words each wily charmer saith,  
Until I reach the goal.

If Thou art with me, mid the dangers, Lord,  
And I with Thee, obedient to Thy word,  
I shall in Thee abide ;  
Abide with me and whisper in mine ear  
Words to correct, as well as words to cheer  
Thus keep me by Thy side.

And when doth come the end, it ends in bliss --  
What consolation for the road is this—  
With Him who went before,  
With Him, and like Him for eternity—  
Learning the love that planned this joy for me—  
I'll worship evermore.

H. S.

*Dec. 1905.*

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## **JABEZ, AND THE POTTERS.**

*1 Chronicles IV. 9, 10, 23.*

“AND Jabez was more honourable than his brethren ; and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bear him with sorrow.

“And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me ! And God granted him that which he requested.”

. . . . “And these are ancient things. These were the potters, and those that dwelt among plants and hedges : there they dwelt with the king for his work.”

*Jabez, and the Potters.*

123

The Scriptures noted above contain valuable lessons for children of God to-day.

A short time ago I listened with much enjoyment to one as he pressed various lessons found in the first two verses, which present to us the short and only history we have of Jabez.

In a few out of the many names found in Old Testament Scripture we have a distinct meaning associated with the name. For the great mass of names, however, we have no Divine reason given so as to allow us liberty to say, "the name means a certain thing, and we have a lesson from God to learn in the name." The story of Jabez, however, furnishes, in the few words given us, a Divine interpretation to his name. The name means "sorrowful." There had been something specially sad resting on his mother's mind as she bare him. But he grew up, and we read, "He was more honourable than his brethren." The ruling passion in his life was the sense of it being approved by Jehovah, that His people should cast out the Canaanite and possess the land for Him (2 Chron. xx. 11). Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, who spied out the land along with Joshua the son of Nun was a man of the same spirit with Jabez, as we read in Joshua xiv. 6—15. We read also he encouraged others to follow on the same road. Othniel, the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb. (Josh. xv. 17), responds to his uncle's invitation. "He that smiteth Kirjathsepher and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife." Othniel takes the city and receives his reward. This Achsah is of the proper spirit—a true "helpmeet" to Othniel. She asks a blessing of her father—even "springs of water." He gave her "the upper springs and the nether springs." She had a "good understanding" as to what would add great value to the gift.

To God's people to-day all this is for their learning. The Scriptures that deal with conquest in the land speak strongly and invitingly to us as to the entering practically into "the spiritual blessings" we are blessed with in Christ in heavenly places. "All our blessings are in Christ." For many of them to be enjoyed we must be in the faith that we *are now* in heavenly places *in Christ*.

One point in Jabez' prayer that I wish to emphasise here is, he desires that he might be blessed of the God of Israel, and his coast enlarged. He wished to receive a further portion, and ability to enter and take possession. His power to realise or take possession he rightly estimated was in the God of Israel's hand being with him.

Are not we taught in the same way in Eph. i. Consider the greatness of the prayer *for* us in the closing verses of that chapter. We read at verses 17 to 23 "that it may be given unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father (the source) of glory; the eyes of our heart being enlightened that we may know what is the hope of our calling (the hope that belongs to our calling), and what the riches of the glory of His (God's) inheritance in (or through) the saints," and lastly, "the greatness of His power which is to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things *to* the church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."



What a wonderful prayer on our behalf, dear child of God! How every word of it should concentrate the heart and mind and occupy us with the One on whose account all this is granted to us by God! Are you earnest in prayer that it may be fulfilled to you? Do we say "Amen" to God our Father as we read these requests of Paul for the saints of God? We may well adopt the words "We are well able to possess the land" whatever be the power of the foe. No doubt the Anakims are there, but measured by the great Captain of our salvation "they are bread for us," and "if the Lord delight in us" He will give us possession here in faith, as certainly He will finish the journey to His own glory in His presence on high.

Let us seek enlargement of coast. All things are ours. We are Christ's and Christ is God's. Our portion is immeasurable.

The desire of Jabez that he may be kept from evil that it may not grieve him should be ours also. We are taught that sin grieves the Holy Spirit of God. But does it always grieve *us*, and is it always on account of Christ's name being dishonoured that we are grieved? Loud denunciation against failure and sin in others does not always proceed from holy hatred of the evil. I have known the presence of strong feeling against a person who had brought dishonour on Christ, but I failed to consider as to what *I* was capable of, and *how* I did not transgress as they had.

We have referred to the request in Jabez' prayer that the hand of the God of Israel might be with him. Much is told us of the hand of God—the right hand of Jehovah. The psalmist had experience of His right hand saving him. He desires the manifestation of the lovingkindness of God and describes Him as the One who saves by His right hand (Ps. xvii. 7). He had already proved it, and again in

Ps. lxxxix. 13, he proclaims "Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand." In Psalm xxiii the writer was satisfied as he thought of going through the valley of the shadow of death, when he remembered that Jehovah was with him—His rod and His staff they comforted him.

The Lord give us Jabez' desires and may we occupy faithfully until He comes.

I conclude this call to observe the prayer of this little known saint of God, by remarking, that while there is much, *very much* in the prayer, the words are few. Jabez is in real earnest in seeking what he gives utterance to, but his words are not many. He is in his own consciousness in the presence of the God of Israel. If there were any others present he is not allowing them into the vision of his soul. He is alone with God, and knows that it is God who alone can give what he asks.

One distinct mark of true prayer as we bow the knee in our closet, or in the assembly, is no doubt the directness of our requests and the absence of "vain repetitions." Our Lord and Master reprobates this (Matt. vi. 7) and long prayers also (Matt. xxiii. 14). The closing words of the verse are very fine, "And God granted him that which he requested."

Verse 23 is preceded by various names also, but of them we are not taught. They are "ancient things." They were potters. They nurtured plants for beautifying the king's grounds and palaces, and hedges for his retirement. They are not desirous to be of note outside his domain. They attended to his work; faithful servants they were satisfied with his approval.

God's children! we should read a lesson in this little portion. His servants!—no higher work can we be given to

do. His work, and the way it should be done is implied in being His servants. Alas! His people have sadly failed to consider this—they have forgotten the word Paul wrote in his first epistle to Timothy his “true child in faith” (R.V.). He is there instructed how he ought to behave himself in the house of God which is the assembly of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (chap. iii. 15). Timothy is to learn from the Scriptures how he should fulfil the trust reposed in him. He must strive in all things to be obedient to the revealed will of God.

These people lived in a secluded spot—but they were placed there by the will of the king for his work. That was enough. To him they were responsible. By him they would be called to account. The Master teaches us fully as to this in words He uttered to His disciples ere He returned from earth to His Father (Luke xix. 12—27). The work of every workman will be tried as to what sort it is (1 Corin. iii. 13). Did the King wish this or that thing done, and has His way that He wished it done been carried out? If done according to His desire and in love to His name it will be rewarded.

How important for the children of God (young and old) to earnestly make the Lord and His will their object. In the case of a young Christian they may have entered on some line of business sheltered by their parent's care, but at last they have to move out. It may be to take up the responsibilities of a business themselves. The heaviest item in deciding should be, “Can I serve my Lord in this place,” not “Is there likely to be a good overturn so that it will pay me.” Generally what I here put last is made the first point in deciding, and not the present will of my Lord. Satan's effort is to hinder the child of God in his witness and service to Christ. It is an intensely critical moment.

May the Divine lesson in this beautiful verse be graven on the heart. The secret of heartily doing the work is to be found in the words "There they dwelt *with the king* for his work." Thus He teaches in these wonderful utterances in the gospel of John, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John xiv. 23).

D. S.

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### **A WORD ON THE BODY OF CHRIST.**

ONE body and one Spirit! Truths how simply stated, yet how much ignored, and even when owned, how little in their fulness understood! One body—the body of Christ; He the Head, His people the members, which together with Him, when viewed in this connection, make up what Scripture calls *the Christ* (1 Cor. xii. 12; Ephes. iii. 4).

One body! Then denominationalism must be wrong, and independency must be quite out of the current of God's thoughts. For one body speaks of union, and membership. There is but one which God owns, and those forming it are members one of another (Rom. xii. 5; Eph. iv. 25), being members of Christ's body (Eph. v. 30), and have all been baptised into one body in the power of the Holy Ghost (1 Corin. xii. 13).

Do we view the body in its local character? There is but one, and to it all true Christians in any place belong, whether they know it or not. If we view it in its general character, the truth is the same. There is but one body, and to it all true Christians on earth belong, and from it none, thank God, can ever break away, however from wilfulness or ignorance they may disown it.

*A Word on the Body of Christ.*

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Now is this truth one to be held in theory only? No. It is a most practical one, and a helpful one in the ecclesiastical confusion around us. Nothing is more catholic than this truth of the body of Christ, yet nothing more readily provokes the charge of exclusiveness against those who acknowledge it, and act upon it; since to such as understand not the truth in question, the attempt to maintain it practically, seems to give to that charge currency and support. On the other hand it is not surely too much to assert that in the practical carrying of it out in accordance with Scripture, Christians, all of us indeed, if not kept are liable to break down.

One body and one Spirit. These truths are now in some measure owned. God in His grace by the teaching of the Holy Ghost through His servants in these last days has brought them out afresh from the word in which they had lain practically unnoticed for so long.

But no formative truth is recovered without a struggle, and it may be that God's people will be tested, to see if they have really learned the one in question. There is but one body, as there is but one Spirit, and the body viewed either locally, or generally, is always regarded in the Word as complete, though, if we speak of the body of Christ, in its fullest character, including as that does all the saints from Pentecost to the rapture, it is not yet completed.

The body viewed locally is regarded as always complete, with its full complement of members, hence it is competent for action, and fully provided with all its parts for its increase. All that is requisite as to members it surely has. But although in the disordered state of the assembly of God, all the members of the body cannot be got together for action, nor all its parts be got to work harmoniously for its increase, the Lord has provided for this state of

things by the promise of Matthew xviii. 20, of His presence in the midst of two or three gathered unto His name. Have we not proved the value of such a word, and His faithfulness to it?

But if He provides for the disordered state of the assembly locally, has He left the assembly at large to shift for itself? That surely would be unlike the character of such a Head, of Him who loved the assembly and gave Himself for it. Is evil then to pass unchecked, not to be inquired into and dealt with, because the question raised cannot be decided by the body viewed in its local character? Such a conclusion must not be allowed for a moment. If the question be concerning the true character of the local assembly, instead of merely that of any member of it, is it to go unsolved, because by the very nature of the case the body viewed locally cannot be judge in its own cause. Why is it that when the body is treated of in its local and general characters, members and joints and bands are mentioned, whereas, when the body in its universal character is introduced these are unnoticed? (See 1 Corin. xii. 27; Rom. xii. 5; Eph. iv. 16; Col. ii. 19, compared with Eph. i. 23; Col. i. 18). In heaven no such action as has now to take place will be needed, and the increase of the whole body will have been attained. But here on earth it is different. The members, the parts of the body, are requisite, and they are provided.

Surely if we bear this in mind, we shall not allow language to rise to the lips, and to flow from the pen, such as, Who is able to look into the condition of a local assembly? the state of which calls for it. The body viewed in its general character is responsible to do this. Responsibility, not ability, is the real question to be raised. And if we have learned, as we surely have, that when the whole local

assembly cannot be got together for action, the Lord is with those who care for His glory, and ratifies their judgment, shall we not find it equally true where the question raised is the condition of a local assembly, and not that of certain members of it? The responsibilities of the body viewed in its general character are to be acknowledged and responded to.

1880.

C. E. S.

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### LOOK UP!

*Heb. xii. 2 ; 2 Corin. iii. 18 ; Psalm xxxiv. 5.*

Oh, child of God, as on you tread,

Look up!

There's nought but glory overhead,

Look up!

Remember, your bright home is there:

What matter, then, the trials here?

With Christ the glory soon you'll share—

Look up!

Oh, why should e're the heart be sad?

Look up!

He died to make you always glad,

Look up!

Awake, and sing His fullest praise!

With Him you'll dwell through endless days,

Oh, what a thought the heart to raise!

Look up!

Would you be kept by God's own power ?

Look up !

Yes, every moment, every hour

Look up !

How oft the blessed Lord when here

Would seek some burdened heart to cheer !

Would we His own example share—

Look up !

If daily you would be sustained,

Look up !

In all around the heart is pained,

Look up !

Ne'er tempted be to look within,

The only way to keep from sin

Is this—be occupied with Him—

Look up !

No longer hanging on the tree,

Look up !

He lives in glory now for thee,

Look up !

If we would manifest Him here,

The eye must gaze upon Him there ;

So shall we, changed, His glory bear—

Look up !

For constant power to run the race,

Look up !

He giveth strength, He giveth grace ;

Look up !

And tell the lost what Christ has done

To fit them for the Father's home ;

Yea, spread the news : He soon will come—

Look up !

ANON.



**THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS.**

God has not called the attention of His saints to the angels on purpose to make them objects of interest to them. They are not bidden to seek their interest nor to pray to them. Some have worshipped angels, but that is the outcome of a fleshly mind (Col. ii. 18), puffed up and become vain, yet degrading itself by doing homage to creatures, to whom such homage must be offensive in the extreme.

Servants they are. Servants, true and devoted, of the living God, "ministers of His, that do His pleasure" (Ps. ciii. 21), never their own. Conflict of will there is not. What belongs to God they seek not. To do so would be their ruin. There are angels, fallen angels, who sinned. They kept not their first estate (Jude 6), and for them no Saviour is provided. The Son of God took hold of the seed of Abraham (Heb. ii), took up the cause of fallen men, whilst that of angels was passed by. Marvellous grace to man!

We read of the elect angels (1 Tim. v. 21), and gather from this that no creature suffices for itself; each needs to be upheld by the power of God. Then, though the elect angels are a vast host, yet we are only told of the name of one, Gabriel, who appeared twice to Daniel, and also to Zacharias and Mary (Dan. viii. 16 17; ix. 21; Luke i. 19; ii. 26). We learn also of an archangel, Michael by name, mentioned as a "chief prince" in Daniel x. 13, and as "your prince" in chap. xi. i. Jude writes of him as the archangel (9); and John in Rev. xii. speaks of "Michael and his angels."

We cannot cite all the passages of Scripture which speak of them, nor refer to the varied services they perform. David, in Ps. ciii. 20, calls upon angels to bless Jehovah in these words: "Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto

the voice of His word." Then Ps. civ. 4, says, "Who maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire." The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes this in chap. i. at the close of which he asks the question, yet not as a debateable point but as a plain fact, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

They have a work to do, a work of service—they minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation. On their behalf they labour and so are concerned with creatures far inferior in strength and intelligence, even members of the human race, fallen and sinful.

Of a service to one such our blessed Lord tells us in Luke xvi. 22. "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died," but of no angelic service was he the subject. With the heirs of salvation are they concerned. The beggar was one of them. The Lord only tells of their service, consequent upon death; of any service to Lazarus in life there is no mention.

Other Scriptures, however, inform us, that during life on earth, they are engaged in caring for God's people. Ps. xci. 11 tells of the charge given to angels concerning those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High. The words are: "To keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Satan quoted this in part, in tempting Christ in the wilderness, but failed in the misuse he made of it to entice the blessed One out of the place of obedience and dependence He had taken. Angels did minister to Jesus, God though He was, for He had become a man and as such received their ministrations—"Angels came and ministered unto Him" (Matth. iv. 11).

*The Ministry of Angels.*

135

We read of the special points in the temptation at the close of the forty days' fast, but of what it must have been to the spirit of the Holy One to be in the company of the father of lies we are not told, nor of the welcome change to the society and ministrations of angels. He was God, so was both their Creator and Sustainer. He was man too, so needed and accepted the service they willingly performed.

In the awful agony in Gethsemane, we note the effect of the soul distress of Christ upon His body, and we learn that an angel appeared unto Him from heaven and strengthened Him (Luke xxii. 43). Blessed Man! yet ever and always God.

In Matth. xviii. 6, the Lord teaches us about the awful consequences to such as offended, or caused to stumble, a little one who believed in Him. In verse 10 the Lord warns any against the sin of despising one of these little ones, adding "that in heaven their angels"—that is, we take it, those ministering spirits specially charged with caring for them—"do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." So august a Person, supreme Ruler of the universe, is never too much occupied to receive those servants, nor are they kept waiting till He is at leisure; for He is always at leisure to see and hear of the least of those who are heirs of salvation. "Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ"—what a blessed God! what a privileged people!

E. R. W.

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THE day when God is morally testing souls is always a day of small things open to the scorn of him whose heart is not content to serve God. Those whose delight is in God's will and work in the day of small things are in communion with Himself.

**HYPOCRISY.***Luke XII. 1—3.*

A STERN denunciation of the scribes, Pharisees and lawyers had just been uttered by the Lord. He exposed their hypocritical ways, and the hollow sham and formality of their religious exercises as only He could do before whose eyes all hearts were open and naked. In withering language He revealed how basely unreal they were, and earned from them undying hatred, so that they sedulously endeavoured to find somewhat either in word or way whereof they might accuse Him. Doomed to failure they were ; for “ never man spake like this man.”

But their hatred could not quench Christ's love. Its existence, and the hypocrisy that preceded it, called for warning against “ the leaven of the Pharisees,” and instruction to correct. So when a great multitude had gathered, the Lord, in the hearing of the people, began to say unto His disciples *first of all*, “ Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” From such He would save them.

Reality is a prime requisite in the eye of God ; pretension, whether religious or otherwise, is nauseous to Him. God's controversy with His people about the unreality that had become characteristic of them, is debated in the prophecy of Malachi ; and the Coming One, who is there spoken of in connection with power to right all wrongs, and when “ the vile person shall be no more called liberal,” is the same “ wisdom of God ” who speaks here warning against hypocrisy.

The Lord's voice proclaims, in tones unmistakeable, “ Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees—hypocrisy.” Its subtle character is thus intimated, and the seductive influence

it might exert is shown. What popularity, seemingly, was the Lord's, with a multitude crowding one upon another to get near Him. Popularity the Pharisees sought, and the snare therein for His disciples Christ would lay open. What will not men do to win popularity—to obtain a following—to earn the praise of giddy creatures? But when the heart craves the applause of the creature, and the vision is bounded by "man's little day," hypocrisy results. In that portion of the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matth. vi. the Lord shows that the hypocrite acts for men to see, prays for men to hear, and fasts for men to praise. But God was not in their thoughts.

To assume, then, to be other than we know ourselves to be in God's sight; to ape a character which does not belong to us; to pretend to a devotion of which the heart is ignorant, is to be guilty of hypocrisy. Deception of various kinds is practised. Prophets of old wore a rough garment to deceive, and spake smooth words in the name of the Lord; and modern hypocrisy is surely not less reprobate because less veiled. Tolerant men are intolerant and tyrannous; pleaders for broadmindedness are bigots; upholders of righteousness are unrighteous; and servants of the Lord, professedly, are pleasers of men. Verily the warning sounded is required by us all—"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees—hypocrisy."

But the antidote—what is that? Christ brings in God and the future. He would have the heart and conscience before God, and the eye upon "that day" when every hidden thing shall be unmasked and brought out into the light, "when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Rom. ii. 16). Hence the Lord's words, "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, neither hid, that shall not be known." The day of exposure must

inevitably come; and the remembrance of that should tend to gender reality, and help a disciple to continue in the path of truth and rectitude in spite of the persecution that such continuance might bring upon him.

How solemn and searching are these utterances of our Lord! Think of it; all the plottings in the darkness are to be brought into the light; all the whisperings in secret are to be given publicity. "The SECRETS of men" are known to Him. So to forget God, to leave Him out of calculation, as the hypocrites do, is to be at the disposal of the evil one and at the mercy of fleshly lust. May His words lay hold of our hearts.

To His disciples Christ spoke first. The warning and teaching He imparted we need now. Pretension is hateful to God and He must unmask it. Reality He desires, and He will by and by commend it. Subjection to God, and trust in Him implicitly, are enjoined upon us. The one will save us from being unreal, and the other from the fear of man, which bringeth a snare. Truth in the inward parts God still desires. In the hidden parts may He then make us to know wisdom, for His name's sake.

H. F.

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"How often is this the case, that the difficulties which draw out the unbelief of the heart lead to speak evil of the position to which we have been divinely called, and of which once we had tasted the blessedness! All flowed from forgetfulness of God."

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**A COMMON MISTAKE.**

“WHAT you tell me of yourself interests me much. It is *very* common indeed; and what many, if not most, saints of God pass through. But, first or last, there is nothing for us but the bare word of God. But we must take Him at His word, and in doing that, can we alone find rest. There is no peace nor rest without that.

All that had to be done for our salvation by our Surety *has been done*, and He is risen in proof of it; “delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification” (Rom. iv. 25). Thus He bore our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Pet. ii. 24). The Lord laid them on Him, and He laid them *all*. The Lord Jesus has borne them, and He commissioned His disciples, after He had borne them, to preach forgiveness of sins in His name. And God assures us now that whosoever believeth on Him—*i.e.* Christ,—shall receive forgiveness of sins (Acts x. 43). Our part is to believe on Him, and there rest.

True, how true, one has to speak of failure in walk. But that *does not affect what Christ HAS done*. We are to rest on *God's testimony* as to what Christ *has* done, looking for grace to walk as those redeemed by His blood. So the apostle could tell the Ephesians, “By grace *are* ye saved through faith” (Ephes. ii. 8); and yet warn them afterwards against all kinds of evil ways. We are so apt to make the mistake of judging of our security by our walk. Our security rests on the *finished* sacrifice of Christ. Our walk should be affected by it. But the former never did depend on the latter. God says “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. x. 17). He says that because He has been infinitely glorified by the death of His Son. He wants us to believe it, and to rest on His *bare* word. May

He so put His word before you, that in all simplicity of heart you may rest ON HIS TESTIMONY to the *finished* and *finally accepted sacrifice*. When Nathan told David "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (2 Sam. xii. 13), he believed it, because the prophet *said* it. God says, "Whosoever believeth on Him—*i.e.* Christ—shall not perish, but have everlasting life (John iii. 16). Shall we not believe God?

Let me give you a little of my own experience. Years was I in a state of uncertainty. I know well what that is. At last, I just went to God and told Him all about it, and it was but a few days before I saw my mistake, and *could rest on a sacrifice accepted by God FOR me*. People put feelings before faith, instead of letting them be formed by faith—I mean by believing God's word, and their proving the effects of that on their feelings."

ANON.

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THE HOLIEST is a place where I can only be as *clean*. *Sin* cannot be there. Well, since I am a sinner, I cannot be there except on the ground of that which has put away my sins. If invited there (Heb. x. 15-22), then my sins *must* have been put away.

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THE HEART IN HEAVEN, WHERE THE TREASURE IS. Keep your taste, your love, and your hope in heaven. It is not good your love and your Lord should sojourn in different counties. Remember, too, you are nearing home, and what matter then of ill-entertainment in the smoky inns of this worthless world?



## CHRIST, OUR SAVIOUR.

“THE beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” So wrote Mark in the Gospel that bears his name. Unlike Matthew and Luke he passes over the birth of the One of whom he wrote, telling us briefly His name, *Jesus*; His title, *Christ*; and that He is the *Son of God*. It is the Son on the earth, a man amongst men in busy service, teaching, preaching, and healing all manner of sickness and disease. How suited to the need of men in this sad sin-stricken world was He! How suited, too, to the heavens in all its purity and light, to the heart of God, to the craving of His nature, was this Jesus, this Man amongst men! It was but fit and right that the heavens should open to look down upon this One, and that the voice of God should be heard in owning Him thus: “Thou art my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Upon Him the Holy Spirit had descended, whose first acting was to drive Him into the wilderness, away from the dwellings of men, with the wild beasts, and there for forty days without food, was tempted of Satan. Then the angels ministered unto Him. Could He not have cared for Himself? Was He not God? aye, verily! It is as a man He encountered the tempter, capable of feeling His isolation, needing, as men do, food, but finding none. It was His to feel the pangs of hunger and receive the ministrations of angels, beings of His own creating.

We know that He overcame the adversary by such means as we also can, viz., by the Word of God. Of this Mark says nothing. We shall soon see the proof of it however, for on going into the synagogue at Capernaum to teach He

found in the congregation a man in the power of Satan, possessed by a demon. The moment for the conflict had come. Victory by obedience to the Word had been His over Satan as the tempter; now He shows Himself Victor by power,

Satan was the "strong one" in possession, but a stronger than he was in that synagogue. It was not that might was right, as is too often the case among men; for Satan had no just claim to that man nor to any other. He got his power over men through their ruin, which he had been instrumental in causing. But the demoniac was in the presence of One whose right to the man and to all things none could dispute, for He was the Creator. A word from His lips and the demon must obey it. Men knew not *who* He was; the demon did, and owned Him as the Holy One of God. "Hold thy peace, and come out of him," is the stern command. Convulsing his victim, he yet cried out, and came out of him. No attempt to fight did that demon make. Doubtless he would have done so had there been the chance of gaining the victory, but there was none. Did Jesus impose absolute silence? He did so far as giving testimony to Himself was concerned. He cried out, however, but what he said Mark does not tell us. It may have been that fear impelled him. It may have been that he went as near to disobedience as he dared to go, but his lips were closed as to declaring who Jesus was. His action, however, should demonstrate that he had found his Master. So he came out of the man.

The gospel of the kingdom Jesus had been preaching (see verse 14), and now the congregation in the synagogue at Capernaum are amazed, and question "among themselves, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this?" Elsewhere we read He taught, or spake, as one having authority

and not as the scribes. Yes, He had authority. He was the King. He preached the glad tidings of the kingdom, and showed His power to get rid of Satan's hold over men. The day is coming when Satan himself shall be shut up in the bottomless pit during the reign of the King over the earth.

Having given a sample of what He will do by and by, Christ is soon at work to rid one here and there of the effects of sin. In the synagogue He encountered the enemy. It was in the house of Simon and Andrew that He first deals with disease. Simon's wife's mother was sick of a fever and anon they tell Him of her. It was theirs to tell Him. It is ours to do likewise. "And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her." Do we wonder that she arose and ministered to them? What else could she do? Yes, she ministered to her Deliverer, but not to Him only but to those who were with Him. It was hers, not to teach or preach, not to forsake a woman's sphere for that of the other sex, but to minister to Him and those with Him. She served, and her service was acceptable. It was timely, for there was need such as she could minister unto. He needed suited objects to expend His love upon. He came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. Blessed Lord Jesus! He had needs too; for He was man; and many women were privileged to minister unto Him. The domestic sphere where a woman may shine has been ennobled by the entrance into this sphere of the blessed Son of God. The Word became flesh. A woman, a virgin gave Him birth. She nursed and cared for Him. Highly favoured was she. Doubtless she expended all the warmth and tenderness of a mother's love upon the infant Jesus, her Son; and yet was He too "God over all blessed for ever." In His public life of service other women were privileged to minister to Him.

Simon's wife's mother was one of them. She needed no pay ; no salary was attached to this service. It was entirely the product of love—not the natural human love such as Mary his mother doubtless had for her infant son, but love the product of grace, the result of His love. Could Simon's wife's mother ever forget that He came to her in her sickness for she could not go to Him? Moreover He took her by the hand and lifted her up. Could she ever forget such grace as that? He took her hand—He lifted her up. No wonder the fever left her. His grace, His tender love, as she remembered it, as she thought of it and meditated upon it, would make her love to serve, not roughly, not in a slovenly way, but as nearly as she could in the same considerate, tender, gentle way.

There is service and service. If our spiritual education be neglected, we may be devoted, we may do a lot, there may be, too, warmth of love in our service, but from ignorance of His mind much that is done may be unsuitable and unacceptable. How often in these days would women be as men, and boast of being used of God in blessing to many as justifying their entrance into the sphere that God has assigned to men. Forsaking their own proper place and duties, they lose much of that modesty and shamefacedness that should mark them. They would fill the public place, and demand equality with men in everything. But this is to their shame. We are not wiser than God. Where He places us, it is ours to be. What He has ordained, it is ours to recognise. What He has enjoined, it is ours to observe.—His will to know and His commands to obey. No amount of special pleading, no justifying by results, can make right what is wrong. It is wrong to set aside God's order even in nature. The perfect servant did always the will of God. What He did was only what God wanted

Him to do. Then, too, the way He did it, was absolutely perfect. He took the fever-stricken woman by the hand and lifted her up. He stood over her, as one has written; He touched her, as another has recorded; but Mark, whose it was to present Him in His service for our instruction and delight, puts on record the tender and morally lovely way in which He acted.

The Gospel of the Grace of God as proclaimed since the death and resurrection of Jesus, makes known to all who believe on Him, deliverance from the guilt of sin through Christ's blood; deliverance from its power now, though it is still in us; and deliverance from its presence at death or at the coming of the Lord. We may surely regard the incidents recorded in the early part of Mark's Gospel as illustrating the present work of God in grace. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness" (Col. i.). Do we estimate aright this precious deliverance? As to our sins, we are instructed thus: "In whom (Jesus) we have redemption through His blood, *the forgiveness of sins*" (Eph. i.). Then there is deliverance from the power of sin as seen in the experience recorded in Rom. vii: "when I would do good, evil is present with me," "a law in my members, working against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin." A necessary lesson to learn, but a painful and distressing experience. In what way is deliverance to be obtained? Not by effort; not by prayer; not by anything that we can accomplish, but through Jesus Christ our Lord. As in Adam the head of the human race, I partake of a sinful nature, I am in a fallen condition. For these I am not personally responsible. They are mine as the result of an act of disobedience by the head of the race. For my own actions I am responsible; not for those of the head of the race. Nevertheless my

fallen condition or state comes to me and is mine by his disobedience. As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ I am in Him, I am a member of the race of which He is the Head. This Headship He did not enter upon until after death. It was by the baptism of the Holy Ghost that the body of Christ was formed, but that involves *union with Him*. It was by the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ that believers came to be in Christ. This is quite distinct from union with Him. It is another line of truth. *In Christ* speaks of headship of race—all in Him are members of the race of which He is the Head. It was by the disobedience of the one man (Adam), many (that is all who are members of the human race) were constituted sinners; so by the obedience of One (Christ), the many (that is all who are in Him members of the spiritual race of which He is the Head), are constituted righteous. Righteous here is not righteousness imputed or reckoned; but a state or condition which is ours through being in Christ. We are partakers of His condition subsequent to His obedience unto death. That is, His condition becomes ours too. He once had to do with sin—He was made sin (2. Cor. v. 21). He died, and passed out of that condition of living in which this became true of Him. He was made under the law. He died, and passed out of that condition of living to which the law applied. He lives again, but lives to God. “In that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God” (Rom. vi). But adds the Apostle, “Likewise reckon (or account) yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” It is not a feeling or experience, but a fact. Christ has died to sin, we have died to sin. It is not that we died in Him, as is often said, but we *died with Him*. Dead is a condition—His condition is ours. Hence Paul could write to the Colossians: “*ye have died*”; and

again, "If ye be dead with Christ," etc. The whole race of which Christ is the Head is viewed as dead to law, to sin, and to the rudiments of the world. As to quickening them, *quickenened with Him*; as to resurrection, *raised with Him*; as to ascension, *seated in the heavenlies in Him*.

To make Christ's death as the substitute to be mine, is I think a serious mistake. If I died in Him, as is often said, then I bore the wrath of God, I was forsaken of God, I suffered for my sins in Him. But no! "He bore that we might never bear the Almighty's righteous ire." He died *for me, in my stead*. All judicial dealing it was His *only* to *pass through*, but as out of it, having passed out of it by death and resurrection, His present condition is mine also, through being in Him. I am enwrapt, as it were, in the moral value of His sacrifice, His blood, His death, and in that I, a responsible creature, stand before God. But I am also (as in Him) in His condition subsequent to His suffering and death. As to my sins, I am perfected for ever by His one offering. Nothing can be added to that. As to my state or condition, His condition is mine. To own the truth of this latter in practice is now ours; for being dead to sin, we should certainly not live in it; but as alive from the dead, it is ours to bring forth fruit unto God. As dead (those who have died) we are exhorted to set our affections (or mind) on things above, where Christ sitteth. Moreover, the believer is under another rule than that of sin, the rule of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and is thus set free practically from the dominion of sin. Life in power, precious fact! So the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in him, who is not under it, who walks, not after the flesh as formerly, but after the Spirit. It is a new order of things. Christ in glory is his object, God's will to do, not his own. Fruit is produced in him in a spiritually natural

way, for He learns to think as God does, and to view things in general, in relation to Him.

But to return to the Gospel narrative, Jesus wrought deliverance. He touched the woman, He lifted her up, and the fever left her. Helpless she was, the victim of a condition that kept her occupied with herself. Self! Self! Self! Christ delivered her, and then it was Christ! Christ! Christ! and His own, because they were that.

Evil has many phases, just as the human frame is liable to many diseases. We read that there were many sick of divers diseases, but *He healed them all*. There is no excuse for serving sin, nor for self-occupation. Jesus has saved from the guilt of sin, and He is the Saviour too from the power of sin; soon He will save us from its presence in us. In the narrative He removed the diseases *entirely*, but in its typical character it is the power of sin over us that we are to know deliverance from now with the certainty of its entire removal in future.

A leper came to Jesus. His was a condition that separated him from his fellows; too bad was he for companionship with those who were also bad. His was a desperate case indeed. He came to Jesus beseeching Him and kneeling down to Him and saying unto Him, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Did Jesus say, You are altogether too bad; you must go away; I can do nothing for you. Too bad for Christ none can be who know their condition and own it to Him. Instead of rejection there was compassion. Instead of Do not come near to me, Jesus put forth His hand and touched Him—yes, Jesus touched the leper, and saith unto Him, "I will, be thou clean; and immediately the leprosy departed from him." Too good to need a Saviour many seem to regard themselves; for they do not come to Him; they do not in distress appeal to Him;



and so are unsaved, unblessed. It is a part of Christ's glory to be able and willing to save the very worst. Should any unsaved one read this prayer, we would earnestly say, Come ! oh come to Jesus !

E. R. W.

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### **A FRAGMENT.**

“ ONE frequently observes in the history of Christians that the evils, which in after life, prove their greatest snares, are those against which there is the greatest watchfulness at first. Most happy is it, when the spirit of watchfulness increases with our increasing knowledge of the tendencies and capabilities of our hearts. But this, alas ! is not always the way—on the contrary, how frequently do we find Christians of some years' standing, indulging in things which, at the first, their consciences would have shrunk from. This may seem to be but a growing out of a legal spirit ; but should it not rather be viewed as a growing out of a tender and sensitive conscience ? It would be sad, if the result of more enlarged views, were to be a careless spirit or a seared conscience, or if high principles of truth did but tend to render those who were once self-denying and separated, self-indulgent, careless and worldly. But it is not so. To grow in the knowledge of truth, is to grow in the knowledge of God ; and to grow in the knowledge of God is to grow in practical holiness. The conscience that can let pass without reproof, things from which it would formerly have shrunk, is, it is much to be feared, instead of being under the action of the truth of God, under the hardening influence of the deceitfulness of sin.”

**"YOUR LIFE IS HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD."**

MY LIFE'S with Christ in heaven,  
    'Tis hid with Christ in God ;  
There, where hath soar'd no pinion,  
    No creature-foot hath trod ;  
Divine repose and treasure,  
Beyond all thought or measure,  
    Where Christ is hid in God.

In the bright Sanctuary  
    My life is hid in God ;  
The earthen vessel, weary,  
    Turns to its lowly sod.  
My day in shade declineth,  
But O, what lustre shineth  
    Where Christ is hid in God !

High in the very highest  
    My life is hid in God ;  
Loudly may roar the tempest,  
    And wake the swelling flood :  
Though earth rock to its centre,  
No storm can ever enter  
    Where Christ is hid in God.

Till Christ come forth from heaven,  
    My life is hid in God ;  
To Him all power is given,  
    He'll wield His mighty rod ;  
His saints His image wearing—  
His might and splendour sharing—  
Who shall withstand th' appearing  
    When Christ comes out from God ?

**THE KINGS OF JUDAH.**

(2 Chronicles xxi.—xxviii.)

*Continued from page 29.*

ERE we reach the history of Hezekiah, whose reign occupies a prominent part of 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and the prophecy of Isaiah, we have short notices of various kings of Judah who followed Jehoshaphat. Chronologically I shall notice them briefly.

*Jehoram* reigned eight years. Of him we read that he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab; for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife; and he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord. But God's faithfulness to His covenant is seen, as He would not destroy the house of David (xxi. 7).

The evil results of his father Jehoshaphat's intercourse and association with Ahab (2 Chron. xviii. 1; xx. 35) are seen after he has passed away. Nations who had been subjected to Judah, revolt (xxi. 8-10), and the hand of Jehovah was upon his people and himself and his household. We read also that Jehovah stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines and of the Arabians, and they carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives (one son, his youngest, Jehoahaz, or Ahaziah, only was left). He suffered from an incurable disease, "and departed without being desired" (20).

*Ahaziah* reigned one year. He followed in his father's evil ways. His mother (*Athaliah*) counselled him to do wickedly, which ended in his destruction. *Athaliah* on the death of her son, takes the throne. She was a usurper. Doubtless she thought that in destroying the seed royal her seat would be safe. But God took care of His own word. He wrought by an instrument little suspected of working

against the queen mother. Jehoshabeath, daughter of Jehoram, and sister of Ahaziah, found Joash among the king's sons that were slain, and put him in a bed chamber. He was there hid in the house of God six years. Jehoshabeath was the wife of Jehoiada the priest. The priest was evidently with God, so that at the proper time this instrument of Israel's influence over Judah might be removed. He worked warily and strengthened himself, taking various captains of the people into covenant with him (xxiii. 1). He carefully made his arrangements, guarding the person of the infant king, and at the suited time Joash is brought forth and crowned. The priest Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, "God save the king."

The noise of the people running and praising the king wakes up Athaliah to learn the cause of it. It is at once apparent, and she rends her clothes, and cries, "Treason, Treason." Instructions are soon given as to the course to be taken, and the wicked woman is removed out of the house of the Lord and slain.

The worship of Baal had been set up in Judah. The people speedily destroyed the house and his altars and images, and his priest is slain. Then the worship of Jehovah, as written in the law of Moses, and the rejoicing and singing as ordained by David, are set in order again.

*Joash*, we are told, was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem: *Joash*, we read, did that which was right in the sight of the Lord *all the days of Jehoiada the priest*. He is soon at work repairing the house of God. The sons of Athaliah, "that wicked woman," had broken up the house of God, and the dedicated things of the house of Jehovah had been bestowed upon Baalim.

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We then read of a proclamation being made through Judah and Jerusalem to bring in to the Lord the collection that Moses the servant of God had laid upon Israel in the wilderness (Exodus xxx. 12-16). This money, we read, was appointed for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. "Everyone of those numbered from twenty years old and upward shall give an offering unto the Lord." This they did, and gathered money in abundance, and the work was perfected, and they set the house of God in His state and strengthened it. The word of the Lord remained and proved sufficient to them in their time of need. It is always so.

But their priest waxed old and died. Thus it was. *Now* our High Priest cannot die. He died and entered on His priesthood, and as we cling to Him and *take our way from Him*, we shall go on and overcome.

Alas! the death of Jehoiada was a great loss to the king, for we read that the princes of Judah came and made obeisance to the king; and the king hearkened unto them.

Flattery succeeds in leading away from the right path. We need to be grounded in the Word of the Lord, if we are to resist the seducer. The princes of Judah no doubt had no value for the ways of Jehoiada, and soon as he departed they make approaches to Joash, and the house of God is given up, and groves and idols are preferred to the worship of the living and true God (18).

God sends them prophets to recall them, but they would not give ear.

We read of Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, coming to them moved by the Spirit of God, telling them that they would not prosper, they had forsaken the Lord. We read they conspired against him, and stoned him with

stones, and this too at the commandment of the king (21).

God's eye was on this, and is referred to by the Lord when on earth (see Luke xi. 49-51). The martyr's last words as he died, "The Lord look upon it, and require it," did not, and will not, fall to the ground (2 Chron. xxiv. 25; Matt. xxiii. 25-26). *Amaziah*, the son of Joash, reigned twenty-nine years. He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but *not* with a perfect heart. What is right in the sight of the Lord to be to the glory of God, must begin in the heart. His confidence was in the number of fighting men he could gather against his enemies, not in the Lord. He therefore subsidizes 100,000 mighty men of valour out of Israel for a hundred talents of silver. This is a step that cost him dearly. The Lord disapproved of it, and a man of God came to him and warned him against the army of Israel going with him (xxv. 7-8). He tells the king that "the Lord was not with Israel, but if he was determined to go, to do it and be strong for the battle; God shall make thee fall before the enemy; for God had power to help, and to cast down."

Amaziah's concern is now on account of the money which he had given to the army of Israel. The man of God assures him that "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this" (9).

The king goes out and fights against the children of Seir, and smites of them in all twenty thousand.

He is not, however, clear of Israel. They returned, but the wrong step he took in seeking their aid cost him three thousand men and much spoil (13). It is a serious matter to leave God out and seek the aid of a people whom God does not own.

This king took the descending scale, and he goes further away from the God of Judah. He sets up the gods of the

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children of Seir, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them.

A prophet from Jehovah is sent to him, but the king further rebels and threatens to smite the servant of God.

A conspiracy is formed against Amaziah in Jerusalem, and he flees to Lachish and is slain there. It is an evil and a bitter thing to depart from the Lord. Amaziah resisted the checking influence of the Divine message and falls, to his loss. When Satan begins to tempt us aside from the way of the Lord, our duty is to resist him. If we do not he knows how to push the advantage we give him, and the defeat becomes manifest and great.

*Uzziah.* Of this king it is written, "As long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper" (xxvi. 5). Again we read, "he was marvellously helped till he was strong, but when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction; for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense" (15-16). The priests, the sons of Aaron, withstood the king, and said to him, "go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God" (18). And while he was wroth with the priests the leprosy even rose up in his forehead, and the priests thrust him out; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him. He was a leper unto the day of his death; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord (19, 20, 21 verses).

We have a serious lesson to learn from Uzziah. He went on well "as long as he sought the Lord," and "he was marvellously helped till he was strong." We read of those who "out of weakness were made strong" (Heb. xi. 34). Paul tells us that when "he was weak then he was strong." He had *proved* the truth of 2 Cor. xii. 9, "My grace is

sufficient for thee : for *my strength* is made perfect in weakness." This is a lesson we are slow of learning. Like Jacob often not learned until we are about to depart from the scene where we might have been allowed to serve the Lord, were it not that we think we are "*something*" when we are "*nothing*." Another has written, "We do not know how to be weak : *that* is our weakness." In our efforts to do some great thing as we judge it, we spoil all, and we finish our course in shame. May we learn what power *is* and *how* it is possessed.

(Chap. xxvii.). *Jotham*, son of Uzziah, reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. "Jotham became strong, for he prepared his ways before Jehovah his God" (6). May we have this mark upon us, seen and approved by Him who loves His people (xxviii). *Ahaz*, his son, reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, but his course was marked by the direct opposite spirit to that which worked in his father. "He did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, like David his father." Judgment fell heavy upon him and his people on account of his ways. Israel lifted up their hand against them, but the Lord would not allow it, and by His prophet ordered them to deliver up the captives again. He who delighteth in mercy abundantly turned the evil which Israel began to bring upon them into a blessing (15). Ahaz cannot turn to the Lord. He is living far away from Him, and in his distance from Jehovah he appeals to the kings of Assyria to help him. But how vain it was. The king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not. But in all this he turns not to the Lord. We read that in the time of his distress he trespassed yet more against the Lord.

Ahaz, we read, took away a portion out of the house of the Lord, and out of the house of the king and of the princes



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and gave it unto the king of Assyria, but he helped him not.

Again we read that Ahaz sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus which smote him, thinking they would help him. We read, however, "They were the ruin of him and of all Israel."

The king turns his back against the worship of the living God, shuts up the doors of the temple, and made high places to "burn incense to other gods, and provoked to anger the Lord God of his fathers."

We do well to ponder the path of our feet, and see that we are maintaining the path of separation that is incumbent on us, as we find ourselves in a professing church that trembles not at the word of the Lord, and in a world that lieth in the wicked one. The Lord is jealous of our associations. Alas, too, we find "we feel" in place of "it is written" guiding us, and thus we become "hindrances" in these days of peril.

D. S.

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MEN are wise enough to judge God, but not to judge themselves. In that condition it is impossible that they and He should come together. It is a first necessity that God should have His place—should *be* God; and therefore man be the puny creature that he is, a babe before Him.

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**THE PLACE OF MIRACLES.**

MIRACLES are a far more real revelation of God Himself than general laws—moral revelation. I am not personally in relationship with God by general laws ; I am by free miracles, not done necessarily on me or for me, but in which God's free action shows what God personally is in His actings.

I ask if Christ's miracles did not do this—did not show the intervention of God in goodness in a world of misery ? There are instances of judgment when it was to deliver others, and that is part of the character of God ; there are permitted displays of Satan's power that we might know it. Why are any of them inherently incredible. Who is the judge ? Man's experience ? Nonsense ! He cannot have any experience of miracles. It is merely saying there cannot be, because there cannot be ; because I do not think God ought to do them. *You* do not ! What is incredible ? Was God not powerful to do them ? You cannot say so. Was He not good enough ? Ah ! that is perhaps what is incredible for you : I thank God, it is not for me.

But if in a world of misery God was winning the confidence of men's hearts to His goodness, what more credible than miracles ? That is extraordinary displays of power, sufficient to show God's intervention, so that men might know, not only that evil was not of Him, but that He had come to man's help as good. This may be incredible for the new school : they may study the movements of Jupiter, and speculate on the fall of empires, as based on general laws ; but a personal God of goodness they do not like to know. It has inherent incredibility for them.

But there is no personal relationship with God without it. I delight in the thought of seeing God manifested here below, spending Himself to win the confidence of men's

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hearts who, as offenders were afraid, and using the very wretchedness they were in by sin to draw their hearts to Him out of it.

True, it was inherently incredible to Pharisees and Sadducees then. He could not be of God; He did not keep the Sabbath. They were grieved that the Apostles taught the resurrection. But Jesus cared for the poor of the flock, and, in spite of Pharisees, would win by speaking "as never man spake," and by doing so that "It was never seen on that fashion." If power acting in goodness to win the hearts of the poor to God is inherently incredible, I know where the heart is to whom it is so.

Such, then, is the place of miracles. The abiding thing is the truth of the being of that personal objective God who is revealed by these means. Miracles are a means of knowledge as evidence. The Truth, and the Son—who is the Truth, revealing the Father, revealing God—is that which is evidenced. When unbelief ceases, miracles are useless as evidence; but as being the fruit and exhibition of the power and love of God, they remain always the object of increased delight; and in Christ's miracles it is impossible to separate His ways and feelings and thoughts from them, when we have any detail.

Miracles, then, have a double character. They are confirmatory signs graciously given, and especially Christian miracles, a present witness of the intervention of power in grace. Where Christianity is believed and professed, so far as they are proofs, they lose their importance—are out of place. So far as they have the second character, the record of them, which is supposed to be received, is a witness to the heart that God is come in to help, and how He is come in. The Word alone reveals this directly as revelation. At any time faith *founded* on miracles was nothing worth,

because miracles, do not quicken. We are begotten by the Word of truth, and so children by faith. When believed only by reason of miracles, the Lord did not trust Himself to them; He knew what was in man. As removing opposed kindrances in the mind, and strengthening man against unbelief, they are precious to our compound nature. There is much that removes unbelief,—even solid reasoning does—that does not give faith nor a new nature, but removes the opposition of nature and silences it, and attracts the heart. This, if alone, is nothing. There must be something positively new which a man cannot give himself, and which no proof produces. “Ye must be born again.”

J. N. D.

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“THE Unity of the Spirit.”—The Holy Spirit has formed this unity. No power of man could make it; no power of Satan can break it. The union of the members of Christ's Body, it embraces all Christians, *i.e.*, all whose sins are forgiven and in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. This is all of God, and is, we may say, the divine side of truth. Our responsibility is to use diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit *in the bond of peace*. A Christ-like walk should characterise us all, one towards the other, in the communion of the Holy Spirit. To take independent or sectarian ground, is to put ourselves outside what Scripture recognises and so cease to keep the unity of the Spirit *in the bond of peace*. Our responsibility relates to the oneness in correct manifestation. Oh, that practice accorded with the exhortation! May it be our aim till He come!

W. H. O.

## **PRAYER AND GOD'S WILL.**

LET us look at a few Scriptures that touch the subject of Prayer. The privilege of talking with God in free and holy intercourse, expressing our wants, seeking His guidance, or telling out the thoughts of our hearts, is the undoubted privilege of all saints. They form the privileged class, and need neither prophet nor priest to speak for them. But we need ever to remember the words of our Lord Jesus as recorded in John xv. 7: "If ye abide in Me"—constant communion that desires be present—"and My Words abide in you"—to give right direction to our desires, so shall desire and request be according to God. Then by prayer, dependence upon God is expressed truly; not only as regards our daily temporal needs, but as concerns submission to His will in all things. And viewed thus, who can think of prayer without thinking of Gethsemane? There the extremest agony and most perfect submission were seen in combination. Of this it is the unique example. The circumstances were unique, for the hour of His suffering was at hand, when for men Christ would die, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree.

"He kneeled down and prayed" (Luke xxii. 41). Significant words every one! Ere this, standing in that upper room, "He lifted up His eyes to heaven and said" (John xiv. 31; xvii. 1); but here, in keeping with the moment of deep distress, He bows in His agony and pours out the plaint that reveals so unmistakably the perfection of His manhood, both in proper feeling and perfect submission.

We are privileged to place ourselves, in thought, upon that Mount beside the bowed form of the Son of Man, and to hear the petition thrice uttered with increasing earnestness, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me," accompanied with the words of entire self-surrender, in which His deep piety, mention of which we have in Heb. v. 7, shines so clearly: "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done."

Thoughts for us cluster thickly here, but let us now but simply enquire, What lesson shall we learn for ourselves? Surely this, that *God's will must be FIRST*. If we but give it that place, how well will the end justify the wisdom of such a step. To bow to it becomes us. Christ offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him out of death (Heb. v. 7), and though adverse indeed seemed everything in that dark hour, man triumphant, the Christ rejected, yet He was heard, as His resurrection attested. He prayed; and then bowing to the supreme will, His flesh rested in hope; for, according to Ps. xvi. 11, He was shown the "path of life," and was saved *out of death*, and is now set down in that presence where fulness of joy is found, and pleasures pass not away but abide for evermore.

If our circumstances press heavily and cause strong cryings and tears, let us recall Gethsemane, and in submission bowing, allow God to have His way. 'Tis best, that His will, perfect if supreme, should *be first—be done*.

But we pass on, to learn in quite another connection, that *God's will is best*. To an incident in Hezekiah's life, one of the best of Judah's kings, we turn our attention. The record of Jehovah's message to him is given in Isa. xxxviii. 1. Sick unto death was the king, when to him the prophet came, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in

order, for thou shalt die and not live." Authoritative and emphatic was this! There could be no mistaking the tenor of those words!

And what effect has the message upon the king? Does it make manifest his piety, bowing him in submission? Alas no! Turning his face to the wall and weeping sorely, he pleads his own doings, asking the Lord to remember (as though He would forget) his ways, and the good which he had done (ver. 3). Sad must be the result, as we shall see here, when the basis of any prayer is man's doings, and the word of the Lord is ignored. The perfect Servant said, "Not My will;" Hezekiah pleads when death confronts him, "Remember, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee." What a difference!

The prophet returns to the king, for his tears had been seen on high and his prayer heard; and the assurance is given that to his life fifteen years should be added, that deliverance from the king of Assyria should be effected, and Jehovah would defend that city, not, be it remarked, for the faithfulness of Hezekiah, but "for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake" (2 Kings xx. 6).

Inscrutable are the ways of the Lord, but His will is always best. That truth is writ large here. Fifteen years come to Hezekiah, but how much of sorrow and declension were his!

We cannot now follow in detail his course, but study it, reader, and mark how he acts when the ambassadors from Assyria visit him; note the indifference to the real welfare of God's people when the prophet indicates to him what would eventually come upon them. His vision seemed bounded by "my days" (Isa. xxxix. 5-8).

Subjection to God's will must result in rich blessing; for His will is best; and happy those, who in the spirit of the

following simple words, can lift up their hearts and rejoice :—

“ Best, though my plans be all upset ;  
 Best, though the way be rough ;  
 Best, though my earthly store be scant ;  
 In Thee I have enough ! ”

Another lesson we need to learn is that *God's time is best*. He acts according to the perfect love and wisdom that is in Him ; and though often delaying the answer to prayer, yet never forgets, but intervenes at the moment that best serves His purpose, and that best secures the blessing for the creature.

In the first chapter of Luke's Gospel the aged Zacharias is greeted by the angel Gabriel with these words—“ Fear not, Zacharias ; for thy prayer is heard.” We gather from the interview that that prayer had long ago been uttered. Hope had evidently died out, slowly it might have been ; died, as the possibility of an answer became with each succeeding year, more and more remote. So the priest's words indicate : “ Whereby shall I know this ? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years ” (ver. 18). But if their aspirations had ceased, their prayer remained, treasured on high, and answered in God's own time.

Ah ! is it not so with us often ? We set the time for God to respond ; and failing that, oft cease to pray, and are overtaken with surprise when the answer comes. But let us bear this in mind, that the earnest desire of the heart is not unheeded on high ; and though it may be that the lips that uttered the petitions have long been closed in death, yet the pleas abide. It should encourage us to remember this.

It is not though that the answer will always be in the way desired ; for be it also remembered that as His time is best, so is *His way likewise*. Paul's prayer for the removal of the thorn in the flesh, brought, not the removal of the thorn,



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but grace sufficient to sustain the Apostle with the thorn. And grace is strength (2 Cor. xii. 9).

But what says Paul to the answer? He surely came to realise that not his way, but the Lord's way was the best. For as the power of Christ consciously rested upon him, so he "most gladly" gloried in infirmities, and took pleasure in them, and reproaches, and necessities, and persecutions, and distresses, for Christ's sake. Here is no resignation merely to what seemed an inevitable part of the pathway, but a glorying in what is so contrary and objectionable to nature. Yes, perfect are the ways of the Lord! And now, ere we close this little study, let us recall the facts that we have glanced at. God's will must be first, for His will and time and way are always best. May it be ours to realise it.

H. F.

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"That the Church has failed, miserably failed, is a solemn truth indeed; and this failure has altered largely the circumstances in which we are placed to-day, and encompassed our path with difficulties, while it has deprived us largely of the help that we should have gained from one another. But it compels no one of us to disobedience to the least word that God has spoken, nor deprives us of either the wisdom or power necessary to 'stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.' Difficulties are only means for us of realising the more what He is for us: as the spies said of the gigantic enemies that Israel would be called to encounter in taking possession of the land that had been promised them, 'they shall be bread to us'; for faith is strengthened by those demands upon it which only expose the weakness and bankruptcy of unbelief."

**EXODUS xv. 25—26.**

THIS little incident in the history of Israel must not be dissevered from the neighbouring ones here, if we would learn truly what it is designed to teach. It is first of all to be observed that a distinct section of the book of Exodus falls between verse 22 of our chapter and the end of chapter 17. This is no arbitrary selection, but will approve itself to the spiritual understanding, if attention be given to the indisputably typical character of all these episodes.

There comes first, after the miraculous passage of the Red Sea, the three days waterless march into the wilderness. Then Marah is reached, where water indeed is found, but useless for drinking purposes by reason of its bitterness. The waters healed, sweetened, made palatable, by the casting in of a tree, shown to Moses for that strange purpose, immediate and welcome relief is afforded to the thirsty host. At the same place, ere they resumed their journey, a solemn and striking deliverance from God reaches them. Whether immediately, or through the ordinary channel, Moses, the communication was made, we are not, in so many words, informed; but we may probably infer the latter. At Elim, where abundance of refreshment is found, they next encamped, continuing their journey thereafter forward into the wilderness. An encampment by the Red Sea again, mentioned in Numbers xxxiii., 10, ere this advance into the desert, is omitted from this description, as the object of the arrangement in Exodus is by no means historical, but of another nature. The account of the giving of the manna, and of the water at Rephidim, as well as of the conflict with Amalek, are likewise all ruled by this consideration.

Designedly, these various incidents in Israel's history are so arranged as to suit the typical teaching we have already

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mentioned as pervading "the things that happened unto them." That which this short sketch of an interesting part of their journey sets forth is—God's *grace*, now as then, to His redeemed people in the wilderness. That wilderness journey we must remember, although not strictly speaking a defined part of God's declared *purpose* for His people, forms a great, a most important part of His *ways* with them. We all know, or learn early like Israel, that it is at any rate a part of our history, for we experience very soon that, for "the rest of our time in the flesh," the world is a wilderness, and that for sustenance and help in it we are dependent on the provisions of God's wondrous grace. Of that fact, and concerning these provisions, this little sketch gives a beautifully clear and compact record.

Sheltered by the blood of the lamb from the judgment upon guilty Egypt, and redeemed from the power of its prince by God's own delivering might, they stood upon the shores of the Red Sea a type, full and blessed, for all time, of God's ransomed people, rejoicing in His salvation.

And He who orders their steps and ours now leads forth, not yet into the promised land of rest and inheritance, but into the dreary desert. No water is found to quench their thirst, or sustain their spirit. The world's wide waste has nothing to support or cheer us. Marah's bitter waters are all that we meet with there. Sorrow and suffering, the bitterness of death itself, we are called on to taste. But the cross of Christ, that glorious tree, cast into its waters, can make pleasant, and even a source of life and refreshment, what was in itself so hard to bear. His death there in sorrow, deepest descent into the waters of suffering and bitterness, can sweeten for us every bitter cup, for that which can sustain us, while partakers of His sufferings in the scene of His rejection here, is the sweet and happy

sense of "knowing," in blest communion with Himself, "the fellowship of His sufferings." Elim's cool and shady retreat next meets us on our journey, where perfection both of sustenance and of grateful refreshment is administered to us from those whom God has formed and planted for that service. As the manna too, the living bread from heaven, we have Christ come down from thence, in humiliation here, to be fed upon by our souls, as their precious daily portion. From the smitten rock also flows forth that living water of which the Lord Himself spake, the well within, and the rivers flowing out, the Holy Spirit given since He Himself is gone. How bountiful the provision of wilderness grace!

Truly He deserves the confidence in Himself, as well as the dependence on Him that this wilderness journey is so suited to beget and maintain. It is one of its most prominent lessons for us. Nor does the next step in their career teach any other. Amalek appears. The enemy again, but not now a Pharoah. Pharoah may be vanquished. Amalek will again and again be encountered. Christian conflict this is, for it is not into rest we are yet entered by any means. The Spirit has come, has been given; but against the flesh that lusteth against it there is declared perpetual warfare. And that battle can be successfully waged only in dependence upon the Mediator on high, who, with the rod of God and uplifted hands, causes us to prevail. Thus is our wilderness sojourn mapped out for us. Prepared for its exigencies we may surely be. Prepared also, may we say, to learn the lessons of dependence and confidence in God that it teaches.

But it is to the short sequel to the story of what occurred at Marah that our attention is now attracted. That place of encampment would ever be memorable to these pilgrims as a spot where disappointment and bitterness were turned into

joy. And memorable the experience is to us also, proving as we do, as often as we are called to pass through it, the power of His cross to sweeten the sorrow and suffering in our path. Fitting it was therefore that a statute and an ordinance should there be made for them. It was a scene to recall, an occasion when God had wrought for them in marvellous grace, and the favourable opportunity was taken to put them to the proof, and to impress upon them their obligation to the God whose grace they had so lately enjoyed. Obedience to Him in all things was pressed upon them as that which God desired. It surely became them as those whom He had redeemed, and was bestowing so many favours upon. Nothing else suited so well the relationship in which they stood to Him as His people. And appreciation of such gracious dealings of the Lord with them, as they had just witnessed, would best be shown by giving in return a willing ear and heart to that which He had spoken. It is upon such grounds as these there can be no doubt, that God's claim to their obedience is here rested.

For this is not to be confounded with that later call to obedience in chap. xix. 4, 6, when the law was proposed for their acceptance. "Ye have . . . seen how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people . . . and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." The two occasions are in such strong contrast that some mention must be made of this later one. And, first of all, it must be noticed that, however remarkable the first occasion was, it does not partake of the same momentous character as pertains to this latter. At Sinai we have one of those critical moments that come, not every day, but only once or

twice in the history of a people. We are arrived, in fact, at a crisis.

It is quite evident that at that moment the whole question of their position in the world as God's people came up for consideration. They had a history behind them; they had a future before them; now was the time to pause and to pass in review the terms of that relationship. The nation composed of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were related to God as His people on certain well-defined terms. The unconditional promises to the fathers lay at the foundation of their history as a separate community, and that particular action of God's power which we may say established them and gave them clear standing in that relationship—their redemption—was an intervention of grace. Terms these are, one would think, with which none should quarrel. Their course was not ended. To bring them into, and establish them in the promised land was God's purpose, and necessary for that glorious future intended for them. But on what ground was it all to be based? On what principle was God to act towards them, or were they to be with Him? Every promise as yet had been unconditional, every action towards them, right up to Sinai, had been in grace. Was this to continue to be the ground of action? or would Israel welcome a change? Brought hitherto by grace, at Sinai fresh terms of relationship were proposed. "Ye have seen," God says, the *past*; "now therefore" from the *present*; "ye shall" in the *future*. This is really a comprehensive view of things, prefacing a change. And the change was accomplished, for Israel, ignorant of themselves, and therefore full of self-confidence, voluntarily embrace the terms proposed. "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Enrolling themselves thus under a covenant of obedience as the condition of blessing they now occupied a new platform, where

obedience became, to say the least, a matter of new force and significance.

Our passage in chap. xv., however, is not of this character. It partakes more of the nature of a simple appeal, based upon the grace, and love, and care He had so fully exercised towards them. The one, in short, is the requirement of law, the other is the claim of grace. Does it lack force on this account? Surely not. How many considerations rise to disprove it! Can any claim be stronger, better supported, more fully endorsed than that which rests upon favours undeserved most bountifully bestowed. And that was Israel's case. Is it not also ours? And, from the fact that it was such a claim of grace, and not a requirement of law, is it not the better fitted to speak to us, who are not under law but under grace, and to remind us of the constant obligation we are under to render obedience to the God of all grace. The accompanying promise, that, however many Marahs they may meet with, if going on with God in the path of obedience, they shall be exempted from the diseases He had brought upon the Egyptians, is remarkable. It would argue that disobedience and non-compliance would mean for them such trouble as these had had from His hand. If that be the inference, what may the lesson for us be? Sorrow and suffering, bitter waters, we cannot as a matter of fact escape. If the path that includes Marah's bitterness be refused, and suffering with, and for, Christ be shunned, we shall simply suffer with the Egyptians. Suffering we shall have. It lies with ourselves, so far, to determine what kind it shall be, as well as with whom we shall be companions in tribulation. How solemn the consideration! "In the world ye shall have tribulation" is true in the most absolute sense. How blessed when it is a Marah-bitterness we taste, and not an Egyptian sorrow; for then it may be turned into

sweetness by the casting in of the tree,—“But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

He manifests Himself to them in all this scene as “Jehovah-Rophi,” “the Lord that healeth thee.” Blessed character to adopt towards a wilderness people. Blessed to make His acquaintance thus. No Egyptian, no worldling ever had it. May we know Him as the Healer in all our sorrows, the Sweetener of all our sufferings.

The wilderness is around us, where desolation reigns, bitterness and suffering meets us on our pilgrim way, waste and barrenness encompass, and danger threatens. The Lord is with us, and walking in the dependence upon Him He loves to see us exercise, and in the obedience to Him He desires and claims, we prove Him all along the weary, trying, sorrowful way “Jehovah-Rophi”: “the Lord that healeth thee.” The obedience He looks for from us is no legal compliance with commandments inscribed on tables of stone, and proposed as terms of relationship; but the doing the will of God from the heart, the heart that has experienced, and is filled with the sense of His grace—the heart that has Christ inscribed upon its fleshly table. The two claims, of law and grace, how contrasted! The promise accompanying each also, and the manifestation of Himself God gives in each case, how different. Ah! is not the best of all promises ours, and the most precious of all manifestations, when obedient to His commandments and His words?—“He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me, and He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. . . . If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.”

J. T.



**PAUL'S ASPIRATIONS AND DESIRES.***(Phil. i. 19-25.)*

THE Epistle to the Philippians has been termed the Epistle of Christian experience. In it Christ is before us in connection with Paul, and plainly it is evidenced that "He is enough, the heart and mind to fill." Behold there a man of like passions with ourselves, a man who could speak of himself as once "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious" (1 Tim. i. 13.), with soul afire for the blessed One in the glory, and energised so by the sight of Him, that he can exclaim—"This one thing I do . . . I press towards the mark" (chap. iii.), onwards, upwards ever, perfect in desire, his heart in the goal with his treasure. Such is Christian experience, not alas! often our experience as Christians. The former speaks of engagement with Christ; how often is the latter connected with the mean ambitions and sordid aspirations of the world.

But Paul, after speaking of his joy in connection with the preaching of Christ whether in reality, or in pretence as some did, hoping thereby to involve the Apostle in increased trouble and suffering, gives expression in a magnificent passage, to the blessed, the deep yearning of his heart. It was that Christ be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death. And this was not the enthusiastic utterance of early days. "The prisoner of the Lord" had suffered much; his love had been tested in many ways; but the longing of his heart increased with passing years. Oh, that it were so with us!

For the consummation of his "earnest expectation and hope," he was constantly looking. His confidence was great. He would continue still, his one desire being *that Christ be magnified*. No limitations are imposed here. There is *no law* to restrain such yearnings, which have the

unqualified approval of God, who wills that all acknowledge and honour Christ as Himself.

Christ magnified in his body, whether by life or by death, was then the wish of Paul. Life—that is the pathway here with its difficulties and trials, varied circumstances and sorrows. Death—the termination and the way into His presence. The Apostle here expresses the great governing principle of his life: “For me to live”—what? One word sums up all—CHRIST. “To die”—what then?—GAIN.

We might well say that over again, and realise that the solemnity of *living* is far more to be thought of than the dread of dying. Preparation for this is consistently pressed. But “to die—gain” is, must be true of every Christian, for “death is ours,” and when the thread of life, so slight, so brittle, is snapped, the freed soul, wings its way to heaven there to be “*with Christ*, which is very far better.”

Life is ours also; life in which we are to seek that Christ, our precious Saviour, whose life's blood flowed for us, be magnified in us. And the more that is so, the more of the joy of eternity do we receive in time. Life is life for service of which Christ is the centre, and He alone will satisfy every craving of the desirous heart. Well has it been remarked that Paul's words are not as some would almost interpret them, “For me to live—holiness,” for that might mean the exclusion of Christ. But where Christ is, holiness must be; it is a consequence, a result of being His, and following after Him.

Many are the objects before men here. Some seek wealth, some desire position, others the mere acquisition of knowledge, and others again reputation. But what do *we* seek? “For me to live—Christ”? Oh, may it be so! Such seeking brings approbation from above. How that comes out in Matth. xxviii. 4-5, where “the angel of the Lord” says

to the women, "*Fear not ye,*" and this in contrast to the fearing and quaking of the keepers of Christ's tomb. For why? "I know that ye seek Jesus." They were in quest of the right One, the dearest Object of their heart.

"To die—gain." Of course it is. There are no sorrows in His presence. All the ills to which here we are heirs are left behind. No pangs of hunger or of pain when with Him. *With Him*, that is best of all, "very far better." *Death* sets the spirit free, but life, again we repeat, is life for service of which Christ is the centre. Let life be summed up then in one word—Christ: to die must be gain.

But passing on, we get a precious glimpse into Paul's heart. He was exercised, and found himself in a strait betwixt two. Labour continued longer here, meant more fruit stored up for eternity; but, oh! he did want to go home, to be *with Christ*. His heart yearned for that haven of rest. But then there were the necessities of the saints, and many cares attached to those, with perhaps the loving more though less loved.

But Paul's decision is reached. He would abide, not to be ministered unto but to minister, like his Master. Divine love and grace when submitted to and manifested will enable us to rise above the deepest yearnings of the heart. Marvellous words, "Even Christ pleased not Himself," and in this spirit the favoured servant follows the steps of his Lord.

"I know that I shall abide and continue with you all," Paul asserts. And his purpose for remaining is also stated—"For your progress and joy in faith." Bent, then, he was, upon imparting spiritual blessing, and to create more abundant boasting in Christ Jesus. To bless them, not to please them simply, was his purpose. He would deepen in them the desire for the deep realities of the things of God,

that truly there might be "progress and joy in faith."

Thus Paul shows by example the meaning of his words, "For me to live—Christ." And how necessary is this for us all to-day, necessary to be animated by this grace which characterised Paul. If with truth we can say, "For me to live—Christ," then we shall remember we are but channels through which blessing may flow, and shall plod on, unappreciated, unpopular it may be, but little concerned about results, and free from the trammels which self, in many subtle ways, casts around us. Let us dwell, not upon the unfaithfulness of "His own," but upon the faithfulness of our Saviour and Lord, and upon the fact that above and beyond all our conceptions, He is worthy to be served.

Then just a reference to the word of warning uttered by the Apostle:—"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." The result, then, of truly receiving the truth is a becoming walk. Christian teaching is to result in Christian practice.

But remember Paul's words—"For me to live—Christ." Creatures fail, but Christ—no, never! and we can always rejoice in the unsearchable, the inalienable, and the inexhaustible riches of Christ.

H. F.

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"God proves Himself rich in mercy, and this, not in conferring objective favour only in Christ, but in rendering His tried ones superior to all trouble, not by exempting those He loves from suffering and sorrow, but by giving the faith that accepts all at His hands with confidence in His love."

**THE BIBLE.**

REVELATION enriches us with truths which Reason never could have discovered, but which, being given, Reason can accept without loss of dignity or remission of responsibility. To me the Bible is a divine revelation—a revelation of God, Providence, Sin, Atonement, Faith, Immortality. The Bible is not a book containing a revelation; it is a revelation. We assume an immense responsibility in claiming that any book is a final and authoritative standard in faith and morals. We place the Book itself in an awful position. We separate it from all other books; we make sceptical criticism a profane offence, and devout obedience an essential element of spiritual character. The mind has simply to receive; the will has simply to obey; the heart has simply to trust. The book is to us verily as God Himself. Are we, in nineteenth century light, to stand by such a position, or to abandon it? Is the Bible still to stand alone, and to demand the obeisance of all other books?

There is only one book in the world which can prove the inspiration of the Bible, and that is the Bible itself. Let the Bible speak for itself. When enquirers come with their questions, objections, and difficulties, insist, as a condition of conference, that the Book itself be read through and through from end to end, until the enquirer is thoroughly acquainted with its contents. That reading will do its own work.

That reading has made me an unquestioning and grateful believer in the plenary inspiration, the divine authority, and the infinite sufficiency of Holy Scripture; and, therefore, I can the more earnestly and definitely encourage others to impose upon themselves the sacred task. I now know that the Bible is inspired. It addresses itself to every aspect,

and every necessity of my nature ; it is my own biography. I never know how great a Book it is until I try to do without it : then the heart aches ; then the eyes are put out with the great tears of grief ; then the house is no home of mine ; then life sinks under an infinite load of weariness. I know well all the criticisms which this kind of confession never fails to evoke ; if I knew less of them I would more of them, but knowing them well, in all their scope and meaning, I will no longer allow them to rob the heart of its most sacred joys.

—*Dr. Parker.*

## **WILDERNESS LESSONS.**

*(Deut. viii. 1-10).*

AGAIN, Moses returns to enforce all this with the ever-fruitful wilderness lessons ;—we, too, in eternity, shall return to feast upon harvests gathered out of such barren soil. If these are lessons of humiliation, it is just this that is so needful for the proud heart of man. To the meek and contrite of heart God looks,—yea, dwells with these. Humility is the true undoing of the fall in one main feature ; and then the forty years of discipline have their justification.

They were to remember, then, all the way by which God had led them,—a way which had brought out for them, as His way still does for all, all that was in their hearts. This in its design was but their Father's care, whether He suffered them to hunger, or fed them with His strange food, still by man so little appreciated. Patient weaning from self it was, patient instilling of lessons of dependence, so easy-seeming, so hard to acquire. Ah ! in the life that He has taught us to be our possession, how sure that God's

Word is that which sustains it! "By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live."

If there was trial, how God's tenderness was shown! Raiment never growing old; feet never swelling as they trod that flinty soil. We, too, have a robe of beauty that is fresh eternally; "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," of which the rough places only prove the abiding comfort. Discipline—yes, but the tender discipline of a father for the son in whom he delighteth.

Beyond, the good land beckoning them,—“a land of water brooks, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills,” reminding us of the fulness of the Spirit which abounds at all levels for us; a land of grain and fruits, and stored within with precious metals. Alas! *there* lay for them dangers which the wilderness was meant to prepare them for; and they might say, “My power, and the might of my hand, have gotten me this wealth.” Into *our* land, thank God! we shall enter with this lesson learnt; and yet how in this the wilderness may still be remembered as our teacher, and its teaching still be treasured up for endless blessing.

F. W. G.

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“THE possession of much truth no more guarantees now than then (Malachi's day) that we are true witnesses for God in our own day; still less the assumption that we have a position according to God because we are in a certain historical line of succession. So thought those who broke the law, rejected the prophets, slew the Messiah, and refused the fresh testimony of the Holy Spirit. Let us beware of making the same fatal mistake, and rather examine whether we are walking in the distinctive truth God has revealed to us for His own glory in Christ.”

**GATHERED THOUGHTS.**

*2 Cor. vii. 1.*—Clearly too the possession of these promises is the great incentive to personal purification in practice. Nor is anything more hateful than the position of separateness from the world along with indifference to holiness. There are those who inculcate what is personal only, and apologise for ecclesiastical evil as if it did not compromise them in the Lord's dishonour; there are others whose zeal is solely for ecclesiastical purity, and whose personal ways are light and loose and far below those of many a saint in humanly formed and ordered societies. Both classes are condemned by the solemn words before us: the first by chap. vi. 14-18, the second by chap. vii. 1. May we, as having proved the truth and blessing of the former, have grace to find the constant value of the latter also, and to cultivate purity outward and inward, perfecting holiness in God's fear!

We have thus a double relationship in His grace. God dwells and walks in us as His temple, plainly a collective blessing; and besides, He is to us for Father, as we are to Him for sons and daughters, which is no less surely individual. But both are founded on coming out in separateness to God, from among the worldly, with responsibility to touch no unclean thing.

The apologist for ecclesiastical antinomianism argues that the Apostle is actually speaking of heathen impurity. Granted; it was the unclean thing there and then; but he was led by the Spirit to write with such breadth and depth as to cover everything that defiles. Is it meant that uncleanness is now consecrated or ignored? Is it denied that evil is most of all evil when coupled with the name of the Lord Jesus? Is not such an association the deceit, power, and triumph of the wicked one? To cleanse ourselves from every pollution is our clear and habitual duty as God's temple and family.



## MARK x. 1—45.

WE have now nature in its relation to God, a matter of great moment in the path of service: the institution of marriage, the relationship to Him of children, the state of man in his best naturally, sin having thrown its dark shadow over all; finally, we see nature thus deformed working in the servant of God himself; but then the victory of God over it, and the perfect Servant setting the pattern for His people, and moulding them after His own likeness.

1-12.—In the question as to marriage, we are taught by Christ to respect absolutely the Creator's ordinance at the beginning. According to that, man and wife are one flesh, and this is founded on the creative work itself which made them male and female, one man and one woman. God has joined them together; man must not put them asunder. Mark does not even notice the exceptional allowance of divorce, when the marriage tie has in fact been broken through.

13-16.—As to the children, Mark notices the Lord's displeasure at the disciples' conduct, and gives here substantially what in Matthew is found elsewhere (xviii. 3), that only those who receive the Kingdom of God as a little child could enter therein. Mark also shows a fuller answer on the Lord's part to a slighter request. He is asked to "touch" them; He takes them up in His arms, puts His hands on them, and blesses them.

17-22.—In the ruler's case which follows, we find the heart manifested of one who is, as Paul says of himself when unconverted, "touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless." There is really that on account of

which it is said (and in direct connection with his "Teacher, all these things have I kept from my youth") that "Jesus looking upon him, loved him." There was that in him which was lovable. What he says of himself, he says with an honest conscience and conviction of its truth. Nor is he, as his question shows, merely engrossed with the present and without thought of God. He desires and seeks eternal life; and, attracted by what he hears or sees in Jesus, he comes to Him to learn the way to find this.

Mark emphasises his running and kneeling to the Lord, his "*Good Teacher*," which from that mere human standpoint the Lord cannot accept. Goodness is in God alone: would that he had sought it only there! Nature is fully judged in the sweep of that assertion; and presently in his aching heart, as he turns, alas, from the One in whom his hope had been, he has to realise at least the bond that (one would fain hope, only for the present) holds him from the blessing that he seeks. But this bond a more than human power must sever. Nature in its fairest form is fallen away from God. Man's need is of a Saviour.

23-27—This is what the Lord now affirms. To the amazement of His disciples, He declares that it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. Those who, to make this less absolute than it seems, would apply it to an eastern city gate, should remember that the Lord affirms directly that that of which He is speaking is "to man impossible." On the other hand, Mark records for us the explanation that a rich man stands here for one that *trusts* in riches, which at the same time prevents the obvious mistake of a gross literalism, and extends the principle to the poorest in actual possessions. Really he only is in the sense intended "rich" who trusts in riches; and he may do that who

never acquires them. In the divinely wrought hunger of soul, the things to which the worldling turns for help become as little valuable as gold to meet desert-thirst.

The disciples in their astonishment say one to another, "Who then can be *saved*?" But salvation is of God wholly. When men have learned their need of this, there is then no difficulty.

28-31.—Nature in itself is then hopeless; and in the child of God still there abides that which because of its tendencies Scripture calls the flesh. "In me, that is in my flesh," says the man in the experience of the seventh of Romans, "dwelleth no good thing." Of the flesh, self is the centre; and into the sphere of spiritual things the flesh will intrude, how easily. Self may claim that in which (in the sense in which we are speaking) it can have no part, and take pleasure in the thought of a foremost place there. Peter's "*We have left all and followed Thee,*" is just such a claim, which the Lord meets in grace with a full assurance that nothing can be left for His sake without abundant recompense, both here and hereafter. But He guards this doubly from abuse such as the carnal mind might make of it: first, by the reminder that it must be done for His sake to be rewarded: not for self, to gain the reward. Secondly, and springing out of this, "many first shall be last, and the last first," which effectually forbids self-placing anywhere.

32-45.—But we go on beyond this, to see the victory of God over all this spirit of strife and emulation. Again He begins to warn them of His coming death, and to comfort them with the thought of His speedy resurrection. There is no response: fear has already fallen upon them. But presently it is seen of how contrary a spirit they are by the request of the sons of Zebedee for the two places nearest Himself in the coming Kingdom. The Lord points out to

them the way by which He reaches this. Can they drink of His cup and be baptised with His baptism? And immediately they assure Him that they can. He tells them that in these they shall in fact partake; but the places that they seek are only His to give to those for whom it is prepared of His Father.

This awakes the indignation of the other disciples, and shows a similar spirit to be in them all. And now He shows them their great and fundamental mistake. Heaven is to be no place for the ambition of men. The Son of man came not to be ministered to but to minister: love's mission among them sought only what love alone could count a recompense. And if, "beyond all controversy the less is blessed of the better," our dependence upon Him insures that this ministry of His to us will go on for ever. If love made Him take it up, love will make Him keep it too, as surely as He is Son of man for ever, although the toil and sorrow of His work be past.

If then with Him service is but the sign of a love unending, and so can never cease, can it be different with those whom He is bringing into the glory of likeness to Himself? Can they take up service to win lordship by it, and state, and authority? That were surely impossible: nay, the greatest in heaven's kingdom is he that humbleth himself as a little child (Matt. xviii. 4). In heaven's rule, Love rules; and therefore rule is service still, most valued because it is so.

—*Numerical Bible.*

There is always strength in looking to God; but if the mind rests upon the weakness, otherwise than to rest it upon God, it becomes *unbelief*.

**LEPROSY.***Leviticus xiii. xiv. 2 Kings v. 9-10.*

THE teaching of Scripture on leprosy as it bears on a saint of God, and on a sinner still without God, is very instructive. Valuable papers on part of the subject have appeared in *Help and Food* (New York) lately.

My object in writing is to call special attention to the two classes, emphasizing the different way God has shown in His acting toward them. Man is only the servant to execute the Divine will.

Leprosy is *sin*, wherever it is seen. If the soul is to *abide* with God in the enjoyment of the large portion bestowed on it, or be brought to Him, sin must be judged or removed.

First, then, I notice that in the case of an Israelite, the teaching of Lev. xiii, xiv, intimates that the person in whom leprosy is found to be at work is to be brought unto the *priest* for his judgment. The circle wherein the leprosy was discovered is where Jehovah had His dwelling. The priest judged for God. Jehovah had given His law to Moses and Aaron (xiii. 1). What they had to do was to consult the statute book and act according to what is recorded there. When the priest looked on the leper and had not certainty given to him, did not find that the marks of leprosy corresponded to the description given by Jehovah, the priest is directed to put him in ward for seven days, and if still he is doubtful, he must delay his judgment for another period of seven days. Thus great care is to be taken that no mistaken judgment be delivered.

The teaching of these chapters is very helpful in regard to discipline in the assembly of God to-day. The want of

patience, and the ever present remembrance that the priest's acting was to be for God, has had sad results. No party feeling must enter into the mind of the priest. The final review of assembly judgment will discover sad neglect of the Word of God, and consequently will be to our loss in the day of manifestation.

The case supposed in these chapters has entire reference to one in the assembly of God. In the case of a sinner in his sins, it is not the priest that is required to be consulted but the *prophet*. A notable instance is presented to us in the history of Naaman the Syrian. The Word of God has pronounced on *all* men: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," is God's declaration as to man. The judgment is recorded in Romans iii. 19 and 23.

Naaman was a leper. I pass over the many interesting details that we find regarding him in 2 Kings chap. v., and call attention to what we have recorded in verses 9 and 10. He is seen at the door of the house of the prophet Elisha. Elisha sends him the message, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." This was a blessed gospel to this leprous man—for although "a great man with his master," yet he was a *leper*. Here the message comes to him for the proving of faith, and after a contest within, faith gains the day, and we read "he went down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan according to the saying of the man of God, and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

In New Testament language we may say, he was a "new creature." He had rendered the obedience of faith. Thus we see the Divine order. In the case of sin in the child of God breaking out and bringing him under the word which calls for excision from the assembly of God, it is priestly

discernment that is requisite. But in the case of a sinner in his sins, without God, and without hope in the world it is the Gospel of God made known for the obedience of faith, and therefore it is the *prophet* that announces the glad tidings to Naaman. There is no shutting up the poor man, but he is a confessed leper and then is the remedy declared to him.

D. S.

### **EPHESIANS v. 1—6.**

WHAT a mighty principle opens here on the saints! "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children." What limits can there be if we are exhorted to imitate God Himself! Nor is it in any way now an assertion of claim, as the law was, on man, standing on his own responsibility before God as a creature. God has revealed Himself in grace; still He is God and none other; and if He has communicated to us His own nature, a lesser, lower standard there could not be. It would dishonour Himself and the very grace He has shown us, and nowhere more fully than in the earlier parts of this epistle. It would be, too, the most grievous loss to His children beloved, whom He would train and bless yet more and more even in this scene of evil and sorrow, turning the most adverse circumstances into an occasion of teaching us what He is in the depths of His grace and filling ourselves with the sense of it so as to form our hearts and fashion our ways, as we forget ourselves and live above our own habits and the conventionalities of men in the truth of Christ.

Neither law nor even promise ever opened such a field as this. The very call so to imitate God supposes the perfect

grace in which we stand: indeed it would be insupportable otherwise. No doubt it is most humbling to reflect how little we have answered to His call; but even the sense of our previous shortcomings where it is deep, without losing sight of this grace, is turned to precious account, and we are growing and going on with Him when we may little think it. The law demanded what man ought to render to God: to love Him and our neighbour is no more than our plain and bounden duty. The promise held out the hope of a seed of blessing, not to Israel only, but to all families of the earth. But now after promise was despised and law was broken, God has displayed *Himself* in Christ, and while accomplishing all in Christ, has brought out higher counsels in infinite grace to us in such sort that His own character, thus displayed, becomes the only suitable pattern to which He would conform His children even now. "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children; and walk in love as Christ also has loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." (ver. 1. 2.)

To forgive one another, even as God in Christ forgave, is blessed; but this, though after His own heart and ways, is not enough. It is surely divine in its source, and impossible in its full character and extent to flesh; but it is in view of man and man's failure, and the outbreaks of an evil nature. He would cherish this in us. It is the fruit of His grace, and most needful, in such a world as this; most needful for His saints in their intercourse and dealing with each other. But it is far from being the expression of all He is, and would have us enjoy and reflect. There is the outgoing of good according to His heart, where there is no question of evil to be forgiven, which is in a certain sense only negative, however real and sweet it may be. Here all is positive,



flowing fresh as it were and above human thought. Hence the word is, "Walk in love, as Christ also loved us and hath given Himself for us." To be forgiven was our abject, urgent need, if we were indeed to have the smallest comfort from God or hope of deliverance from wrath and of blessedness hereafter. It was grace, of course, the grace of God, but addressed to, if not bounded by, man's need. But now we stand on the new ground of the excellency of Christ and the exercise of that which is proper to God in the activity of His own nature. Hence it is not the sin-offering that is here alluded to, nor is it simply the blood or the suffering of our blessed Lord, but His delivering *Himself* for us, in matchless love, "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."

One would not be mistaken on such a theme, nor weaken for a moment the certainty that in the Lord's sufferings on the cross there are depths found there only; but these are not and could not be put before us as a pattern, seeing that they pertain exclusively to Him who bore our sins in His own body, and was made sin for us, meeting that judgment of God, which no man, nor angel, nor creature, nor new creature could share with Him, however blessed through it, and filled with thankful, adoring delight in Him who was thus alone, not only for us, but for God's glory, the object of the wrath God felt and must execute against sin. But here it is a question of that which sets forth the admirable love of Christ in all its positive fragrance and beauty; and this in order to call out, in the energy of the Holy Ghost, the answering ways of the new nature in the saints; for indeed Christ is our life, and what bounds are there to the power of the spirit who dwells in us? Love leads to service in self-abnegation, whether in Him perfectly, or in us according to our measure; but surely it gives and forms

the spirit of service, as we see in our blessed Lord. (Phil. ii.)

Nevertheless, the more sweet and blessed, the nearer it is to evil, unless it is maintained in divine power and self-judgment. It brings together; it awakens spiritual affections; and what is begun in the Spirit may end in fleshly corruption as we see at Corinth, no less than seek a fleshly perfection of a religious form, as we see in Galatia. Accordingly the Apostle proceeds to warn the Ephesian saints against the dangers to which free, familiar converse might expose unless sustained by the Holy Ghost. "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints." These lusts of the flesh were not only not to be allowed, but not even named. They were God's holy ones, saints; and the question now was of that which becomes, not mere men, but saints.

Nor does he confine his warning to unbridled licentiousness or the covetous desire of that which might gratify man, but extends it to unholiness of language too, whether openly shameful or under the veil of refinement—"neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks." Here again the positive side is brought in and the heart's reference to God's goodness, which breaks out in thanksgiving. "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." It is most important to remember, that let sovereign grace do what it will, let it go out to the vilest, let it cleanse the most defiled, the moral ways of God remain inflexible. His nature does not change. He hates and never can tolerate iniquity. His love may find, and has found, a glorious solution of the difficulty in the cross of

Christ; but God and sin never can walk nor dwell together.

The children of God have opposite dangers as to this, and need to watch against their feelings. They may be quick to exclaim in some flagrant case that there can be no life there; they may be too precipitate in giving their confidence where there is a fair show in the flesh. Some of the most solemn departures into the world have been where few, if any, doubted; as on the other hand, who has not known the comfort of seeing the painful appearances which repelled one fade away so as to let the grace of Christ shine out more and more, or flesh was judged by the truth in the sight of God; and those of whom most doubted because of untoward looks, at last won the confidence of all. Sometimes it may have needed a serious dealing of God: severe sickness, reverses of fortune, domestic sorrow, before the soul was set right; still it was though late in the day.

Both these extremes teach us the need of waiting upon God, instead of trusting our own impressions, that we may judge righteous judgment. The natural heart may take advantage of grace, but ere long will manifest its unremoved evil. Persecution may rise up, wolves may enter, and sheep may for a while be deceived. But God abides, and the word of His grace: Why should we be disquieted? Let us have faith in God, imitate Him as children beloved, and walk in love, not only because, but *as* Christ loved us; and whatever the result, we shall have the comfort of pleasing God, meanwhile kept from haste one way or another. Watching for evil is very far from "giving of thanks," and indeed incompatible with it. But then let us never lower the standard of the ways which God looks for in His saints. If no corrupt person has an inheritance in His kingdom, never treat such sin lightly now. "Let no man deceive you with

vain words ; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them." To be partners with such in any way is grave for a saint. Let us take heed.

—*Bible Treasury.*

## WILES.

It is always of deep interest to add to our little store of knowledge of our blessed God and His beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. To learn of Him, and to be taught of the Spirit in those things revealed to faith, must ever be among the supreme exercises permitted in grace to such as were once in impenetrable darkness and at immeasurable distance from Him.

Here is a question: "Who has title to all the earth?" We all remember that Christ questioned with His creatures as to where the advantage came in if loss of such a kind were suffered: "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Then we are told of all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, not being of the Father but of the world.

But in our former interesting question, the children of Israel were bid "Come hither, and hear the words of Jehovah your God. And Joshua said, Hereby shall ye know that the living God is in your midst, and that He will without fail dispossess from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD OF ALL THE EARTH

is going over before you into the Jordan." Here then is a remarkable thing. Foes were in possession. Enemies had held sway there for generations while His people were in affliction, in adversity, on pilgrimage, succoured in deserts and brought up to a land, a goodly land, yet held, and stoutly held, by multitudes of stalwart and vigorous men. Now we see that although warriors are not called upon to do battle in the desert, yet to reach the good land of which our blessed God had spoken, their path lay through desolate waste, and as the beauties of refreshing streams and fruitful trees, rich pastures, suited to satisfy abundance of cattle, goodly dwellings surrounded by olive yards, vine yards, with the lowing of oxen, the hum of bee, etc., came in sight, these must have afforded cheer to wanderer and warrior. Yet there must be conflict. The war was to be with flesh and blood. *The Lord of all the earth* had spoken, One who had perfect right to place the children of men and set the bounds of their habitation as it pleased Him.

We trace the fortunes of this people who had the living God in their midst. What brilliant victory over Jericho was vouchsafed! What deliverance for Rahab! Time, patience, and attention to orders had to be observed, and permission only to shout at a given time. Joshua had looked previously and had seen a man with his sword drawn in his hand. He was the Captain of Jehovah's army. There had been challenge duly given in those words, "Art thou for us, or for our enemies?" And this One who had been interrogated also directed Joshua: "Loose thy sandal from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy." And Joshua did so.

What interspersings are these so humbling to find in the sacred records? The shout of victory has scarce died away

ere victors manifest the appearance of vanquished ones, and flee before their foes. Solemn sight! No wonder Joshua was humbled to the dust and could not face such issues; but he was commanded to rise up and learn from infallible lips the true nature of all this reverse. The children of Israel had, alas, committed unfaithfulness. "*Israel hath sinned.*" The command of the Lord had not governed every heart. There was no easy victory over Ai, as Joshua's advisors predicted; and the stroke intended for foes, the provoker of Jehovah to anger, the troubler of all Israel had to feel the severity of, and all Israel had to take sides with the Lord against Achan. "And all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire, and stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones. . . . And Jehovah turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place was called the Valley of Achor to this day" (Josh. vii. 25, 26).

Jehovah mercifully clears up internal matters, and directs what was to be done under such painfully humbling circumstances, and permits a further going forward to victory, which He eventually gave.

Jericho had fallen; the Lord had been vindicated in the matter of Israel's unfaithfulness through Achan, and Ai had been taken. An interval was given to present the suited offerings to the Lord, and for Him to be revered and obeyed the Word was read in the hearing of all. More than ever it is apparent that enemies are of one mind to resist, but in chapter ix. of Joshua we learn that other methods are resorted to by the enemy than open hostility. How forgetful are we that Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, and have his servants put on the garb of righteousness, using subtle wiles to deceive when opposition,

strength, or violence fail to secure to him the vantage ground he would gain.

We see from the brief sketch what hindered in both these cases of solemn overthrows that His people had, and the consequences allowed to follow on which mistaken zeal on Saul's part to undo but increased the suffering and sorrows of Israel well into and beyond the period of David's reign. There was failure in glorifying God by regarding His Word. Achan took of the accursed thing and dishonoured Him. And a people who approach without munitions of war, with their old sacks, and rent and tied-up wine flasks, patched up sandals and mouldy bread, and the story of having no connection with Hittite, Amorite, Canaanite, etc., and withal the pious way they use the name of Jehovah, being Israel's God, proved ample for the purpose in hand. But remember, fellow-believer, how all this gained and prevailed. They permitted audience in time of war to strangers. They trusted to their eyes and to their ears. The men took of their victuals, but *they did not inquire at the mouth of Jehovah*. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them, to let them live; and the princes of the assembly swore unto them. There was an alliance now made; His people had pledged the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel.

Would God allow this pledging of His name to spare those whom He had originally directed should be destroyed? Yes. True, they had gained their point by deceit, but the alliance was formed, truly an unequal yoke, yet Israel had misused His name, and He would not permit a making light of it. What sorrows were to flow from this, just as the prize and inheritance were in possession! How long would the shame of this last? Would it ever be effaced? *Is it a little slip to fail to ask counsel at God's mouth—His*

*precious Word?* We find that a zealous Saul would seek to wipe out the stigma to His people of this pledge of peace which had been given in Jehovah's name years before. This unrighteousness but brought further trouble as year after year famine was permitted to afflict in David's time. And upon David making inquiry of the Lord, he learned that it was on account of Saul shedding the blood of the Gibeonites. This also must be avenged; and upon seven of the house of Saul the sword of government descends (2 Sam. xxi.)

One has said "It is a dangerous charity which spares the enemies of God, or rather which spares itself, through unbelief, in its conflicts with them, and which is soon led to form with them connections that bring the judgment which those enemies have inherited, and themselves also deserved." But these Gibeonites came as friends, not foes. The secret was with God, who knew their true character, and the nature of their errand, and He would have revealed it had His blessed face been sought.

It is a wile of the enemy to suggest prayer, the solemn assembly, and a host of other pious exercises, when the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, should be used, and coupled with that true dependence as expressed in prayer and supplication *in the Spirit, watching thereunto* with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. We take it that trouble in the past, yea, in earliest times, resulted from the Word being disobeyed, in deviating in spirit from the Word, in not observing Scripture principles, in the choosing apart from Him who appoints the path for our feet to tread. How easy a victory the enemy gains when he draws us from the plain Scriptures, simply permitting us to feel good over some religious forms and semblances of right attitude but wrong heart when the Word has been dis-



honoured by neglect or disobedience. The Apostle calls it a process of bewitching when the truth is not obeyed. But oh! what serenity and what comfort, however sharp the conflict, when the blessed God can be turned to in true confiding trust still to afford that suited grace sufficient for the way and day. Fresh surprises, no doubt, are before us as we are cast upon God and the Word of His grace. We are not to trust our eyes, our ears, or the judgments we may form. The perfect Word, upon which time makes no change, is that which is sure. What a boon to have it, and what felicity in the sweet of communion is the portion of those who yield to it place because it is His Word—owning its supremacy and authority.

We see a Balaam can pass through the form of prayer, and rise up awaiting no answer; but having his mind made up, pursues his way and falls in the ranks of the enemies of God.

Saul pleads when found out by the prophet of God that he had spared the best for sacrificial purposes, but that sparing was proof of God's Word despised. "Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." In days of tradition, when truth was not esteemed priceless, a people who lie in the lap of the wicked one would say, when the word of God by Moses was presented—for that word plainly stated "Honour thy father and thy mother" (see Mark vii. 10-13), "It is a gift . . . and ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother: making the word of God of none effect through your tradition." Now the leaven of hypocrisy works, and in a sentimental pious way you hear of the conscience elevated above the Word; souls assume to learn the mind of the Lord upon matters, but with astonishment you find that reference to the Word is not intended—but the form of prayer is assumed, the will is

further strengthened, a perverse way more steadily pursued. Then, again, that Word which is so vigorous and penetrating, lets us know that such as confess in a true way to expect our blessed Lord has its marked effect upon all who are sanctified by the truth.

Communion—how different to creed! “Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” Love and fellowship—how these choice and precious terms are turned to serve base and selfish ends dishonouring to God. And yet again the Word safe-guards, and lets us know the true and how we may detect what is counterfeit. It is for this reason the Word never can know weakness. Love divine is manifestly in exercise when what He graciously enjoins is pursued. Something very showy may be under our eye, but: “though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.” Then, again, there is no uncertainty in the faithfulness of God or His call: “Called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” Children of God will recognise that what is inconsistent with that call is that which may not be cherished if the full joy of which apostles wrote under inspiration would be shared. Since there are wiles may we be wise and cleave to the Lord and the Word.

W. B.

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Difficulties may come in; God may allow many things to arise to prove our weakness; but the simple path of obedience is to go on, not looking beforehand at what we have to do, but reckoning upon the help that we shall need and find, when the time arrives.

**THOUGHTS ON IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.**

DOES Scripture teach that God loves equally each member of the human race? If so, how comes it that He has a chosen people, each one of whom He predestined to conformity to the image of His Son? each one of whom was elected and called by grace with an effectual calling? Then again, were the sins of each member of the race laid upon Christ as the substitute, and He bore Divine judgment on their account? Some think so, and say the only difference is that some have faith and some have not. But where does faith come from? Is it a product of man's fallen nature? If so, then some are not dead in sins, for they have a something which God values highly. . . . Scripture says, "Ye are saved by grace through *faith*, and that not of yourselves, *It is the gift of God*. Not of works lest any man should boast."

Can it be that God loves equally every sinner, and yet chooses some and not others? and gives faith to some and not to others? gave some to His Son and not others? laid the iniquities of each one upon Jesus, and forsook Him in His holy judgment on their account, and yet will by-and-bye judge all the unbelieving for those sins after Christ has atoned for them? If so, sinners will suffer eternally for sins that Christ has already suffered for, and this at the hand of a righteous God. No earthly creditor would, with the least particle of honour, be so unjust. But is it so? No. Christ was the substitute for the saved only. He made propitiation for the whole world. It is, therefore, most important to distinguish these truths. God's holy nature has been duly cared for in respect of the whole question of sin, but all are not, and will not be, saved.

E. R. W.

**MAN'S HISTORY.** (*Rom. 1. 21-28*).

At what date idolatry was introduced no one can now say. If, however, we cannot fix the date of its introduction, we know the cause that led to it (ver. 21). That stage of declension reached, the others were soon entered upon. In what a solemn way they are severally noticed.

**GOD GAVE THEM UP.**

"God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts" (24). "God gave them up unto vile affections" (26). "And, as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over (or, up) to a reprobate mind" (28).

Now this is history, man's moral history; but a history man would never have written of himself. Those who first entered upon the path of declension would doubtless have repudiated the possibility of any one sinking so low. Those who had sunk into it, and were living in it, would not, it is evident, have been able to trace all this out. It is man's inner, as well as his outer, history that we here contemplate.

His heart, his mind, his acts are passed in review. In his heart he had turned from the proper object for the creature. In his mind he became a fool. In his acts he showed, both the need of an object outside himself, and the efforts of one who sought to supply it by worshipping different forms of animal life. And this picture of man, created originally in the image of God and made in His likeness, is presented as a faithful delineation of the Gentile world, which comprised not merely ignorant barbarians, but civilised nations, cultivated races, and educated classes. Intellectual abilities of no mean order had been developed. But where were morality and godliness to be found?

C. E. S.

## **GOD'S SCHOOL.**

THE "happy school-days of childhood" are remembered with delight by nearly every one; but comparatively few Christians realize the joy and blessing that may be found in God's school. They forget that, even now, they are students for a higher profession, with prospects far higher than this world can offer, and of an enduring character.

What earnestness marks the diligent student; what solicitude to master the lesson, and what keen satisfaction is experienced as each advance is made! There is real pleasure in making conquests in fields of human knowledge; but it is trifling compared to the joy of making progress in God's school. If the former be of temporary value and pecuniary profit to us, the latter is eternal gain.

Let us, then, consider our privileges as students in God's school, and use them to advantage.

First, we are at school as long as we are in the world. Our Lord said, "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world." Why? Because the needs and vicissitudes of this life are used to display God's grace and character in a way that would be impossible in glory. The Master would not have His disciples lose a single experience which would teach them more of God.

This world, then, is God's schoolhouse. Its colossal proportions, its marvellous construction, and its brilliant canopy, declare the glory of its Architect. In this schoolhouse can be seen the work of students that have gone before: some are ruins which warn us to avoid their errors, and others are noble monuments which encourage us to imitate their faith.

There is one Teacher : none other is needed (1 John ii. 27). He is personally interested in every pupil in the school, and tutors each one individually (Rom. viii. 9). Not a point of profit escapes His notice, and He teaches "all things" (John xiv. 26).

What wonderful advantages are these ! What high and holy lessons may be learned under the teaching of the Holy Ghost !

There is one text-book : suited to the simplest beginner (1 Peter ii. 2) ; and, withal, sufficient for the thorough education of the ablest scholar (2 Tim. iii. 17). This book, moreover, contains an answer to every question of importance (Prov. xxii. 20, 21).

There is no tedium in the pages of this volume, but never-failing delight in their perusal ; and besides its pleasant reading, it is wonderfully effectual in giving wisdom. Listen to the testimony of a faithful student : he had only the earliest chapters of our text-book, but had learned to love them : "O how love I Thy law ! it is my meditation all the day. Thou, through Thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies : for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers : for Thy testimonies are my meditation" (Psa. cxix. 97-99).

The Scriptures, therefore, are to us the oracles of God for wisdom and instruction, and a never-failing source of joy and comfort to our souls.

There are many lessons—lessons for all ages ; for babes and for children, for young men and for fathers (1 John ii.)—lessons for all relations in life ; for husbands and wives, for parents and children, for servants and masters, for kings and for their subjects.

A somewhat different course of instruction is given to every pupil, exactly adapted to his strength and character.

Some must "study to be quiet and do their own business;" others, to "stir up the gift that is in them;" each according to his need.

The lessons are also of a progressive character, leading on to an active and useful life. "Giving all diligence, add to your faith courage; and to courage, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter i. 5—8).

There are two methods that God uses in teaching His own. Of the first He says, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye." How blessed to be in such communion with God, and so understand His mind, that a look from His eye will teach us the right way! The second method in which God teaches is used only when the wayward pupil refuses to be instructed by the first. "Be not as the horse, or as the mule which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle" (Psa. xxxii. 9).

Can we not, dear brethren, explain many of the sad circumstances in which the people of God are found as the bit and bridle, turning them in the way which God's eye had indicated long before? Obedience had been refused, and had to be enforced, leading to much pain and sorrow. May we earnestly seek the spirituality necessary to know God's mind, and the faithfulness to carry it out.

How good is discipline at the Father's hands! His love is perfect, His knowledge absolute, His power supreme! *We* are prone to be either harsh or lax with our brethren, but God's government is infallibly for our good. His

dealings are most considerate: every faithful service is remembered, and shall be rewarded; all that is good fully recognized. On the other hand, no sin is so small that it may pass unnoticed. God's balances are true; His justice unwavering.

We are not to suppose that discipline is only for punishment, however; it is often to check our natural disposition; but all is corrective, and it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those exercised thereby. Let us not seek to build a wall about us to shut out God's governmental dealings, for we will find Him stronger than our wall, and reap sorrow for our rebellion. Let us rather humbly apply our hearts to learn the needed lesson, that we may rejoice in its rich fruition.

The students in God's school, manifestly, are God's children. No child can escape the training: his very relationship places him under the Father's instruction and discipline. On the other hand, only those born of God are taught of God, or can understand His things. The mere professor is a counterfeit student, "ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. iii. 7).

Real students, however, are far from being alike in their qualities and character. There are diligent students, and slothful students; they may be apt, or dull; willing, or rebellious. The delinquent ones have a sorry time in this life, as did Lot, and not much treasure laid up for the life hereafter. The good students gain fitness to be used of God, as did Moses in the backside of the desert, David with his sheep, or Peter with the Master. These had much joy in serving God; they learned, too, how to wait for Him, and to suffer the sorrows of the way; high honour was given to them, and great is their reward in heaven.

Let us each consider, in God's presence, what kind of



students we have been, and are. Have we obtained "a good report" through faith? And let us seek grace to so apply ourselves that we may be much used in God's service.

Advancement is the fruit of diligent or patient study, and the result, besides the actual knowledge gained, is a change in the student—a ripened judgment, an increased power, and an enlarged capacity. So it is in God's school: as we become acquainted with Him, our capacity is enlarged, and we are increasingly able to take in and enjoy His blessed fulness.

Some have wondered what will be the difference, in heaven, between the man whose earthly walk with God has been long and faithful, and another whose acquaintance had scarce begun, when taken from this scene. Doubtless the difference will be vast; similar, perhaps, to the contrast between a great cask filled to the brim, and a tiny vial likewise full. We know that every soul in that blessed place will be fully satisfied, but we also know that there will be peculiar and individual joys for those who have been in special ways faithful to their Lord. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

The reward of every loyal heart is God Himself. "To win Christ" is the supremest joy of the heart who has experienced something of His matchless love down here.

Dear brethren, let us be good students in God's school! Let us get all the lessons and blessings that are intended for us.

Let us make the most of the wilderness. Rest is sweet after a desert journey.

Let us get acquainted with our God, and learn of Him in

His Word and in all His dealings with us. Let us use this life, not for itself, but for the one ahead of us.

“There, no stranger;—God shall meet thee;  
Stranger thou in courts above.  
He who to His rest shall greet thee,  
Greet thee with a well-known love.”

A.S.L.

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## **REPENTANCE AND THE PREACHING OF IT.**

FROM Genesis to Revelation repentance is from time to time brought before us. At one period of the history it is spoken of God; at another it is urged on man: “The Lord repented that He had made man.” “He repented that He had made Saul king.” “He repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people.” These and similar expressions, used of God in the Old Testament, are never found in reference to Him in the New. Twice only in the New Testament is repentance spoken of about God, and both times to express the unchangeableness of what He has done. “The gifts and callings of God are without repentance” (Rom. xi. 29). “The Lord swears and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec” (Heb. vii. 21). With man in the flesh before Him in the Old Testament we can understand such a term used of God. Man’s wickedness drew out the expression from the Spirit that God repented He had made him on the earth. His people’s miseries, when suffering under His governmental dealings, drew forth the compassion of His heart, and He delivered them; “For it repented the Lord because of their groanings, by reason of them that oppressed

them and vexed them" (Judges ii. 18). With the Second Man, the Lord Jesus, before Him in the New, and the fragrance of His merits ever fresh in His sight, no room was there for repentance on His part. The time of man's probation had ended; the day of dealing in grace had followed.

Turning to man, repentance in both Old and New Testaments is enjoined on him. Job repented, and the Ninevites also. To Israel urgent but fruitless exhortations to repent were addressed by the prophet Ezekiel. As we open the New Testament we meet with that call repeated. John the Baptist preached it, and the Lord called men to it. The Apostles before His crucifixion went out to insist on it, and after His ascension continued to enforce it. At all times after the Fall, and under all dispensations, repentance on the part of fallen man was needful. Dispensational teaching does not do away with it; the fullest grace does not supersede it; for, side by side with the proclamation of forgiveness of sins, the Lord Jesus, when risen, commissioned His apostles to preach it. Thus Peter and Paul alike insisted on the necessity of it, whilst the Lord Jesus had previously told of the joy which shall be in heaven, and the joy which is now experienced by the angels when one sinner repents and turns to God. A just person needs no repentance, a sinner does. Hence, in the New Testament, where we have principles set forth, and not the mere external acts, the term used of God's repentance is different from that employed when repentance is insisted on for sinners.

Forming then, as repentance does, so prominent a topic in the preaching of the Apostles, it may well be a subject for enquiry, how far this element of apostolic preaching enters into the general evangelical teaching of the present day. Amid the now widely spread proclamation of God's grace to sinners, is not repentance to sinners overlooked?

208      *Repentance and the Preaching of It.*

Is there not, too, with some a jealousy lest the preaching of it should detract from the freeness of that grace? Such clearly was not the case in apostolic times, nor should it be the case now. None contended more earnestly or constantly for the freeness and fulness of grace than Paul, yet none more plainly insisted on repentance. At Ephesus (Acts xx. 21), at Athens (chap. xvii. 30), and when writing to the Romans he spake of it (Rom. ii. 4). It was God's command to all men. At Damascus, at Jerusalem, in all Judea, and wherever he went among the Gentiles, men could hear him insist on the importance and necessity of it (Acts xxvi. 20). Repentance and faith he preached; repentance toward God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. It was not repentance as preparatory to faith, nor faith without repentance; but repentance and faith.

But some may ask, What is repentance? Let us turn to Scripture to find out. It is not a mere change of mind on certain points (this will confound it with faith); but the Lord preached, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark i. 15). It is not simply a conviction of having done wrong; for when the multitude were pricked to the heart, Peter exhorted them to repentance (Acts ii. 38). It is not sorrow for sin; for "godly sorrows worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of" (2 Cor. vii. 10). Nor is it synonymous with conversion; for Peter tells the Jews to "repent and be converted" (Acts iii. 19). But it is a change of mind, a judgment of self, ways, and sins, which is evidenced by a change of life. It is God's gift (Acts xi. 18; 2 Tim. ii. 25) bestowed by the risen and ascended Christ (Acts v. 31). It is fruitful; for there are works meet for (worthy of) repentance (Matth. iii. 8; Acts xxvi. 20); and it is "unto life" and "salvation."

But how was this change of mind wrought in the

individual? Not by preaching law. The law could show the sinner he had done wrong, but God alone could give repentance. Saints before the giving of the law experienced it, as well as Gentiles who never were under it. Job saw God and repented; the Ninevites heard the preaching of Jonah about a coming judgment and repented. A judgment to come the Apostles often announced (Acts iii. 23; x. 42; xvii. 31; xxiv. 25). The Roman saints heard of it (Rom. i. 18), and the Thessalonian believers had escaped it (1 Thess. i. 10). Peter wrote about it, and Jude quoted Enoch's prophecy concerning it. In view of the wrath to come the Apostles urged on souls the importance of repentance. But to Israel there was an additional reason for their repentance, viz., that the times of refreshing should come by the return of the Lord Jesus from heaven (Acts. iii. 19).

Nor was it only in view of the future that they preached repentance. They exhorted their hearers to it on the ground of what had taken place. Man had crucified God's Son, and thereby shewed his hatred to God. God had replied to man's act by raising up the crucified One, and setting Him at His own right hand in the heavens. By this it was plainly seen who it was that had been crucified, and as clearly demonstrated that all who opposed that crucified One, and persecuted those who followed Him, were really opposed to God. Here was a ground on which repentance might well be enjoined, and Peter insisted on it on the day of Pentecost. But how does he address his hearers? Does he speak of God's anger against the people, and dilate on the terribleness of His wrath, and urge them to propitiate the angry Judge? He brings home to many of them the enormity of their guilt, by showing from Scripture who the crucified One really was and is. He was the Christ, the hope of Israel. He was the Lord, the ruler of all. God's

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faithfulness to His promises had been vindicated in the sending of His Son, and this was the way they had treated their long-looked-for Messiah. Believing what he said, accepting the testimony of the Holy Ghost by the mouth of Peter, they saw what their sin was, and asked what they must do. So in Solomon's porch (chap. iii.), and before the council, the Apostles tell them plainly who it is they have crucified, and what God has done for Him. They preach Christ, and God's acceptance of Him, witnessed by His resurrection and ascension. The person of the Lord set forth, their sin was manifested in all its enormity. They scrupled not to state it, and the conviction of it on the hearts of their audience necessitated repentance. Paul, too, bore witness of a glorified Christ, and preached the kingdom of God, which, when received, made repentance needful for all who had opposed the truth of God, or had been living to please themselves. It was not the thunders of the law that the Apostles resorted to on such occasions. They told of God and of Christ. They preached the Lordship and Christship of Jesus. They began with God and His Son, and thus penetrated to the inmost soul of their hearers. Is not this the way to be successful now? Philip preached Christ to the Samaritans. Paul preached the kingdom of God, and taught those things which concerned the Lord Jesus Christ, in his hired house at Rome. God's Gospel he proclaimed, which is the power of God unto salvation.

And here another feature in their preaching may be noticed. They presented the Lord Jesus as God's provision for the need and desires of the soul. In this they followed the example of the great Teacher Himself. "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away," is the Holy Spirit's delineation by the Virgin Mary of God's manner of acting amongst men. To the

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hungry the Lord offered Himself as the true manna, to the thirsty as the giver of living water, to the weary and heavy laden He offered rest, to the blind He could give sight, and to the sheep He was the Shepherd. All in whose souls there was a desire for what the world could not supply found in Him the answer to the craving of their heart.

In a similar manner the Apostles presented Him to individuals or congregations. In the house of Cornelius at Ceasarea, in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, in the prison at Philippi, Christ was presented as God's remedy and God's full provision for the fallen children of Adam. The Gentiles heard of forgiveness of sins through faith in Him. The Jews were instructed in the way of procuring a perfect justification, which the law never had provided, and never could. At Philippi, Paul spoke of salvation, but to one who was anxious about it. They ministered God's grace as was suited to exercise souls. If they spoke to an individual of salvation, it was because the heart was exercised about it. If they preached to a congregation, they pointed out it was for a class—for those who wanted it. Take the different sermons in the Acts. At Pentecost it was the question of the heart-pricked ones which elicited the way of forgiveness. In Solomon's porch, forgiveness is assured to all who repent. The Son of God has been sent first to Israel; but those only who repented would know forgiveness of sins. To Cornelius and his company, the Lord is presented as the object of faith, by whom souls could get forgiveness. At Antioch in Pisidia, forgiveness is preached to all, and a perfect justification through faith in him. At Lystra, God is proclaimed as the Creator, and the giver of all temporal blessings. At Athens, the unknown God was revealed, and the future judgment is announced. To Jews and Gentiles God's grace was preached; to the heathen God was revealed.

But is it not the case that God's grace was preached as meeting something the heart needed? Faith in Christ is clearly set forth as the way of salvation and forgiveness; but the manner of its announcement supposes an exercised heart, a needy soul. How different is Paul's language to the jailor from his speech to the careless multitude in the Areopagus? The jailor has his question answered; the Athenians are informed of the unknown God, and warned of the coming judgment. Where there was a need already, the Apostles ministered to it; where it did not exist, they attempted to create it by preaching about God and about Christ, the kingdom of God, the gospel of God, the person, the work of Christ and its results, they set before their hearers.

Such a method of preaching did then, and always will, lead to a deep and lasting work. Should faith in Christ be regarded simply as a means of getting to heaven? There is no other way surely. But is not the gospel rather to be regarded as a divine remedy for the fearful results of sin; and God's method of deliverance and relief for souls acted on by His Spirit? A remedy, yet more, far more, than a remedy; for it tells us of more than deliverance from wrath. Still, it is God's way of meeting what man needs, and is intended for those who have felt that need. It is not an easy road to heaven, but a way of escape from the deserts of sin. For the cross of Christ tells us what sin is in God's sight; it shows what the deserts of sin are; it manifests what the love of God and of Christ is, and what has been provided for sinners.

C. E. S.



**THE END OF ALL THINGS.**

THE solemn reminder that is given by the Apostle Peter in this portion of his epistle must surely have an intensified force for us who are so many years nearer *the end* that he intimated was *at hand*. The dispensation in which Peter wrote, continues, and so also the activities of God in grace ; and as in communion with Him we are to "account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation (2 Pet. iii. 15)." There is not, nor could be, any slackness with Him concerning His promise, though men, reasoning from the apparent stability of outward and visible things become scorers of His Word concerning *the end*.

But the fact of its nearness is evidently intended to have a weighty effect upon the conscience, and is calculated to inculcate sobriety, to awaken watchfulness unto prayer, and to exercise love.

So in view of that *end*, when God in government shall be manifested, how needful to have "the loins of the mind" girded up. How contrary to His thoughts are the thoughts current even amongst those who profess His name to-day. It is usual to speak as though another Pentecost was about to dawn ; as though good was about to celebrate its triumph universally over evil ; as though this was the beginning of a new era instead of "the last days" of the "latter times." Sobriety in thought is lacking ; for the uniform testimony of the Scriptures, both old and new, is to the very reverse. But Pentecost has gone to know no reviving, and the time is *now* when judgment is taking place in "the house of God" (1 Pet. iv. 17). Bowing neath His chastening hand is surely becoming rather than boasting, or a searching for *outward marks* of His favour and approval. And as time speeds on, so the downward course continues, and more rapidly, until

as Christ puts it: "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8).

Only by power will evil be restrained, and only when Jehovah's judgments are in the world will the nations learn righteousness; for "let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness" (Isa. xxvi. 9. 10). It is interpreted as weakness and as licence for licentiousness. God is manifesting grace—favour unmerited—and yet the course of evil, refined and unrefined, continues,—“evil men and seducers wax worse and worse” (2 Tim. iii.). How unfaithful, yea, how false, to raise a contrary testimony. Verily God is wiser than man, and how confirmatory of His Word is the prominence given to man and the utter forgetfulness of what is due to God from those who honour Him by their lips.

And presently Christ comes "in power and great glory," not then to save the world, but to execute judgment; for that day will then have begun which God has appointed, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained" (Acts. xvii). Christ comes then with "ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon all" (Jude 14.).

Again, how emphatic is the testimony of John through the Spirit: "It is the last time . . . even now there are many antichrists" (1 John. ii. 18). Thus man is exalted, and in so far God is degraded and dethroned (2 Thess. ii). Solemn consideration!

How sobering is the truth. That is the requisite thing,—truth that creates soberness, that awakens watchfulness, that causes the exercise of love. It is an exhortation of Scripture that the truth be bought, not to be again sold; but let us not think that that is fulfilled when hard earnings even are spent in the purchase of books that may contain the truth.

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Unpalatable are these truths? Do you say in your heart as you read, These are not the days to reiterate such things? Alas! the blinding of the adversary to the real state of things *as before the eye of God* is revealed by such musings. Those with deepest needs will say that they have need of nothing. Man and his things are sufficient: Christ is rejected and excluded (Rev. iii 17). So speaks He "whose eyes are as a flame of fire." His vision, penetrating the gauzy veil of religion that is cast to hide the ugliness of man's moral state, discovers the true condition.

The end draws near: "be ye therefore sober," in face of the levity and unrestrained imaginings of men on the brink of eternity; "and watch unto prayer," because of weakness and inability; for by the power of God's grace can we alone be kept amidst the many besetting temptations and snares that crowd the pathway our feet must tread. But the hearts cry directed up to Him who is above the heavens, "the Rock that is higher than I," brings support and protection; for He is able to make all grace abound towards us. But watchfulness is necessary that the cry be timely. To be caught unawares might mean disaster. "Watch and pray."

But with difficulties outside calling for watchfulness, inside—"among yourselves"—love in its fervency was to be manifested. There the flesh would often obtrude itself, and in a variety of ways. Love will meet that difficulty, for "love never faileth," not by ignoring or being indifferent to sin,—not by bringing out and holding up to public gaze the failures of others, but "love will cover the multitude of sins." In the secret of God's presence the question is secretly settled. There love takes the failure, not its own, and unburdens the heart. Care is shown for what is due to God and so room is made for Him still to be in grace with His

people. Christ is waved in His peerless excellency before the blessed God, prefigured by Job offering up the burnt offerings as he thought of what his sons might have done, (Job i. 5) and His merits are pleaded. When coldness and estrangement come in let us think of Christ and have fervent love. Love can accomplish much. It *will* cover the multitude of sins.

H. F.

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### EXTRACTS.

THE character of these last days is just this, that men are always seeking, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth. I have no need to be asking what is truth, if I have it; what a man seeks he has not yet got. A man that is always hunting after truth proves by his action that he has it not yet.

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Grace has put us in such a place, and only grace could do it. There is no possible room for the thought of merit in our gaining that which man in innocence could never have pretended to, and which makes our whole life henceforth but a thank-offering for it. Faith is that by which we regain what we had lost in the fall, the place of creature nothingness before God, with the sense also of our guilt in having lost it. Thus there should be for us no claim of greatness any more, while the glorious example before our eyes of One who became for us a servant in His love, self-humbled, poor, emptied of the glory proper to Him, should rid us of all desire of self-exaltation.

**GOD'S UNFAILING GOODNESS.**

(Ezek. xxxiv. 11—31).

ONE of the most prominent lessons taught in the Old Testament is that of God's unfailing goodness, brought out in vivid relief by the failure that it broods over. From Genesis to Malachi it shines—everywhere we see "mercy rejoicing against judgment." It shone on the guilty pair in the Garden in Eden; it hovered over a perishing world in Noah's days; it was revealed in the call of Abram and was pledged to him by God's oath; it followed Jacob in his exile from his father's house; it abode with Joseph through his sufferings in Egypt; it marked the oppression of Israel in Egypt and brought them deliverance according to His word; it went with them through their wilderness wanderings and set them safely in the land of promise; it bore with the people in their sad departures from Jehovah—bore with them until there was no remedy—bore with them until patience longer drawn out would have appeared as acquiescence in their evil ways; and then, when scattered and under the Gentile yoke, providentially cared for them. But instances, many and varied, could be multiplied; for from the beginning of the sacred page to the close of it, the fact is writ large indeed that "*God is good.*" Of Himself He records, "I change not"—faithfulness marks all His ways.

And in this chapter of Ezekiel, the prophet of stern denunciation, the expositor of the fearful evils current in the midst of those who bore Jehovah's name, we have a beautifully tender and touching word which presses home upon the heart the truth that He is, in His never-failing faithfulness, superior to all evil, and that He will in His own

time manifest that clearly. The prophets may prophesy falsely, the priests may rule with violence, His people may love to have it so ; but His counsels of old, which are faithfulness and truth, He will not forget, and the assurance is given that what He has purposed shall stand.

And first note in this beautiful portion the oft repeated "I"—"I will search," "I will seek," "I will bring," "I will save," "I will feed." How painful often it is to hear the reiteration of that personal pronoun when it proceeds from the lips of a failing creature, and only tells of self-sufficiency and pretension. But here, how different. It is Jehovah, the self-existent One who speaks, and who in His sufficiency undertakes for His flock when the shepherds of Israel have made themselves fat, and have clothed themselves, but have neglected the sheep. At their hand He would require His flock.

But when thus neglected and scattered He would Himself intervene, and in the dark and cloudy day of trial and persecution, would seek them out and regather them and feed them in their own land, secure in a good fold, so safe and secure as is intimated in the words, "I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down" (ver. 15). Then they will verily rest by the waters of quietness, rejoicing in the plenitude of His provision for them.

And what enhances this wonderful grace of His, this tender solicitude, is the fact that it is "*the lost*" that He seeks in the energy of His love; "*the broken*" that He binds up by the power of His arm; "*the sick*" that He cares for and comforts in His tender pity. But, ominous words for the "strong" to hear!—"I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment." Independency of God means ruin for the creature. What a mercy to be dependent upon His unfailing goodness and

grace ! Of that love we have already tasted. Upon that grace we are dependent. Its exercise towards us is constant and continual, bless His name !

Then to secure this blessing to those once-trodden down ones He sets up a shepherd who shall combine in His person the offices of shepherd and king. Can there be any doubt as to who is here meant ? " My servant David," He says ; but " the patriarch David " had long been dead and buried, so to One who was " of the seed of David according to the flesh," we are turned. The reference is to that One who, when in His humiliation here, looked upon the scattered and fainting multitude and His heart was moved with compassion (Matth. ix. 36)—Jesus of Nazareth.

Of this One we read in Isaiah xlix. There Jehovah's choice is set forth : " Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to Him whom man despiseth, to Him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose Thee " (ver. 7). And of the flock that He leads it is written, " They shall not hunger nor thirst ; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them " (ver. 10). Truly in that day there shall be " showers of blessing " descending upon them, as conscious of, and rejoicing in the relationship established by Himself, they know themselves to be His flock, and acknowledge no other God but Jehovah. Happy people to be in such a case !

May this brief retracing serve as a reminder, as time wings its way on, that His goodness and faithfulness are unending, and that by all these and similar words, He invites our confidence, and desires the implicit trust of our poor hearts. These Lord we tender to Thee !

H. F.

**A FAITHFUL WITNESS.**

A witness for God is the most uncompromising man on the face of the earth. He never lowers the flag. He never adapts his testimony to altered circumstances. General unfaithfulness only nerves him, braces him up to a more complete surrender to his Master's interests. No surrender of the truth is ever thought of. He may die, death alone being the check to the course and testimony of the witness, but he will never sacrifice one iota of his testimony. He is a man who counts not his life dear to him if he may but finish his course with joy. A witness is essentially a martyr, the word for both being the same in Greek. "God and His glory" is his watchword. Would you be a faithful witness for God, another Antipas, "one against all"? Then you may have to seal your testimony with your blood, as Stephen in the midst of religious Israel, or Antipas amongst the professing people of God. A true servant of God never defends his character, that the Lord takes care of, and woe be to the man who wantonly takes liberties with the character and ways of God's witness. He enters into a controversy with God as Numbers xii solemnly intimates. A witness for God is a man who meekly bears reproach, suffering, and distress, but is consumed, yea, burns, when the glory of his Master is in question (Ex. xxxv). May the Lord lead to increasing and unswerving faithfulness, to the Master and His mission.

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## THE SECOND MAN.

IN no way has God so wonderfully revealed His love, His grace, His condescension, as in sending Christ into the world as the Second Man. It is that which above all else refreshes and strengthens the soul in these days of incoming apostasy. If the deification of man and "Union in Incarnation" be the master errors of this age, then the lines of truth that will feed and comfort the believer most in these days are those connected with the Word being made flesh and tabernacling among men.

Take one line of truth, "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. ii. 17, 18). In Ps. ciii. 13, 14, we read, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." In many other Old Testament Scriptures we have God's knowledge of His people brought before us, but what a difference between the knowledge of Omniscience—God knowing us as He knows all things, and Christ being made in all things like unto His brethren, and being "tempted in all points like as we are, apart from sin."

What a blessed truth to think upon, that His knowledge of our path is not alone of the one looking down from heaven, as Scripture so often puts it; but He knows our trials and temptations and sorrows by personal experience. He has suffered being tempted. He has sighed. He has

groaned under the burdens that have pressed Him down. He has wept as His eyes have beheld evils that sin and death have wrought. He has wept with others and wept over others.

What rest and refreshment comes to the tried and tempted child of God as he contemplates these revelations of the sympathies of Christ with His people in their path down here. "Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Scripture limits that oneness by "apart from sin." There could be no possibility whatever of any oneness in that, but in the suffering, the pain, the sorrow, the attacks of evil men and of Satan, He knows by His own experience what we pass through. How blessed to keep this before us in telling Him our sorrows and trials. He knows all about our path, not only as the Omniscient God, but also as the Son of Man. He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. How good to realize this!

Christians often feel that no one else knows how great their trials are, or how sorely they are tempted. That may be true, but the Lord Jesus knows. He has the tenderest sympathy for each suffering child. Whatever any of us may say or know, He knows all about our sorrows, and He can comfort as none else can. No one can ever be friendless if they will only turn to the Lord Jesus. But pride and unbelief and lack of repentance keep people from the sweetness of His love. Satan blinds them, gets entire possession of them and destroys them. The Lord Jesus has been here amid it all. One of those whom He chose gave himself over to Satan. No men ever showed greater blindness than the Pharisees who hated Christ. There never was such intolerance as the Jews manifested, as in the ninth of John. There was never such injustice as in the trial of Christ, such utter perversion of the civil power

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from its appointed work. Yet "He opened not His mouth." He bore it all in silence. He took that place to bear the sin of the world. In every thing and in every way He is the contrast of the fallen first man, except as is shown in Rom. v. 12 and onward. Adam was the type of Christ in certain positions, but the opposite of Him in all others.

J. W. N.

**REVELATION iii. 7-13.**

IN the assembly at Philadelphia both doctrine and practice had been cherished. "Thou hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name." Here we see what faithfulness can effect. A little strength they had, their capability for service was not great; but the absence of a greater power was not allowed to be a plea for deadness, such as was in Sardis, nor for the sufferance of a false teacher like Jezebel at Thyatira. Such being their state, the Lord introduces Himself, not as One clothed with judicial power as in the letters to the angels at Pergamos and Thyatira, but as the Holy One and the True, who possesses the key of David to open and to shut. To what He is those at Philadelphia had in measure been conformed. So faithful in the maintenance of doctrine, and exhibiting the fruits of it in their ways, the door of opportunity for service He here tells them that He will keep open for them, and no man shall shut it. Through grace having been faithful, God's ways in government they should prove. "What a man soweth that shall he also reap," announces to us the unfailing principle of God's government. These had been faithful in their measure: so opportunity for further service should be secured to them. How often do believers prove the unfailing principles of God's government by suffering

consequences, perhaps enduring, of some wrong action in past times! Here the converse, less often proved, is illustrated for our instruction by the keeping open the door for further service, for and by the Lord, which no man should shut.

The opportunity then to do service for Christ is something to be prized. The knowledge of forgiveness is not the end of man's salvation, for "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." Into this the Philadelphian Christians entered, and showed that they understood of what use, as alive in Christ, they were to be upon the earth, and hence were to experience, as here expressed in a threefold way, the rich grace of Christ; in the door being kept open by Him, in His vindication of their title to be God's people before those who would deny it, and in their being kept by Christ out of the hour of tribulation, which shall come upon all the habitable world to try them that dwell upon the earth.

This last promise, based as it is on their having kept the word of Christ's patience, shows that saints in early days not only were taught about the hope of the church, but really held it fast. Paul's wish for the assembly at Thessalonica (2 Thess. iii. 5) was fulfilled in that of Philadelphia (ver 10). Commended then so highly as they were by the Lord, and enriched with such promises, might they relax their efforts and abate their zeal? Man's evil heart led by Satan might say, Yes; the Lord however warns them against such a delusion. He could and did commend them; but, knowing man's heart and Satan's artifices, He adds the significant admonition; "I come quickly, hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown." Then He ends the letter to the angel by

acquainting him with the future position of the overcomer. “He that overcometh” (for their service was still unfinished) “will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.”

Possessed of little strength, but faithful to Christ's word and name, their service He does indeed prize, and their faithfulness He will reward. Pillars in the temple of His God they shall be, monuments of divine workmanship for all to behold, ever remaining where God dwells. And though disowned as God's people on earth, Christ will display them as God's, with the mark of heavenly citizenship written upon them, as well as His new name written by Himself in token that they belong to Him. What delight in the faithfulness of His people does the Lord take, since He will mark those who exhibit it as belonging to God and to Himself!

C. E. S.

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## “**HEARKEN TO ME.**”

(*Isaiah li.*)

THERE is something sublimely beautiful and attractive in the many messages sent by God to His people through the prophet Isaiah. And who can wonder that he should be entitled “Isaiah the grand”—his own confession is, “I am a man of unclean lips”—though alas! those who bestow the appellation are more engaged with the language in which the communications are couched than with the blessed God

who sent them, in grace deigning to use a man as His instrument.

God is speaking to His people; not to the mass of the nation, for the closing verses of the preceding chapter reveals two classes—those who fear the Lord (ver. 10), and those who, refusing to hear Him, are busily engaged in kindling a fire to obtain light for themselves. Such were covetous idolaters in apostacy from the God whose name they bore.

To the former God speaks here, and thrice the call to hearken is repeated. Obviously, then, God has something of marked importance for them. And first, those who "follow after righteousness" are addressed. How this term indicates the way their energies were being expended. They were seekers after the Lord, and that in the face of an apostate nation, who had filled full the cup of iniquity to the very brim by refusing and casting from them the One sent in Jehovah's name, and by allying themselves to the one who came in his own name—the antichrist. (This portion of Isaiah's prophecy contemplates Christ rejected.)

A feeble few, then, in weakness God would sustain, not by taking them out of their trial, though out of it they should come as "polished shafts," but by giving them a word from Himself to which faith could cling. Of what He had done they are reminded; of His sovereign call of Abraham, whose true descendants they were, when out of a world in the darkness of idolatry God "called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." What He had done, He again could do. And though the evidence of pressing circumstances seemed to point entirely the other way, yet the desolation of Zion was to give place to fruitfulness; its abounding sorrow was to be followed by joy and gladness; and the dirge of dark days was to be succeeded by anthems

of thanksgiving and the voice of melody. Such were Jehovah's avowed counsels concerning it. Could they trust Him?

Then backward to what in days long previous He had wrought, and forward to what He would yet accomplish, God directs them. And this is His way. When adversity seems to linger long, and doubts arise to harass the mind, look back!—"He spared not His own Son"; look on!—"how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

But proceeding, the second "hearken" with increased intensity sounds forth. Sovereignly called, they form verily, that faithful remnant, His people and His nation. So Jehovah acknowledges them, and His Word for their guidance is given, and to assure them of the verity of His counsels being accomplished. The heavens should vanish away, the earth wax old, the inhabitants thereof die, but permanence marks the salvation of Jehovah, and in perpetuity His righteousness should abide.

What a word of cheer for those under whose feet everything seemed fast going, and who would be prone to act on their own behalf instead of waiting the intervention of their God for them. What does He say? "My righteousness is near," when He would manifest His perfect consistency, and make plain the accord of His ways with Himself. In them He would display it; and intervening on their behalf would deliver them. Soon that was to be; for "My salvation is gone forth." Thus would He by granting the Word of assurance, beget confidence in their hearts. What grace here shines that He should labour to that end!

But more.<sup>1</sup> He would give comfort likewise. They must not anticipate the deliverance that was coming and resort to the sword. Patience must have her perfect work, and waiting, they must neither fear nor fight men. The fear of

man ever tends to become a snare, and here the exhortation is against that. As a people "that know righteousness" they are spoken to. Let men reproach, let men revile, on their way they were to keep, strong in confidence in their God, and with His law in their hearts. Then why fear? So puny are men that the moth shall eat them up as a garment, and the maggot devour them like wool. Pride and haughtiness of heart characterise the despisers of God; but how scathing to that pride, how humbling to that might of mind which ignores the Omnipotent One is this contrast. Oh! what have those to fear who rest in "the everlasting arms," and who "dwell between His shoulders." To such the words of Moses, the man of God, apply: "Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and the sword of thy excellency" (Deut. xxiii. 29).

Thrice, then, the cry to hearken sounds forth from the Lord, in which He reminds the faithful of His sovereign call; that being His people they must confide in Him; that, though in trial, He would comfort and keep them, and would effectually bring to accomplishment His own counsels. Surely in these calls there is some consolation for us now. May we seek and find.

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"O, BE quiet, God is Master—dost thou think that all this din and hurly-burly that is abroad betokens that God has left His throne? No, man, His coursers rush furiously on, and His chariot is the storm, but there is a bit between their jaws, and He holds fast the reins, and guides them as He wills! God is Master yet; believe it; peace be unto thee! be not afraid!"



*"Awake, Awake!"*

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**"AWAKE, AWAKE!"**

*(Isaiah li. 9; lii. 8).*

THE threefold cry of "Hearken" is followed immediately by the call to "Awake, awake!" thrice repeated also. Jehovah's counsels concerning Zion He had revealed, but how impossible the fulfilment of them if His arm put not forth its power and made the way open for them. For the first cry is to the "Arm of the Lord" to awake. Had it been quiescent? Had He ceased to care how His faithful ones were treated? Did the cry imply that there had been indifference on His part? It had ceased to act as in the days of their deliverance from Egypt, but He had not ceased to care, as the "opened ear" would gather from His former communications. Indifferent He was not, as He would make plain; but the just by his faith in the Word of his God was to be sustained.

"Put on strength, O arm of the Lord," is the cry. Almighty power was there—that was not lessened, but not for long had there been the manifestation of it. In ancient days Egypt had been cut and the dragon wounded. In ancient days that arm had made the very depths of the sea a way for that ransomed people to pass over. And reasoning from those expressions of power the conclusion is drawn that "therefore, the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion."

But what an important question the need of this cry should awaken. If He, who had pledged His power to an obedient people, was no longer acting in power on their behalf, but rather was permitting the uncircumcised to oppress and tread them down, must there not be a reason? An important question surely, and important, too, in its application for God's people now, who are asking questions that imply—though not intended so to do—that God is

ceasing to be gracious. Where is the blessing of former days? Where are the conversions as at Pentecost? are the queries put by one to another.

But God had (and God has now) a controversy with His people which must be settled. Had He been unfaithful and departed from His word? Nay, but unfaithfulness had marked those who were His, and their cup of iniquity had but filled to the full by the rejection of Christ in His humiliation, as before remarked; as the rejection of Christ in the glory, and the Spirit's presence here, and testimony to the Lord are spurned now. But what, then, is the way to blessing? It is that of repentance and confession, not simply because of the stroke of judgment that has fallen, but because of the sin and dismal turning from God which necessitated that judgment must be (Isaiah liii.; Zech. xii. 11-14; Hosea xiv.). Very partial must be the recovery which follows the sorrowing on account of the weight of God's hand upon His people, as we can see so consistently through the Book of the Judges. So here Jerusalem must be brought to the dust, to the very direst extremity, but then to be lifted up.

Oh! this cry, “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord,” how attractive—how right *in its season*; but how much more according to God to truly bow under His mighty hand, and receiving His Word to find strength in quietness and confidence before Him, content to await His time for the deliverance of which He has spoken.

For that must not be anticipated, but in patience waited for. Here Jehovah shows that the fear of man might even be in such a cry; as we know *care for reputation* might seek evasion from service or desire for it (Jonah iv.; 2 Sam. xviii. 19)—a care that comes out painfully prominent in the efforts of God's people now.

But comfort until deliverance came would be vouchsafed from Him who was making His people *to know His name*. Frail men die; the oppression of the oppressor comes to an end. Should they then be as the captive exile whose only thought was of himself and his circumstances? Their God was not bound by circumstances. He, above all circumstances, was over them; He had divided the sea, and had likewise put His words in their mouth, and had put His protecting arm about them, for His purpose was to say unto them, though then in obscurity and downtrodden, “Thou art My people.” Haste for deliverance then there was not to be, but quiet confidence in Him. Are there not lessons here for us to gather up?

So the second call is to Jerusalem to awake and stand up. At the hand of the Lord the cup of fury had been drunk, and the effect wrought is seen in the Scriptures already referred to. Brought into a seemingly helpless, hopeless condition, their extremity proves His opportunity, and He who pleads the cause of His people, puts the cup into the hands of those who in pride and haughtiness had exceeded.

But that point reached, HE cries to Zion to awake and put on strength. Assuredly His arm would be for them. They would know Him, as He in His grace and tender compassion, presenting Himself would say, “Behold it is I.” And so the feet of one thus in communion with Him that should, though as sent by Him, go forth and publish good tidings, heralding salvation, and proclaiming unto Zion “Thy God reigneth,” would be supremely beautiful.

He will effectually bring to pass all He has promised. Let us be sure of that. See in vision that people going forth, not in haste nor by flight (ver. 12), but the Lord going before, and the God of Israel the rereward. Let us seek

grace to truly keep the word of Christ's patience with Him, though desirous ever to catch those accents tender, "Arise, My love, and come away!"

H. F.

## TRUE GREATNESS.

*Luke xxii. 14-30.*

I do not know that there is a more touching lesson in any of the words or ways of our Lord Jesus Christ than that which comes before us at the last supper.

First of all His desire is to eat that paschal feast with His disciples. He was the only One who knew what it meant—the One to whom it spoke of such a burden as never was nor could be borne by mere man. And yet with desire He desired to eat of that passover before He suffered. He knew it was the immediate harbinger of His death upon the cross. Yet there was not one of the disciples that so desired to eat it with Him, as He desired to eat it with them. This is love, and love is self-sacrificing.

It was this cup that He told them to divide among themselves—not that of the Lord's Supper. Our Lord Jesus never partook of His own supper. He partook of the paschal supper, but not of His own. For this is for us, being the witness of a redemption which He wrought for us (not for Himself of course). The paschal supper was for Him as well as for the disciples, and He desired to eat it along with them. On the occasion of the passover, after its cup was passed round, He institutes His own supper; but before that He says He was no longer to drink of the fruit of the vine till the kingdom of God was come. He took the supper, to Him not a sign of joy, but of the deepest suffering.

*True Greatness.*

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The Lord's supper, which speaks to us of perfect peace through His suffering, He needed not; He gave it all to us.

But this very thing forthwith brings out, as grace invariably does, whatever is unjudged in nature. The more love you show, if there is not a heart that answers to it, it is but provoked by it, and takes advantage of it. The very perfection of Christ's love brought out whatever was unjudged in the disciples. As for one of them there was nothing at all in him but unjudged self, and he betrayed his Master. As for the others, what were they doing? They were striving at that precise moment which of them should be the greatest. That was the question in their minds. Jesus was going to show that He would become the least and lowest of all, that they might be exalted; yet this was just the moment in which they had this discussion which should be the chief among them. But our Lord turned it to infinite profit, bringing out for us the character of true greatness. Self is never great, and it has the consciousness of its own littleness. Persons strive to be great, when they have no greatness in reality; whereas when the soul has found Christ and when Christ is the object of the soul, our satisfaction in His greatness forms our affections. Accordingly, here with the disciples, self was their object. Thus they were totally inconsistent with what Christ had made them. Had they had Christ, not only as their life before God, but as the object of that life, there would have been, without a thought about it, the real greatness which properly belongs to the child of God.

True greatness at the present time is shown by being nothing at all. Greatness can go down; greatness instead of seeking to be served, serves others; greatness now, in an evil world far from God, shows itself in the resources of grace known in Christ before God, and going out of that fulness

which it possesses in Christ. Everything in the world is founded on the exact opposite; and the deeper runs the stream of the world, the greater is the desire to be something, and the desire to parade whatever we think we have. This is flesh in its littleness; and flesh and the world always keep company together. Self likes the world: it holds hard what it has got, and seeks to make a bargain with the world to get more. The knowledge of Christ delivers from all this. But a Christian who does not know that he is a Christian who does not know that he has got Christ and eternal life in Christ is entirely inconsistent, and all else must be out of course. In order to have practical power, I must not only have the thing but know that I have it. Supposing a man possesses all the wealth of India and does not know that he has got it, it is practically useless to him. The consequence is that the man, after the manner of men, is miserable; he can do nothing, serve nothing, help nothing. The possession of the things of this life never makes a man happy; but Christ does, and we possess all in Him.

Why was the poor widow who gave the mite the richest of all, as the Lord Jesus marks her out with His eye of love? She was the only one who had such consciousness of what she hoped for from God, that all that she had in the world was but an offering for the Lord. And we rob ourselves as well as defraud Him if we do not exercise this ennobling faith. Conscious of what we possess in Christ, all that we have is at the Lord's disposal. The consciousness of the grace of Christ imprints its own character upon us; and instead of seeking, it gives, and instead of seeking to be served by others, it loves to serve. There is not one of us that is free from this tendency to self, but there is not one that may not have a complete victory over it. Let my heart be only towards Christ, and set upon Christ, and it will be impossible

for Satan to get me into anything mean or selfish. But let my eye be off Christ, and there is nothing I may not do, nothing too low or too unworthy that Satan may not slip in by.

What is the Bible? The history of the struggle between God and the devil. This one thing runs from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation. It is not merely a question of man, but of Satan working by man to dishonour God. The earth was the place where the battle was fought. The first Adam comes, but falls; and all the history of the Old Testament is the failure of the first Adam with promises and predictions of the triumph of the second. Then the New Testament comes; the battle is over, the triumph is won. We are put with the Last Adam, and Christ looks that we should be victorious. But we are never victorious except so far as Christ is our object when He is before our eyes at each moment, in each difficulty or trial that comes before us here below. When are we happy? When Christ is before our eyes not when we are looking back to the happiness of yesterday. Satan would have us look back upon past happiness, and perhaps date our blessing upon such or such a day. But it ought not to be so. I am, of course, to have a joyful recollection of all that the Lord shows me, and I shall certainly not forget the first moment of blessing from Him. But how miserable if this only be our comfort and stability now, and our assurance that we shall be with Christ! Nay; it is a living Christ that we have—a Christ that died and is alive again, and a Christ that would imprint His own character upon us, making us truly great. It is holding fast what Christ has given us that delivers us from littleness, and holding it fast in Christ Himself.

The Lord grant that, strengthened of His grace, we may be enabled thus to do. Then each word of Christ will have its own power over our souls, will be clothed with His own

love ; it will come to us, not as some great draught upon us, as if the Lord could be enriched by us, save only in such honour to Himself as really blesses our own souls. It is the consciousness that we have such blessing, such wealth, such dignity in Christ, which gives and keeps us in the feeling that all that is of this world would rather detract from us than add anything to us. It is not only that we have got Christ, but that there is nothing but Christ that is a real honour or power or glory to the saint of God. And the bright day will come, when Jesus will tell us what He told the disciples, "Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptations." This was after the discussion of who would be the greatest, after He had before Him the treachery of one disciple, and the unworthy vanities of the others ; after it all that He says, "Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptations." But knowing all that they had been in the past, their many weaknesses and failures, yet He puts it as an honour to them, "Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptations." It was He who had continued with them, who had sustained and kept them in spite of themselves. Yet see how love delights in saying to us, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom as My Father hath appointed unto Me : that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom."

The Lord give us then to be steadfast. It is but a little while. Soon the time of our trials and temptations will close. Soon the time of Christ's dishonour in this world will give place to a throne of glory, and every eye shall see Him, and every knee bow before Him. May we be faithful to Him for this little while. Bright will be the remembrance of suffering for Him in His presence for ever !

—*Bible Treasury.*