

THE REMEMBRANCER.

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE
FOR
THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

“ Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them. Yea, . . . I think it meet . . . to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.’

—2nd Peter i. 12, 13.

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The Remembrancer.

"WE WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT."

2 COR., V. 7.

"Not by sight" can we guide our feet,
Safe through the perils we this day meet ;
Easy and smooth as the path may seem,
Dangers lurk where we least should dream ;
The net is not spread in sight of the bird,
'Mid Eden's flowers was the tempter heard,
And great is the need when life looks fair,
That we closely cling to our Father's care.

O keep us Lord when the world seems bright,
Walking by faith and not by sight.

"Not by sight" when a few steps on,
All the brightness of life seems gone :
Our earthly sunshine is clouded o'er,
We see the joy of our hearts no more,
Shall we sit desolate ? Nay, but rise
By faith to the good that beyond this lies :
God is preparing in cloud and gloom,
Showers of blessing whence grace shall bloom.

So keep us, Lord, through Thy Spirit's might,
Walking by faith and not by sight.

"Not by sight !" It is best to lean
On the hand that's guiding us though unseen ;
Yes, best in suspense to linger, till
God's time is come to reveal His will.
Best in perplexities far, to wait,
Till He the "crooked things shall make straight,"
Best, for the honour of His great name,
Best, for the blessing we then may claim,

So keep us, Lord, through Thy Spirit's might,
Walking by faith and not by sight. .

O foolish those who would walk by sight !
What will ye do in death's dark night ?
It is faith alone can triumph then,
Faith in the Saviour of sinful men.
Thousands have told with their last faint breath,
How He they trusted was near in death,
He has brought them safe where they see at last,
The meaning of all the mysterious past.
O keep us, Lord, till we meet in Light,
Walking by faith and not by sight.



FAITH.

[AN EXTRACT.]

It is characteristic of faith to reckon on God, not simply spite of difficulty, but spite of impossibility.

Faith concerns not itself about means ; it counts upon the promise of God. To the natural man the believer may seem to lack prudence ; nevertheless, from the moment it becomes a question of means which render the thing easy to man, it is no longer God acting ; it is no longer His work where means are looked to. When with man there is impossibility, God must come in ; and it is so much the more evidenced to be the right way, since God only does that which He wills. Faith has reference to His will, and to that only ; thus it consults not either about means or circumstances ; in other words, it consults not with flesh and blood.

WHERE FAITH IS WEAK, EXTERNAL MEANS ARE BEFOREHAND RECKONED ON IN THE WORK OF GOD. LET US REMEMBER THAT WHEN THINGS ARE FEASIBLE TO MAN, THERE IS NO LONGER NEED OF THE ENERGY OF THE SPIRIT. Christians do much, and effect little—why?

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him.”



THE CALL OF ABRAHAM.

HEBREWS XI., 8-18.

Quite a new principle was brought to light when God began to deal with Abraham; *i. e.*, the principle of calling out. God distinctly called Abraham. Many other things are connected with Abraham, as father of the faithful, and a pattern model man, to show forth God's dealings: he was the first that God called forth out of his own country. One of the first principles of truth to a soul lies in the discovery that Abraham made; that is, the personal existence of God, and an invitation from Him to keep in His company—“Come unto the land that I shall shew thee.” Many may not have denied the existence of God, but as to any personal connection, it would never have entered their minds unless He had revealed Himself. Others had faith, too, but it did not come out like Abraham's. Abel shewed his by offering a lamb. Again, we get Enoch's call, but his heart was above before he went on high. Noah's lot was

cast in exceedingly evil days ; he believed God, prepared the ark, and was carried out of one earth to another. (We do not get Lot called apart.) Abraham is among an idolatrous people, and God comes and calls him, saying, “ I have a place for you, and there I will bless you and make you a blessing in every way, and you shall know what it is to have the living God as your help in every time of need.”

I want you who are old and you who are young in faith, to set to your seal that God has introduced Himself as a living Person to your soul. Directly we have Jesus Christ, we have God, and all our associations are connected with God. Faith produces different effects ; the moment you bring in anything save God and His word, that is not faith. The path of faith is never the path of nature ; nature takes quite a contrary course. “ What ! ” Abraham’s kindred might have said, “ a stranger, a God we do not know, has told you to leave us all, and you are going forth in a mist, not knowing where He is going to take you to.” God had spoken, and Abraham as an individual had to act on His word, and God did accredit His own word to Abraham. It then became a question whether Abraham could say, “ I will put aside all the reasonings of my friends, and listen only to Thee.” When did his faith fail ? When he came to a difficulty, and stopped to consider for himself, and settle for himself, which way to get out of it. God had told him the way, but he got upon cir-

cumstances and off faith. First, he had been told to leave all ; if it came to that he must go without Terah.* He did not leave all, he takes with him Terah and Lot, and the effects become evident ; he had to stop till Terah died, and he could not get on till Lot was separated from him.

God will not give up with His people, He will have patience till they know it will not do to depart from His word. Not until after Terah died did Abraham come to Canaan ; first, he had to get rid of Terah, and then of Lot. If I interrupt the word of the Lord in any one part, it lowers the tone of my whole soul unconsciously. There was Lot, and besides a famine came. There was corn in Egypt ; Abraham says, " I will go there." The lack of faith carries him there, and he gets into the thick of the fight, loses Sarah—where is she ? He is at his wits end, and what can he do ? Nothing ; departure from the word has brought him into all this, and what was to help him out of it ? God's own word. Again he is sent forth in the power and presence of God.

Remark in the eighth verse, when called to go out, by faith Abraham obeyed, and went forth, not knowing whither he went. Nothing tries and searches human nature so much as uncertainty ; we cannot bear suspense (there is relief in the worst certainty) ; but that is just God's principle of acting with us. He does not want you to know

* It is a significant fact that Terah means " delay."—EDITOR R.

how to face famine. He does not want Abraham to know how His promises are to be made good : his seed was to be as the stars of heaven ; how was this to be, seeing he had no child ? God has given him everything but that ; silver and gold, flocks and herds, and three hundred trained servants. He was a man most remarkable in his day, and all seemed to say to his heart, “ Who is to inherit all this ? ” It ever seemed to be bringing to his heart the thought that he had no children, and poor Sarah tried to smuggle a child into the house, but that was not an Isaac. The question was continually raised, “ Where is your city ? where is your seed ? ” He had to wait a long time, and it came at last by a miracle wrought of God. The very prosperity of Abraham forced him to hang on God. Who is to be the heir ? the man-servant ? No, wait ; hang upon God.

Remark in the ninth verse, the pilgrim and stranger character kept up : dwelling in tabernacles (tents) was the mark of a stranger and a pilgrim. Tents were made for Israel in the wilderness ; they did not have houses till in the land of Canaan. God's dwelling in the wilderness is a tent, in the land a temple. Abraham dwelt in a tent ; Lot did so too at first ; but he did not keep up the pilgrim character. First, he pitched his tent towards Sodom, then sat in the gate, and had a house in Sodom. Abraham kept it up (looked for a city) ; he knew there was such a city, and the Holy Ghost adds, “ Whose builder and maker is

God." Remark how this man's faith was sustained. He can look above everything counting on it. There it was ; he had not yet got the fulfillment of the promise, but he was to have it ; but he had a faith sustained by God's word. As heavenly pilgrims, we cannot say we have got what we hope for ; but the time is coming when we shall go right into heaven, and cease to be pilgrims and strangers down here.

Is our faith set above? If God and you are keeping company, do you think He will let you have a single need unsatisfied? Oh, what a jealous God He is ! What a wall of fire round about us ! When He separates any one to Himself, He plants the blood of Christ right behind them. If He has spoken to us of His glory, and told us not to mind earthly things, should not our associations be, not of ties of nature down here, but of His company, His country, His interests? Waiting as people who do want to keep up their character of strangership, plainly confessing by their walk and ways that they are pilgrims on their way to a better country? Even poor Jacob could not help being a pilgrim. How came Jacob to be in a position to receive wages of Laban? Because he got off the ground of being a pilgrim. He had a deal to say at the end of how long and how dreary his life had been, whilst Abraham's whole pathway is strewed with blessings every step. God was with him. Jacob too dwelt in a tent. If God has revealed Himself to your heart, and spoken to you

of future glory, separating you unto Himself, He would not like you to be passing through the wilderness "hardly bested," not with Jacob's experience, talking of the great things you have to give up. He does not like that. He wants you to be like Abraham, saying, "Look at all my blessings; look how close God has set me to Himself, and see how He is going to fill all my circumstances, to make me rise over all my difficulties, and make His own presence so sweet to me, that I would rather be in difficulties with Him than out of them without Him."

We learn what God is by Abraham's walk. Look, too, at Paul, when moved out of everything: when in difficulties of all kinds he always had a song to the praise of God's grace. What a difference between God saying, "Here is something good for you," and your holding out your hand and taking it, and saying you are not good enough for what God gives you. Christ would not give Himself to us in resurrection till He was given to the Father. He must come down to us as the Father's gift. Whether it be sorrow or joy, if it is God's gift, we can say to everything else, "That is not good enough for me." Did God's people lack power in His company to feel that He was their portion? The very country not theirs till God had given it to them. What you must be looking out for is God's gift at the present time. If anything bright offers itself (not God's gift) do not take it, it will not have sweetness, you will

not find God in it. Let Him be first, and you keep behind Him. If a pilgrim, you will not be thinking of settling in houses, you will hang all your hopes on the place where the Son is ; but do not take anything but God's gift to you at the present time. If God has prepared a city for me, should my mind be absorbed by anything down here ? Abraham refuses to touch a single thing, and the moment after God says, " I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." We never read of His being the God of Lot. He promised to be Abraham's God to Lot, and fetched him out of Sodom ; but Lot was not in the way to talk of Him as " my God." What ! the God of a man settled in Sodom ? No ! but the God of pilgrims and strangers. The same untiring grace and love ; but God could not blazon it abroad that He was the God of Lot in Sodom. There was no planning with Abraham. When we deal with God we cannot make plans ; directly we make a plan we get our feet entangled.

You and God must go together ; there can be no planning if with God. The trial God puts Abraham to in regard to offering up Isaac is very remarkable. God tries hearts often in the same way. I do not know anything more heart-searching than this that Abraham had put before him, but he left it with God to settle all his difficulty. It was just the test whether he was hanging on God or not. Yes, he was ; and he gives up Isaac, his hand is stretched out to slay, but God comes

in ; it was not in the heart of the Father to let that father slay his son. Oh, what a feeling must there have been in Abraham, the feeling of all blessing from first to last being in the approbation of God Himself, the feeling in the soul that the faith given by God had been tried and not found wanting ! How God does try our faith in many ways ! Do you know what suspense is ? Do you know what it is not to see your own way on ? And if you put forth a single thing to help yourself, does *He* not move it out of *His* way ? To be kept in suspense is one way that we may be compelled to wait upon God ; to look to, to hang upon Him, in the being satisfied with that God, so as to leave all to Him for the fulfilment of our desires.

To be in suspense, to be a pilgrim and a stranger, not to take anything, but wait till God gives. Oh, a man walking with God will have a happy, a blessed experience ! Otherwise there will be only sorrow and disappointment, as Lot and Jacob found.



FRAGMENT.—In Hebrews, faith is looked upon as an active principle of endurance and conduct ; reliance on God's word through grace for practice. In Romans, it is the principle on which we are justified, in virtue of Christ's work, the ground of peace. In the former it is the active-working faith of the saint—in the latter the no-working faith of the sinner.

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF RUTH.

INTRODUCTORY.

The events of the book of Ruth unfold themselves in the midst of the sorrowful circumstances that characterized the administration of the Judges, and yet there is nothing in common between the line of thought of this narrative and of that which preceded it. The book of Judges describes to us the ruin of Israel placed upon the footing of responsibility—a ruin irremediable, in spite of the tender care of Divine pity which sought to restore the people and often even did so partially. In contrast to the dryness and barrenness of the ways of unfaithful man as seen in the book of Judges, that of Ruth is full of refreshment. One finds there the “brooks of water, the fountains and depths” of which Moses speaks (Deut. viii. 7); it is fresh as the dawn of morning. All there is redolent of grace, and not a false note disturbs this delightful harmony. It is a green oasis in the desert, a genuine idyl in the midst of the dark history of Israel. When we meditate on this little book of four chapters, infinite are the proportions which it assumes for our souls. The sphere of action has not changed, and yet it might be said that the sentiments and affections of heaven have come to choose a home on the earth. One can hardly conceive that this country, a witness of so many wars, infamies and abominable idolatries, was at the same time the scene of events whose

simplicity carries us back to the blessed times of the patriarchs.

It is explained thus. Since the fall two histories run side by side ; that of man's responsibility with its consequences ; and that of God's counsels and promises with the manner of their accomplishment in spite of everything. Now the latter is *grace*. It could be nothing else when it is a question of the divine counsels and promises, for the responsibility of man can not touch them, his guilt can in no wise change them, a scene of ruin is incapable of hindering them, and God rebukes Satan even when he opposes their course (Zech. iii. 2). In proportion as evil is extended does the history of grace develop itself in the most wondrous way and with irresistible progress, until it reaches the purposed end. It has the heart of God as its starting point, and the person of the Lord Jesus as its centre. It tends finally to the pre-eminent glory of the Second Man and to the blessings which we share with Him. For this reason is it that the book of Ruth concludes with the prophetic mention of Him who is the Root and the Offspring of David, the glorious Redeemer promised to Israel.

But if Ruth is a book of grace, it is also necessarily a book of faith. Grace cannot go on without the latter, for it is faith which lays hold of and appropriates it to itself, which clings to the divine promises and to the people of the promises ; which, in short, finds its delight in Him who is the

sustainer and heir of those promises. Such is the wondrous character of the pages that we are about to look at.

CHAPTER I.

“ Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land ” (ver. 1). These words indicate the special circumstances of the scene. We are in the days of the judges, in the land of Israel, but there is a *famine*, a time when the providential ways of God are exercised in judgment against His people. “ And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.” Bethlehem—the town which was to be the birth place of the Messiah (Mic. v. 2), and was to have the privilege of seeing shine forth, at its rising, the Star waited for by Israel—in the days of Naomi looked only upon utter human destitution and catastrophe. The hand which had often sustained the people was withdrawn, and everything failed them. This truth, developed in the book of Judges, that of Ruth only confirms, but adds thereto certain important facts in vs. 2-5.

During these days of ruin, and under the dealings of God in chastisement—Elimelech (a characteristic name signifying “ God is king ”) expatriated himself with Naomi (“ My pleasantness ”) and his children. Under the divine government

they seek a refuge among the Gentiles. In the midst of this desolation, Naomi is still, in spite of everything, linked up with her husband and her children. Her name is not changed and she still bears it in spite of the ruin. But Elimelech ("God is king") dies and Naomi is left a widow. By joining in affinity with the idolatrous nation of Moab, her sons profane themselves and die. To all appearance the race of Elimelech is extinct without hope of posterity; and "My pleasantness," in mourning and henceforth barren, is plunged into bitterness.

"And Naomi arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab; for she had heard in the country of Moab how that *Jehovah had visited His people in giving them bread*. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah" (vs. 6, 7). At the news that Jehovah was showing grace to His people, Naomi arises and starts to return to her country. The state of Israel had not changed, but God Himself had put an end to those days of providential judgment that had fallen on the nation, and this poor widow, bowed down under the weight of affliction, could hope for better days. *Grace* is then, as we have said, the first and dominant note in the book of Ruth. All the blessings which it contains are dependent on the fact that "*Jehovah had visited His people in giving them bread*." By

this well known expression, the Old Testament characterizes the blessings brought to Israel by the Messiah. "I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread" (Ps. cxxxii. 15). Ah! if the nation had been willing, these benefits would have been their permanent portion when Christ was come into their midst multiplying the loaves for the 5000 and for the 4000!

The daughters in law of Naomi accompany her, prompted by the thought *of going with her to her people* (ver. 10). But this good intention is not enough, for to be found in connection with *grace* nothing less than *faith* will do. The behaviour of Orpah and of Ruth illustrates this principle. Outwardly, there was no difference between them. Both start and go with Naomi, proving thus their attachment to her. The affection of Orpah is not at all wanting in reality: she weeps at the very thought of leaving her mother in law; full of sympathy, she again sheds tears abundantly when leaving her. Orpah, the Moabitess, also loved the people of Naomi: "*They* said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people." But it is quite possible to have a very amiable character without faith. It is faith that creates a gulf ~~between~~ between these two women so alike in so many points. The natural heart, struggling with impossibilities, draws back, whilst faith is developed thereby and its strength augmented therein. Orpah relinquishes the path of uncertainty. What could

Naomi offer her? Ruined, stricken of God and full of bitterness, had she yet any more sons in her womb to give as husbands to her daughters in law? Orpah kisses her mother in law and returns unto her people *and unto her gods* (ver. 15). There at last is the secret of the natural heart exposed. It can cling to the people of God without belonging to Him. A woman like Naomi is well deserving of sympathy, but there is no indication of faith there. Faith separates us from idols *from the very first*, causing us to abandon *our gods*, and it turns us to the true God. Such was the first step of the Thessalonians in the path of faith (1 Thes. i. 9). Orpah, on the contrary, turns away from Naomi and from the God of Israel, to turn back unto her people and unto her gods. Struggling with the difficulty she shows herself incapable of bearing the strain. She goes away weeping, but she goes away, like that amiable young man who departed very sorrowful, not being able to make up his mind to part with his possessions to follow a Master that was poor and despised.

Very different is Ruth's case. Precious faith, full of assurance, determination and decision! How clearly she sees her way! Nothing seems to move her. She listens to Naomi, but her conviction is settled, for she knows of only one path, which, for her, is the *necessary* one. What becomes of the *impossibilities* of nature, before the *necessities* of faith? Ruth does not allow herself to be stopped by the impossibility of getting a

husband, nor even by the fact that the hand of Jehovah was gone out against her mother in law, and only sees in the accumulated obstacles fresh reasons for not forsaking her object. Naomi is everything for Ruth, and Ruth *clave* unto Naomi. "Intreat me not to leave thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried. Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (vs. 16, 17). To accompany Naomi, to journey, to dwell, to die with this one who, for Ruth, is the only possible link with God and His people—such is the desire of this woman of faith. But her intentions go further than mere companionship; she *identifies herself* with the people, whatever their state may be, to belong thus to the God of Israel, the true God who changes not: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Having turned her back on Moab and its idols, she belongs henceforth to new objects. Without possibility of separation she identifies herself with them; let death come in, it is powerless to break such links. This is the meeting place between God and faith, the place of agreement and of identification. How this narrative makes us thoroughly understand that faith is the only means of putting man—the sinner—in connection with God! Like as Ruth *clave* to Naomi so does faith cleave to the Mediator, object of the counsels of

God, who only can give a sure connection with the true God, an immovable position before Him.

Precious touching journey is this of these two afflicted women going up again to Bethlehem! Naomi went away rich and full, and was coming back empty. Had there been any desolation comparable to hers? Deprived of her husband and her two sons, too old to have a husband, without human hope of an heir,—a true picture of Israel—all was over for her as far as nature and the law were concerned. Far more than that, the hand of Jehovah was stretched out against her, and the Almighty Himself, whom she might expect to be the sustainer of her faith, had filled her with bitterness under the weight of His chastisement. She had changed her name “My pleasantness” for that of “Mara” (Bitter), because the God of Israel (Jehovah) had testified against her and the God of Abraham (The Almighty) had afflicted her. Ruth, her companion—also a widow and without children (but who had never had any), being moreover a stranger and daughter of an accursed race—had never known the blessings that had passed away from Israel, and had no claim whatever to their promises. They go together, the one acknowledging fully her state and the hand that was heavy upon her, the other having no other links with God than her faith and Naomi. Their road is strewn with difficulties, but they see shining brightly a star which guides them. Thanks be to Him; Jehovah has visited His people in giving.

them bread. They come to Bethlehem together in the beginning of barley harvest, thus arriving at the place of blessing at the very moment when it is dispensed. It is there that they are about to meet with Boaz !

The reader, even slightly acquainted with prophecy, cannot fail to see in all this scene a picture of the past history of Israel and of the future ways of Jehovah with them. Although they have been banished among the Gentiles for their unfaithfulness, certain links may still exist between the people and God. Has not Jehovah spoken by their prophet : " Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come" (Ezek. xi. 16)? But their Elimelech is dead ; the sole head of the family of Israel, Christ—the Messiah—has been cut off ; then the nation has become as a widow stript of her children and barren in the midst of the Gentiles. But when they acknowledge and accept the judgment of God on them and drink, in humiliation, this cup of bitterness, then there will be the dawn of a new day for this poor people. The old Israel of God, object, in its hoary old age, of the ways of Jehovah to the stranger, will set forth in bitterness of soul to recover the blessings of grace. With it arises a new Israel, a Lo-ammi which was " not His people" but which finding a germ in Ruth, returns, a poor remnant from the fields of Moab to become again

the "people of God." It is shown us under the figure of a stranger, because on the footing of the law there was no claim to the promises, and that it is the new principles of grace and faith that places them in connection with Jehovah. On this latter footing God acknowledges them as His people and gives them a higher place of supreme honour, associating them with the glory of David and of the Messiah. Out of barren ground issues a refreshing spring which only waits the moment when all human hope is lost, to show itself. This fountain becomes a running stream, a large deep river, the river of divine grace, which carries Israel along to the ocean of Messianic and millennial blessings !

(To be continued, D.V.)



EXTRACT.—The confidence of faith is to be manifested in the Christian life as a whole. Christians are often brought to a stand, through measuring their own strength with temptation, instead of exclusive reference to God. They go on well up to a certain point. One talks of his family, another of the future ; in the various concerns of life our reasonings mean but this : " I have not the faith that counts on God." Faith has reference entirely and exclusively to God. Duty often leads into difficulty ; but I have the consolation of saying, " God is there, and victory certain ;" otherwise, in my apprehension, there is something stronger than God. This demands a perfect practical submission of the will.

GRACE.

Oh, wondrous grace, that makes more dark my sin,
 More bright and glorious, justice and its sword ;
 That doth the sinner's heart and conscience win,
 While God is justified and sin abhorred !
 Lowly I bow before its glorious throne,
 And, while absolved by grace, myself most guilty own,

I fly not now from that all-seeing eye
 Which once I shunned, to hide myself in night ;
 The blood, that purged my sin, has brought me nigh,
 To dwell in God's own love, and walk in light :
 The holy, holy, holy, Lord I love,
 Whose holy will I now delight to learn and prove.

Sin can't condemn, for grace has justified ;
 Sin shall not reign, for grace has set me free ;
 Sin I abhor, since Christ my Surety died ;
 His living grace now reigns, and succours me ;
 The grace, that has the wondrous work begun,
 Shall crown with glory when its mighty work is done.



GRACE.

How refreshing it is to our souls to think of the *grace* of God ; for what do we not owe to that grace ? May the God of all grace guide us, whilst for a little we dwell upon this blessed aspect of His character towards us poor sinners !

The very fact that we are *sinners* at once brings in the necessity, that if God act toward us at all, it should be *by* grace. The Scriptures recognizes but two ways of our dealing with God, and He with us, and those ways complete in themselves,

either *all* works, i. e. obedience, or *all* grace, i. e. the ground of works being *entirely* forfeited, so that entire *grace* can alone reach the case. Now, that there has been a flaw *somewhere* in his obedience, the most *hardy* would scarcely dare to deny, and, therefore, if we are to be saved it must be by *grace*. But without entering on that question now, let us trace a little the *stream* of grace. That it was *grace* that set God in motion towards us, for the purpose of our salvation and complete blessing, the Scriptures declares to us. For speaking of the calling with which He calls us, "the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself" (Eph. i. 5), He says it is "to the praise of the glory of His *grace* wherein He hath *bestowed His favour upon us* in the Beloved." For so I believe it ought to be rendered. Not so much His bringing us to acceptance in Christ, as He subsequently does, as the original movement of His heart towards us in Christ at first. (The word is the same as, "Hail, Mary, highly favoured," i. e. the subject of favour.) And as it was grace that began, so grace has equally showed itself forth in all its ways. The dispensational wisdom, wherein God has brought forth His grace, shines marvellously forth. He waited till the law had run its full course, "as a school-master unto Christ," until it had shewn by its heavy yoke, which they could not bear, the helplessness of the sinner, man, and the inefficiency of the blood of bulls and goats (Heb. x.), to meet the manifest need. He waited, and then in the *fulness of time* He sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under law. What forbearing grace and wisdom! How necessary for us! It came, therefore, at the right time; for "when we were yet without strength (proved to be so dispensationally), *in due time* Christ died for the un-

godly." And, indeed, as I said, God has taken occasion thus to *set forth* and shew forth His grace, and that it *is* grace. "God *commendeth* His love toward us, in that, while we were *yet* sinners, Christ died for us."

Nor is it this only ; but look at the whole calling of the Church, look at what God did for the Church at once, in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ—He took it from the horrible pit, out of which it was hewed (Eph. ii. 1-3), and at once, at one bound, taking us just as He found us, but putting away our sins by the blood of Christ, "even *when*, or *though*, we were dead in sins, He quickened us together with Christ (by *grace* ye are saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And, indeed, the next verse tells us this is to be the thing specially displayed and illustrated hereby hereafter, "That in the ages to come He might shew forth the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus." And how it loves in that passage to dwell on this one thought of grace ; cutting away everything which for a moment could intercept the view. "For by *grace* *are* ye saved through faith," and that very faith (the hand by which we receive it) not of yourselves : *it* is the *gift* of God. Not surely of works, for we are His workmanship, and how can the workmanship boast itself against the *Workman*, as though it were anything in itself ?

Then, again, look at the place whereinto we are brought by it. It is not merely a number of *blessings*, as we have it in our translation (Eph. i. 3), but one unbroken, unclouded *charter* of blessing—"all spiritual *blessing*, in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

To return. The more we study the salvation

and blessing of the Church in Eph. ii. and i., the more do we see that it is, *must* be of grace. The depth and heighth of it cuts every string of human claim or strength.

Take another view. Look at the *Person* in whom this grace comes—God's Son, His only begotten Son, in whom He was ever well pleased, one with the Father ; what do we read in that ? It is the deepest of all. 'Tis an unspeakable gift. He spared not His own Son, but delivered *Him* up for us all. " Angels desire to look into it."

" That it is grace alone carries on the work which itself began, we know to our joy. It is, indeed, God only that works in us, to will and to do of His own good pleasure : " Thou also hast wrought our works in us " (Isa. xxvi. 12). Further, we know that—

" Who *grace* has brought, will *glory* bring,
And we shall reign with Him."

He will *thus* crown His own work.

I say, then, it is well, often amidst the trials and corruptions of the Church, our own failures and trials, to look away from all to that grace, which stands forth bright and independent of all for us. It refreshes our souls, it animates us afresh, it inspires the freshest and the brightest confidence in God, and again girds us for our work. " Harken unto me," says the Lord to *Israel's* remnant (Isaiah li.), " ye that follow righteousness : look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and to Sarah that bare you : for I called him *alone*, and blessed him, and *increased* him." The result is full confidence. " *For* the Lord will comfort Zion : He will comfort all her waste places ; He will make her wilderness like

Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord ; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."

It is both refreshing and profitable to think of the simple *grace* of God ; for the same spirit that works in the unconverted to assert *salvation* by works, works also in us to bring us into bondage, to becloud our apprehensions of the simple grace of God, and thus cut us off, more or less, from the fountain of all *joy*, and of *all* strength. For our strength will always be in proportion to our simple apprehension of the grace of God. If that fountain is disturbed, the waters will surely become muddy in our souls. And how decisive is the Spirit of God, knowing the importance of clearness here. He admits of no compromise. Gal. v. 4—"Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by law [wholly, or *in part*, for the Galatians did not give up Christ *altogether*, but would have Christ *and* something else] ; ye are fallen from *grace*." That is, ye have left the ground of *grace*, which admits of no compromise.

Yes ; the sum of the Gospel will ever be found in its fulness in those words of the Apostle, Titus ii. 11—"The *grace* of God that *bringeth* salvation hath appeared to all men, *teaching* us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, godly, and righteously, in this present world ; *looking for* that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar, or special people, zealous of good works." This is God's golden chain, grace running through all. That grace may, in every way, in heart, and life, have its full effect with us, may well be our prayer.

“GOD IS LOVE.”

1 JOHN IV. 8.

The expression, repeated over and over in verse 7 of 1 John iv., is “*love* ;” and in verse 8 it is repeated again, winding up with, “*God is love.*”

It is very important to enter into the truth, not only that love is of God, and that He dwells in us who believe, but to understand that the love here spoken of is the character of God Himself: “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him” (ver. 16): This is something exceedingly beautiful to those who know it, and, “He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for *God is love.*”

What the Spirit of God speaks of in chapter i. of this epistle, as to our relationship with the Father, is surpassingly marvellous, and we can only know it by knowing what Christ came for; knowing it, we are identified with that Son, who came into the world that we might have life in Him, and God sent His Son that we might have life. What sort of life is it? A life that brings a believer into direct connection with the Father and the Son. Not only am I a son, but, being born of God, I have a new nature; and He tells me I am *in His Son*, and He *in me*. Think what a place He sees me in; and, mark, all God’s springs are in Himself. He saw nothing in man but hatred, and it was love, divine love, that led Him to give His Son, and love that led that Son to come into this world, that God’s love might be manifested to His creatures; His own nature and heart led Him to do it. He drew His own motive from within Himself, and He puts this same love into the heart of him that tastes it. It is love that

brings us into the presence of God Himself, a love that communicates the life of His Son to those dead in trespasses and sins, and they have a life that is locked up in the Son, and never can be touched. Is it true that you can turn round, and say, That is the manner of life I have got—life hid with Christ in God? If Christ Himself, up there, is my life, it links me up with Him, in whom is the whole bundle of life. The Head cannot say to the feet, “I have no need of thee.” It cannot say to the feeblest member, passing through the difficulties and sorrows of the wilderness down here, “I have no need of thee.” Why? Because of its being bound up in the bundle of life. Not only is that life brought out in all beauty in Him, who was with the Father, but that life has been communicated by the Father to us, and is so *in us*, that Christ cannot say He has no need of us.

Did you ever look up into the face of the Lord Jesus Christ with the consciousness of having *one life with Him*? If so, you cannot entertain a single question about the place you are in before God. In Eden all was very beautiful; and, looking round, man might have said, “What a *large* Giver God is.” But what can we say, as those to whom this life has been given, and whose fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ? Surely, we can turn round with deeper feeling, and say, “What a *blessed* Giver *our* God is!” When I wandered in sins, He found me and gave me a life that has brought me into fellowship with *Himself* and His Son.

The eleven, at the day of Pentecost, saw the stream of life flowing to this and that one, and even to men that had dipped their hands in the blood of God’s own Son. But did it cease then? No, it has flowed for eighteen hundred years into

the dead souls of sinners ; and, when we look, we find it has connected us with another scene altogether. Well may you say, I am very unlike *Him* whose life I have. If you have it, you have found out, and will be finding out till He comes to take you to Himself in a glorified body, what a contrast you are to Him ; but it is not a question of what *you are*, but of a portion that has flowed to you *from* the Father. You will find your dearest relations turning from you, as those whom the Father has given to Christ *out of the world*. The Lord said, "The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John xvii. 14). The world cannot understand that principle in you—a certain affection in the heart of God that found its expression in the Son, and we find those whom God has given to Him so connected with Him, that the love wherewith He is loved *is in them* (John xvii. 26), and they are able to walk in the power of His life, unto His praise and glory, as dear children. Neither you or I can say, "We love God with all our hearts and souls," but, "*He loved us*, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins"—"Not that we loved Him, but He loved us" (1 John iv. 10). If I begin with self, there is nothing but ruin. Is there anything to be got out of the ruin ? Any want felt there for God ? Impossible that there could be. Well, then. "Herein is love," God says, "not *your* love to me, but mine to you ; turn your eye to Christ, to see how I loved you, and gave my Son for you" (cf. Rom. v. 8).

Under the law, in connection with propitiation, or atonement, a victim was brought, but the blood of bulls and goats never could put away sin, the blot remained, and though the blood was sprinkled, and put on the mercy-seat, its effect was so far

from being eternal, that before the end of the year, sin being there, it needed to be done again ; but Christ, by one offering, for ever has put our sins away (cf. Heb. ix. 7—x. 22). Not only love comes out on the cross, but all He did was the expression of the love of God, and the meeting of the Father's mind. He was as completely one with the Father as it was possible to be. I have to begin with God, not myself. What has God done ? He has put before the soul the ground on which it can rest in His presence—given His Son as the propitiation for our sins ; and we can sing, " Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood ; to Him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen " (Rev. i. 5, 6).

In Rom. i. 19—iii. 19, the Spirit of God traces out the awful condition of man by nature, but God has commended His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Not only God has given His Son as a propitiation for us, but He has introduced us to a higher order of existence than man in Adam ever was in ; He has given us the eternal life that is in His Son—an entirely new and divine order of being. What I have is just the life of that One Person in whom is all God's delight. By the work of Christ on the cross all question of sin was once and for ever settled for us who believe, and we have peace with God (cf. Rom. iv. 24—v. 2) ; and, now, out of His fulness we receive grace upon grace, and when He comes He will present us, without spot or wrinkle, to Himself. Is it difficult to say whether or not we have tasted what it is to be in such a place ? I get this light shining in me, because He has given me of His Spirit. Has not God a right to speak ? Does He not know how to use human language so as to carry it right home to our souls ? To be sure He does.

The Lord Jesus declares about His sheep (John x. 27-30), that they have eternal life, and none can pluck them out of His hand, or out of the Father's hand ; but human nature says, " How can *I know* it to be *true*? How can *you* know it? A pretty word for a *creature* to put forth ! Far better for the creature to say, " Let God be true, and every man a liar." It is by faith in Him who cannot lie that we know this (cf. 1 John v. 9-13).

Then, in describing the experience of a soul led by the Spirit of Christ and what should be the mark of it, God says His love was so displayed in that work of His Son, that it dwells in the hearts of believers, and they in it. If God uses your sin to shew the virtue of His Son's blood, are you to say, " My leanness, my leanness"? Your leanness ! How came you to be calculating on anything of yourself? If you bring an empty vessel, even if there be a crack or flaw in it, you can keep it *full* to overflowing, if you put it into a cistern of water.

The proper expression of God's will has come out ; the deepest, highest, brightest, fullest, most blessed counsels of God getting their expression in Him who said, " Lo, I come to do Thy will." Who was that Babe, laid there in a manger? What could it mean, those angels saying, " Glory to God in the highest?" Ah ! God said, Your ways are not my ways, nor your thoughts my thoughts. I shall bring out of my own bosom One who was there before all worlds, and thus will come out to light, through that Son of my love, what I am—my character will be seen ; He will declare what I am ; I can let the brightest expression of heaven's delight shine ont upon something on earth now. God could look down upon that Babe, and see there the perfect expression of His

glory. All God's glories came out in connection with that Person, who said, "No one knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him;" and, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father" (Matt. xi. 27; John xiv. 9).

Looking to be manifested at Christ's judgment-seat, we have no cause to have any uncertainty as to results. And why? Because, "as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17); and I can say this, "If Christ has taken the place of the smitten Rock, and has become my life, will He find fault with His own life in me?" He will find fault with our practical inconsistencies, but the life of a believer is what Christ is; and not only have we life in Him, but He is the propitiation for our sins. He did the whole will of God, and He was made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We can take our place in God's presence, and our confidence cannot be shaken, if the heart is simple and true, because there is the blood that cleanses from all sin, and we take our place there as those who are cleansed. If it is the question of your getting into His love, you cannot get in; but if it is the question of Christ's having brought you into it by washing you from your sins in His own blood, there can be no fear, "perfect love casteth out fear," and, "We love him because he first loved us." Would you have liked Christ to have left out of His word all desire for the expression of your love?

God cannot receive anything from a ruined creature, because it comes with a taint of sin and selfishness, but as accepted ones in the Beloved, is it not an expression of His love to put it into our heart to say, "We love him, because he first loved us?" All the ruin and sin of the first Adam became the very occasion for all the love of God to

flow out. If able to say, "I am a believer and a pilgrim," I ought to be able to say, "I know what manner of love God has bestowed upon me." The real claim of God's love over them is never answered by the children of God, if they are not standing in it as the expression of it. What have I to do with bringing water down from the rock? The water is there, and if it has come down to me, was there any virtue or power in self to bring it down? No! As a creature I am ruined, and if I should say to God, "What can I, a ruined creature, do?" His answer is, "It is not the question of your doing, but of mine. I gave my Son to be the propitiation for your sins, and you will find that he that honours that work has found the ground on which to stand in My presence with perfect acceptance."

I am in a world where all are scrambling after what they can get *for self*. "Well," I say, "I have nothing, but poor and little as I am the Father gave His Son for me, and I have the heart of that Son of His occupied with all that concerns me, and counting the beatings of this heart of mine down here, and after all Christ's self-denial for me, is there to be none from me to Him?" When Christ says, "I bought you with my own blood; I charged myself with all your guilt," are we to do or say anything that is not for the glory of that Christ? If God is working in us, having given us life in His Son, and says, "Now I am looking to see you walk like Christ," are we never to think of *His* side? Surely not in the thought of paying Christ. One once spoke to me of suffering for Christ, and said, "If I love I must expect to suffer a great deal more." "What!" I said, "you do not want to pay Christ, do you?" "No; but I do wish to have my love to Him going out

in some other way than in cold expressions of gratitude." How beautiful to be on those terms with God that we find in the word certain individuals were! Oh, believe me, you can only plead with God as you know *Christ*. He alone is the channel by which God can bless you and answer every desire of your heart. "God is love," but it is in and through Christ that He is this for us.



MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF RUTH.

(Continued from page 20.)

CHAPTER II.

We have seen in the first chapter the beautiful expression of faith on the part of Ruth. Beautiful too in effect, for such characterizes everything that comes from God. Did not Jesus Himself marvel at the centurion of Capernaum, who, by faith, acknowledged his own unworthiness and the all-sufficiency of the word of the Lord to heal? Chapter ii. brings before us the various characteristics of this faith and the blessings which grace attaches thereto.

Up to this Ruth's faith was resting upon the work of grace that God had wrought in behalf of His people; but it is absolutely necessary that faith should have an object—a *personal* object—and it is impossible that such should not be met with. As yet Ruth did not know this mighty man spoken of in the first verse; but she hopes to meet him on the ground of grace. Harken to

what she says to Naomi : " Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn *after him in whose sight I shall find grace.*" This land of Israel where God has visited His people to give them bread, will be sure to have some ears of corn for her likewise. Although poor and without any rights, she knows that she can count on the resources of Jehovah. Her path is *clear*, for the path of faith is always so, but it was not the choice of her own will. We often call that the path of faith which is the outcome of our own thoughts, or the desires of our natural hearts, whilst faith never acts save in dependence on the word. Ruth consults Naomi, and Naomi says to her: "Go, my daughter!" God was certainly guiding her in this path. His grace caused her providentially to enter the field of Boaz.

Boaz, of the family of Elimelech, who was dead, replaces him, so to speak. Naomi has in Israel a protector, a rich and powerful head of the family. "In him is strength" to restore this poor house completely ruined. His name is that of one of the two pillars of the future temple of Solomon (1 Kings vii. 21), set up by that king as witnesses of the establishment of his kingdom, of that glorious period which followed the troublous reign of David. Boaz comes from Bethlehem, wishing his servants the blessing of the harvest day (Ps. cxxix. 8), and at once notices Ruth among the reapers. Thus it is that grace anticipates faith. The servant that was set over the reapers bears witness to

the Moabiteess. She has come, says he, as a humble and poor suppliant, and immediately set to work, scarcely allowing herself any rest. Like this servant, the Spirit of God bears witness at the present time to the character and activity of our faith. "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith," says the apostle to the Thessalonians. Faith is diligent and does not take rest, lest it should not gather up the blessings that God has strewn in its path.

What a touching interview is this first meeting between Boaz and Ruth ! The words which fall from the lips of the mighty man sound like heavenly music in the ears of the poor stranger. Is he going to upbraid her for her intrusion ? Who would do him the injustice to suppose it ? Hearest thou not my daughter ? It has been and is my desire that you should be in my field and not in any other ; let nothing induce you to leave it. He puts her with his maidens. Let her not fear the men ; has he not given them charge not to touch her ? If the domain of Boaz yields her nourishment, she also finds wherewith to quench her thirst there. What tokens of grace are thus showered upon Ruth ! .But wait : this and the following chapters have fresh ones in store for her. They go on augmenting and expanding unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills (cf. Gen. xlix.26) ! Ah ! it is because she has to do with Boaz. If faith is a wonderful thing, how much more so is He who is the object of it. Such dig-

nity, and that combined with such condescension, as well as with tenderness almost maternal ! It rises aloft like the pillar of brass in Solomon's temple, it comes down to the minute and delicate considerations of love—a love that has nothing in common with human passion—full of holy majesty and mercy, lifting up to itself the beloved one after having in grace come down to its level. Such is Boaz, such is our Jesus !

The apprehension of the resources of grace does not come to us in a moment. They are ours according to the measure of the activity of our faith. Christ opens to us gradually the *enjoyment* of the infinite treasures of His heart.

The first movement of Ruth is to fall on her face, and bow herself to the ground. How can she be other than grateful when Boaz expresses himself thus ? You who say you knew Him, you have never believed, if the words from the mouth of Christ have not cast you down at His feet. O dry hearts, and arid souls ! You rationalists of the present day, who dare to take the name of Christian, and judge the word of our Lord instead of receiving it ! Fools, asserting yourselves in His presence, criticizing and dissecting Him (conduct more outrageous really than that of the coarse soldiers who spat upon Him) when you should cast yourself broken and abject at His feet ! Away ! dwell with your pride until judgment overtakes you ; the fields of Boaz, his promises and his person will never belong to you !

Ruth then opens her mouth. "Why," says she, "have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" I love this "*why*" which denotes profound humility in this young woman: "I have no right," says she, "to such a favour." She is only occupied with herself to confess her unworthiness—but how she does appreciate him! "Thou hast taken knowledge of me, when I was nothing for thee!"

The servant had borne testimony to the poor Moabite; it is now the master himself who is going to declare what he finds in her. She had not come before him in her own righteousness as Job had aforetime come before God—Her experiences had begun where Job's had finished, and it is he before whom she is prostrate who charges himself with the vindication of her character, for he was aware of everything. "It hath been fully shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband; and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knowest not heretofore." Boaz attributes to Ruth the labour of love, which is the fruit of her faith; and her care for Naomi (type of the afflicted people) had not escaped the notice of the master. Yes, this poor daughter of Moab was a true Israelite, in whom there was no guile. But also, a true daughter of Abraham, she had left her country and her relatives, and had set out on a

journey to a people unknown to her. Boaz places the seal of his approbation upon so much love and faith, then he promised her a recompense; "Jehovah recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of Jehovah the God of Israel under whose wings thou art come to trust." Recompense is not the end, but the encouragement of faith.

Ruth responds as did Moses in Ex. xxxiii. 13; the praise of Boaz does not exalt her; she realizes that all is of grace, and desires to find more grace. She recognizes his authority over her and declares herself his unworthy servant. Then he honours her in inviting her to his feast. Ruth at the table of Boaz! What favour for the poor stranger! "She did eat, and was sufficed, and left" (of the food). Is it not as though we were present at the multiplying of the loaves by Jesus?

The *communion* which Ruth has just been enjoying at the table of Boaz does not make her forget her task. On the contrary she draws from it fresh strength and renewed activity, with more abundant and blessed results than before. Our work, to be effective, should flow from what we have received for ourselves, and the results will be so much the more rich, in proportion as we have personally found our own joy in the presence of the Lord.

The heart which has been nourished and had its thirst satisfied by Christ is never selfish. Is it not said, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living

water?" Ruth thinks of Naomi and returns to bring her the remains of the repast, and what she had gleaned, desiring that her mother should be satisfied as she had been. Thus he who is faithful gives an account of his labour to the people of God and seeks their prosperity. How little do Christians realize these things ! What importance has the prosperity of the church of Christ, for those who prefer their own church, and their own people and their gods, to Him? The Lord's poor afflicted people do not seem worthy of care to these indifferent hearts. They will insist, perhaps, on the work of the gospel to the world ; but a heart in communion with Christ does not sacrifice one to the other. The apostle Paul was as much a servant of the assembly as he was of the gospel. He loved that church which Christ, in His love, had purchased by His own blood. Far would it have been from him to have loved a sect or a church of his own invention ; he only knew the assembly of Christ, and was jealous for His sake with a godly jealousy to present it to Him as a chaste virgin.

The heart of Naomi is full of gratitude towards the man who has recognized Ruth when he might have rejected her as a stranger. What sweet intercourse between these two women of God ! Ruth pronounces the beautiful name of Boaz, Naomi responds with thanksgiving "to him who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead."

What a touching character is that of Naomi! Ruth has more of the first transport of a youthful faith, Naomi the experience of a faith matured in the school of trial. You who are young Christians do not reject the experience of those who have known the Lord a long time before you have. Naomi helped her daughter-in-law to know Boaz better. "The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen." Experience is always joined to intelligence. Naomi has the perception of what is suitable in Israel, of the order which becomes the house of God. The counsels of Christian experience, always *attach* souls to the family of God and to Christ, as those of Naomi attached Ruth to the belongings of Boaz. But they also *separate* her from every other field (v. 22). It may be that these latter would offer as many ears of corn to the gleaners, but they would lack the presence of him to whom henceforth the heart of Ruth was indissolubly bound, as well as the peace, the joy and the communion which he imparts. Precious experience of those who have grown old in the path of faith, for it is a help to the young to walk in the path of *holiness*! It is furthermore from the lips of experience that the fullest praise flows, for it knows the grace and goodness of the Lord in the past as in the present. Ruth *attaches herself* to Boaz and *dwells* with her mother-in-law.

(To be continued, D.V.)

PEACE WITH GOD.

Oh ! the peace forever flowing
 From God's thoughts of His own Son,
 Oh ! the peace of simply knowing,
 On the cross that all was done.

Peace with God, the blood in heaven
 Speaks of pardon now to me ;
 Peace with God ! the Lord is risen !
 Righteousness now counts me free.

Peace with God—is Christ in glory,
 God is just and God is love ;
 Jesus died to tell the story,
 Foes to bring to God above.

Now free access to the Father,
 Through the Christ of God, we have ;
 By the Spirit here abiding,
 Promise of the Father's love.

Jesus, Saviour, we adore Thee !
 Christ of God, —Anointed Son ;
 We confess Thee, Lord of glory,
 Fruits of vict'ry Thou hast won !



In the sacrifices in the beginning of Leviticus, we have, in type : Christ in His devotedness unto death, *burnt-offering* ; Christ in the perfection of His life of consecration to God, *meat-offering* ; Christ the basis of the communion of the people with God, who feeds, as it were, at the same table with them, *peace-offering* ; and finally, Christ made sin for those who stood in need of it, and bearing their sins in His own body on the tree, *sin-offering*.

FORGIVENESS, DELIVERANCE, ACCEPTANCE.

READ LEV. I. AND IV.

How the New Testament helps us in understanding the Old, throwing light upon the types there ; and, in so doing, oftentimes bringing out the truth more vividly than a mere doctrinal statement of the same !

In these two chapters, we have the work of Christ on the cross brought before us in two aspects. In the 1st (the burnt offering), what Christ was in His death for God ; in the 4th (the sin offering), what He was in His death for the sinner. God of course begins with that aspect of it which is for Himself, and afterwards comes to that which is for the sinner. We, on the contrary, have to begin with what Christ was in His death for us, and so will look first at chap. iv.

“ If a soul shall sin through ignorance, etc.” (ver. 2). How strikingly this brings out the holiness of God ! How ready we are to make excuses, and, if a thing is done in ignorance, to think but little of it. But, dear reader, in having to do with God, we must remember that His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither His ways our ways . . . and that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts (Is. lv. 8, 9). God, in His grace, has made provision for the guiltiest, if they will but hearken to Him, but

He will pass by nothing, not even if "a soul shall sin through ignorance,"—for, "GOD IS LIGHT" (1 John, i. 5). What then is to be done? On our part we can do absolutely nothing to cancel the guilt, for "without shedding of blood is *no* remission" (Heb. ix. 22). Then the victim for the sacrifice, whether bullock, or kid of the goats (male or female, vs. 23, 28) or a lamb, must be one "*without blemish.*" Where was such an one to be found? Could man produce such? God waited for hundreds of years, but such an one could not be found among the sons of Adam. God then must do one of two things—either visit judgment upon all, or provide the one necessary Himself. Which did He do? "He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16), thereby proving that "GOD IS LOVE" (1 John iv. 8). Jesus, His beloved Son, becomes a man, and John the Baptist gazing on Him once exclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). Then we have the life on earth of the blessed Lord looked at in four different aspects, in the four gospels. But though He humbled Himself and became man, His people remember that He was never less than The One who did humble Himself—even "Christ . . . who is over all, God blessed for ever," Amen. (Rom. ix. 5). As He walked this earth God saw, for the first time, a man that answered in everything to the desires of His heart—*ever* and

only doing His will, thereby proving Himself the Lamb *without spot*. But there was the question of sin to be settled before God, and so "Christ through the eternal Spirit offered Himself *without spot* to God" to purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. ix. 14).

The 4th verse of our chapter tells us that the animal (which was really a type of Christ) was brought to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord, and the sinning Jew was to "lay his hand upon the bullock's head." Laying the hand on the victim's head expresses identification, as much as saying, "That's me—that animal takes my place." And so when I look at Jesus on Calvary's cross bearing sin's heavy load, faith enables me to say, "That's me—He took my place"—surely in grace—but still He took it. Well, if He took it, He must bear all the consequences of taking it, and so He did. Judgment and death were hanging over my head, for "the wages of sin is *death*" (Rom. vi. 23); and "It is appointed unto men once to *die*, but after this the *judgment*" (Heb. ix. 27). All that God was against sin Jesus bore on Calvary's cross. Harken to that cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Ps. xxii. 1; Matt. xxvii. 46); and "He yielded up the Ghost" (Matt. xxvii. 50), having said, "*It is finished*" (John xix. 30). How those words of the Lord Jesus bring before us the contrast with every sacrifice in Old Testament times! If it was the great day of atonement as

presented in Lev. xvi., it must be repeated every year, for the redemption then accomplished only held good for that length of time ; if it was an individual who had sinned, a *fresh sacrifice* must be brought. Consequently there never could be at that time "perfection as pertaining to the conscience" as mentioned in Heb. ix. Perfection, or otherwise, of the conscience depends upon the character of the sacrifice presented. When the offending one coming to God brought a bullock or a goat—the sacrifice not being perfect, the conscience could not be perfect. But now if a sinner comes to God—just as a sinner and nothing else or he would not be "doing truth" (John iii. 21)—on the ground of the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary's cross, and rests upon that, and *that only*, the sacrifice being a perfect one, the conscience of him who believes the record "God has given of His Son," is perfect. The redemption that resulted from the atonement made on the cross was an eternal one (see Heb. ix. 12). The blood that was there shed did not merely cancel an individual act of sin, for "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all (more accurately '*every*') sin" (1 John i. 7). We get that truth brought out, in type, in our chapter in ver. 6, in the blood being sprinkled "*seven* times before the Lord"—"*seven*" standing for perfection in spiritual things.

Dear reader, have you come to God, just as a poor sinner and nothing else, and are you resting,

and resting *only*, on the precious blood of Christ? If so, that blood cleanseth from every sin; God—the God you have sinned against—says so, and so forgiveness flows from it. But the resurrection of Christ is another proof of the question of sin being settled before God—because if Jesus was bearing my sins on Calvary's cross (see Is. liii. 6) how could God righteously raise Him from the dead, if every sin was not fully atoned for? But, blessed be God! if He “was delivered for our offences,” He “was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have *peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. iv. 25, v. 1). Remember then that it is a work done outside of us, even the work on Calvary's cross, that is the ground of our peace, and not the work of the Holy Spirit in us. There is never such a thing as a soul resting on the work of Christ, outside of him, that there is not a work of the Holy Spirit inside him—still it is the former and not the latter which is the ground of peace, and it is important not to confound them. They go together, still they are distinct from each other.

It is important also to remember that He who bore our sins on Calvary's Cross is not there now; for, “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins” (1 Cor. xv. 17). In Acts xiii., Paul, having given a short outline of God's dealings with Israel, refers to the Lord Jesus as the One in whom the promises found their fulfilment. He speaks of His death *and resurrection*.

Then, pointing to Him as the risen, glorified Man at God's right hand, he says, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins ; and by Him all that believe *are* (not '*will be*') *justified from all things*, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

The Holy Ghost, in Rom. iv. 7, says : "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered."

DEAR READER, IS THAT BLESSEDNESS YOURS ?

(*To be continued, D.V.*)

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

The resurrection and glory of the Lord Jesus is a great fact. Whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear, there it is, and cannot be gain-sayed. And further, we have to do with it, and cannot escape from the application of it to ourselves. It is set above us, and before us ; as at creation, the sun was set in the heavens, and the creation of God had to do with it.

It is thus treated in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. It is there dealt with as a fact, from the application of which to themselves none could escape. It has its different virtue, its two-fold force and meaning ; and men are to know how it addresses itself to each of them. But there it is and no one can elude it.

Who could pluck the sun out of the heavens ?

The glory seated itself in the cloud, and Israel *must* know it there, and have to do with it there. It may conduct them cheerfully, or rebuke them and judge them ; but there it is in their company, in their midst, and the camp in its different conditions must have to do with it.

Prophets from God came among the people. There they are, whether the people will hear, or whether they will forbear ; they have to know—they *must* know—that a prophet has been among them. They cannot gainsay the fact, or escape its application to themselves in judgment or blessing.

The budding rod I might have noticed in this connection: It is brought out from the sanctuary to the camp, and the camp *must* accept its presence. That it is there is a fact, and none can deny it, whether they will use that fact obediently, and taste the fruit of the service of God's Anointed One ; or whether they will still rebel to their own destruction, is another thing. But the budding rod that speaks both of judgment and of mercy is in the midst of them.

The Lord in the garden of Eden was the same at the beginning. It was a fact. Adam could not displace Him. He was there—as the sun at that moment was in the heavens.

Adam *must* have to do with Him. If he be in innocency, as in ch. ii., that fact will be his joy. If he be in guilt, as in ch. iii., that fact will be his doom. But he cannot elude the force of it ; nor withdraw himself from the application of it.

I might say that Christ in the world that Satan had usurped through subtilty, was also a kindred fact. None could, in that day, deny it, or rid themselves of the force of it. Satan himself shall know it, and men shall have their blessing brought to them by it; or their guilt and judgment enhanced through it. The kingdom of God had come, and they must accept it as a fact.

Just thus, just after this manner, is the present great fact of the resurrection. Jesus is risen and exalted—He is ascended and glorified. We might as well pluck the sun from the heavens as try to escape the application of this fact to our condition, whether of repentance or of unbelief.

The great characteristic teaching of the apostles, in the book of Acts, is *interpretation of this fact to the conscience of sinners*.

This makes apostolic ministry among men very simple; and blessed it is from its simplicity.

Peter, who opens that ministry, at once takes the resurrection of the Lord as his text. He exhibits that great fact in its *judicial*, and its *saving* power. He preaches from it the glories of the Lord Himself; and he derives from it the blessings of all believing sinners. It is the object constantly before him. He gives it different characters, or invests it with different virtues; but it is the object constantly before him, and the fact which he declares again and again—his fullest interpretation of it being found at the very close of his ministry, in the house of Cornelius, when he preaches that

the risen Jesus is set of God both for judgment and for salvation. (See ch. x, 42, 43.)

The risen Jesus may be *boldly resisted*, as in Saul's case (Acts ix.). But it is equally death for the soul to despise it (ch. xiii. 41). It is not so shocking to the moral sense of man, but it is equally death in the judgment of God.

Paul in his ministry, as constantly uses the same great fact of the resurrection of Christ, interpreting it, like Peter, to the heart and conscience.

In his first preaching at Antioch we see this. In the synagogue there, he conducts the story of God's ways with Israel from the day of the call of Abraham to the resurrection of Christ; and then upon the resurrection, preaches the forgiveness of sins. But he adds, that the despising of that great fact, the being careless about it, with a carnal mind indifferent to it, will as surely be followed by judgment, as the generation which the prophet addressed was visited by the judgment of God through the Chaldees.

At Athens, where his next great preaching was, he has still the same great fact as his theme. But he gives it its solemn meaning. He invests it with its terrors; for he found this Gentile people full of idolatry, though in the pride of their sects of learning, and in the carnal busy desire of anything new in the earth or among men. He tells them of this great mystery, which was a fact in heaven, registered there, and he gives it its meaning for them. Referring to their besotted wor-

ship, he says to them, "the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent, because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead." (Acts xvii. 30, 31.)

And after his ministry had formally terminated, and he becomes the prisoner rather than the servant of Jesus, still before his judges it is of the resurrection he speaks. (See Acts xxvi.)

The moral that we draw is, the *sweet positive application of this great fact to each one of us*. We have, each one of us, individually to do with it—or rather it has to do with us.

The resurrection speaks of judgment to man as man—for it is the witness of a solemn collision between God and man. *God is on the side of man's Victim*. God has glorified the One, whom man denied and crucified. Here is collision—and the result of that is judgment; for God is stronger than man. Man must be overthrown in such conflict. Judgment *must* fall on him that is opposed to God. The "pricks" cannot be "kicked against." Saul of Tarsus persecuting Jesus, shall be found in a work of self-destruction.

The resurrection speaks of salvation to the broken, confessing sinner. Because the resurrection witnesses *God's satisfaction in that atonement for sin which Jesus offered*; and if God is satisfied,

who can condemn? If God witnesses that such has been put away for all that will trust and plead the death of Christ—who shall lay anything to the charge of such? what tongue can prevail against them?

The resurrection thus speaks of “mercy” or of “judgment,” as we either look to the cross of Christ, with the interest of convicted believing hearts; or as we despise and slight it. It has a voice in the ear of all. It speaks to us, whether we will hear or whether we will forbear. To enjoy it as the salvation of God, we must personally, and livingly by faith, be brought into connection with it—but if we slight it all our days, it will at the end *bring itself in connection with us*, as it were, whether we will or not. In this way it brings to mind the Lord Jesus in Mark v.—In spite of Satan, Jesus puts Himself in connection with him in the person of the Gadarene, in order to judge him and destroy his work. But He does not put Himself in connection with the poor diseased woman in the crowd, till she by faith had put herself, and the necessity she carried, in connection with Him. Surely her faith was given to her of God. It was no notion of her own, but the fruit of the drawing of the Father in the power of the Spirit. But still so it was; that the virtue in Jesus did not visit her, till her faith had visited Him.

And this distinction has a deeply serious fact in it. If we by faith use not a risen Jesus now, and get the virtue that is in Him, He will visit us by

and by, and that, too, with the judgment that will then be in Him. No depreciation will then avail—no seeking now can but avail!

By the preaching of the resurrection in the Acts, we learn that God has taken out of man's hand the very weapon of his fullest enmity against Himself, and used it for man's everlasting blessing; but if man will despise such goodness, then he must answer for having taken that weapon into his hand. The sword that man was using in hostility to God, God has turned as into a plough-share, whereby to get for man the bread of everlasting life. Joseph of old was sold by his brethren—but Joseph sold became an instrument and channel of life to them who had sold him. Their very wickedness was turned of God to their blessing.



MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF RUTH.

(Continued from page 40.)

CHAPTER III.

Naomi, we have said, presents not only an example of experience but of *intelligence*. She is happy that Ruth should have found such a guide. Naomi commands, but her commands are not grievous, being those of *love*. "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" What she enjoins is with a view to the happiness of Ruth, whom she loves; but likewise because she knows the heart of Boaz: "Is not Boaz of our kindred?" Ruth, the woman of faith,

obeys : " She did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her " (ver. 6). May we be able to obey in the same manner. Obedience is easy to those who know that God loves them, and that He only desires their rest and happiness, and that Christ loves them; and bears them continually upon His heart ; but it is difficult when the soul has as its object the pleasing of self, and the finding of happiness and rest apart from Christ.

Boaz is about concluding his labours; the harvest over, he must winnow his crop on the threshing floor, after which he will gather it into his grainaries. His heart was satisfied ; will he repulse the poor Moabiteess? Naomi is full of confidence, and knows how to point out to Ruth the path of blessing. " Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor : but make not thyself known to the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down, and he will tell thee what thou shalt do." Ruth prepares herself for this meeting, lies down at his feet and awaits his word. This will be the character of the poor remnant of Israel, found faithful at the moment that the Messiah will manifest Himself after their long night of waiting. But is there not a much greater reason that these characteristics should be ours? We have heard the voice which tells us to wash and anoint our-

selves, and to be prepared for Himself only. Have we forgotten Him? Where are we now? Have we gone in to pass the night on His threshing floor, or on that of strangers? Have we responded like Ruth, from the bottom of our hearts: "All that thou sayest unto me I will do"? Yes, He wishes that we may be practically worthy of Himself; that, lying at His feet, acknowledging His rights over us, we may wait patiently for His word during the hours of the night. Soon our Boaz will break the silence. Will it be to reprove us severely, or to express His approbation of our conduct?

In the middle of the night Boaz recognizes the one who had come to place herself under his protection, and blesses her. The book of Ruth, this history of grace, is full of the blessings of both of the giver and of the receiver. Every heart is full of joy, from the moment that Boaz appears on the scene. His presence awakens praise, for he dispenses about him all the blessings of grace. What infinite happiness to praise Him! But is it not also a happiness to receive, like Ruth, the testimony of His satisfaction with us? May we covet earnestly the approbation of Christ. How humbling to think how little we seek it! The praise of men puffs us up, but His never does. He commends us for what His infinite grace sees in us; He sees in us what His grace has produced, and what answers to His thoughts.

Boaz praises Ruth in that she has "shewed

more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning." At first her love had been in exercise towards her mother-in-law, who represented for her the people of God ; now she was actuated by love for Boaz. She had not gone after young men whether poor or rich, nor sought companions according to natural affections, but had come to the one whose rights she acknowledged. He reassures her and promises to do for her all that she requires (ver. 11). What encouragement for faithfulness ! All that we receive is of His grace, but He also gives us according to the measure of our obedience and of our spirit of sacrifice for Himself. " Give and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together and running over ! " (Luke vi. 38). As soon as Ruth had come to know Boaz, she had done everything with respect to him ; and now he does everything for her. He is not satisfied to remain debtor to us ; He would grant all the desires of the faithful heart.

" All the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." Ruth combined those qualities of which Peter speaks, which make the one who has them neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. She adds to her faith virtue (courage) ; to virtue knowledge ; to knowledge temperance (self-control) ; to temperance patience ; to patience godliness. To love for her own she adds love, and " shows more kindness in the latter end than at the begin-

ning." She receives likewise an abundant entrance into the kingdom. This faithfulness touches the heart of Boaz : " I will do to thee all that thou requirest ! " What an example for us ! May it be our earnest desire to receive a response like that. The church at Philadelphia received it. Having kept the word of His patience and walked in practical holiness like Ruth, Jesus says to her : I will do all for thee ! The Lord will also bless the poor Jewish remnant at the last according to the virtue, the holiness and the practical righteousness which they have manifested in their ways. He blesses us now in the same way : " Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight " (1 John iii. 22).

However, a near kinsman who had the right to redeem was before Boaz. Would he, or could he, exercise his right ? We shall see later. In the meantime Ruth has the privilege of lying at the feet of Boaz until the morning. This will be the part of the remnant, and it is ours also. We can rest at His feet while the night lasts. Is it not a most blessed place ? To be at His feet, having His approval of our walk, depositaries of His promises, fully assured that He has heard us, and that the labour of this wretched life will have a termination, and give place to the public manifestation of our association with Him, and to the possession of the glorious fruits of His work !

Now it is himself who has a care for Ruth's reputation, and justifies the holiness of the one whom he wishes to make his companion. But before openly espousing her cause, he fills her vail, giving her secretly the pledge of what he has in his mind to do for her. (Ver. 15.) He acts in the same way towards us. The dawn is near, but before we can see and meet Him, He has already given us the Holy Spirit of promise, and the earnest pledge of our future inheritance.

Ruth returned laden to her mother-in-law and "told her" (not what she had done for Boaz, but) "all that the man had done to her." Her heart is full of him, but she needs that her mother-in-law should enjoin *patience*. She will not have very long to wait, for the one who has taken her cause in hand, will not delay bringing it to a triumphant conclusion. "The man will not be in rest," says Naomi, "until he have finished the thing this day." Why? *Because he loves her.* Ah! this is the great, and the only reason of His work for us. Do we ourselves, brethren, speak like Naomi? Have we the happy consciousness of the love of Jesus for us? Are we waiting for Him as the One who will give Himself no rest until He has finished this day? The *this day* is, for us, the daily expectation of our Saviour. He wishes to have us with Himself. Yet a little patience, for, "Yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

(*To be continued, D. V.*)

A FRAGMENT.

We may receive a benefit from a person, and be assured of a hearty welcome to it, and yet feel ourselves ill at ease in his presence. Nothing is more common than this. Gratitude is awakened in the heart very deeply, and yet reserve and uneasiness are felt. It calls for something beyond our assurance of his good will, and of our full welcome to his service, to make us at ease in the presence of a benefactor. And this something, I believe, is the discovery that we have an interest in *himself*, as well as in his *ability to serve us*.

This delineates, as I judge, the experience of the poor woman with the issue of blood (Mark v). She knew the Lord's ability to relieve her sorrow, and her hearty welcome to avail herself of it. She therefore comes and takes the virtue out of Him without reserve. But she comes *behind Him*. This expresses her state of mind. She knows her welcome to His service, but nothing more. But the Lord trains her heart for more. He lets her know that she is interested in *Himself*, as well as in His power to oblige her. He calls her "daughter." He owns kindred or relationship with her. This was the communication which alone was able to remove her fears and trembling. Her rich and mighty patron is her kinsman. This is what her heart needed to know. Without this in the spirit of her mind she would have been still "behind Him ;" but this gives her ease. "Go in peace,"

may then be said, as well as "be whole of thy plague." She need not be reserved. Christ does not deal with her as a patron or benefactor (Luke xxii. 25). She has an interest in Himself, as well as in His power to bless her.

And so as to the Canticles. It is the love which warrants personal intimacy (after the manner of the nearest and dearest relationships), that breathes in this lovely little book. The age of the union has not yet arrived. But it is the time of betrothment, and we are His delight. Nay, it was so ere worlds were. As another has said, "in the glass of His eternal decrees, the Father showed the Church to Christ, and Christ was so ravished with the sight that He gave up all for her."

Do we believe this? Does it make us happy? We are naturally suspicious of any offers to make us happy in God. Because our moral sense, our natural conscience tells of our having lost all right, even to His ordinary blessings. The mere moral sense, therefore, will be quick to stand against it and question all overtures of peace from heaven, and be ready to challenge their reality. But here comes the vigour of the spiritual mind, or the energy of faith. Faith gainsays these conclusions of nature. And in the revelation of God, faith reads our abundant title to be near Him, and be happy with Him; though natural conscience and our sense of the fitness of things, would have it otherwise. Faith feeds where the moral sensibilities of the natural mind would count it presuming even to tread.

THE MORNING STAR.

(*Lines suggested by a morning ride to I. H. R'y Station, Canada.*)

NARRATIVE.

'Twas early morn, the snow shone white,
 Glittering beneath the moon's pale light,
 For high in heaven she held her way
 And hours must elapse ere break of day ;
 But travel we must if we hope to gain
 The rail in time for the morning train,
 So we started, and heard as the sleigh sped fleet
 No sound but the tread of the horse's feet ;
 The world was sleeping and all was still,
 For silence rested on vale and hill,
 'Twas well we were muffled in furs, I ween,
 For the frosty air bit sharp and keen ;
 And little was said as we slipt along,
 For frozen alike seemed tale and song.
 Our hearts were discouraged because of the way,
 And sorely we longed for the dawning of day ;
 Yet pleasant the thoughts, and still they abide,
 Which came to me during that long cold ride,
 For the harbinger bright of coming day
 Did ever before us its light display ;
 The silvery rays of the *Morning Star* (Rev. ii, 28),
 Above the horizon shone afar,

And as I sat gazing, sweet thoughts arose
In my mind, which in measure resembled those.

JESUS, THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR.

I thought of Him who died for sin,
That He eternal life might win
For those who did in heart abhor Him.
Who, though the Father's sole delight,
Willingly left the glory bright.
With death and suffering before Him.

Of Him who render'd up His breath,
Bowing beneath the stroke of death,
Triumphing over death by dying,
And who, though dead, yet strong to save,
Arose victorious o'er the grave,
Its dread and loathsome power defying.

I thought of Him in courts above,
The object of the Father's love,
By radiant angel hosts attended,
Dwelling in glory's brightest blaze,
The theme of heaven's exhaustless praise,
His sufferings forever ended.

But though on high, He's still the same
As when upon the cross of shame
He prayed in love for them that slew Him.
Though dwelling in the courts above
He still retains His name of Love
And welcomes all that still come to Him.

How great the love He bears His own !
 Its height or depth can ne'er be known,
 In His warm heart 'tis ever glowing ,
 And soon He'll come to claim His bride
 That she may e'er with Him abide,
 Glory divine on her bestowing.

Hearken ! He speaks from heaven afar,
 I am *The Bright and Morning Star* (Rev. xxii. 16),
 Midnight is past, 'tis early morning,
 Rise from among the dead—awake—
 Be watchful, slumber from thee shake,
 For soon I come the heavens adorning.

NARRATIVE.

But now, as slowly waned the night,
 The frost seemed sharper still to bite ;
 Stung by the cold, we thought the sleigh,
 As it slipt along, made little way ;
 But though this might our comfort mar,
 It made no change on *the Morning Star*.
 In beauty and brightness still it shone
 Like a silver plate in the sky alone.
 To our impatience it seemed to say,
 " Wait for a little, 'twill soon be day ;
 Be patient, this trial will soon be past,
 And your journey's end you'll reach at last."
 And again sweet thoughts in the mind would rise
 As I gazed on the *Star* that illumed the skies.

THE RISING OF THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR.

When the trav'ler weary,
 Bending 'neath a load,

Through the darkness dreary
 Toils along the road
 In his worn-out sandal,
 Hoping rest to win,
 Sweet the shining candle
 Of the welcome inn.

When the storm is pouring
 O'er the midnight sea,
 And the surge is roaring
 'Neath the vessel's lee ;
 To the awe-struck seaman
 Rapturous is the sight,
 When through darkness gleaming
 Shines the Beacon Light.

When the Church contending,
 Weary, sad, forlorn,
 Yet on God depending,
 Watcheth for the morn,
 Then what joy and gladness
 When from heaven afar,
 Ending all her sadness,
 Shines the *Morning Star*.

Jesus ! Lord of Glory,
 Lord of life and peace,
 Theme of angel's story,
 Bid our wanderings cease.
 See our bark is riven
 By the tempest's jar,

Shine, oh shine, from heaven,
Bright and Morning Star.

NARRATIVE.

But now at last, to end my story,
 Rose the bright sun in a blaze of glory,
 Bidding the slumbering world arise,
 Soaring triumphant through the skies.
 The darkness fled before its beams,
 'Neath his bright rays the landscape gleams,
 Had it been summer, songs of love
 Had warbled forth from every grove,
 Clothed in bright green, the stately trees
 Had waved their branches in the breeze,
 While verdant grass and floweret gay
 Had basked beneath the living ray ;
 But now, although the dazzling glow
 Shone over fields of cold white snow,
 The scene was pleasant to the sight
 And fair to view in th' morning light ;
 So when—our journey nearly done—
 In glory and splendour rose the sun,
 I thought of the time when with banners unfurl'd,
 The Lord will revisit this suffering world
 (After, as *Morning Star*, He has come
 And taken His bride to His own bright home),
 And when, as *the Sun of Righteousness*,
 He rises in glory bright to bless
 His earthly people, forsaken long,
 Filling their hearts with joy and song.
 Israel ! on whose devoted head

*Has rested for centuries curses dread ;
And as I thought of these coming days,
My heart burst forth in songs of praise.*

CHRIST, THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

When we speak of Israel's wand'rings,
Mournful is the dirge and low ;
Nought of joy relieves our pond'rings,
Only thoughts of grief and woe.

But still deeper grows the sadness,
And still louder Israel's moan,
Unrelieved by aught of gladness
When the Church to heaven is gone.

Hated for their name and nation,
Round them storms and tempests low'r ;
Crushed 'neath dreadful tribulation,
Wielded by resistless power.

But when trembling for the morrow,
Groaning in their deep distress,
Then, while in their deepest sorrow,
Soars the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. iv. 2).

Rising in a cloud of glory,
Light and healing on His wings,
Ends glad Israel's mournful story,
And their hearts with rapture sing—

HALLELUJAH !

Hail ! all hail that cloudless morning,
Hail that bright millennial day

When, the heavens and earth adorning,
Christ will all His power display.

Then shall Israel's praise ascending
To the great Anointed One,
With the Church's anthems blending,
Reach Jehovah's glorious throne.

Then, while shouts thro' heaven are ringing,
Ransomed earth with loud acclaim
Shall with rapturous joy and singing
Praise Messiah's glorious Name.



"THE MORNING STAR."

It has been truly said by some one that the Old Testament Scriptures end with the hope of the coming of the "Sun of Righteousness;" and the New, with that of the "Morning Star." Sweetly beautiful is this! The godly remnant of Israel who feared the Lord, and spake often one to another (Mal. iii.), had the precious consolation before them of the coming of the "Sun of Righteousness . . . with healing in His wings" (Mal. iv). And we find them in Luke ii., the Simeons, and Annas, and "all them that looked for redemption in Israel" (vs. 25-38), rejoicing in the advent of the "Sun of Righteousness," the "consolation of Israel." But, alas, his beams fell coldly on the hearts of his nation—they had no heart for Him! Men were

morally unfit to have God amongst them ; and so He was obliged to hide His beams of blessing in the darkened scene that surrounded His cross, and to reserve the day of blessing for a future season. Meanwhile *our* calling was revealed, and *our* hope presented to us ; not as the " Sun of Righteousness," but as the " Morning Star !"

The more we contemplate the fitness of this symbol of our hope, the more does its divine origin appear. It is the watchman during the long night, who sees the morning star for a few moments, while the darkness is rolling itself away from off the face of the earth, and before the beams of the sun enliven the earth with their rays. And so with the Christian's hope ; he watches during the moral darkness of the world, till dawn ; and just as the darkness is deepest, and is about to roll itself away before the beams of the " Sun of Righteousness," *his* hope is rewarded in seeing the " Morning Star" (Rev. xxii. 16), in his earliest brightness, coming to take up His people to Himself, that they may shine forth with Him, as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. xiii. 43), when He reveals Himself to the millennial earth, as the " Sun of Righteousness."

" I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and Morning Star. . . . He which testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen."

FORGIVENESS, DELIVERANCE, ACCEPTANCE.

(Continued from page 47.)

Lev. iv.

DELIVERANCE.

There is, however, another point and a most important one, and that is *deliverance*, or, as it is generally called, salvation. I prefer the former word, as bringing out more clearly what is meant. How often, dear souls, in whom there has been a work of God, have doubts and fears ; sometimes going so far as to question if they have ever been converted. It is because they have not really got deliverance ; for God's way of deliverance being once known is never lost ; though there may not be the joy flowing therefrom if the individual is not going on with God.

Scripture makes a distinction between " sins " (the naughty things done, the bad fruit produced) and " sin " (the nature, the tree that produces the bad fruit). Now, *forgiveness* has to do with the former, *deliverance* with the latter. Where there is a condition of spiritual slothfulness and a lack of exercise in the soul, God may withhold the knowledge of deliverance. Again, where there is not a bowing to God's verdict of what we *are* (not what we've *done*), deliverance cannot be known. The poet may write (and men applaud),

" O, wad some power the giftie gie us,
To see oursels as ithers see us."

There is something however immeasurably beyond that, viz.: To see ourselves as God sees us.

Dear reader, has the word of God ever come home with such power to your conscience as to bring you really into the presence of God? There can be but one result, if such has been the case. Now, Job was not a bad man by any means, and he could talk quite eloquently about God, and knew a great many things about Him, and yet had not seen himself as God saw him. In Job xlii. 5 he says: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but *now* mine eye *seeth* Thee." What was the result? "Wherefore I *abhor myself*;" not abhor what I *have done*, but "*myself*." Dear reader, has there ever been a moment in your history when you have thus stood face to face with God? Nothing betokens moral distance from God like good opinion of self. When we stand at the judgment of Christ, will any of us have a good opinion of self? Surely not! Then why so now? How many earnest souls go on trying to improve themselves! How many societies and associations (and religious ones, and with the name of "Christian" attached to them, too) there are for the improvement of man, as such! It may be ignorantly so, but all this is a denial of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The rejection of Jesus—God manifest in the flesh—proved that there was 'nothing in the heart of man that answered to anything in the heart of God; for the deepest and fullest expression of love on God's

part only brought out the terrible state of the heart of man. The cross of Jesus, on man's side, proved not only was man a sinner, and a law breaker, but a God-hater, and as Rom. viii. 7 says "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God" (margin).

Now let us turn to our chapter and see how the truth comes out in it, and let us remember that the animal there was a type of Christ on the cross, when He who knew no sin was made *sin* (not only "bear our *sins*") for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God *in Him* (2 Cor. v. 21). And, as Rom. viii. 3 tells us, "What the law could not do God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for *sin*, condemned *sin in the flesh*." If you read verses 11 and 12 you will see how the truth comes out in type,—most vividly. Ver. 11 takes up the different parts of the animal, and remember this is the body of the animal itself—not the blood, as previously. "And the skin of the bullock." The skin stands for the external beauty of the animal. In 1 Sam. xvi, 6, 7, when the eldest son of Jesse came in, Samuel seeing a fine, tall, handsome young man said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him." What was the Lord's answer? "Look not on his countenance nor on the height of his stature, for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on *the outward appearance*, but the Lord looketh on *the heart*." Read Mark x. 17-22 in the same connection. There, a young ruler

comes to Jesus with everything *outwardly* lovely—but when God's one test was put: "What think ye of Christ?"—he turned his back on the Lord and went away. There was nothing there for God. And so in the type, the skin was carried forth without the camp and burnt on the wood with fire. In other words it was fit only for the judgment of God. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29). Jesus on Calvary's cross bore the judgment for every one who believes the record that God has given of His Son (1 John v. 10-12; John iii. 36), but for all others "the second death, the lake of fire" (Rev. xx. 15) is their portion, however nice they may appear in the eyes of men.

Next comes "his flesh." There we get below the surface, but the same result—nothing for God, and so taken outside the camp and burnt.

Now let us go to the end of the verse and work backwards. "His dung" (the offal). Of course everyone would agree as to that—there was nothing there for God.

"His inwards," the seat of the affections. Well, the rejection of Jesus, the deepest expression of God's love to man, proved there was nothing, as we have seen (p. 70).

"His legs" represent his walk, his general life. Look what Paul says of himself, Acts xx. iii. 1: "I have lived before God in all good conscience to this day." And yet before he was converted he was murdering the Lord's people, thinking he was doing God service (see John xvi. 2). No, there is

nothing really for God in the natural man, such is the awful havoc that sin has made.

“ But now we come to “ his head.” Oh ! how different is man’s verdict from God’s on this point. The great panacea now-a-days is education. If we turn to the word of God, what does He say ? Corinth was one of the chief cities of Greece, the leading country at the time for literature and the arts and sciences, and of course learning, etc., was much thought of there. In the first epistle to the church at that place, the Holy Ghost says : “ I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise ? where is the scribe (the educated man of the day) ? where is the disputer of this world ? hath not *God made foolish the wisdom of this world ?*” And again : “ The world by wisdom knew not God,” and “ God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.” In the Epistle to the Romans, chap. i., when the Holy Ghost is referring to man’s having got away from God after the flood, He says : “ Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (ver. 22). And is not history repeating itself in this very end of this self-lauding nineteenth century ? Who are the leaders in giving up the Bible—turning their backs on the word of God—with fine sounding words of “ higher criticism,” etc. ? “ Professing themselves to be wise,” they are really “ blind leaders of the blind.” No, there is nothing more *for God* in man’s head than the other

parts, and, with the offal, is only fit for the judgment of God.

But some one may say, "It will not do to be so very particular in details—take man as a whole there is some good in him." Ver. 12, answers that. Ver. 11 looks at man in detail, but ver. 12 looks at him as a whole, "Even the whole bullock," but with just the same verdict—to be carried forth without the camp and burnt; it was only fit for judgment—God's judgment against sin.

Turn now to Romans vii., where we get one who has learnt his lesson and bowed to God's verdict; for the expression, "when we were in the flesh" (ver. 5), shews that he was not there when he wrote. The law is the measure of man's responsibility as a *child of Adam*, and so we find the one in that chapter, doing his very best to meet its claims. What was the result?

In ver. 14, he has found out that he is a slave, "*sold* under sin."

In ver. 18, he has learnt two lessons: 1st, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth *no good thing*." He has now learnt experimentally in his own soul what came out at the cross, and which we have just seen, in type, in Lev. iv. 11, 12.

But there is a second lesson in Rom. vii. 18, viz, that he has no strength, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." He is lost. Now one is lost when the strength is all gone and the person is utterly unable to extricate himself from the position he is in.

But that is not saying another person may not pull him out. Now in vs. 7-24 (Rom. vii.) "I," "My," "Me" occur between forty and fifty times, i. e., he is looking at *himself* striving to extricate *himself*. In the last named verse he gives up the struggle, just ready to despair, "O wretched man that I am! (not "who shall *forgive* me" but) "who shall *deliver* me from the body of this death." He is just where God's Deliverer meets him.

In ver. 25 he looks outside of himself, for the first time, and sees it (with the eye of faith) all done by another, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

DEAR READER, HAVE YOU GOT THAT FAR?

(*To be continued, D.V.*)



MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF RUTH.

(Concluded from page 58.)

Chapter IV.

Naomi spake truly. Boaz could not give himself rest, until he had accomplished the work which his goodness and energy had undertaken. He wished that the one he loved might find rest and that it might be well with her (iii. 1), and he knew that she could be only so with him. Thus it is with the Lord as to ourselves. His life here below was a life of toil for us, culminating in the unutterable travail of His soul upon the cross. He has in this

manner accomplished this promise: "I will give you rest." We already possess rest of conscience in the knowledge of His work; rest of heart in the knowledge of His adorable person. But the Lord is still working, in order that we may enter into a future rest "which remaineth for the people of God," the rest of satisfied love where everything will answer eternally to the thoughts of His own heart.

Boaz also undertook to give rest to his beloved because she had wrought and suffered with the people of God. In the same way the Holy Spirit says to us: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven" (2 Thess. i. 7). "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward this name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Heb. vi. 10).

This book of Ruth is full of *labour* and of *rest*; labour and rest of service, labour and rest of faith, labour and rest of grace. The reapers labour and rest; so also does the master of the harvest; so also does Ruth, the bride of his choice. O, how she rests at the feet of Boaz during the hours of the night! How she still rests until the travail of the redeemer prepares for her the rest of which our chapter speaks

According to the custom of Israel, he ought to revive the name of the dead, and to re-establish it in his inheritance. This duty devolved upon the

next of kin. Now there was a man who possessed rights over the inheritance of Elimelech before Boaz. Boaz addressed himself to him in the presence of a number of witnesses. This man would have been very glad of the heritage, but knowing that the seed would not be his, he would not consent to take Ruth also. If he did so, he would impoverish himself and mar his own inheritance, for the property of Ruth's children would not revert to him nor to his family.

This near kinsman is a striking type of the law ; for, like this man, the law, which had prior rights over Israel, exacts, takes, and gives nothing. It would no longer be the law, if it were able to undertake the work of grace ; nevertheless its inability is not because of itself, but because of those to whom it is addressed. The law looks for something from man, and man manifests himself as incapable of pleasing God. It promises life on condition of obedience ; but, man being a sinner and disobedient, it can only condemn him. It is a ministry of death, and cannot give life to the dead. Barren, it would never have posterity nor be able to bring forth sons in the divine lineage of the Messiah.

Grace alone is able to undertake these things. Declaring man to be lost, it expects nothing of him, imposes no conditions upon him, makes him no promises, but gives him liberally, increasingly, eternally. It begets by an incorruptible seed and communicates life, places man in relationship with

God, produces in him fruit which God can accept, and introduces him into the glory. .

Thus the law declares itself powerless in presence of the "second husband" who comes after it, our Boaz, in whom is strength. He will raise up His people Israel and "shall see His seed," as saith Isaiah, but only, as we know, after having poured out His soul unto death (Is. liii.). In the interval, all the result of His work at the cross is applicable to us, Christians. As to our souls, we are already risen with Him; as to our bodies, we shall be, as surely as he is Himself. Boaz is, for us, the type of a risen Christ.

The near kinsman takes off his shoe—the law cedes its rights to Christ, rights acknowledged by the witnesses with whom he had surrounded himself for this purpose. Boaz redeems the inheritance in order to possess Ruth, for he has more interest in the happiness of this stranger than in all that belongs to her. For the church Christ has done much more. He *gave up* all He had, to acquire us. The poor remnant of Israel will also acknowledge Him with joy when it sees its heretofore rejected Messiah coming in glory.

Witnesses of this scene, *the people and the elders*, applaud and bless the powerful Boaz; for such goodness is worthy of all praise. The Holy Spirit puts in their mouth these prophetic words: "Jehovah make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel!" The history of the

people will recommence, so to speak, with the poor Moabiteess. It will begin anew on the ground of grace. It is not Leah, it is Rachel, the wife beloved, the wife of Jacob's free choice and for whom he had served so long, who is here first presented. In everything the book of Ruth gives precedence to grace. "And do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem." These cities, witnesses of grace, will also be of the power of Boaz : "And let thy house be like the house of Pharez whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which Jehovah shall give thee of this young woman !" That his posterity may be established like that of Pharez according to the election of grace !

"And *Jehovah* gave her conception." In the presence of this heir that grace has given, the *women* take up again the course of the prophetic thoughts of the people : "And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be Jehovah, which has not left thee this day without a kinsman." They transfer to the head of the son of Boaz the right to redeem which Boaz has exercised, and foresee a future redemption accomplished by this man who is born of Ruth. In him, they add, the old age of the people will find a nourisher, its feebleness a restorer, and his name will be associated with that of Ruth, the poor remnant, having her heart drawn out to Naomi, the afflicted people of God, and who are worth more to her than the perfect number of sons (ver. 15).

Naomi nourishes Obed in her bosom ; he goes forth, like the Messiah, from a barren people. The *neighbours* then strike up their prophetic notes of praise : “ There is a son born to Naomi ! ” The sphere becomes closer and with it the measure of intelligence. The nearer we are to the people of God, the more we appreciate Christ and His grace. If we are satisfied with the nearness which “ the people and the elders ” possess, we shall not be able to get beyond their level of spiritual intelligence ; whilst the heart bound to the church will have a more intimate and personal knowledge of the Lord. “ A son is born to Naomi ! ” It is thus that the future Israel will rejoice before him as the joy of harvest as they are transported with joy who divide the spoil, and they will say : “ Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given ; and the government shall be upon His shoulder ; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace ”

“ And they called his name Obed.” Obed, “ He who serves ; ” above all His marvellous titles, behold His title of glory ! It is the Servant who is the Heir and from whom David springs, the Bearer of royal grace. All our hearts beat with joy when we call Him by this name ; for He, the Counsellor, the mighty God, has served, He still serves, and will remain a Servant forever for those whom He loves ! His devotedness to God and His love for us, His entire work even to the laying down of His life, the grace which leads Him to stoop to wash our feet, His eternal servitude of love when we shall be with Him in the glory of the Father’s house—all these, our greatest blessings, are connected with this title of Servant !

THE SERVANT FOR EVER.

EX. XXI. 5, 6.

(An old hymn slightly altered.)

Sweet to ponder o'er His footsteps,
 All the service of His love ;
 And adoringly remember,
 Grace 'twas brought Him from above !
 Learn His love beside the manger,
 Learn it on the stormy wave,
 By the well, and in the garden—
 Learn it by the Cross and grave.

Yet not only in remembrance
 Do we watch that stream of love ;
 Still a mighty torrent flowing
 From the throne of God above.
 Still a treasure that's uncounted,
 Still a story half untold,
 Unexhausted and unfathom'd, .
 Fresh as in the days of old.

Christ, at God's right hand, unwearied
 By our self-will and our sin,
 Day by day, and hour by hour,
 Welcoming each wand'rer in ;
 On His heart amidst the glory,
 Bearing all our grief and care,
 Ev'ry burden, ere we feel it,
 Weighed and measured in His prayer.

Fragrant thus, with priestly incense,
 Each distress, each sorrow tells
 Thoughts that fill the heart of Jesus
 In the glory, where He dwells.
 All His love, His joy, His glory,

By His Spirit here made known,
 Whilst that Spirit speaks the sorrows
 Of His saints before the throne.

He, of old the Man of Sorrows,
 Pleads before the Father's face,
 Knowing all the needed solace,
 Claiming all the needed grace.
 We, so faithless and oft weary,
 Serving with impatient will ;
 He unwearied in our service,
 Gladly ministering still.

Girded with the golden girdle,
 Shining as the mighty sun,
 Still His pierced hands will finish
 All His work of love begun.
 On the night of His betrayal,
 In the glory of the throne,
 Still, with faithful patience, washing
 All defilement from His own.

When the Father's house resoundeth
 With the music and the song ;
 When the bride in glorious raiment
 Sees the One who loved so long.
 Then for new and blessed service
 Girt afresh, will He appear,
 Stand and serve, before His angels,
 Those who waited for Him here.

He who led them through the desert,
 Watch'd and guided day by day,
 Turn'd the flinty rocks to water,
 Made them brooks beside the way--
 He will bring them where the fountains
 Fresh and full spring forth above,
 Still, throughout the endless ages,
 Serving in the joy of love.

A SERVANT FOR EVER.

EXODUS XXI. 2-6.

It will be profitable to look at what Scripture says about the Lord Jesus as "The Servant," and to meditate a little season on the moral glory attaching to Him as such.

Another has very beautifully and truly said, "Love delights to serve;" and we see it exemplified in perfection in the blessed Lord. "In all things He hath the pre-eminence" is as true of Him as the Servant as in every other position that He has ever filled.

How brightly the above passage in Exodus lights up when we see in it a type of Him as the Servant! Phil. ii. 7, shows us that He "took upon Him the form of a servant" when He "was made in the likeness of men." It was a new thing for the one "by whom all things were created" (Col. i. 16); who "spake, and it was done, He commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. xxxiii. 9), to be in the position of receiving commands; and so we find in Ps. xl. 6, it is said of Him, "Mine (lit. 'for me') ears hast thou digged (margin). Then in Heb. x. 5, the Holy Spirit accepts the Septuagint rendering (conveying as it does the right thought), "a body hast thou prepared for me," thus identifying what Ps. xl. 6-8 says with Phil. ii. 7.

What led Him to take this place? "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." In keeping with this, we

get Him saying on one occasion, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business" (Luke ii.); on another, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John iv.), showing what was ever before Him. Did the selfishness of His disciples manifest itself in "strife" as to "which of them should be accounted the greatest" (Luke xxii.), he tells them that what obtains in the world was not to be the case among them, adding, "I am among you as *He that serveth.*" O beloved reader, what a rebuke to the selfishness of (the disciples' hearts, do you and I say?—nay, but of) your heart and mine; and not only selfishness, but pride, when we find that men—yea even the people of God—nowadays, object to be called "a servant." If there is one position that, more than another, has been lit up with moral glory, in this world of pride and selfishness, it is that of servant. In connection with this very position we find some of the most precious teaching in the New Testament, Ephes. vi. 5-8; Col. iii. 22-25; (How exquisite for the heart, where the eye is single, are those words in ver. 24, "Ye *serve* the Lord Christ." What higher object could a saint have?); 1 Tim. vi. 1-5; Tit. ii. 9-14; 1 Pet. ii. 18-25.

How full of moral beauty is the way that the Spirit of God portrays Him in the Servant's place in Is. l. 4.* (having, in the previous verse, shewn

* Delitzsch renders "learned" as "disciple" in both occurrences in this verse.

Him as the One who "clothes the heavens with blackness, etc.," where He is represented as waiting "morning by morning" for the "word in season;" and what "apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. xxv. 11) were "the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth!" (Luke iv. 22). Well might the officers say, "Never man spake like this man!" (John vii. 46). Surely we may connect Mark i. 35, * with Is. l. 4. Beloved reader, what lessons and what an example for you and me in these two scriptures! If we were found acting upon them more, what the Holy Spirit enjoins in James i. 19 would be made good in us, in increasing measure.

All through His wondrous pathway in this world do we see the same perfection as the servant, ever doing His Father's will. In Gethsemane, in all the solemn agony of that moment, with the cross before Him, when praying, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me," He immediately adds, "nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done" (Luke xxii). Thence He passes onward, in the path of obedience, to the cross, "Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii).

Now let us return to Ex. xxi. We have glanced at Him as the Servant and seen what perfection shone out in Him as such. Now comes the question, "Will He 'go out free'?" That He could

* Mark's gospel presents the blessed Lord in His Servant character, but noting in ver. 1, that He was "the Son of God."

have done so John x. 18, and Matt. xxvi. 53, show plainly enough. But no : "I love my master, my wife and my children ; I will not go out free" were about to be fulfilled. There was not only the One whose will He came to do (and which He did *perfectly*), but, "my wife and my children." Turn to Ephes. v. 25-29, 32 ; and Heb. ii. 13-15, and I think we shall there find what corresponds to the type.

In Ps. xl. 4 we have seen ears digged or prepared for Him, and that that corresponded to His taking the Servant's place. Now it is the question not of His being a servant, but of His being a SERVANT FOR EVER. The cross answers to Ex. xxi. 6, and so we find in Scripture that He never gives up being a man. God the Father has righteously decreed that He shall judge the world as Son of Man (John v. 22, 23, 27 ; Acts xvii. 31 ; 1 Cor. xv. 25-27) ; and that all things shall be put under Him as such (Ps. viii. ; Heb. ii. 5-8). After the millennial reign, even in the eternal state, He will not cease being a man (1 Cor. xv. 28). O, dear reader (if you are a believer), that blessed One has served you and me, where, and in a way, that no one else could. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. viii.), may well come before us in this connection, and may the Spirit of God apply those words to our hearts with such power that "The love of Christ constraineth

us ; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead ; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but *unto* HIM which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. v.), may be practically true of us during the "little while" that He leaves us here to "occupy till I come."

We find then that He has served us on the cross bearing the judgment of God for us and shedding His precious blood—our only title to glory.

If we turn to John xiii. we shall find a precious picture of His present service. "His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father." Was he going to cease serving them? Oh, no! Love delighting to serve, as has been said, His service is as unceasing as His love; so now "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end;" and so "He riseth from supper and laid aside His garments and took a towel and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.

The reader will notice that it is water in the basin, not blood. When a person has taken his true place before God as a sinner and rested in simple faith on the work the Lord Jesus accomplished on Calvary's cross, he is "justified from all things" (Acts xiii. 39), has "peace with God" (Rom. v. 1), and is a "child of God" (Gal. iii. 26). Then comes the question of communion, which the

least allowance of evil, or of defilement contracted, interrupts. The Lord uses the simplest things of every day life to teach lessons by. In those countries where they wore sandals, however clean the individual might otherwise be, the dust was very apt to settle on the feet as they walked about. So we, in this sin-defiled world, are very apt (through lack of dependence and watchfulness) to contract defilement, and this interrupts communion. In ver. 10 the first "washed" is rather "bathed" or "washed all over" and corresponds to the action of the word when we are "born of water" (symbol of the word, Ps. cxix. 9; John xv. 3; Ephes. v. 26; cf. 1 Pet. i. 23, 25) "and of the Spirit," and of which there can be no repetition, for "He that is washed needeth not save to wash (a different word, and used more particularly with reference to the feet and hands) his feet, but is clean every whit."

"Clean every whit;" Thou saidst it, Lord;
 Shall one suspicion lurk?
 Thine, surely, is a faithful word,
 And Thine a finished work.

How often, though, dear fellow-believer, have you and I, since we have been the Lord's, lacked watchfulness and failed in dependence, and done or said something naughty. Perhaps, too, we have gone on our way and forgotten, or tried to forget, about it; or, what is still worse, made an excuse for it. But in spite of all our efforts to do so, it has kept coming before us again and again, till at

last we have been broken down in self-judgment and confession ; and the soul, looking back, said, "Why, here have I, after all the love and grace I have been brought to know, gone and taken my pleasure (be it only for a moment) in that which caused the Lord Jesus His agony on Calvary's cross"—or some such words ; and, going to the Father, a simple and full confession has been made (specifying what has been done), acting as 1 John i. 9 shows us. But what has produced this ? The blessed Lord Jesus has had His eye on us all the time ; and, in His unceasing, unwearied love has stooped down to wash our feet, by His Spirit applying the word to the conscience. John xiii. shows us His side of it ; and 1 John i. 9 the effect in us.

Lastly we come to His future service. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching ; verily I say unto you, that *He shall gird Himself*, and make them sit down to meat, *and will come forth and serve them*" (Luke xii. 37). *He will Himself minister* to our joy, when we are with Him in glory. What surpassing love ! Well may we sing :

It passeth *knowledge* ! that dear love of Thine,
My Jesus ! Saviour ! yet this soul of mine
Would of Thy love, in all its breadth and length,
Its height and depth and everlasting strength,
Know more and more.

It passeth *telling* ! that dear love of Thine,
My Jesus ! Saviour ! yet these lips of mine

Would fain proclaim to sinners far and near
A love which can remove all guilty fear,
And love beget.

It passeth *praises* ! that dear love of Thine,
My Jesus ! Saviour ! yet this heart of mine
Would sing a love so rich—so full—so free,
What brought a rebel sinner, such as me,
Nigh unto God.

And Jesus, when Thee face to face I see,
When on Thy lofty throne I sit with Thee ;
Then of Thy love in all its breadth and length,
Its height and depth, its everlasting strength,
My soul shall sing.

One feels how poor these few words have been on this wondrous subject, for what deep, full, moral glory shines out, and ever will, in connection with the Lord Jesus, as the The Servant ! And when he comes forth as the Conqueror (Rev. xix) having on His blessed head "many crowns," methinks that of THE SERVANT will (if it be possible) outshine all the others in its surpassing brilliancy.

Finally, what practical effect, dear reader, will this little meditation have on you and me ? I will close by simply quoting two or three Scriptures, praying that the Spirit may seal them home with power in your soul and mind. "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" (John xx. 21). "Whoever will be chief among you, let him be your *servant* ; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom" (Matt. xx. 27, 28).

LIVING TO SELF OR TO CHRIST ?

(2 COR. V. 14-16.)

The thought uppermost in my mind, in reading these verses, is just as simple as it is *of all importance*, and that is, beloved brethren, *what are we living for?* A weighty question, I need not say, and it is of moment to our souls that we should not shrink from answering it, and that we should answer it in the fear of God. Verse 15 was peculiarly before me, "He died for all, that they which live," that is, the believers, etc. All were dead, believers and unbelievers alike, all were ruined men before God ; and the death of Christ is the proof of the condition of every soul naturally ; that is, all are lost—all lifeless toward God ; that even the Son of God, who is everlasting life, should need to suffer—should find no portion but death in this world, is the proof that there was no life in it. Everything lay so irretrievably in death, that for Him to die is the only door of deliverance out of it. And "He died for all." It is not said that all should live, though undoubtedly there was life in Him adequate for every soul, life everlasting in Christ : but then, in fact, no soul did, none would, receive Him, not one. Grace therefore has wrought, and given some to receive Him. And therefore it is added, "He died for all, that they which live," that is, they who do believe in Him and have life therefore—"that they which live

should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." Now, there is never a question day by day that arises, but what brings out one of these two things, that is, whether we are living to ourselves or to "Him who died for us and rose again." And have I not to own the sad truth, how constantly we have to rebuke our souls? How often, not to say in general, the first impulse of the heart is to take that view of everything which would minister to our pleasure, or gratification, or importance? What is this but living to ourselves? When any question comes before us, when anything, either in the way of an evil to be avoided, a loss to be shunned, or something to be gained, some object that comes before us, is it not our tendency to look upon how it will bear upon us and to give it that turn which will be for our profit or advantage in some way or another? I do not say always personally: it may be for our family, for our children, looking onward to the future or at the present. Now, we are always wrong when we do it. God would not have us to neglect the real good of those dear to us and dependent on us; but the question is, whether we trust ourselves or Christ. Are we adequate judges of what is best for our children? Are we the least biased and the wisest to decide on that which would be for, not the passing profit, but the good which endures for ever? It comes to a very simple issue. We have two natures—one which is always grasping for something that will

please and exalt itself, and another which, by the grace of God, is willing to suffer for Christ,—and clings to what is of Christ. But as the apostle says (1. Cor. xv. 46), not that which is spiritual was first, but the natural, and afterwards the spiritual. So it is precisely in our practical experience. The thought that is apt promptly to arise when there is trial and difficulty, is the simply natural one, how to get out of it—not, how am I to glorify God in it, and turn it to the praise of Christ. Then, again, if there is any prospect of improving circumstances, this is the first thought—that which is natural. Ought we not to be upon our watch-tower with respect to this? Should we not have it as a settled thing for our hearts, this is my danger? We may not all be tried in the same way; for that which would be a gratification to one might not be so to another. But there is one sad thing in which we all agree: we have a nature that likes self, and seeks to gratify it, and we have hence a tendency to indulge that nature as the first thought of the heart. But let Christ only come before our souls—let us bethink ourselves of Him, when either trouble or pleasure comes before us, and what then? That which is natural fades away: we judge it. We say, That is a thing which brings no glory to Christ—and what are we here for? Let us remember that God has done everything to fit us for His presence, He “has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. i. 12). There is no doubt of that,

it remains untouched. But the practical question for our souls is, whether our hearts, knowing the perfect goodness of our God and Father towards us, enter into this great thought—that He now sets Christ, dead and risen, before us, in order that, in the presence of the angels as well as of men, yea, in His own presence, there may be the wonderful spectacle of beings who once lived for nothing but self, here, by the very image of Christ before their souls, lifted above self altogether.

May we bring this to bear upon whatever may be the circumstances through which we pass day by day ! It is the main thing for the walk of every saint. There are other great things for the Church ; but they are so much the greater as they are built upon Christ, the Object of each individual that composes the assembly. Let us not deceive ourselves as to that. No position can ever make amends for failure in the habitual thought of the heart. May we search and see whether *we are living to ourselves* or to HIM *who died for us and rose again !*



FORGIVENESS, DELIVERANCE, ACCEPTANCE.

(Continued from page 75.)

DELIVERANCE (*concluded*).

If we turn to Ex. xiv., we shall see a type of God's way of salvation (or deliverance). It is not as in Ex. xii., God passing by as a Judge and

kept out (in that character) by the blood. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you," which was perfect security. It is not a question of *Safety*, but of *Salvation*, which are quite different, though often confounded. In Rom. i. 16, we are told that "The Gospel is *the power* of God *unto salvation* to every one that believeth." That is what Ex. xiv. shows; bringing out, in type, what the death and resurrection of Christ has done for every believer. The people there are in a dilemma; Pharoah and his host are pursuing them, and the Red Sea before them. In this terrible plight they feel how powerless they are. Moses says to them, "Fear ye not, *stand still*, and see the *salvation of the Lord*, which He will (not 'shew to,' as in the authorized version, but) *work for you*" (ver. 13). What a word to a person bordering on despair, "Stand still!" The very last thing that any of us will do till brought to feel how powerless we are. How suited then comes the word, "When we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom v. 6). And whilst this last named Scripture refers primarily to that period of time in the varied dealings of God with man, when the truth came out (manifested by his inability to keep the law) that he was "without strength"; still we have each one to learn it experimentally in our own souls (and that was the second lesson learnt, as we have seen, in Rom. vii. 18), before there is the giving up of every effort on our part, and we

“*stand still*, and see the salvation of the Lord which He (not “*will* work for you” because we look back at a finished work, but) *has wrought* for us. We have to learn not only that God is the Deliverer, but *how* He does it, “see that great work which the Lord did” (ver. 31).

Then comes the word from the Lord to the people, “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward” (ver. 15). “*Go forward*”! Why, the Red Sea is right before them and that (to sight) is, certain death! Yes, quite so, *to sight*; but “the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (not *to sight* but) to every one *that believeth*”: and so we read, “By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, which the Egyptians (where there was no faith) assaying to do were drowned” (Heb. xi. 29). What weapon was it that man’s unfaithfulness had put into Satan’s hands? Death. What did the Lord Jesus do? He went down into the stronghold of the enemy, as it is written, “That *through death* He might destroy (or ‘annul’) him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and *deliver* them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. ii. 14, 15); and, “Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished (or ‘annulled’—same word as ‘destroy’ in Heb. ii. 14) death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel (2 Tim. i. 10). It is written of believers (1 Cor. iii); that, amongst other things, “death is ours.” Instead

of being a weapon in the enemy's hands, it is the means of deliverance.

We have seen (p 44, referring to Lev. iv. 4) that laying the hand upon the head of the victim was expressive of identification; as it were faith looking at the cross and saying, "That's me—He took my place." Just bring that thought in here. Did Jesus bear the judgment of God and die *to sin*? Yes, and as my substitute. Then what is true of Christ is true of the believer before God and for faith. So in Rom. vii. 24, 25, where we get the cry of one who has learnt that there is no good in him and that he has no strength, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death (margin)," we find the moment he looks away from himself and his own efforts to Christ and His work, he immediately adds, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." What a relief to find out that, on the cross, not only were my *sins* atoned for, but that the question of my nature (*sin*) has also been fully gone into; and that "what the law could not do (as the one in Rom. vii. found out), God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for *sin*, condemned *sin* in the flesh (Rom. viii. 3), which exactly agrees with what we saw, in type, in Lev. iv. 11, 12. In John iii. 16 we are told, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." It may be nice *flesh* or nasty *flesh*, educated *flesh* or uneducated *flesh*, religious *flesh* or irreligious *flesh*—but it is still *flesh*. Now God's word

tells us also that "The flesh profiteth nothing" (John vi. 63); and "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. viii. 8). Reformation may do for man, but no for God; so the Holy Ghost says in 2 Cor. v., "If any man be in Christ (not only "there is no condemnation," as Rom. viii. 1 says, but), he is a *new creature* (or 'creation'); old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new, and all things are *of God*."

If we turn to Rom. vi., we find there, speaking of believers, it is said, "Knowing this, that our old man *is crucified with Him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed (or 'annulled,' the same word that we have already had in connection with the devil, Heb. ii. 14; and with death, 2 Tim. i. 10). Then further down in same chapter, "For in that He died, He died *unto sin* once (not 'sins' here, but 'sin'); but in that he liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise *reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin*, but alive unto God (not 'through,' but) in Christ Jesus." Thus we learn that believers are looked upon by God as having died with Christ. That is God's way of deliverance from "sin" (the nature).

It is the same as to the law. The law is not abrogated, as some have unwisely said, but "The law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth" (Rom. vii. 1); and, "Ye also are *become dead to the law* by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth

fruit unto God (which man, under the law, never did) But now we are *delivered from the law, being dead* (margin) to that wherein we were held ; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

The law has been carried out to the full, and has killed me, as it were, in the person of Him who, in matchless grace, took my place and bore all the consequences of the place that he took. How sweetly Paul puts it (and it is true of every real believer), "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. *I am crucified with Christ* ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ, liveth in me ; and *the life which I now live* in the flesh *I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*" (Gal. ii. 19, 20). How the "newness of spirit" comes out in the above, viz., "The love of Christ constraineth." *His love* working in the heart *is the motive*, and HIMSELF the Object before the soul.

What a real deliverance God's is ; but it excludes all boasting, and so man does not like it, but prefers one that lets him have some credit, if ever so little.

It is helpful to contrast Ex. xii. 13 with Ex. xiv. 31. In the former it says "*When I see the blood, I will pass over you.*" In the latter, "*Israel saw that great work which the Lord did.*" They were then, as it were, on resurrection ground ; and it is in resurrection that the power of God has been displayed. "He was crucified through weakness,

yet he liveth by the power of God " (2 Cor. xiii. 4). It is important for each soul to see that the believer is on resurrection ground before God. One of the desires of Paul's heart for the Lord's people was " that ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead " (Ephes. i).

But not only is the believer delivered by death and resurrection with Christ, from " sin " and " the law ; " but we read, " Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave *Himself* for our sins, that *He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father* " (Gal. i. 3). And we find Paul saying, " God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world* " (Gal. vi. 14).

DEAR READER, HAVE YOU SO LEARNT CHRIST ? HAVE YOU SEEN THAT (IF YOU ARE THE LORD'S) THE CROSS OF CHRIST HAS COME AS MUCH BETWEEN YOU AND THE WORLD AS BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR SINS ?

(To be continued, D.V.)



" O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

“ ONLY IN THE LORD ;”

OR

SCRIPTURE MARRIAGE.

MY VERY DEAR ——,

After the encouragement which your letter, received last night, gives, I lose not another day in writing. The reasons which have kept me hitherto from doing so are various ; but the reason which weighed heaviest with me was a fear of making you unhappy, without being of any use. But now you give me liberty to say what I think, and as I think much on it, I fear my letter will not be very short. It was truth you spoke when you said, I should not have encouraged it, had I known all the circumstances. I was indeed astonished at your reasoning, and much more at ——’s, but not the least astonished at the engagement of your affections, for this, I often told you, I expected ; but I am not going to laugh at you. No, dear ——, I feel most sincerely for you. It is the fashion to laugh and ridicule *love* ; but when disappointed, I do think it among the most painful of the Lord’s dispensations to sinners, to be the means of crushing one who loves you ; for the happiness or misery of one dear to you to hang upon your yes or no, and have to pronounce no, and thus leave an impression of ingratitude and

unkindness ; to know there is *one* in this wilderness whose every thought is yours, miserable on your account, and yet not able even to attempt to administer comfort—it is very painful, especially when to this is added a long *never*. I am a very hard-hearted creature ; but there are some cases in which I can in some degree understand the command, “ Weep with those who weep,” and your case borders too much on my own not to sympathise with you—I mean when I speak of your giving it up ; therefore do not think what I may say unkind. I am not ignorant what it is to give up an object tenderly beloved, but I can only say I am not ignorant of the peace which follows when the lacerated soul is at length able to surrender itself, with a subdued and unruffled heart, into the arms of everlasting love, saying, “ Undertake for me.” This I say, believing what you have declared ; for few have much affection. But however painful the struggle, it is short and light compared with what you, in the other case, will be entailing on yourself and him. Is it happiness to disappoint the high expectations he has built upon in his union with you ? or do you expect to be more amiable than the Lord Jesus, and think you will succeed in walking consistently, and yet pleasing the world ? or is the carnal mind to be expected to endure it better ? Do not be angry at my speaking of him as an unbeliever ; for if not now a believer, it is presumption in you to build upon his seeming anxiety on the “ one thing needful.” If the Bible is true,

there is a rooted enemy within, and though he may admire the religion of Jesus at a distance, he cannot love to come in contact with it in every turn of life, to have it the subject of conversation, the end to which every thought, word, and action tends. I say not only this from seeing it around, but the word of God has said it; and truly I can say from what I see, dear —, love-conversions are not to be trusted. I do not say it is hypocrisy in Mr. —, or in many others I could name, but love for the individual really deceives them into love of what is dear to that individual. It was not hypocrisy, I say, in — to admire—because she did not join in the dance, which, joined with his being so *well inclined*, induced her to see no harm in following the desires of her own heart. *Has he helped her on?* When such uneven weights are put into the scale of the affections, one must ascend just in proportion as the other descends. It was not hypocrisy in another in my eye to drive with his now wife's relations constantly to town, on purpose to talk of those subjects, to come to this house, and show such anxiety as to sit up nights with dear —, enquiring into the truth. Alas! you could hardly now distinguish if she is a Christian or not, after holding out against the reproach of it for many years. I could mention one who spoke at all the Dublin meetings, so zealous was he for the truth; yet when the prize was obtained he opposed and put a stop to her visiting the poor, or having schools—put an extinguisher

over the Lord's bright light. I could mention another, whose prayers deceived even the very elect, now contending for balls, plays, reading novels. Passing over many others, I could come nearer home ; and remember letters full of the one subject by one who never meant to deceive or could bend to deceive in his life, the glory of whose character is and was openness to an extreme. It was not hypocrisy ; he really admired and joined in it, and continued long to join in every way religious society, church going, reading with and arguing with his wife, even attending the catechising the poor ; and though his kindness, and love, and affection are as devoted as ever, is it happiness not to be able to speak of your Beloved, who occupies, or should occupy, your every thought, without exciting the strongest expressions of disapprobation ? Is it happiness to have no communion with one always with you—he despising your pursuits, you not relishing his ? Is it happiness, while rejoicing in the glorious promises yourself, to feel your very joy your greatest grief, in being reminded that he who is dearer to you than your own soul has no part or lot in the matter, fearful every time he goes out, knowing he is without God, and consequently without hope in such a world ? Is this a highly-coloured picture ? Alas ! no. How far short of what most endure ! How often is it persecution ! how often separation from every means of grace, every exertion, a drawing and quartering of affection—duties

spiritual drawing one way, duties earthly the other, till from necessarily opposing the will of Him who expects to be obeyed, the affections of the idol loosen, and all the *etc. etc. miseries ensue* ! If this were to be from an enemy you might bear it ; but how will you from your companion, your guide, your own familiar friend, with whom you hoped to have taken sweet counsel ? Is it fair of you, knowing this, thus to deceive and ruin the happiness of Mr. — ? Is it not better to cut it in a vein that can be healed ? You will say, " Oh, you do not know Mr. — or you would not so speak ; he could not deceive, he is so natural ! " I believe it, and remember I said it was not hypocrisy. From what I have heard I believe he is thoroughly amiable, and, I dare say, *well inclined*. But if you have waited for an earthly father's consent, why not for a heavenly Father's ? Why not till his good inclination end in conversion, till his seeking end in belief ? Because you are sure it is God's *intention* to bring him to Himself, and that by your means ?

Really, my dear —, what has become of your reasoning faculties ? Have you been let into God's counsels ? and even if you have, are you to disobey His will in order to bring them to pass ? Do you remember whose work conversion is ? and does He require you to do evil that He may do good ? Were you to have given yourself to Mr. — before you knew the Lord, and then expect that He would hear your prayer for him, it would

be expecting abounding grace ; but is it less than presumption, with open eyes to unite yourself to him now, and then expect that, since you have not fitted yourself to God, He will fit Himself to you ? I should fear you were leaving yourself without an argument to plead with Him. Would it be excusable to run away with Mr. —, and marry him at Gretna Green, because you feel so certain your father intends to give his consent ?

But perhaps you will say, “The Lord has not forbidden it.” I have again considered 1 Cor. vii. I am still of opinion that it is, exactly in point. Keep in mind there is no middle state. Read Romans viii., and see that those who are in the flesh are not in the Spirit ; those in the Spirit are not in the flesh. If the evidences given of those in the Spirit, to whom alone the promises belong, are not seen in him, he is in the flesh, and he is to be considered by the Christian in the same light as an infidel, as to “*evil communications corrupting good manners.*” Surely if the Israelites are so repeatedly urged not to mingle with the heathen lest they learn their works, and are so often chastened for this sin, are we in no danger in taking such as guide, companion, counsellor, the repository of our every care, joy and sorrow, the one we vow to obey ? Believe me, a man will not learn from his wife. Why are the Lord’s people kept so separate—a peculiar people—throughout the Bible ? and what was the effect of their intermarriages ? See both Ezra x. 2, 3, and Nehemiah xiii. 23-27.

Did Solomon (1 Kings xi. 4), with all his wisdom, lead his ungodly wives the good way? or did they lead him the bad? Is human nature changed? Why did David so repeatedly say he would not know, or even have to dwell in his house—one that is not the Lord's, that he looks upon such as his enemy, and even that his companions shall be those who fear the Lord? Is not still the path of the just a shining light? Is the way of the ungodly less darkness? Have light and darkness more communion than they had? Why does St. Paul bid us to marry *only in the Lord*? (1 Corinthians vii. 39.) Is it that you shall have more advantages than at home? The Lord has settled the *one*, and can glorify Himself in you, who are His property, bought, paid for. He has forbid the *other*. I do not expect you in the least to mind what I say, and I fear all this will be seen some day by Mr. —; but I have said nothing against him, except that he is not now one of God's children, which I gather from yourself. I deny not but some day he may turn out a brilliant light; but whether or not, I must think it the greatest presumption for you, in his present state, to marry him. As for his being afflicted, do you mean to say that none are afflicted except the Lord's children? I wish I could think the same, and that all I have seen under stripe upon stripe, or even those who have been at the time softened by it, consequently must be safe. Alas! alas! no.

When I found writing was useless I prayed

often ; but your reasoning on this also is strange. You determine, if you can, to walk into the fire, yet you tell me to pray that you may not be burned. Would you think it reasonable for me were I to yield myself to the dissipations of the world, and tell you to pray that I should not be led into temptation ? As to God making it out by His providences, I have answered to —. If I were asked what I saw in His providences, I should be inclined to answer, “ He is emphatically asking, ‘ Lovest thou Me more than these ? ’ ” You answer in words—

“ Give what Thou canst, without Thee I am poor ; With Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away.”

But you as plainly deny it in action. He says, “ If you love Me keep My commandments.” It is painful to flesh and blood to cut off a right hand, to pluck out a right eye ; yet it is expected, and those are not worthy of Him who are not willing to give up all, “ take up their cross and follow Him.” Abraham’s was a painful trial of faith when called to offer up his Isaac. Would it have proved his love if he had said, “ I cannot do that ; but if the Lord takes him from me I shall be resigned ? ” The trial of your faith must be more precious than gold, must be tried in fire, and will prove itself by giving up the idol ; not in being resigned should it be denied by your Father ; not by determining, if you can, to do evil that good may come. As to saying you have consented, that I consider as the world’s snare. You made a pro-

mise you had no right to make, and therefore you have no right to keep. The Lord says, "Give *Me* thine heart." Mr. — says, "Give *me* thine heart." The Lord says, "If you give Me all—time, talents, everything, without the heart, they will be nothing." Mr. — says the same. You answer, "I will give it to both." But stop and remember who it is says, "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos iii. 3.) Remember who says, He will not divide the heart with Belial (2 Cor. vi. 15). Choose then whom you will serve. Oh, may you be able to answer in action, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Oh, well He knew our frame, who appointed that our heaven should consist of love! It is a dangerous feeling to be trifled with; there is something so sweet in loving and being loved. All in Christ Jesus shall drink together of the draught of everlasting love, when at length we reach that ocean of love without bottom or shore, when He shall Himself show us, in the map of time, the line of love which has traced out our every step through this dark, howling wilderness. There we shall wonder at ourselves for ever hesitating, whether He that spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us, will not with Him give us all good things. (Rom. viii. 32).

"Above the rest this note shall swell,
My Jesus hath done all things well."

Hoping and praying for your eternal good,

whatever may happen, that the evil as well as the good may work for it,

I am, dear —, as ever

Your very sincerely affectionate,

T. A. P.



CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.—The courage, patience, firmness and zeal of a Christian are a perfectly distinct order of character from the courage, firmness, patience and zeal of a natural man—self-confidence, self-glory, self-preservation, self-exaltation, are the essential principles of one ; confidence in God, self-renunciation, subjection to God, glory to God, abasement of self, being essential principles of the other. So that the essential principles that formed the character of Paul as a natural man were destroyed through the cross, in order that his soul should imbibe the life of Christ, which was the principle that formed his character as a Christian, “I am crucified with Christ ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Though Christ was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. In any instance that we give up our own will, without sacrificing conscience, we are gainers. If but my dog exercises my patience, and makes me yield my will, he is a blessing to me. Christ never willed anything but what was good and holy ; yet how often was His will thwarted, how often hindered in designs of good !

THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE WORLD.

“The friendship of the world is enmity with God ; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” Powerful testimony ! which judges the walk and searches the heart. The world's true character has now been manifested, because it has rejected and crucified the Son of God. Man had been already tried without law, and under law ; but after he had shown himself to be wholly evil without law, and had broken the law when he had received it, then God Himself came in grace ; He became man in order to bring the love of God home to the heart of man, having taken his nature. It was the final test of man's heart. He came not to impute sin to them, but to reconcile the world to Himself. But the world would not receive Him ; and it has shown that it is under the power of Satan and of darkness. It has seen and hated both Him and His Father.

The world is ever the same world : Satan is its prince, and all that is in it, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world. The heart of man, the flesh, has since the fall been always enmity against God. It is often thought and said, that since the death of Christ, Satan is no longer the prince of this world ; but it was precisely then that he declared himself as its prince, leading on all men, whether Jews or Gentiles, to crucify the Saviour. And although men now bear the name

of Christ, the opposition of the world to His authority remains the same.

Only observe and see if the name of Christ is not dishonoured. Man may indeed be taught to honour it ; but it is none the less true that where he finds his enjoyment, where his will is free, he shuts out Christ, lest He should come in and spoil his pleasures. If left alone he does not think of Him, he does not like to be spoken to of the Saviour ; he sees no beauty in Him that he should desire Him. Man likes to do his own will, and he does not want the Lord to come and oppose it ; he prefers vanity and pleasures.

We have the true history of the world and its practical principles in Cain. He had slain his brother, and was cast out of the presence of God, despairing of grace, and refusing to humble himself. By the judgment of God he was made a vagabond on the earth ; but such a condition did not suit him. He settled down where God had made him a vagabond, and he called the city after the name of his son, to perpetuate the greatness of his family. That his city should be deprived of all the delights of life would have been unbearable ; therefore he multiplied riches for his son. Then another member of the family invented instruments of music ; another was the instructor of artificers in brass and iron. The world being cast out from God, sought to make its position pleasant without God, to content itself at a distance from Him. By the coming of Christ, the state of man's heart was

manifested, not only as seeking the pleasures of the flesh, but as being enmity against God. However great His goodness, it would not be disturbed in the enjoyment of the pleasures of the world, nor submit itself to the authority of another ; it would have the world for itself, fighting to obtain it, and snatching it from the hands of those who possessed it. Now, it is evident that the friendship of this world is enmity with God. As far as in them lay, they cast God out of the world, and drove Him away. Man desires to be great in this world ; *we* know that the world has crucified the Son of God, that it saw no beauty in the One in whom God finds all His delight.



BIGOTRY AND FAITHFULNESS.

These are days when things are breaking up. Infidelity is rising like a surging flood on every hand, and that which is affecting the world is affecting the Church. Old landmarks are being rapidly swept away, and those of yesterday are not those of to-day. The plenary inspiration of Scripture, the doctrine of the atonement, the divinity of Christ's person, eternity of punishment, are all held by many as exploded theories of an unenlightened past.

Young Christians are more or less influenced by all this, and if they stand up boldly and faithfully for the very words and authority of the Scriptures, they are often dubbed "*bigots*" for their pains.

No, dear young Christians, do not allow terms such as these to close your mouths for Christ, but pray God to give you strength to be faithful to Him and His word.

Paul knew that after his departure grievous wolves would enter in among the saints, not sparing the flock, and from among themselves should men arise speaking perverse things, drawing disciples after them. But what does the front-rank man of Christianity do? Does he give them some well-worded creed to stand by, or some powerful arguments of his to meet the evil teachers with? No; he commends them to God, and to the word of His grace (Acts xx. 29-32). Our strength lies in dependence upon God, and cleaving closely to His word. We may not understand it all, but we can exercise faith in God and His word, and we shall thus be led on. For instance, how many doubt the first chapter of Genesis, and tell us what science has brought to bear on the question, and how the earth has only evolved after almost interminable ages into its present condition. But what saith the Scriptures. "Through FAITH we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." (Heb. xi. 3.) Faith in the word of God leads us triumphantly through no end of difficulties. Then these enlightened (?) individuals turn round and call us bigots. Bigotry is *blindly* adhering to a creed. Bigotry leads to illogical positions, to a hard, dry, unfeeling line of action. But faithfulness to God does just the

opposite. However, faith is outside the province of these doubters. The joy of the Holy Ghost is unknown by them. The power of conversion has not affected them or their lives. The outgoings of hearts to our brethren in Christ form no part of their experience.

They may admire, as they do, the terse, forcible language of the Scriptures, its poetry, its history, its moral grandeur, but they know not its power when applied to the heart and conscience by the Spirit of God. All these facts and experiences are foreign, and unknown to them.

We asked a young man, converted a few weeks ago, "if he understood the Bible better since he was converted." He answered in the affirmative, and agreed that before he was saved it was like a dead man coming to a living Book, and now (through the grace of God) it was a living man coming to a living Book, and a stream of blessing passing from it to him. Those who are seeking to undermine the authority of the Scriptures, and the wondrous truths of Christianity, have no conception of their own utter badness and God's inflexible righteousness. They have never got into His presence, and so they can talk, talk, talk.

The young men in 1 John ii. 14 are strong, because the word of God abideth in them. What a secret of power! May we be kept thus proof against all the assaults of the enemy, whether as a roaring lion or clothed as an angel of light.

May unflinching faithfulness in these last and

perilous days be ours. May the hope of the Lord's near coming keep us from growing weary or our feet from lagging. The sight of His face—never to be withdrawn—will soon gladden our eyes, and fill our hearts with untold joy.

“ A little while”—’twill soon be past,
 Why should we shun the promis’d cross ?
 O let us in His footsteps haste,
 Counting for Him all else but loss :
 For how will recompense His smile,
 The suff’rings of this “ little while ! ”

FORGIVENESS, DELIVERANCE, ACCEPTANCE.

(Concluded from page 100.)

Lev. i.

ACCEPTANCE.

We now come to *Acceptance*. What we have had hitherto has been, in a certain sense, *negative*—though, of course, very real as far as it goes. To be forgiven is very real, but is of a negative character. Let me give an illustration. Suppose a young man has behaved badly, left his home, squandered what he had and got over head and ears in debt. If he returned to his father and confessed what he had done, and his father forgave him and paid all his debts, it would be very kind indeed on the father's part, and would be very real as far as it went ; but, if nothing more was done, how would the young man get on ? What would he live upon ? Suppose, however, that the father

was a very wealthy person and head of a very large and very prosperous firm, and took the young man into partnership. He is now a member of the firm and might be heard talking of *our* firm, *our* business, etc. That would be a great deal more than being forgiven and his debts paid. So it is with the believer. It is not only that his sins are forgiven and that he is delivered from all that was against him, and that there is no condemnation for him, as we have seen, but he is a child of God, yea even more than that, "if children then *heirs* ; *heirs* of God, and *joint* (or *co*) *heirs* with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17).

In Lev. iv., we had what Christ was in His death for the sinner, but in chap. i. we have what He was in His death for God. And whilst the word "burn" in connection with the sin offering means to consume (as expressive of the judgment of God against sin), "burn" in connection with the burnt offering means "to rise up a sweet savour," being quite a different word. Apart from the question of our salvation, fellow-believer, infinite was the glory brought to God by the cross. In the very scene where His glory had been, as it were, trampled under foot, *this world*—as to the very thing so dishonouring to God, *sin*—in the very nature that had been the enemy's willing agent in all this, *man's*—Jesus glorified God: "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do" (John xvii. 4). Was not all that precious beyond measure to the

heart of God? Let the judgment of God search Him in the most minute way (the skin removed and “cut into his pieces” ver. 6) there was nothing but perfection to be found, and all was for God, and rose up a sweet savour (“burn” in ver. 9) to Him. The words, “of His own voluntary will” in ver. 3, should be “for His acceptance.” In the next verse we have : “And He shall put His hand upon the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for Him, etc.” We have seen (pp. 44 and 97), that putting the hand on the head of the animal was expressive of identification. But how different the identification now ; as to the sin offering, faith can look at the cross and say, “That’s me—He measured my distance from God and bore all the consequences—but God has raised from the dead the One who hung on Calvary’s cross and given Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God (1 Pet. i.), so faith can look right up to where Christ is now and say, “He who once measured my distance from God is now the measure of my acceptance and of my nearness, for : “as He is so are we in this world” (1 John iv. 17) ; and we are “accepted in the beloved” (Ephes. i. 6). The reader will notice that it does not say, “accepted in Christ.” No question but it means Christ. But, dear fellow-believer, God would show you and me not only how *near* we are, but how *dear* we are, to Him. So further on the same epistle, it says : “Be ye followers (or rather ‘imitators’) of God as *dear* children. How the

Lord Jesus pressed home on the hearts of His disciples (slow to believe—as alas ! ours also are), “The Father Himself loveth you” (John xvi. 27) ; and, “That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them” (John xvii. 26), which the world will know by and bye (John xvii. 23).

But what became of the skin which we are told in Lev. i. 6 was removed from the burnt offering? If we turn to Lev. vii., where we get the regulations in connection with the offerings, we find in ver. 6, that “the priest who offereth any man's burnt offering, even the priest, shall have to himself the skin of the burnt offering which he hath offered.” Now, whilst not wishing to dogmatize as to the interpretation, it seems to me that the lesson taught is this. The priest is the type of the child of God as a worshipper. Of old, the priest had access only into the holy place. Now, the veil is rent and it is into

The holiest we enter
 In perfect peace with God ;
 Through whom we found our centre,
 In Jesus and His blood,
 Though great may be our dulness
 In thought, and word, and deed,
 We glory in the fulness
 Of Him that meets our need.

But when I do enter, I do so, not only as a forgiven sinner (though, through grace, I am that), but as a child of God and with all the value of the work of Christ resting upon me. And it is well to remember that it is God's estimate of the value of

His work, not mine. Who is it who alone estimates sin aright? God. You and I, fellow believer, may hate sin, and the nearer we are to God, as to the state of our souls, the more we will do so. Still I could not say (nor could any believer) that I have as correct an estimate of sin as God. So also of the work of Christ. It is written, "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself *for us* an offering and a sacrifice *to God* for a *sweet smelling savour*" (Ephes. v. 2). The "*sweet smelling savour rose up to God.*" So in the burnt offering in Lev. i. The 9th verse tells us that (the skin having been removed) all of it was burnt on the altar. Dr. Young's literal translation brings out the force of that verse with much beauty: "The priest hath made perfume with the whole on the altar, a burnt offering, a fire-offering of sweet fragrance to Jehovah." Who smelt the sweet fragrance that arose and put a true value on it? God, for that was all for Him. So I (once a poor, guilty, lost, hell-deserving sinner) now, through grace, stand before God (as does every one resting only on the work of the Lord Jesus for acceptance) according to the value that God puts on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ! What matchless grace!! Well may the Holy Spirit speak of "the EXCEEDING RICHES of His grace," which, "in the ages to come," God is going to show!!! (Ephes. ii.)

Again I ask, dear reader: "HAVE YOU SO LEARNT CHRIST!"

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, FOR YOUR REDEMPTION DRAWETH NIGH.

LUKE XXI. 28.

Lift up your heads ! ye drooping ones—
Sorrow and night are nearly spent.
Sleepers, awake ! Ye slumberers, arise !
And you, ye patient, waiting ones,
Lift up your eyes !

For watchers on the hill-tops see
Visions supremely fair,
And notes of heaven's own melody
Are wafted to them there.

See ye no tokens of the coming morn ?
The breaking of that glorious day,
When sin, with all its deep, dark stain,
For aye shall pass away ?

Oh ! let us not be weary,
Though all around be dreary ;
Though for a while thick darkness like a pall
Over the world should fall.

When fierce the battle strife shall rage,
O Lord, for us do Thou engage :
When Satan wields the death blows of his power
Spirit of Truth, be with us in that hour.

Divinely strengthened, let the Church now stand
Firm against every foe, a compact band ;
Each warrior girded be—assured of victory ;
Others with sandalled feet,
Waiting the summons their dear Lord to meet.

Behold, He draweth near !
Ah ! where will now the careless ones appear ?
Whither will unbelievers flee ?
Where will the scoffer and blasphemer be ?
The lengthened day of grace will soon be o'er
When mercy's tender pleadings
Shall be heard NO MORE !

Joy, joy to all believing ones !

It is the Lord—He comes, He comes !
Christ once denied—"The Crucified."

He who for us was slain
Returns a Conqueror, crowned,
With all His faithful "found,"
Triumphantly to reign.

O grave ! thy well-kept trust is there no more ;
That thrilling sound to thee must be—

Give up *His dead*—Restore ! Restore !
Clearer, transforming, and intenser bright,
Nearer and nearer beams the Living Light ;
Till faith and hope are perfected in sight.

Here conflicts cease—
Armour and weapons are laid down
To take up the Crown ;
All, all is peace !

Earth, once again in youthful prime,
Now owns her rightful King.
And beast and bird, and herb and flower,
Spontaneous tribute bring,

On high, the ransomed myriads raise
Hosannahs to their Saviour's praise ;
Mountains and vales the sounds prolong,
Till universal is the song :
And angel choirs attent above,
Join in full chorus—"God is Love."

The Bride's long-absent Lord is come,
Jerusalem on high her blissful home !



"BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH !"

MATTHEW XXV. 1-13.

It is a striking and solemn thought that when the cry *at midnight* was once made, it *never was repeated*. The effect of the cry was all confusion amongst the virgins. The wise had gone in some-

where, and they had slept as well as the foolish. They had "gone in," and thus had falsified their true and primary attitude, which we read of in ver. 1, where we are told, they "went forth" to meet the bridegroom. But once midnight came, a cry was made; this was full of grace. They did not deserve that they should have been awakened and recalled to their first state of expectancy, still it was given. But it *never was repeated*; and what followed was the confusion, but *midnight was past!* Still, amidst all the confusion, there was a consciousness in the wise virgins that they had oil in their lamps. With them all was well. And when the bridegroom came, they went in with Him to the marriage. The others were not ready, and when they came *the door was shut.*

All this is truly solemn, and the more so when we see how the parable connects itself with the previous one: "*Then* shall the kingdom of heaven," etc. (ver. 1), i. e., in the state of things which we find in the parable of the wicked servant—who said in his heart, my lord delayeth his coming. Mark this; he did not deny that he would come at some time or other, but it did not suit his plans and his association with the drunken, or his assumption of power tyrannising over his fellow-servants. His *heart* dictated his conduct in all this. What has Christendom done but this? Centuries of worldliness and assumption of authority have characterized her; and instead of meat in due season, her effort has been to extinguish the

hope of the Lord's return, as an ever present thing, as but ill suited to her. She has brought in all sorts of events to be fulfilled before that. She does not say, "He will not come," but puts it off as far as possible from a present, living hope.

In such a state of things, the Lord *has given* the warning cry. Of late years it has resounded far and wide. Opinions have varied, and speculations have been put forth as to the true character of that return. Still, the cry has gone forth—the midnight cry—for it was *at midnight* the cry was made; and it was *after midnight* the confusion, which was the result of it, took place.

Let us look around us in Christendom at present, and see if we cannot discover this very state of things—confusion of every kind. Many of those who profess His name have waked up from the slumber which has crept over the Church for centuries—wakened by the midnight cry.

Reader, are you one of those who have heard the cry? And are you conscious of the possession of that which will admit you to the marriage? I appeal to your conscience before God. Is this so, or is it not? Remember this, *the cry never was repeated.*

EVIL SERVANT—"My Lord delayeth his coming."—Matt. xxiv. 48.

SCOFFER—"Where is the promise of His coming?"—2 Peter iii. 4.

CHRISTIAN—"Come, Lord Jesus."—Rev. xxii. 20.

“**MARAH.**”

EXODUS xv.

Scarcely had died away the rapturous notes of Israel's joy and exultation, because of their deliverance from all the power and malice of Egypt, before they are made to feel the barrenness and dearth of the wilderness. With what high and elated thoughts of God's goodness and power did they step out into the wilderness! Surely they were little prepared for this, their first march in it! To go three days and find no water, and when they reached some, to find it “bitter!” What a contrast to the high tone and brilliant expectations they had just celebrated in song! How differently had they expected of God! How natural it was for them, as knowing and rejoicing in the great work of deliverance which He had accomplished for them, to reckon on His providing a scene of unbroken happiness for them. Thus is it often with believers now, after having in like manner, as it were, crossed the Red Sea. They have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and they rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. They have the exulting experience of Rom. v. 2, but can they say, “and *not only so*, but we glory in tribulations also.” Do they as a rule, even *expect* tribulation here, much less *glory* in it? They are in all the exuberance of delight, because of peace with God, and hope of the glory of God. But

what of this world—this wilderness? Have not many of us expected, and even toiled to find all easy and agreeable here? Have we not sought to make ourselves happy here? Have we not been disappointed, depressed, almost inconsolable, when we have found no water here, and of what there is, only bitter? We have entered the wilderness, without understanding what it is. We have expected that the God who had blessed our souls with such peace and exultation over the enemy and over death, should preserve and screen us from sorrow. In the spirit of our minds, we have not been one whit better than Israel. We have murmured and complained, toiled and fretted, to find easy and agreeable circumstances here. *But it cannot be.* The wilderness illustrates what the world is to the saint; and the first stage of the journey gives a character of the whole. It is all drought. There was nothing in it for Christ. He has been rejected out of it. There is nothing in it for God or for His people. The world has condemned itself in its inability to value Christ. If the best cannot be valued, how could anything inferior? If the world has nothing for God in it; if it has rejected the best thing God could send into it, how can I expect Him to make it easy and agreeable to me? On the contrary, if true to Him, and estimating the world as He does, I glory in tribulation; for tribulation worketh endurance; endurance, experience (or trying); and trying, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed,

because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which He hath given us. I ought to start in the wilderness expecting nothing but dearth ; and in not doing so, is where many of us have failed. Our expectations have been like Israel ; and our disappointment and disheartenment at not finding them realized, like theirs also. We have had in fact, to go back, and begin anew—to start aright. Most of our failings in the wilderness march are attributed to our having started with a wrong idea of what the wilderness is. Ease or rest we *cannot* find in it ; and the more we expect it, the more shall we chafe under the disappointment. The first stage in our journey must proclaim to us, as to Israel, what the true nature of the journey is. *It is Marah.*

What then is to be done—the water is bitter ? *God* can make it sweet. He shows Moses a tree which, when cast into the water, makes it sweet. This is Christ crucified. This is what the world rejected ; and the only good thing which God has to give His people in passing through it. Nay more ; the bitterness of the circumstances which I am passing through, is only an opportunity for Christ to come in, and so make the bitter sweet. If you have no Marah here, you know not the power of Christ to convert it into sweetness. Paul in prison at Rome, and John at Patmos, were in very bitter circumstances ; but would they have changed them for any other, seeing that those

circumstances were the opportunity for the revelation of Christ? God cannot let me find both sweetness here, and sweetness in Christ. If I *will* have the sweetness of circumstances, I shall not have the sweetness of Christ in the bitter circumstances, for it is He who brightens up the dark circumstances. Let me once be brought to see that without the bitter circumstances I could not have such knowledge of Christ, and I shall murmur at them no more. I accept them; nay, I glory in tribulation. It is not only that I am quiet and resigned, braving my circumstances in the strength of natural character. No, I *know* they are bitter; but I don't occupy myself with the bitterness, because God has given me to know more of Christ in it; so much so, that I should be sorry that they should be altered, lest I should lose what I have learnt of Christ in them, making them sweet. I am thus prepared for tribulation, but I am also assured of finding in Christ a *greater* and *fuller* delight; so that the tribulation is hailed as another opportunity for disclosing to my heart, as a sufferer here, the excellency and virtue of Christ. I am neither vexed nor disappointed; I am in the happiness of God. I joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation. Amen.



THE CHURCH OF GOD.

GOD has "a Church." God has not been ashamed to connect *His* name with one Church—"the Church of the living God" (1 Tim. iii. 15). Oft He calls it "the Church of God" (see Acts xx. 28 ; 1 Cor. xv. 9 ; Gal. i. 13 ; 1 Tim. iii. 5). This it was which Christ called "My Church" (Matt. xvi. 18). And oh, how wondrous : in Ephes. i. 22, Christ given of God to be head over all things to the Church, *which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all!* (See also Ephes. iii. 10 ; v. 23, 25, 27, 29, 32 ; Col. i. 18, 24.)

Child of God ! Can you *show me* this Church ? I have a picture of it, dear to my heart, in the Scriptures ; but I have sought that which the word of God describes as the Church, and have not found it, as it could once be found and seen at Jerusalem, at Ephesus, etc.

What am I to do ? Humble myself down into the dust, so far as I know how (and I have sought to do so these last twenty-five years), not because saints are scattered, but because of man's entire failure in responsibility to God as to the Church ! Then you will say, "You look to see what God will do *for you* and His saints as to communion." Not so ; if my eye be single, I look then to see what God will do *for His own honour* and for the glory of Christ, *with all* His believing people, under

these circumstances ; and this is quite another thing. He may count it to be for His own honour, and for the glory of Christ, and for our blessing in the Spirit, to make us taste the fruit of man's doings, and the failure ; and taste it with inward bitterness and individual experience. May God do with us as seemeth Him good ! No union, no communion which is not that of the Church of God, in the power of the name of the Lord Jesus, could satisfy the Spirit of God in us.

Has not OUR taste of communion of saints assumed a wrong place in many hearts ? Are not many shirking the cross of bearing, outwardly, a state of things which God has brought up to make us realize what we had concealed from ourselves, as to failure ?

Let the Lord do as seemeth Him good. Do thou study His word to see what the Church of God is, and avoid, on one hand, the narrowing down of truth to human forms and rigid crystallizations ; and, on the other, the neutralization of truth by confounding multitudinous association and intercourse with communion of saints. * And, above all things, judge self, and correct self, rather than the churches. The formative truth, which acted on man's heart to form the Church at first, remains, and each individual soul can say, " Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God "—as to all it has to do ; and as to all it has to suffer, " The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ? "

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

Ephesians v.

The exhortation through Ephesians is of a peculiar character. I think generally believers in the present day are not sufficiently aware that it is an exhortation based and built on the fact that we have got the life that expresses itself in the particular way which this epistle traces out. God made man, and there were certain things according to the first creation right and proper for the creature; dependence on the word of God, and love toward all his fellows, which man has lost all the power of through sin. There is then a new creation, and that creation is described in the first chapter of this epistle. We are God's workmanship (chap. ii. 10); that is, we are the thing which He has made. Ver 9: "Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." It is not workmanship as a thing in which God is acting at the present time (that is quite true); but if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature—he is altogether taken out of the old into fellowship with the new. Christ, as a man down here essentially divine, perfectly pure, had power to do God's will, and did it. I am in Christ, and then came the works He has created us to—works

essentially different from those of the first Adam. The works we have, traced out in the end of chaps. iv. and v., are the works of truth, of love and of light—of truth, in that God revealed what was truth when His Son came into the world ; of love, in that God delighted in Christ, and has so united a people with Him that He can so speak of us as being “in Christ.” He says, “Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us.”

And then again (ver. 8), He brings out light : “Ye were sometimes darkness, now are ye light in the Lord.” These works we found redemption works. Adam could not know “the truth.” It is not truth abstractedly ; it is Christ, the full expression of what God is, and the full discovery of what man’s need is ; that is, the truth in which I have been created. Bring Christianity into the scene, everything gets its character stamped upon it according to what Christ is. “All His paths drop fatness,” tender mercy and goodness, as He goes through the work. Am I a Christian—God’s workmanship in Christ? Truth : what is the truth? Do you talk about the truth? Why, you are a sinner ! I say, “You need not tell me that. My sinnership and the measure of my saintship have been proclaimed upon the throne of God ; for the Lamb of God, who died for me, is there.” Righteousness : I am in Christ. How can God receive one who has no claim on Him at all?

Surely if He honours the Christ of God, He will turn His back upon the man who is the very contrast. Ah, yes ! but Christ has sat down as the Saviour, and righteousness is secured to me in Him—the righteousness of God. Was it right for God to receive Christ ? Ah ! surely it was. He sits there at God's right hand as the Saviour. It was for sinners with not a rag, not a title to present. By the very extremity of the evil connected with me, Christ cannot do without me. He wants me for the very proof of what that very righteousness is in which He is before God.

Then the "love." Well, how did all the real delight of God have a sweet smelling savour ? Where did it come out ? Just where Christ met all the very thoughts of God : " I could sweep man away with the besom of destruction ; but then, I have not my own way. I will have mercy, and not sacrifice ; I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." The Father turned to the Son as the only Person who could meet the difficulty ; therefore He met the Father's mind, and made Himself a sweet savour unto God as meeting the question of the holiness of God. " Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." " Now are we the sons of God." Love, beloved, would humble by love.

" Now are ye light in the Lord." It is all perfect light. We can draw near to the holiness of God, right through the veil up to the place where

God Himself is, and dwell in the light, and see God, what He is. I am part of God's workmanship in that way; and after tracing out those three elements of the new creation as He does in the fifth chapter, He comes down to a sort of testing of our hearts and circumstances where we are and he says, "Now let joy abound in your hearts." The mind of man is onesided; it will go into great joy, and forget other things; and He who wrote this knew there was need, so He puts in another word, "Rejoice evermore; and again I say, Rejoice." Now, that is a test for what you are really down here in the wilderness. Can you give thanks always for all things? It is a test of the grace really in its purity in us. "Giving thanks always for all things." The workmanship of God can bear that test. "Rejoice evermore." God is my joy, and I am for Him. Christ is my exceeding great reward; and though He remove real blessings from us as He often does, we are to give thanks always for all things. Have I not enough to rejoice in, not only when He barks the fig-tree, and lays bare the vines, but in spiritual conflicts, temptation, so as to bring out our weakness? "Giving thanks always for all things;" that is a part of what the privilege of the Christian is according to this new nature He has given to us.

A little word, a happy word, I would put in from Philippians. A bold, confident man would say, "I have learnt the whole lesson." God had

him in the school teaching him. What should enable Paul to say to those Philippians, "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure"? There is God working in, and before there is God working in, there is the having set us in Christ. He is working in us according to the nature He has brought us into. Then he takes up these relationships down here; and it is most blessed to see how not only all these things in connection with domestic life—wives and husbands, parents and children, servants and masters, which, alas! man in this nineteenth century so dishonours on earth—how all these things passed before the mind of the blessed Lord as the Spirit has given them.

Just for a moment or two let me call your attention to what was more particularly upon my mind, what is said of Christ in His love. First of all, He is said to be the Head of the Church, and the Saviour of the body. Now the Church, in the sense it is spoken of here as His body, is made up, so far as the elements of it are concerned, of sons of God. The title is special. Before I can belong to that Church I must be a son of God; but creating a body for Christ was needful to God. Brought to Him in that sense, we find there is a certain measure of glory, moral glory, which will come out in displaying that He is the Head of the body, and we are members in particular. He speaks of His love (ver. 25). I find often a good deal of practical truth in the way that is presented:

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church.” “A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another *as* I have loved you.” I lay the stress entirely upon “*as* I have loved you ;” that is, Christ took up the believer before the foundation of the world by the hand of God. It makes all the difference, if I do that to my brethren ; it is not that I have got to pay out love to them, much less expect it, but I have got to look at the believer and say, there is a man that God gave to Christ before the foundation of the world. He may not be walking very rightly towards me ; never mind. Christ did not throw up His shoulder towards Peter ; He brought Peter down, knew how to do it, knows each one as given to Christ before the foundation of the world, and therefore having power to find fresh water to wash one another’s feet, “even as Christ.” He did not love us first of all when He was in the world ; so He says, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church.” We have His love and His conduct brought out to us in Philip-pians. He was associated with His Father in the thought that it would be a good thing for God to go off the throne and become a man, stain the pride of man’s heart, to show how a man could be down here on earth in dependence upon God, doing nothing but God’s will.

He had this love, everything, in association with God. God trusted Him for it, sent Him for it. He came the perfect servant ; therefore when He

says in that verse, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church," it is not only that the love of the husband is to be a love that spends itself, but he must take up the object on whom the love is spent and connect it with the mind of God ; then it is all self denial on the part of the husband. The first thing when this company was brought before His mind was, not only that He loved them, as sons of God, or as a body that would be brought by Him into the glory, where God and the Lamb would display all their glory, but that He had to give Himself for it.

The merchantman seeking goodly pearls found one pearl of great price, and went and sold all that he had and bought it. The Son of God could not have the Bride at all if He had remained only in divine glory. He must take a lower place in which man could become associated with Him ; utterly go down to qualify us for that glory. He took a place by which He could ; He gave Himself for it, and then again, " that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word," set it apart. None but He, who was the Son of God, could have given that Nazariteship to the Church which is here expressed. When Christ met us first of all, beloved, we had nothing but sin. What would cleanse us ? What had we of our own but sin ? Nothing could take out the scarlet stain of sin but His own life-blood, and that blood has touched my conscience. I am separated by that blood ; that blood is on my conscience ; I am to

walk as separated to God. There is the putting apart, and the washing of water by the word, the constant application of the word of God to the soul to keep up cleanliness, the cleansing of all. It could not be unless the Son of God had us in His hands. Then after the separation primarily to God, if any child of God sin we have an advocate with the Father, it comes in to keep the conscience clean ; there is the constant application of the word of God to us. He applies the word by the Spirit to the heart of the babe in Christ to show that he was not under condemnation, but under acceptance ; to the young man, that he cannot identify himself with the things round about him, he cannot carry the dust of earth into heaven. He applies the word in entirely different ways to each one of us, not only to classes, but to each separate soul. There is love ! What a variety of expression His love has ! The son of God, to identify Himself with the Father's mind in the thoughts of God that He should have a Church, quietly waiting, and His love never failing during four thousand years, finding nothing in man to commend man to Him—all in Himself. His love perfectly ready for God, laid out for them to do everything for Him ; the first thought in His mind, after waking up out of the grave, thoughts of love about His people—" My Father and your Father, my God and your God." " Go and tell Peter." What blessed words of love ! And nearly two thousand years have run their course, and He is

just as diligent on the part of those who are brought to Him now as He was then. Did you ever think of the extraordinary position we are in as the manifestation of His love? Because he bore you upon His heart, and me. He saw us in the stream of time, just picked us up, and is making us know the love, just as His people were brought out through the wilderness. Perhaps He will appear before we get to the end of the course. Then there will be the thought, expressed according to His mind and His Father's mind, what this love of God is—"the Church given me as my bride;" this Church connected with the manifestation of the glory of God. He will present it to Himself—He will, and with triumph. There is what He throws the husband upon as the well of water where he would always find water. The Christian's springs are never dry. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." There is love in Christ's heart for us. The one who is called to hold the place of a husband can draw from that spring fresh water to enable his soul—what? to please himself in his wife? No; to take her up in the association where she is set, to help her—never a will of his own, always with this thought about God.

Then, on the other hand, when He speaks about the wife it is just the same beautiful help given to the soul in the circumstances. He says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." You follow me as I follow Christ. A thousand little things that it makes no difference how they are settled unless it be according to God. If I were a husband, and had to settle the burden of the responsibility, then the wife is quit of it

clearly, and the will is bowed. The responsibility rests upon the other side. Well now, a servant with a master—a tyrant? Never mind; it is God trying me, not my master. Just leave it in the Lord's hands, perfectly willing in subjection to Him. A most blessed thing it is, beloved, where the wife finds grace in all that passing relationship (for it is a passing one) not to take it up as that which will minister to her own joy, but finds herself as the one he can reckon on most blessedly from the retired position in communion with the Lord, so that when in the hurry and drive of the business and duty of the husband he expresses what should be done, he just finds her heart at home with Christ. I do not know what tells more on real character than just finding this. When the husband, perhaps a strong character, can say this of wife, "Well, the one thought of her soul is, what will please Christ? Why do I not do this thing? Well, I found my wife praying about the thing, and she was not sure it was His mind." "Shall we not be more like the world if we do this thing?" It is not the putting forth her own will; it is really being the keeper of the king's head. "God has given me one whose thought is always what the Lord would have." It would be the very thing to keep the husband and his heart before God, who knew over and over again where his foot would have slid, but there was one in the Lord's presence watching and praying before God to find out what was the Lord's mind, and throwing the mind forward because of the very difficulties, so that the heart can pass on quietly. We have the ear of our God, and His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear; and His arm is stretched forth in the token of His love to the people that know His name and hang upon Him.

CITIZENS OF HEAVEN.

I COR. XV. 47, 48.

Who are these whose faces are irradiate .
 With eternal joy ?
 With the calm the tempest may not trouble
 Nor the grave destroy ?

Glad as those who hear a glorious singing
 From the golden street,
 Moving to the measure of the music
 That is passing sweet.

They have been within the inner chamber
 None can tread beside,
 Where the Bridegroom radiant in His glory
 Waiteth for the Bride.

He has shown them in those many mansions
 How to Him is given
 That high palace of surpassing beauty,
 Holiest in Heaven.

There it is that they behold His radiance,
 There His love they know,
 Therefore theirs is God's eternal gladness
 Whilst they walk below.

Therefore tread they in Earth's darkest places,
 Through all grief and sin,
 For they know the home that waits the weary,
 Know the love within.

Therefore sad and strange to them the splendours
 Of the world must be,
 " O forgotten and rejected Jesus,
 We have looked on Thee !

" We have seen Thee in the Father's glory,
 Shared the Father's kiss ;
 Strange henceforward to the world our sadness,
 Stranger yet our bliss.

" Sadness for the eyes that cannot see Thee,
 Whom to see is Heaven ;
 Bliss that flows mysterious as the River
 When the Rock was riven.

" Oh might some sweet song Thy lips have taught us,
 Some glad song and sweet,
 Guide amidst the mists and through the darkness
 Lost ones to Thy feet.

" Not our joy, but Thy Divine rejoicing
 Fills that palace fair,
 For the wonder past our heart's conceiving
 Is the welcome there."

Is it strange that from the golden chamber,
 From the secret place,
 Come they forth with everlasting radiance
 Of His glorious Face ?

Telling mysteries that to babes are simple,
 Hidden from the wise,
 Fragrant with the odours of the lilies
 Of God's Paradise ?

Changed—transformed ; for ever and for ever ;
 Thine alone to be ;
 Knowing none on earth, O Lord, beside Thee,
 None in Heaven but Thee.



THE HEAVENLY DWELLING-PLACE AND THE EARTHLY PILGRIMAGE.

(Psalm lxxxiv.)

In this Psalm we have two different states—the enjoyed and, for us, heavenly privileges of a saint, and the experience of mercies by the way, and thus the lessons of God's faithfulness in them. These may be united, but very often are found separated. For a soul may know the experiences, without deep rest and the consciousness of heavenly joy—the heart's peace in the presence of God and in God Himself. It is evident that this is what our souls would desire, above all things,

if we are now practically with God ; that is, to be with Him according to the height of His own thoughts and goodness, and the display He has given, not only of His grace, but also of the place in which He has put us, apart from all circumstances and experiences, that we may be able to enjoy Him to the uttermost. Now I am persuaded that this kind of enjoyment of God is comparatively rare, even among the beloved ones of His family ; and that the continual tendency of our hearts is to be content with just that measure of knowledge of God which hinders our souls from getting into trouble, anxiety, questions of one kind and another. And this comes of the wretched selfishness of our hearts, and the disposition there is in us to enjoy present things, so far at least as our consciences can in any wise permit without damaging our confidence in God. Need I say that a soul born of God resents such a principle as this, and no soul that is entangled by it thoroughly weighs and judges it—understands it in its real import. For there are many specious pretexts which the enemy uses to hinder souls and keep them back. He does not of course permit, as far as he can, that one should understand what he is seeking ; but his object with the saint is, that in one way and measure or another he may hinder the triumph of our souls and the present glory of God in association with His people.

Let us, then, just look briefly at the two fold picture herein afforded. In an Israelite, the two

things could not be together ; but the Christian's peculiarity is, what was necessarily separated in others, we are entitled to enjoy—knowing what they had to learn in detail here and there. There are two blessings, or two classes of men said to be blessed here. The first are those that abide in Jehovah's house : " Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house." Then the effect is immediate and inseparable, and most glorifying to God : " They will be still praising Thee." It is the spirit of worship. You have hearts near enough to God to be above the depression or the elation created by present changes. Around that house there might be bitterness, sorrow, deep dishonour ; for the struggle of the enemy is always most keen in the neighbourhood of God's glory. But they are in His presence ; and what matters it then if Satan rage, and rage ever so near them ? They know that they are near Him to whom Satan, and all that Satan can do, is but a little thing—that they are in the presence of Him who loves them, and controls all things. True moral elevation is theirs and spiritual power ; for God is their measure of judgment and their rest ; and this is only the more appreciated because of the boisterous waves and tempests that Satan may be permitted to excite. And they have the consciousness of this, those that are thus near to Him. They are those dwelling in His house, and they are still praising Him. It could not be otherwise. If I am so near to God that His glory fills my eye

and my heart, I may know all other things outside, but this is the object that attracts my soul and keeps me in peace and gives me power to praise. "They will be still praising Thee." "How amiable ('lovely' or 'beloved') are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts." It is no question now of Israel and of their tabernacles. The soul that has entered into the presence of God regards it less as the tabernacles of the people than of *God*, even Jehovah Himself. "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord." But the courts are not enough, though they might be near, for he adds, "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. "He wanted more than His courts—"the living God, even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God." So far from being content with the outer circle, when once the desire to be near God is in the soul, the desire rises to "the living God." How near can I get to Him? Thine altars—taking in both golden and brazen altars—intercession and acceptance. My heart, he says, is longing to be there, "even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God. In the parenthetical word, which comes in so beautifully, the thought is this. The sparrow may be despised. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" But let them be ever so common and contemned of man, yet are they cared for by our heavenly Father. Yes, the sparrow has found an house; and the swallow,

restless as she may be upon the wing, yet the restless bird has found a nest where she may lay her young. And where is our house and our nest? O how blessed is the answer! In nearness to Himself, where His glory dwells—"Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God." This is true of every saint of God. It is their full, eternal portion before Him. But I am not speaking of it now in the point of view of a fact that grace has given to every Christian, but in a practical way. What I am at is that our souls enter into it and respond to such grace, and find our deep joy in the place which God has given us, in His beloved Son, near to Himself. There are, however, practical trials for each; and hence we find the second part of this Psalm, where the way is looked at, rather than rest and enjoyment in God's presence. People often make their deepest blessings the resource of their souls in sorrow, rather than their present home. Is it not so with many of us? Do we not put aside the thoughts of being so near to God? Do we not wait for it as that which we trust will be our place by and by in heaven? But how is it now? Is it our present pavilion? Is it that to which we turn, as the needle to the pole, habitually? It may be quivering under the pressure of outward circumstances, but there it surely turns. And is it to Christ Jesus that our souls turn habitually? Is it in the consciousness that we are brought into God's presence and seated in heavenly places in Christ

Jesus, put there as our present home, that we walk through this world? Is this the experience of our hearts? But few of God's children could answer with simplicity and assurance of heart, that it is so with them. That there their souls habitually dwell. They may be able to say, "It is my desire;" but what is the actual state of the heart? Though there may be at times some bright gleams, yet is not praise rather the exception than the habit? It may be that we only know what praise is when we meet together on the Lord's day, or when we manifestly bow in worship. But is the tone of thanksgiving, the spirit of adoration, that which characterizes our souls throughout each day? Or is not the power of praise, alas, the rare thing; and the trial of circumstances upon us, and the consciousness of failure, that which prevails? We have, as it were, to put on the garment of praise, instead of standing ever clothed with it. I do desire this for myself as for all the children of God, knowing how blessed it is, though how little entered into. Assuredly it is the sweetest place and the secret of real power. I do not allude now to the power which manifested itself in testifying to others (this is no doubt, important in its place), but there is no power so blessed as the happy, peaceful, calm enjoyment of the presence of God. There is nothing that so wears through all the storms and difficulties and trials of person and things here. The Lord grant that we may know it well. For if we are happy

in our own souls, we make happy—we excite a spirit of praise in others. If our hearts, on the contrary, are always dull, and we are occupied with enemies and evils, disappointment then follows, thence a querulous weakness in ourselves and we become rather the means of enfeebling souls, and filling Christ's members with that which is the reflection of our own weakness, instead of evidencing the strength which is in Christ. The later verses, then, give us the Israelite on his way—he cannot be parted from the land. There are all sorts of difficulties in the way; but if God has called a soul to go there, He does not fail. There is the rain, too, that fills the pools—refreshment ever and anon which God graciously vouchsafes. Therefore, “they go from strength to strength,” God mercifully sustaining and guiding. “Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.”

But the characteristic feature that appears now is prayer, not praise. It is blessed really to pray. It is a true sign of divine life, as we see in the case of Saul of Tarsus, “Behold he prayeth.” The renewed soul cannot but bring its weakness and difficulties before God. But though we must not pray less, we should praise more. Not that we should not feel our weakness and the valley of Baca; but we are called to far, far more, every one of us; and it would be a poor thing to have a title to some blessing, if it were not an enjoyed and appropriated title; if it was like a mere parchment deed, shut up in a strong box, instead

of a flowing and tasted spring of delights. And how deep is then the joy ! What we find in the early verses is rather the result of this. It is not the conflict, but the soul's rest in the presence of God, which we must not defer till we get to heaven. May our hearts turn there to the enjoyment of God Himself, even while we are here in this world. We shall feel the difficulties, but it will be as those that are above them. It will not be an easy path to the flesh. But felt as all may be, there is something better than being occupied with the sorrows and hindrances of the way, and this is joying in God Himself. Hence, while the trials are experienced, yet we may and should have such repose in God about them all, that while we feel everything, we should seem as if we felt nothing. That is what was realized by the apostle Paul—"many tears," yet "none of these things move me." Did he know the truth of Rom. v. 3 experimentally as an apostle ? Nay, but as a spiritual man. Other apostles may not have known it as he did. The triumph of faith is not connected with any particular place or office, but flows from the soul's appreciation of God's own grace in Christ Jesus. We know that even an apostle will be in hell ; and to many who have wrought miracles and cast out devils in His name the Lord will say, "I never knew you." Let us not suppose that the practical power which can give us to know our place with God depends on any state of the Church, or any

special circumstances or position. These things have nothing to do with it, belonging, as it does, to the power of the Holy Ghost, who gives us to enjoy Christ. The soul that enjoys Him thoroughly will be most in God's presence, and most praising Him; and there, too, I am persuaded, will be most power for practical holiness. God makes us happy in Christ: what is the effect? Holiness. The soul is attracted to walk with God above the world; and without this there is no enjoyment, no praising Him. All is vexation of spirit—all is dark, weak and wretched.

These two things, then, should coalesce in the Christian. We are wrong if we take the passage through the valley of Baca now to be so exclusively our place, as to exclude the rest and joy in God which are ours in His own presence. Blessed surely is the man that trusts God in both these conditions. But where the confidence now is simple, intelligent and full, it will not be merely touching the circumstances of trial, but the heart near God, dwelling in God and God in us, and still praising Him.

The Lord grant that if we know the one, we may enter into the still greater blessing of the other, more fully than ever, through Jesus Christ!



“Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.”
(Ps. lxxiii. 25.)

THE RIBBAND OF BLUE.

(Numb. xv. 37-41 ; Col. iii. 1.)

Let me say a word on the Lord's instituting a blue ribband to be worn by the Israelites on the fringe of their garments. No Christian would suppose that this was unmeaning ; or if it conveys a divine lesson, that it is not our business to seek to understand it ; and more than this, to act by the grace of God accordingly.

As to the general meaning of the "blue," which we often find in this book of Numbers, there cannot be any doubt about it. It is the colour of heaven and the appropriate witness of a heavenly character. We have white used commonly for the representation of purity, as crimson or scarlet is the image of the world's glory ; and the ribband of blue being the heavenly colour, the thought connected with it is very simple, though of immense practical importance. The Lord would have His people, even in the commonest things of daily life, to present the constant testimony before their own as well as others' eyes, that they belong to heaven. The effect of this we shall find to be mighty over the soul. It is not enough for us that we should simply abstain from that which is evil, or that we should cultivate godliness. No person born of God could doubt or deny our obligation to holiness, and that the children of God are bound to abstain even from the appearance of evil. But supposing all this, and that

each wore his garment ever so undefiled, would this be the ribband of blue? Does it not mean the reminding our souls from day to day of the place to which we belong? The outward raiment was used to set forth that which is displayed before people—our character and ways. What God, as I think, intended by the blue on the fringe, was the intermingling in the most ordinary ways of daily life the constant token that we are heavenly, and not merely that we shall be there by and by. If we, as it were, put heaven off, making it purely a hope for the future, would not this be for the Israelite, not to wear or look upon this ribband of blue? For if we are merely treating heaven thus, we might be led to say, "We may be earthly now, but we shall be heavenly by and by when we get there." But the effect of our souls taking in the truth which this type teaches is that, while we are on earth surrounded by difficulties, heaven is before our eyes and hearts. Otherwise we shall be in constant danger of acting simply as earthly men—godly, I will suppose, and kind and truthful; but all that is totally short of God's will concerning us. Even to serve Christ, blessed as it is, is not the same thing as being heavenly. All that might have been, and indeed in many cases is, true in beloved saints of God, where the blue ribband is forgotten. What answers to the type, and gives it us far more fully, according to the power of the New Testament—no longer merely the shadow, but the very

image—is the truth we have in Col. iii. We are there addressed as those who belong to heaven ; but, of course, still upon earth, which gives rise to all the difficulties of the path of faith. There will be no difficulty in walking rightly when we are in heaven ; but the fight and victory is by faith now. We are so apt to judge by the feelings of our hearts, so easily led away. And what can strengthen us against ourselves ? Let us hearken to what the Lord says here : “ It shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them.” Is it not remarkable that the blue fringe should be used of God as an incentive to obedience ? The very fact that our souls begin each day with this memorial before us is no small thing. Supposing that we have in our business, or in anything else, to do with men, what is it that will preserve us by the grace of God ? What an encouragement to us ! What a remembrancer that we belong to heaven ! “ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Were this before us, there is nothing, small or great, that the Christian would not do according to God ; there would be a felt link with heaven, and not merely a matter of necessity or of character, which is below a Christian. Of course a Christian will be honest and godly, but if I make character or necessity the

reason why I do a thing, I am not walking as a Christian at all, but like many a man who is the enemy of God and His Son. Doing it as a matter of duty does not lift you above self and present things. Nay, supposing I look at the Lord simply as one strengthening me in my daily duty, it is quite true; but it is not the full measure of the truth. I may lower the Lord to be my helper upon earth merely; but that is not the ribband of blue. But if my eyes are raised from the earth, and fixed on Christ in heaven—if I remind myself that my present association is with Christ in heaven, and that God looks for me to walk worthily of Christ now above myself, being one with Him who is there—in this you find, I conceive, the great truth that answers to the figure. And this the Lord here connects with remembering all His commandments and doing them and walking holily. He had brought them out of Egypt that they might thus walk according to Him, and that they might be His people and He their God. How often, alas! we walk merely “as men.” But if we do not rise above that standard, we are not walking according to that witness of heavenly things which the Lord set forth in type to Israel. We shall find that the power of being heavenly, is according to the measure in which our souls enter into Christ there. It is not a question of correcting this or that, or of beginning one thing and another, but of heavenly things in Christ separating our hearts from things on earth. When we

look from heaven, as consciously of it, and work from heaven downwards, earthly things soon dwindle, and the praise of their disappearance returns not to ourselves in any way, but to Christ. Thus He Himself has all the glory, whatever good thing there may be wrought by the Spirit among the children of God.



JOSIAH AND JEHOIAKIM.

2 KINGS XXII.; JEREMIAH XXXVI.

It was when Israel mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and misused His prophets, that the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy. Josiah and Jehoiakim reigned over Judah just before the Babylonish captivity. The judgments of God were at the door; and we have, in the history of these two kings, the "important contrast" in the way each received the testimony given to them. In Josiah we have the subjection of heart which God always honours: in Jehoiakim that insubjection which He always judges. The history of man proves, that, whether God speaks in the way of commandment, or in the way of threatening, or in mercy, that His words are despised. There are, indeed, some exceptions, as the case of Josiah, the inhabitants of Nineveh, etc.; but generally rebellion is the course he takes. This has been, from the beginning, continues to be so, and will continue so long as the god of this world blinds the minds of

men. There is something deeply interesting in the whole of Josiah's reign ; but especially so, when the message was conveyed to him that the Book of the Law was found in the House of the Lord. " Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes." His heart was not unmoved ; he trembled at God's word. In that light, what were his circumstances ? That law made manifest Israel's rebellion, brought to light their guilt, revealed the judgment of God against sin, and filled Josiah's heart with sadness. Whither could he flee for help ? Only to God. And blessed it is, that when the heart is thus made truly sensible of its condition by seeing light in God's light, there is a refuge in God. " There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared. . . Let Israel hope in the Lord ; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption." (Psalm cxxx. 4, 7). Josiah sends to inquire of the Lord and receives this answer, " Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the Book which the king of Judah hath read But to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord 'God of Israel, as touching the words which thou hast heard ; Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this

place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes and wept before Me ; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord, Behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace ; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place." Such is the grace of our God ! The bruised reed He will not break. He giveth grace to the humble, "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust !" Josiah might use the language of the Psalmist, "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings, and He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God."

Painful, indeed, is the contrast in turning to the history of Josiah's son. Of him it may be said, "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, that trusted in the abundance of his riches and strengthened himself in his wickedness." The 36th chap. of Jeremiah opens with the goodness of God towards His poor rebellious people. He presses upon their attention the solemn condition they were in, causes a roll to be written containing all the words Jeremiah had spoken against Israel, saying, "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them ; that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."

This roll of a book reaches the ears of Jehoiakim (21st verse). "So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber: and Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. Now the king sat in the winter-house in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.' Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words."

How solemn is all this, after seeing the tenderness of heart in Josiah. Jehoiakim rushes from the sound of God's word into the darkness of infidelity. He supposes to escape the judgment of God, by disbelieving the testimony concerning it. This is where Satan is fast leading the world into open rejection of the word of God. There may attend it what Jehoiakim realised. He was not afraid, nor rent his garments. "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Jehoiakim had quietness, but it was not that peace which Josiah knew, of condemnation put away, sins forgiven. There is a message for him. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim king of Judah, He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to

the frost. And I will punish him, and his seed, and his servants, for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not." Pride and unbelief shut out from all blessing, and leave their victims exposed to the wrath of God. "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (see Jer. xvii. 5-8). The only place of blessing is that Josiah took. There the Lord ceases to have a controversy. He knows the claims of His own truth. He will not relinquish them. "He has magnified His word above all His name." Saul sought to uphold his own integrity when the word of God was against him. His heart bowed not before the truth: the Lord cast him off. It is a vain thing to strive with God. May the Lord guard His children in this day of evil! Give us tenderness of heart to "*all*" His truth, so that we may hold our proper place of testimony for Him.



A WORD FOR THOSE ENGAGED IN THE LORD'S SERVICE.

A few years ago I had the privilege of being present at an interview between an evangelist and a venerable servant of the Lord. Having before me all the fellow-labourers in the vast harvest field who may read these lines, I will relate the last words that passed on this occasion so full of interest.

Before taking leave of the old servant of God, and after having expressed the pleasure that it had been to him to make his acquaintance, the evangelist made a request somewhat in these words: "We have just met for the first

time and perhaps it will be the last. You have worked many years in the Lord's vineyard and are drawing towards the close of your pilgrimage and of your service. You have far more experience than myself, for I have only just started in service. May I venture to ask you for a *Motto* which will be a help to me in my work if the Lord sees fit to lengthen out my term of service down here?"

A Motto! Many who read these words might be disposed to reproach the evangelist for showing so little spirituality in asking a man for a motto when he had the word of God. But I will never forget the answer that came from the lips of the old man—an answer full of grace and going to the heart. I will always remember the unction and power with which he pronounced these words: "In the first place, endeavour to produce in the conscience of your hearers a deep sense of sin and of hatred against it; and then, when they have believed the gospel, endeavour to produce in the hearts of those who have believed a true and sincere affection for the Person of the Saviour."

Let all those to whom God has given in any measure to be engaged in presenting the gospel consider carefully these weighty words.

A true and deep work of conscience is extremely necessary in these days of lightness and indifference. Let us never weaken the sense of the gravity of sin in attempting to make the gospel simple; nor fail in insisting on the necessity of real "repentance toward God." And then let us always cultivate in ourselves as well as in each new convert a sincere affection for the Person of Christ—an affection that will manifest itself in a prompt and unreserved obedience. The Saviour has said, "if you love Me, keep My commandments." To do His will, cost what it may, is the *proof* of our affection for Him, just as love for His Person is the powerful motive and the source of all obedience. "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" The Lord refuses the outward fidelity of a disobedient heart.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD SEEN IN HIS WAYS WITH BALAAM.

NUMBERS XXII.—XXIV.

CHAPTER XXII.—It was the object of the enemy to hinder God's people from the enjoyment of the land God had promised to bring them into. It was not now a question of getting out of Egypt. They were brought out, and nearly at the end of the way. *Could* they be prevented entering into the land? If it depended on what *they* were, of course they could be; and Satan, the accuser of the brethren, could hinder *our* getting to heaven because of our sins, if it were on the ground of our worthiness that we must go there. Israel had been stiff-necked and rebellious all the way along, though God had been bringing them water out of the rock for their thirst, and manna from heaven for their food; and now the solemn question has to be settled, whether they are to be prevented entering on account of it. It is the power of the enemy here exerted, not his wiles; *they* come after in the history of Balaam. But this was the point, whether, by force or by wiles, the enemy could keep Israel out of Canaan. We shall see how God announces His thoughts about the

people ; and then the enemy was utterly powerless when *He* took up the question.

Moab is in the place of this world's power—at his ease from his youth—settled on his lees—not emptied from vessel to vessel (Jer. xlviii. 11). Besides being in the place of the world, the prophet is called with the reward of divination in his hand to act for Moab. Balak had civil authority ; but he was conscious that he needed in this case a superior power to help him. The “ powers that be are ordained of God ” (Rom. xiii. 1). Therefore there is really no need of this kind of power to gain men's minds, when all is right. But Balak, having no sense of God's authority and power, seeks it from another. The Israelites are pitched just on the border of the land when this attempt is made to prevent their entering. This is very practical for us ; because many, knowing redemption, and feeling their inconsistencies and failures, begin to doubt whether after all they can reach heaven. It is right to *judge* ourselves for what is evil in us, but the heart owes it to Christ to trust in the mercy of God to the end.

When the people had crossed the Red Sea, they *sung* in the confidence of the power of God to bring them right through, “ Thou hast guided us by Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation ” (Ex. xv. 13). Moab and all their enemies were nothing to them ; for they were conscious of the power of God for them, though the wilderness was all before them. They knew they had got safely out of Egypt, and

they took all the rest for granted ; but they did not know themselves. Therefore God led them forty years in the wilderness, to humble and to prove them, and to know what was in their heart (Deut. viii). In the next chapter we see it was also to shew what the goodness of God to them in all this discipline was.

The people are now at the edge of the land near Jericho. Is the promise as available now that they were at Jordan as at the Red Sea ? This was the question as regarded the people as a whole, not individually ; and it is all a type of spiritual things to us (1 Cor. x. 11). Faith takes us thoroughly beyond circumstances. It does not close the eye, running blindfolded to heaven ; but, taking God's judgment about sin, it knows God's grace also about salvation, and can see that the trials in the way are for the purpose of humbling us, proving us, and doing us good in our latter end. Faith never slights God's judgment about our sin, but trusts in God's grace in spite of it. God will never accuse, though He will chasten His people ; nor will He let Satan do it

Moab really had no need to be afraid, for Israel had strict injunctions not to touch them. Israel would even buy their water of them as they passed through their land. But Moab had no faith in what *God* said. Satan, with all his cunning, cannot tell what the simplest faith knows—the power of God's grace to save to the end. Moab is just a sample of the entire and total ignorance of God's

thoughts in the world. It is well to remember this. They would see this mysterious influence, and yet they are not only ignorant of it, but opposed to it. What had God said to Abram? "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Gen. xii. 3). And now Balak goes about to take the very means of getting God's curse upon himself. Such is the utter blindness of the flesh; it always takes the road to turn God's judgment on itself. There was not only sin in Balak, and plenty of that too, but he had closed his eye against all God's thoughts. It is a terrible thing to be out of the way of God's light, and that is the case with the poor world. If the outward moral restraints are removed in the haunts of men, when their passions are let loose, what utter degradation and misery do we see! And where there is not this outward wretchedness, how sad to see a person walking through this world *without God!* Respectable he may be, and well thought of by his fellow-creatures; but how can he get through death and judgment without God? It is dreadful to think of "the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. iv. 18). If God judges according to our works, what is to be done with them? God says, "There is none righteous, no not one." "All the world are become guilty before God" (Rom. iii. 10, 18). Men go on their way, and think they will get through well at the end. Men of the world are just doing what Balak did. They are

looking for blessing where God has sent the curse, and the curse where God has sent the blessing. There is as much sense about God's ways in an ass as in a man walking without Him.

There are two things in Balaam's mind. One is, that he is afraid of God. So the world are frightened at what they see wrought amongst God's people, whilst they cannot perceive the motives that are at work, and they have no power to control them. There is no power in a parent to prevent the conversion of his child all in a moment. The world cannot control God's work. See how God takes Balaam up ; but has he any time to go to God ? (Ver. 20, &c.)

God is always for His people *in His own heart*. Israel were entirely ignorant of what was going on, but God was not. *He* has taken up the cause of His people, because of the love in His own heart ; and therefore, though he warns them and chastens them, yet He will not let Satan have anything to do with them. It is a sign of Balak being a very wicked man, that he tried to get God's word to Balaam reversed.

In Zech. iii. we have the same thing. Satan there tries to get God's sentence pronounced against the high priest. What could Joshua say for himself ? But God says, " I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee." He does not say, I do not mind the filthy garments, but He comes in of His own love and grace, " I will clothe thee with change of raiment."

God had said to Balaam, "*Thou shalt not go,*" "*Thou shalt not* curse this people." That ought to have silenced him. He ought to have said, There is an end of it, if God says, No. But he was perverse as he could be.

What a terrible plague the people of God are to the world ! They are, in one sense, a pest to it, if walking faithfully. If they are killed, they only multiply the more ; there is no getting rid of them, nor doing anything with them. There are principles and motives and ways in the children of God that the world cannot get rid of. Balaam says to Balak, " If thou wouldst give me thine house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord." How pious he is become now ! If he might have gone, he would. But though he cannot do what he would for Balak, he still keeps up his credit as a prophet of the Lord. Just as if he had the secret of the Lord, he says, "Tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more" (Ver. 19). There has been the money offered, but Balaam speaks as if he was connected with God. This is the way men often act. They claim a connection with God, but disclaim connection with God's people. But this will not do. It is in connection with His people that the cross comes in, and that is the test for a man.

Now God lets Balaam go, and he is delighted at it ; but God *chose* him to go now. And his way was as perverse as ever. God intended him to go,

that he might pronounce a blessing upon His people, instead of a curse. Morally, as regarded himself, Balaam's was the most wicked act in going ; and yet God brings out all His purposes through it. He is nothing more than a rod in God's hand. He goes, and the Lord by an angel meets him. He rebukes man's ways and man's wisdom, by putting more sense into the mouth of the brute beast than man has ; for though he has a *mind*, he uses it against God, which a brute beast cannot do. Man, in one sense, is more blind than Satan, because Satan believes and trembles. God could reveal Himself to a beast's eye as well as to a man's, when He pleased. The effect of this on Balaam was that, in his passion, he would have killed the ass (ver. 29), if he could. When the Lord opens his eyes to see his madness and blindness all the way he has been going, he feels he has sinned, and that God has stopped him (ver. 34) ; but it was from mere terror that he thus speaks, and he goes on without seeing that instead of cursing the people, he was to bless them, etc. (ver. 39.) Balaam goes to the idols of Balak to sacrifice. He liked the name of religion ; but his heart was not with God at all, it was set on money and honour in this world. What a picture of the impotency of sin !

Mark from this history the way God takes to deal with His people. Man thinks to thwart God's people of the blessing He has for them and Satan tries to defeat God in His purposes of love. But

in going their own way, He suffers *men* to do the very things that are for the accomplishment of these purposes. This we see in the crucifixion of Christ. The Jews said, "*not* on the feast day," etc.; but Christ our Passover, was to be sacrificed for us. It was at that very season when the feast was to be kept, and yet they meant nothing less. What a comfort it is to know that God thinks of us, and arranges all for us, though we fail to think of Him! There is not a day, not a moment, but God is thinking of us, and He is above all the plottings of Satan. He will take care of His people. Do they want food? He sends them manna. Guidance? there is the pillar going before them. Do they come to Jordan? there is the ark there. Have they enemies in the land? there is Joshua to overcome for them. He deals with them in the way of discipline when they need it, as He did with Jacob. He humbled him, but gave him the blessing in the end. What a thought this ought to give us of the love of God, when we thus see His activity in goodness to us all the way through! What comfort to know He is *for* us, out of the spring and principle of His own love! He brings His grace and righteousness together in the putting away of sin on the cross. We can never really know God till we know He is Love. God so loved the world that He sent His Son. The world did not ask God to send, and they did not ask Christ to come, but God loved them and *He* sent Him. What a comfort, I say again, to know God

is *for* us, seeing all the enemies—our own hearts, the world and Satan ! *Faith* gets through all, by looking at what *God* is.

CHAPTER XXIII.—We have seen how God laid hold of Balaam by exposing his wickedness. Having got him in His own hand, He forces him to have to do with Himself about His own people. It is a remarkable fact, that Israel does not appear at all in this scene. It was *God* and *Balaam*. So when God beholds His people, He does not allow any check against them, because they are His. If God was walking amongst His people He took account of all their perverseness (see Deut. ix. 24, which speaks of them as at this very time rebelling against the Lord in the plains of Moab). God's judgment of us as saints in our walk, is the same thing ; and our sins against Him, after we are saints, should grieve us even more than those we felt as sinners. When God judges amongst His people as to their walk, He calls everything to account, for He can "by no means clear the guilty." Never does He, in the riches of His grace, bear with or allow sin, as people say. He can cover it in atonement ; He can put it away in the cross, instead of imputing it ; but never can He bear with it, and so give up any requirements of His holiness.

However, the whole question now was between God and His enemy, and it took place up at the top of the hill, the people knowing nothing at

all about it. What could Balaam do with God about the people? Nothing; and when he found he could not avail with God against them, he afterwards seduces them into sin (see Num. xxxi. 16; Rev. ii. 14), and God has to chasten them.

But now, in having to do with *God* about His people, it is only the occasion of God's making a new revelation of His grace. God could not curse His people or defy Israel; and so Balaam has to say after Him. God has His own thoughts about them, and although He can allow no inconsistency in His people, He will bring to pass His own purposes. "And God met Balaam, and he said unto Him, 'I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram.' And Jehovah put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, 'Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak.' And he returned unto him, and lo, he stood by his burnt sacrifice, he, and all the princes of Moab. And he took up his parable, and said, 'Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the East, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom Jehovah hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?"

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his ! ' ' (vs. 4-10).

It is of the last importance for us to see how distinct is God's judgment concerning us, as in our standing in Christ, and as to our walk as saints in the world. The judgment we form of ourselves is never the same as God's. The Holy Spirit, who leads us to judge ourselves, takes account of all the evil which is contrary to God's holiness. In judging myself, I ought to be able to see in myself all the evil, and to be ready to say, when I detect myself, This is not charity, that is not holiness. I have to judge my own heart according to what I am ; but God's judgment of me is according to what He sees me in Christ. If I did not know this to be God's judgment of me, I should never have courage to judge myself. How could I ever look at the evil within, if I knew God was going to impute to me all the evil, and would condemn me for it?

All the difference between experience and faith is this. The testimony of the Holy Ghost in Heb. x., as to what God says of us, has to be laid hold of by faith. " Their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more."

Balaam has no faith in God, so he goes to a high place to see what He will say to him. Peradventure the Lord will meet him. In the next chapter we find he did not do this. Here he takes the character of being very religious. With God in the hill, not Israel in the camp, he sees them (ver. 9). The

people, as to fact, were going on with their foolishness, or their piety (there were Joshuas and Calebs, no doubt) ; but that is not taken account of : God takes all this interest in them out of the springs of His own heart. “ The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned,” etc. God is as absolute in taking them for Himself, as in taking them out of the world. So we “ are bought with a price,” and are therefore not our own. Taken out of condemnation, sin and misery, we are brought into blessing, and now we are not to be like those who are in the world. We are redeemed from the world, and the result of this principle is, that we do not belong to ourselves at all. What we do belong to ourselves in, is in the first Adam. But God has taken us out of this world, that we should belong to Himself. He brought His people out of Egypt to be made His own habitation (Ex. xv.—xviii. ; xxix. 45, 46). God dwells on earth now in us as His habitation (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20 ; iii. 16). We shall dwell in heaven by and by. We are a heavenly people, and the *life* of a person consistent with God’s dwelling in him is looked for.

It is Satan’s unwearied effort to bring a curse against us, just because we are redeemed, as it was with God’s enemy, in the history of His people, to curse them. We have to resist him stedfast in the faith. His accusations are made to God, and God answers for us. Faith takes up the answer of God, as in Zech. iii. It is

of the greatest importance for our peace, and our holiness too, for us to understand this. What could Joshua say to the filthy garments about which he was charged? and ought he to have on filthy garments? Surely not; *he* has nothing to say, but *God* answers for him: This is a brand I have plucked out of the fire, and you want to put it in again. Then He says to the angel, "Take away the filthy garments," etc.; and then God speaks to Joshua, and tells him that He has done it. "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee," etc. Thus He makes the poor sinner to know the perfectness of His work, and the love in His heart that has wrought on his behalf. He does not say, I will do it, but, "I have caused," etc.

Ver. 19, Balaam is obliged to bear witness to the character of God. "God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent," &c. He is not only a God of truth, but He does not alter it. He says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." This speaks the unrepentingness of God. The truth that He tells is truth, eternal truth, and it is now in the mouth of the enemy. "I cannot reverse it." Not, I will not, but I cannot.

The great need we have, as individual saints in the wilderness, is to *see* the evil that is in ourselves. practically, and judge it perfectly. Then we shall never be judged for it (see 1 Cor. xi. 31, 32). God cannot allow sin in us. His way of putting

it away is the opposite of making allowance for it ; but it is the non-imputation of it.

Ver. 23, "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, . . . according to this time it shall be said, What hath God wrought !" If a soul only sees what *he* has wrought, he stays away from God ; but if he sees what God has wrought, he is happy with Him. You can never know how to pronounce judgment upon yourself, without getting into His presence. It must be all uncertainty until you know what God says. You will have Jesus on one side, and hopes on the other ; light on one hand, and clouds on the other. It is in knowing our position in the second Adam, as risen before God, that we have peace and joy and confidence.

CHAPTER XXIV.—The attempt of the enemy did not cause God to reiterate the same blessing merely, but drew out His activity, as it were, to bring out all the riches of His blessings. He carries out His own purposes according to His own will and thoughts.

We have seen, first, how God claimed them as His own people ; secondly, that they were completely justified by God. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel."

God met Balaam, and he found there was no possibility of succeeding against God. Instead, therefore, of going, as at other times, to seek for

enchantments, etc., he turns his face to the wilderness.

Ver. 2. "Balaam lifted up his eyes, and saw Israel abiding in their tents," etc. We do not see a picture of the saints here in heavenly glory, for it was not Israel as brought into the final blessing of God in the land, that they are regarded here, but Israel in the wilderness. Thus we get, through Balaam, the knowledge of God's thoughts about His people here below (vs. 3-5). Directly I look at that which is born of God, I find an entirely new order of things. We are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. The Christian is justified in Christ, and besides that, he is born of the Spirit. Balaam looks upon the people with God's eye. The Spirit of God fills his mind, and he sees what God's thoughts are about His people. Faith enables us to see with God's eyes instead of our own. "How goodly are thy tents," etc. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin," and "he cannot commit sin, because he is born of God"—not *it* cannot, but "*he* cannot." "He," the whole man, is of God.

Balaam "saw Israel abiding in their tents." It was the wilderness. It is not now the justification of His people, but their beauty and loveliness in God's sight, as in the Spirit. They are not only accepted judicially, but they walk in the Spirit. Of Abel it is said, "he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts," etc. He was accepted in person first, and then his gifts are well

pleasing to God. So Enoch was not only justified, but he had the present enjoyment of favour. "Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." He was, as it were, walking in the joy of the Father's smile.

Ver. 5. "How goodly are thy tents," etc. This illustrates the aspect of the church of God now, through the Spirit (Eph. ii. 22). It is more than man was in paradise. There was then no dwelling nor tabernacle of God. By and by His tabernacle will be with men. But as being in the standing of the church, we are taken, as it were, into God's paradise now. We "are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." If the church is divided and scattered, it is held in God's hand. "The wolf, coming, catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep;" but again it is said, "none shall pluck (or "catch," it is the same word) them out of my hand" (John x. 12, 28).

We are God's dwelling, and that is a different thing to God's regenerating us merely. The fact of being regenerate does not reveal things to our soul; but God does reveal things to us by His Spirit which dwelleth in us (1 Cor. ii. 10-12).

The manifested beauty of spiritual life in an individual, or in the church, is another thing, and depends of course on the faithfulness of walk; but the maintenance of spiritual life is entirely on God's part, and never fails.

"As the valleys are they spread forth." This is the refreshing power of the gospel. "How *goodly*

are *thy tents*." They are in favour with all the people ; and the secret of the loveliness of the aspect was, that they were watered by " the river of God " (Ps. lxxv. 9)—" as gardens by the river's side."

It is impossible but that Christ must meet the need of faith, let the general unbelief be what it may. Often, it is true, though most humbling, that the individual faith shines the brightest when the general unbelief is the darkest. In Paul's case it was so ; he went on in spite of all difficulties, when " all were seeking their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Faith looks not only at the blessing there is in God, but at the blessing *where* He has given it—with His people. The people are identified with God on high, therefore they are blessed, and God cannot allow evil in them.

Faith recognizes the place where blessing is, and drinks it in. " As the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted," etc., and then they become the source of blessing to others when so filled. " He shall pour the water out of his buckets." The bride herself says to her Lord, " Come," and says to those who are athirst also, let them " take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17).

I have not got CHRIST yet, but I have got the living water, and therefore I can say, Come and drink. We are not in glory yet, and we are not with the world ; but we have the Spirit, and it is

said, " he that believeth, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water " (John vii.)

Knowing Christ as Saviour, we have sap from the tree of life, and there can be no limit in the result. There is no stint, though little power indeed to use it. " His seed shall be in many waters," signifying the *extent* of the blessing.

Then, besides this, there is strength. " His king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted." Israel will have a king in Zion, but we are in a closer connection with the Bridegroom as His bride. We shall be displayed in the kingdom by and by. Mark the difference, how it is said, " How goodly *are* thy tents," etc., but thy " king *shall*," etc. The people had not a king yet. Visible blessing in power had not come yet. Their elevation was to be a future thing in the land.

With us it is not the kingdom we are looking for as our hope ; indeed, in a certain sense, we are now in the kingdom. It is for us, " the kingdom and patience ;" for Christ is rejected and gone. We are being called to share His rejection, and afterwards His glory. " We shall reign with Him." He is a King and we are kings. He is a Priest and we are priests. If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together. He is our Head, and in all things He is to have the pre-eminence. There is to be power connected with those who have the kingdom. There is not only such a thing as blessing, but it is connected with the people of God.

**A SONG
FOR THE WILDERNESS.**

Rise, my soul ! Thy God directs thee ;
Stranger hands no more impede :
Pass thou on ! His hand protects thee,
Strength that has the captive freed.

Is the wilderness before thee,
Desert lands, where drought abides ?
Heavenly springs shall there restore thee,
Fresh from God's exhaustless tides,

Light Divine surrounds thy going ;
God Himself shall mark thy way ;
Secret blessings, richly flowing,
Lead to everlasting day.

God, thine everlasting portion,
Feeds thee with the mighty's meat ;
Price of Egypt's hard extortion—
Egypt's food—no more to eat !

Art thou wean'd from Egypt's pleasures ?
God in secret thee shall keep,
There unfold His hidden treasures,
There His love's exhaustless deep.

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

On to Canaan's rest still wending,
 E'en thy wants and woes shall bring
 Suited grace, from high descending ;
 Thou shalt taste of mercy's spring.

Though thy way be long and dreary,
 Eagle strength He'll still renew :
 Garments fresh and foot unwearied
 Tell how God hath brought thee through.

When to Canaan's long-loved dwelling
 Love Divine thy foot shall bring,
 There, with shouts of triumph swelling,
 Zion's songs, in rest, to sing—

There, no stranger-God shall meet thee,
 Stranger thou in courts above !
 He, Who to His rest shall greet thee,
 Greets thee with a well-known love.

THE GLORY IN THE CLOUD.

The cloud which conducted Israel through the wilderness was the servant and the companion of the camp. But it was the veil or the covering of the glory also. Commonly it appeared in the sight of Israel only as a cloud, and the glory was known only by faith to be within it. But still the glory was always there, and at times it shone forth.

Such was that beautiful mystery. It was occasionally a hidden, occasionally a manifested glory. It was the servant and the companion of the camp, but it was, so to speak, its God also.*

Now all this was Jesus, God manifest in flesh, God in the "form of a servant" commonly, occasionally shining forth in divine authority, and always entitled to the honour of the sanctuary of God.

* The glory in the cloud was that which dwelt between the cherubim in the holy of holies, the sanctuary or dwelling of Jehovah. The glory which served the camp under a veil was that which, without robbery, assumed all the divine honours of the temple.

Let us look at instances of this shining forth.

Israel had to be defended. The cloud changes its place and comes between the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and then the glory looks through it and troubles the host of the Egyptians, so that they come not nigh Israel all the night, and this was doing for the camp the service of God.

Just so, Jesus. On a kindred occasion Jesus acts exactly as the cloud and the glory on the banks of the Red Sea. He comes between the disciples and their pursuers. "If ye seek me, let these go their way." He defends them; and then, as of old in the borders of Egypt, He looks through the veil and troubles the enemy again; and all this with the same ease, the same authority, as in the day of Pharaoh. He did but, as it were, look out again. He did but shew Himself again. (See Exodus xiv. 24, and John xviii. 6.) Can we refuse to see the God of Israel in Jesus? "Worship Him, all ye gods!" He is the God of Psalm xcvi. 7, and yet Jesus (Heb. i. 6). The Egyptian gods worshipped Him at the Red Sea, and the Roman gods in the garden of Gethsemane. And when brought again as the First-begotten into the world, it shall be said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

But further, Israel had to be rebuked as well as defended, to be disciplined as well as saved. The same glory hid within the cloud will do this divine work as well as the other.

In the day of the manna, in the day of the spies,

in the matter of Korah, and at the water of Meribah (Exodus xvi.; Numbers xiv.; xvi.; xx.), Israel provokes the holiness of the Lord, and as often the Lord resents it. The glory is seen in the cloud, expressing this resentment, a witness against the camp.

Just so Jesus in His day. When grieved at their unbelief or hardness of heart, He asserts His glory, His divine person and power in the midst of the disciples, and is thus, as of old in the wilderness, rebuking their way (Mark iv., 37-41; v. 39-43; vi. 36-51; John xiv. 8-11).

Surely, here again was the mystery of the glory in the cloud realized in Jesus, God manifest in flesh. That cloud veiled the glory, and was at once the servant and the God of Israel. The cloud was the ordinary thing; the glory was occasionally manifested, but it was always there, and in the temple. And is not Jesus in all this?

But I would look a little more particularly at one instance of Jesus as the hidden glory, alluded to above, that in John xiv. In the parting scene on the shore at Miletus, we see the dear apostle full of affection towards the saints, and also strong in the consciousness of integrity (Acts xx.). But there is no glory shining out there. Paul was a servant and a brother. He was a vessel in God's house. Others had been blessed through him: but he was, all the while, a companion, a brother, a fellow-servant, a minister, and apostle, and such only. No veil is to be rent to let him appear other

than he is seen to be. There was no hidden glory in him, nothing to be manifested personally which had not been manifested.

But there is another parting scene where we get this. I mean that which is presented to us in John xiii.-xvii. We find there the tokens of the most devoted affection, as we may get in Paul on the shore at Miletus. Jesus girds Himself with a towel, pours water into a basin, and washes His disciples' feet. But with all this, mark the sense of His authority and of Himself, of His office and of His person, which fills His soul. He knows Himself to be the "Lord and Master," though washing their feet, and "that He was come from God and went to God" (John xiii.). Here is glory in the cloud again. He is the servant of the camp again, but when Israel's ways or words challenge or demand it, Israel shall again, for their rebuking, look to the wilderness again (Exodus xvi. 10), and see the glory in the cloud. And so, quickly afterwards (John xiv. 1-3), the same Jesus would render them other service. He would prepare mansions for them in heaven, as well as wash their feet while on earth. He would also return to take them home. But if the disciples, like the camp of old, be unbelieving, the glory shall shine through the cloud for their confounding, and Jesus will say, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip; he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

Thus Jesus is the clouded glory. And very grateful all this truth is to those who trace, and delight to trace, that glory in its full brightness because of the thickness of the veil under which, in measureless grace, He hid it. He was the servant and the companion of the camp still, on whatever stage of the journey they were. Here was love—the patient, serving love known of old to Israel in the desert. But it is the love of the glory. That is the joy, had we but hearts to take it in. Paul's was love, patient, serving love. But it was the love of a brother, of a fellow-servant, of a man of "like passions," the service of a Moses. Jesus' was the love of the glory.

The glory in the cloud was the God of Israel (Ezek. xliii. 4 ; xliv. 2). The God of Israel was Jesus of Nazareth (Isaiah vi. 1-10 ; John xii. 41). The Nazarene was as the cloud which veiled a light, which, in its proper fulness, no man can approach unto, though discovered by faith.

Here let me add that it is the business of faith (through the indwelling Spirit) to discover the hidden true glory, and to refuse the displayed false glory. How quickly Abraham discovered it ! (Gen. xviii. 3.) How beautifully Abigail owned it in David, type of Christ ! (1 Samuel xxv.) How did the wise men discover it in a manger, after they had passed by all the false displayed glory of the world round Herod in Jerusalem ? (Matt. ii.) And how did Simeon discover it in the Child, the same Child in the temple, and passed by all the

religion, glory, and array which was then filling that very same spot? (Luke ii.) Faith was doing this, discovering hidden glory, all through the life of Jesus. Under the despised form of the Galilean, at one time, the Son of God was owned; at another, the Jehovah of Israel; at another, the Creator of the world; at another, the Son of David or the King of Israel. All these were different glories of the Same Person hid under the same veil.

How precious to Christ was that faith which rent the veil! The wise men, Simeon, Anna, rent the veil of infancy, the dying thief rent the veil of the cross. And see Mark x. The Lord was speaking of His deepest humiliation (ver. 34), but at that very moment the sons of Zebedee speak of His kingdom and desire it. The multitude speak of "Jesus of Nazareth" (ver. 47), but the blind beggar at that very moment speaks of "the Son of David" and prays to Him for help.

How precious is sweet faith as this! And I ask myself, am I rending veils in like power of faith? Do I see glory in the Church still? not doctrinally merely in the person of Christ, but really and livingly in the persons of His people? If I am delighting in, and honouring, a member of Christ under the veil of worldly degradation, such as men would neglect and despise, I am doing this ancient beautiful work of faith, rending veils.

THE PLACE OF FAITH, THE WORK OF FAITH, AND THE PRESENT REWARD OF FAITH.

(HEBREWS VI.)

As we have no place on earth, but are called out of it, our place now must necessarily be only known to faith and held by faith ; and if I am not in faith, I must lose sight of my place. The word of God gives gives me my *place*; declares it to me, and it is by faith that I abide in it. If I am “going on to perfection,” I am discerning things good and evil : the favours of God have not been in vain to me. I am not like the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, only to bring forth thorns and briers. I hold by faith the place which God has given me, and I abide therein, occupied with the interests of God and not my own. If I am in a place of faith, I must be dependent on God, and therefore taking thought for myself is a divergence from the place of faith.

Now if I am not in the *place* of faith, I cannot properly engage in the *works* of faith. If I depart from the place to which alone I am called, it is plain that I cannot do the things suitable or incumbent on me in that place ; but, on the contrary, every attempt that I make at them must tend to damage and hinder others. Abram was called

to a place in Canaan, by faith simply depending on God for it ; therefore he could not choose any place for himself. Lot chose one and dropped out of the place of faith ; therefore he could not serve others. If he attempted to do so, it would be but to lead them in the same downward road with himself. The works of faith did not belong to the place which he had chosen. Abram abides in the place of faith and is secure from the troubles in which Lot is involved, which is ever true even now. It may be said that a faithful Christian does not escape from the effects of tumults in the world. True, he does not escape as to *temporal* things ; but if he be by faith in heaven in Christ, he does in the spirit of his mind escape from the effects of tumults down here. Like Abram I am to have faith and patience. To abide in heaven in Christ is my place. My faith is exercised here, and the suffering here may be prolonged and continued ; but I abide there, and while abiding I engage myself with everything connected with God, and with reference to the place He has set me in. In that region where He has set me, and where He alone can keep me, and where I am simply dependent on Him, it is His interests alone which engage me, and thus it is that I ministered to the saints and do minister. I do the things which accompany salvation, I am engaged with works connected with the place of faith. Thus did Abram. He gathers together all his resources, and, at his own risk, by night uses and exerts them to deliver his

brother Lot. God's love is towards men, and as I am in the power of it, I must act according to the power of it, and in the *direction* in which it works. If I am in the place of faith, God's interest must occupy me, for if I serve Christ, I follow Him, and when I follow Him, I am serving best. Serve Him I *cannot*, unless I am in the place of faith ; and if I am there, I am, though "enduring afflictions," occupied with His interests according to His own mind. Peter, like Lot, diverged from this place when he said, "I go a fishing." And seven went. Instead of serving, he was then hindering and damaging others. Thus did Moses at first, and thus did Saul. They failed to help when they themselves were off the ground of faith. How could they lead others right when wrong themselves ? If Lot wants well-watered plains, surely he is off the ground of faith, and he is found helpless among the unrighteous. If Peter is restless, he is off faith—goes a fishing, and has company enough ; but anything but blessings follows them. If Saul wants distinction, he is off faith and is rash and extreme in everything. Abraham abides in faith and patience. Paul abides in faith and patience, and they serve truly and well to the end.

And not only so, but their own souls know it. And this is the present *reward of faith*. Abram is refreshed and blessed by Melchisedec. Paul knows himself to be "possessed of all things." What a reward for the work of faith ! What *wages*, if we may so say ! It is the "fulness of joy," which the

Lord pronounces to be the portion of the one who keeps His commandments and abides in His love. (John xv.) Serving Christ, the soul is cheered and refreshed on the way. How much greater is the cheer that Christ pours into the heart of the true servant than Melchisedec could to Abram ! Thus the true servant is not depressed and complaining, or comparing present things with the past ; dissatisfied and discontented, retiring into corners to unburden his murmurings ; but, on the contrary, he is so truly from the *place* of faith doing the *works* of faith, according as the interests of Christ are presented to him, that he knows in his own soul the *reward* of faith. He has his wages—fulness of joy—Christ unfolding Himself to him in blessed nearness, and he knowing the fellowship of the Holy Ghost ; and what the kingdom of God is—even “ righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost ” (Rom. xiv. 17).



“OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN.”

PHIL. III. 20.

We were nearing the end of what had been a very fatiguing journey of over twenty miles, from G—— to A——, upon a keen frosty morning, with the thermomètre ranging about 25 below zero. Already one or more of our little party had in a measure succumbed to the influences of the weather, and as we urged our horses on through the village of A——, beyond which there remained

some little distance still to traverse of a road that by no means improved as we proceeded, every one of us was already anticipating the moment when, beyond the piercing cold, the snow drifts, and all the other surroundings incidental to our onward way, we would alight at our destination, where a hearty welcome was awaiting us from dear ones who, knowing we were on the way, had been thinking of us and on the look-out for us from the early morning. There was an unusual stir in the village of A——, and, as we *passed through it, for our goal lay beyond*, we were greeted with the cry, “Your vote and influence!”—the one who thus hailed us judging that we were upon the same bent as himself, that being the day of their municipal election. The answer came simply enough in a shake of the head and pointing forward as those who had their destination beyond, who could take no part in the affairs of the village, simply for the reason that we did not belong to it. We had no rights of citizenship to maintain in it, all our business being in diligent haste to press on until the journey was over—nothing congenial in our surroundings by the way—nothing to tempt any one of us to settle down short of our destination.

Even so, child of God, learn: that party cries raised, however loudly, have no meaning for thine ear as thou *passest through, a stranger, a pilgrim* (in this world), because *a citizen of Heaven*. Let nothing tempt *thee* to alight short of the goal, but, “one thing” characterizing thee—“forget-

ting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before"—do thou "press toward the mark" (or goal) "for the prize of the *calling on high* of God in Christ Jesus."—Phil. iii. 13-14.

A VOICE OF WARNING FOR THE PRESENT DAY.

(READ 2 CHRONICLES XVIII.)

In the declining days of the house of David, as we see in 2 Chron., the Spirit of God occasionally visits. The Lord sends His prophets, "rising up early and sending them;" and those prophets warned, and threatened, and counselled, "till there was no remedy," and Judah went into captivity.

The like thing, to a certain measure, is seen in the history of the Ten Tribes, or in the kingdom of Israel, as the two Books of Kings shew us. Prophets warned the people again and again, till Israel was carried into Assyria.

But these visits or energies of the Spirit in Israel distinguished themselves, I judge, from what they were in Judah. They never, I believe it will be found, brought comfort or encouragement. For Israel, at the very outset, revolted from God as well as from David—and what the house of Jeroboam began, every other house that reigned in Israel, whether of Baasha, Omri or Jehu, continued. And the Spirit seems always to act as a

stranger, when acting in Israel. Thus, at the very beginning, the man of God, sent against the altar at Bethel, was commanded not to eat or drink, or to tarry, or even to return by the way that he went. And much in the same way was the young man, who was sent to anoint Jehu, instructed to carry himself. And Elijah and Elisha, raised up by the Spirit in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, appear as strangers there, all through their ministries. Their walk is desultory and informal. They own no house of God in the land—and each of them furnishes the Lord Jesus, in His teaching, in Luke iv., with instances of God going outside the bounds of His earthly people. I mean when He alludes, as He does there, to the widow of Sarepta, and to Naaman, the Syrian.

In Judah, on the contrary, the Spirit was *at home*, and had *various* work to do. To the end of the declining days of Judah the Lord recognizes His house among them (see 2 Chron. xxxvi). And though His voice in His prophets be generally that of warning and rebuke, yet still, at times, He counsels, and comforts, and encourages.

Thus, Rehoboam is warned not to go against the revolted tribes, with the hope of bringing them back, because that revolt had been God's judgment on the house of David. This warning was, therefore, gracious counsel.

In the times of Jehoshaphat and Amaziah, the Spirit, in different prophets, warned the kings of the house of Judah, to keep themselves from all

alliance with the house of Israel. This was gracious.

Asa and Hezekiah, and the days of Joash, in the person of Jehoida, witness how mightly and blessedly the Spirit could help Judah at times.

And there is a peculiar form and acting of the grace of God, by His Spirit, in the days of Josiah. The Book of God is found ; and then the Spirit in Hulda', the prophetess, interprets present things in the light of the Book. .

Now, all this various energy of the Spirit of God in the declining days of the kingdom of Judah, has a voice in our ears in this our day. But among all these instances of the acting and energy of the Spirit then, our chapter (2 Chron. xviii.) affords us one of the most solemn and affecting.

The whole scene is very weighty and serious. The two spirits are there, the unclean spirit, and the Spirit of God, the spirit *from* the Lord, and the Spirit *of* the Lord.

The world, or the apostate, is there, in the person of Ahab.

The involved, defiled saint is there also, in the person of Jehoshaphat.

The separated man, the witness of Christ, is seen in Micaiah.

And, beside, we get the various fate, so to speak, or the history of the different actors, in this solemn scene ; at the end of it all, the king of Judah and the king of Israel.

The spirit of delusion, the unclean spirit, is

here, doing the work of dementation in the apostate Ahab, ere his destruction comes—for his measure of iniquity was now full. But the Spirit of God is here also, in the prophet Micaiah, faithful, and, therefore, *grieved* and *suffering*—grieved, doubtless, by the evil, impure connection between the saints and the world, which that moment exhibited—Jehoshaphat sitting with Ahab ; suffering even to bonds and imprisonment as from the world by the hand of Ahab.

Striking, indeed, are the energies which are seen at work here. The spirit of error encourages the king of Israel to go on with all his projects ; for he promises him that there is only victory and prosperity before him. Zedekiah, one of the false prophets, goes so far as to make horns of iron, symbols of the strength, with which Ahab was to push his enemies, till he had destroyed them. Zedekiah did not take into account the moral condition of things at that moment with Ahab and his kingdom. This was nothing to him. It can be nothing to a false prophet. But Zedekiah says all he can, and does all he can to urge Ahab on his way, and carry out all the purposes and expectations of his heart, assuring him of all the honour and wealth that would attend him.

And surely, I may say, we see much of this same thing nowadays. The moral state of the world, its character under God's eye, is not appreciated. It encourages itself to go forward. "Progress" is the writing on its standard now. "Excelsior" is

its motto ; higher and higher still in the attempts and attainments of human skill and capability. A rejected Lord is overlooked or forgotten. The blood of Jesus may have once stained the earth, but the earth is still fruitful. Man has departed from God, but he has skill and resources to build a city and a tower. If ever there was a time when man was encouraged to go on, it is the present. Character or condition before God is not estimated. These are days when many a Zedekiah is making horns of iron ; many a deceived heart, and practised hand is prophesying and sketching the world's sure progress.

And much of the religion of the day speaks flattering words in the ear of the world, as to all this its purpose and its expectation, not knowing its character before God. But in Micaiah, the true language is heard—vessel of the Spirit of God as he was.

He lets the king of Israel know that Ramoth-Gilead shall witness his fall, and the scattering of that flock which he, as a shepherd in Israel, was now gathering there. He speaks not of progress and of triumph, but of judgment.

Surely this is a word for us. Christendom presents all this. This chapter is a fruitful witness of what is now afoot in us in larger characters. A grieved, and, in some places, a suffering, faithful election—saints defiled by evil alliances—the world in its hopes and projects of growing importance—and an unclean, false spirit encouraging the world,

thoroughly careless or indifferent as to its character before God. Can we not read these things in this chapter, and can we not as clearly read them in the day through which we are passing?

And, let me observe, there is something of all this to be seen in Luke xix.

The multitude are watching the Lord on His way to Jerusalem; and they think that the kingdom of God is *immediately* to appear. They judge that nothing is needed but a little "progress." The Lord was on His way to the royal city; and He had but to reach it, as they seemed to have imagined, and the glory would be there, and the day of the power of the kingdom. They did not weigh present things in Israel in God's balances—they did not appreciate them in their relationship to Him, which is the real character of every thing.

The parable of the nobleman who went into the far country is there delivered by the Lord, to correct this thought of the multitude—and after a little while He makes His formal entry into the city, but only to expose such a condition of things there, such a *moral* condition, as would surely hinder God from displaying His glory there; and Jesus, therefore, instead of letting the kingdom immediately appear, retires in judgment. For the glory must have a clean vessel.

This is full meaning—and like our chapter, has a voice for this our day. For, if there be a warning needed by the present generation in Christdom, it is this—that things must be estimated in God's

light, in the face of the great wide-world fact, that Jesus, God's Christ, has been rejected here. No other estimation is divine. But this generation are not carrying that secret with them—as the multitude, in Luke xix., did not consider the moral condition of Jerusalem then, but looked for an immediate kingdom ; and, as the prophets in Israel made promise to the king in Israel, of progress, and prosperity, and triumph, in spite of all the apostate condition of things then in Israel.

Let the saints of God remember, again, I would say, that the glory must have a clean vessel. The Spirit of burning and of judgment must do its work in the cloud by day, ere the shining of the flaming fire by night, can rest on the dwellings and assemblies of Zion, as says the prophet (Isaiah iv. 4-5). The angels of the Son of Man must take out of His kingdom all that offend and do iniquity, ere the righteous can shine forth in the kingdom, as the Lord of the prophets Himself says (Matt. xiii. 41-43).

And surely do the ministers of judgment find out the subject for judgment. At the end, Jehoshaphat is preserved, and Ahab falls—though all was tending to the contrary. Ahab had sheltered himself ; and the word of the king of Syria had marked such a one as Jehoshaphat appeared to be, for the sword. But God was Judge. The issue of the day was in His hand ; and the *eagles* that He sends out know whose the *carcass* is (Luke xvii. 20-37). "Where, Lord?" asked the wondering disciples.

"Wheresoever the body is," said their Master, "thither will the eagles be gathered together." Again, I say, the ministers of judgment find out the subject for judgment. The Judge of all the earth will do right. The arrow of the Almighty will surely reach its mark as it does here, and Ahab, the apostate, the representative of the revolted world, falls.

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!"



MARK OF A FAITHFUL SERVANT.

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."—2 Cor. iv. 5.

The following incident recorded of Judson on the occasion of his return to his native land in broken health, after an absence of thirty years, aptly illustrates the above scripture. It affords also an affecting proof of devotedness to the interests of Christ, and is very precious in days like these, when many—who take the place of being servants of Christ—so frequently use similar occasions for the exaltation of man, if not for the display and gratification of self in a greater or less degree :

"Announced to address an assembly in a provincial town, and a vast concourse having gathered from great distances to hear him, he rose at the

close of the usual service ; and, as all eyes were fixed and every ear attent, he spoke for about fifteen minutes, with much pathos, of the ' precious Saviour,' of what He had done for us, and of what we owed to Him ; and he sat down, visibly affected. ' The people are very much disappointed,' said a friend to him on their way home ; ' they wonder you did not talk of *something else*.' ' Why what did they want ?' he replied : ' I presented to the best of my ability, the most interesting subject in the world.' ' But they wanted something different—a story.' ' Well, I am sure I gave them a story—the most thrilling one that can be conceived of.' ' But they had heard it before. They wanted something new of a man who had just come from the antipodes.' ' Then, I am glad they have it to say, that a man coming from the antipodes had nothing better to tell than the wondrous story of the dying love of Jesus. My business is to preach the gospel of Christ ; and when I can speak at all, I dare not trifle with my commission. When I looked upon those people to-day, and remembering where I should next meet them, how could I stand up and furnish food to vain curiosity—tickle their fancy with amusing stories, however decently strung together on a thread of religion ? That is not what Christ meant by preaching the gospel. And then how could I hereafter meet the fearful charge—I gave you one opportunity to tell them of ME ; you spent it in describing your own adventures !' "

JESUS AT THE GRAVE OF LAZARUS.

“Jesus wept.”—JOHN xi. 35.

It was not to her brother's new-made grave,
That Mary, from her chamber, went to weep,
But to her Lord, so full of power to save,
Who passed Himself through death's dark, swelling wave,
To turn death's terrors into peaceful sleep.

She knew His love. She sat in happier hours
A soul-rapt listener at His holy feet ;
Drank in His living words like April showers,
Like dew distilled upon the opening flowers,
As heavenly music to her spirit sweet.

How changed the scene was now ! Her happy home,
Where Jesus ever was a welcome guest,
Sickness had entered, death's dark shadows come ;
Lazarus was now an inmate of the tomb :
Distracting thoughts and anguish filled her breast.

Had they not sent to tell Him of their pain ?
“He whom thou lov'st is sick,” their strong appeal :
They looked, but still they looked, and looked in vain ;
At such an hour, what could His feet detain ?
Did not His heart for their affliction feel ?

“Oh that He'd come ! or, even speak the word !”
A hundred times her burthened spirit sighed ;
The thought, “I am forgotten by the Lord,”
With wound more piercing than a two-edged sword,
Mary, may-be, thy tempted bosom tried !

Now all is o'er—gone is that brother dear ;
Jesus nor came, nor spake the sought-for aid ;
Four days have passed since death reigned master here,
And they had weeping followed slow his bier,
And in the silent tomb his body laid.

Many have gathered to that house of woe ;
Well it was known to be the loved retreat,
Where, after toil and conflict with the foe,
From strife and tumult, Jesus used to go,
And with these friends enjoy communion sweet.

But all in vain they seek her heart to cheer,
 In vain their tears of sympathy may flow ;
 Can they restore to her that brother dear ?
 But Martha comes—she whispers to her ear,
 “ The Master calls thee ; to His presence go.”

Oh, gleam of sunshine in the darkest sky !
 “ Jesus is here, He calls me !” From her seat
 She rises quickly. Whither should we fly,
 But to Thy bosom, when the waves are high ?
 Weeping she falls, and worships at His feet.

“ Lord, if Thou hadst been here, he had not died,”—
 ‘Tis all her lips can utter. Lord, how true !
 Death to assault Thine own in vain had tried,
 If Thou wert here, and we but near Thy side :
 Thy absence is death’s time, and Satan’s too.

His answer was not words, but groans and tears ;
 Oh, tears and groans of sympathy divine !
 How fraught with glory, “ JESUS WEPT,” appears !
 What stores of comfort through all coming years !
 The woe, that wrings my spirit, touches Thine ;

It almost makes the darkness turn to light,
 Sorrow to joy, when thus Thy grace we know :
 On blackest clouds the rainbow shines most bright,
 The stars most brilliant in the darkest night ;
 So shines Thy love in deepest shades of woe.

Thou hast, O Lord, a bottle for our tears !
 Thine in our inmost hearts deep-treasured lie,
 Our richest cordial in all griefs and fears ;
 More precious than the costliest gem, appears
 Each drop of Thy most tender sympathy.

Men learnt Thy love, when they beheld Thy woe :
 “ See how He loved him,” they admiring cried.
 Oh, priceless tears, and groans ! and yet we know
 E’en more Thy heart’s deep fountains, since did flow
 The streams of blood and water from Thy side.

Oh, blessed Jesus, all we want we find,
 The more we know our wants all hid in Thee ;
 A friend than brother far more true and kind ;
 Balm for the bleeding heart, and tortured mind,
 Full of divine and human sympathy.

And more than friend Thou art : for when we lay
 In our own blood polluted, lost and dead,
 And Justice drew its fiery sword to slay,
 And hell exulting waited for its prey,—
 Thou gavest up Thy life, and diedst instead.



WHAT IS DEATH ?

For the unbeliever nothing can be more terrible than death. It is justly and scripturally called "the king of terrors" (Job xviii. 14). It is the judicial close of the first Adam. What is beyond? It is not merely so for the animal nature, though that be true, but the more it is considered in connection with man's moral nature, the more terrible does it become. Everything in which man has had his home, his thoughts, his whole being employed, is closed and perished for ever : "His breath goeth forth . . . in that very day his thoughts perish" (Ps. cxlvi. 4). Man finds in it an end to every hope, every project, to all his thoughts and plans. The spring of them all is broken. The being in which he moved is gone ; he can count upon nothing more. The busy scene in which his whole life has been, knows him no more. He himself fails and is extinct. None have to do with him any more as belonging to it. His nature has given way, powerless to resist this master to which it belongs, and who now asserts his dreadful rights. But this is far from being all. Man indeed, as alive in this world, sinks down into nothing. But why? Sin has come in : with sin, conscience ;

with sin, Satan's power ; still more, with sin, God's judgment. Death is the expression and witness of all this. It is the wages of sin, terror to the conscience, Satan's power over us, for he has the power of death. Can God help here ? Alas, it is His own judgment on sin ! Death seems but as the proof that sin does not pass unnoticed, and is the terror and plague of the conscience, as witness of God's judgment, the officer of justice to the criminal, and the proof of his guilt in the presence of coming judgment. How can it but be terrible ? It is the seal upon the fall and ruin and condemnation of the first Adam. And he has nothing but this old nature. He cannot subsist as a living man before God. Death is written on him, for he is a sinner, he cannot deliver himself. He is guilty withal and condemned.

The judgment comes. But Christ has come in. He has come into death—O wondrous truth, the Prince of life ! What is death now for the believer ? Now mark, reader, the full force of this wonderful, unspeakable, intervention of God ? We have seen death to be man's weakness, the break-up of his being, Satan's power, God's judgment, the wages of sin. But all this is in connection with the first Adam, whose portion—because of sin—death and judgment are. We have seen the double character of death ; the failure of life, or living power, in man ; and the witness of, and conductor into, the judgment of God. But Christ (" who knew no sin ") has been made sin for us ;

He has undergone death, passed through it as Satan's power and as God's judgment. Death, with its causes, has been met in its every character by Christ.

The judgment of God has been fully borne by Him before the day of judgment comes. Death, as the wages of sin, has been passed through. It has, as a cause of terror to the soul, in every sense, wholly lost its power for the believer. The physical fact *may* take place ; for so wholly has Christ put away its power that that is not necessarily the case. " We shall not all sleep," though " we shall all be changed " (1 Cor. xv. 51). Desiring, says the apostle, not to " be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life " (2 Cor. v. 4). Such is the power of life in Christ.

But death has much more than passed away. Death is ours, says the apostle, as all things are (1 Cor. iii. 21, 22). By the blessed Lord's entering into it for me, death (and judgment too) is become my salvation. The sin, of which it was the wages, has been put away by death itself. The judgment has been borne for me there. Death is not terror to my soul ; it is not the sign of anger, but the fullest and most blessed proof of love, because Christ came into it. The very power of the law against me, I am freed from, for it has power over a man only as long as he lives ; but, in Christ, I am dead to the law already. In a word, Christ, the sinless One, having come in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (Rom. viii. 3), my whole con-

dition, as in the first Adam, has been dealt with—dealt with so that all its consequences have been righteously undergone ; and by death the old man, Satan's power, sin, judgment, mortality itself, which are connected with the old (or sinful) man, are passed and done with forever. I live before God now in the One who is risen, after enduring all that belonged to the old for me. God has dealt with the old man, and all its fruits and consequences for me, in the new, who has taken even the natural consequences attached to it, and gone through its power as in the hands of Satan. Death has freed me forever from everything that belonged to, and awaited the old man, as alive.

First, condemnation and judgment are entirely over, as a question of the soul's acceptance. The dreadful ordeal is passed ; but by another—so that it is my deliverance from it according to the righteousness of God. The floods which destroyed the Egyptians were a wall to Israel on the right hand and on the left, the path of safety out of Egypt. The salvation of God was there. Egypt and its oppressive power were left behind them. Death is deliverance and salvation to us.

Secondly, what is it become in practice ? In the power of Christ's resurrection, I am quickened (Ephes. i. 19, 20 ; ii. 5, 6). He is become my life (Col. iii. 4). I can dispense, if I may venture so to speak, with the life of the old man ; I have that of the new. But He who, now risen, is my life, passed through death. I reckon myself dead.

Hence it is never said that we are to die to sin. The old man does not and would not ; the new man has no sin to die to. We are said to be dead, and commanded to reckon ourselves dead ; " For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God " ; " Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord " (Col. iii. 3 ; Rom. vi. 11). We are then directed to mortify our members which are on the earth, in the power of this new life, and of the Holy Ghost which dwells in us. I have the title, then, to reckon myself dead.

What a gain is death to me in this respect, if really the desires of the new man are in me ; yea, what deliverance and power ! What is death for faith is the old, harassing, sinful man ; in which, if responsible to God, I was lost, and unable to meet Him. " When," says the apostle, " we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death " . (Rom. vii. 5). But Rom. viii. 9, — " Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." The flesh is not our place of standing before God. We have acknowledged ourselves lost and ruined in it. That was the standing of the first Adam, and we were in it. Law applied to it death, judgment. But I am not in it now, but in the Second.

So as regards ordinances, the apostle says, " If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living (or alive) in the world

are ye subject to ordinances ? ” (Col. ii. 20). For faith, we are dead, not alive, in the world. Hence, also, everything that practically makes us realize this—trial, suffering, sorrow—is gain. It makes morally true and real in our souls, that we are dead, and thus delivers from the old man. “ In all these things is the life of the spirit ” (Is. xxxviii. 16). It is disengaged and delivered from the obscuring and deadening influence of the old man. These sorrows and breaches in life are the details of death morally. But of the death of what ? Of the old man. All is gain.

Thirdly, if death comes in fact, the death of what ? Of what is mortal, of the old man. Does the new risen life die ? It has passed through death in Christ, and this has been realized in us. It cannot die. It is Christ. Hence, in dying, it simply leaves death behind. It quits what is mortal. We are absent from the body and present with the Lord. It was previously outwardly connected with what is mortal ; it is no longer so. We are absent from the body, and present with the Lord. We depart and are with Christ. It is true faith that looks for a greater triumph—we shall be clothed upon ; still this is God’s power. The old man, thank God, never revives. God, because of His Spirit that dwells in us, will quicken even our mortal bodies (Rom. viii. 11). The life of Christ will be displayed in a glorious body. We shall be conformed to the image of God’s Son, that He may be the First-born among many brethren (Rom. viii. 29). This

is the fruit of divine power. But meanwhile death itself is always deliverance, because, having a new life, it is our being disencumbered from the old man which hinders and hems our way. It is our being with Christ. How sweet and refreshing is the thought ! When once we have seized the difference of the old and new man, the reality of the new life we have received in Christ, the death of the old will be known and felt to be true and real gain. No doubt, God's time is best, because He alone knows what is needed in the way of discipline and exercise to form our souls for Himself, and He may preserve us to know the power of this life in Christ, so that mortality should be swallowed up without our dying.

But if death is the ceasing of the old man, it is but the ceasing of sin, hindrance, trouble. We have done with the old man, in which we were guilty before God—righteously done with it, because Christ has died for us—for ever done with it, because we live in the power of the new. Such is death to the believer. “To depart and to be with Christ is far better” (Phil. i. 23). As judgment, Christ has taken it ; as to the power of sin, it is the death of the very nature it lives in. As actual mortality, it is deliverance from it to be with Christ in the new man which enjoys Him. Who, as to the proper gain of it, would not die ?

If we live to serve Christ, the sorrow of this world is worth while ; but it is not the less sorrow in itself, whatever blessing may cheer us through

it. To us to live, is Christ ; to die, gain. It is but the old man that dies ; our misery first, our enemy afterwards. Of course this supposes divine life, and in practice the heart to be elsewhere than in the things the old man lives in.

THE RESURRECTION.

I CORINTHIANS XV.

The resurrection after all is that which is the full and perfect deliverance from the whole effect and consequence of sin. At the same time it shews that what God has predestinated us to is an entirely new estate and condition of things altogether. Nothing is more important than that we should clearly apprehend what it is God is about ; whether He is correcting the old thing, or setting up an entirely new thing. Now the resurrection shews that God is not bringing about a modification of the scene in which we are, but that He is bringing in a totally new power. The discernment of this has the most important effect upon the way of life, the modes of seeking to do good, the objects and efforts of Christians. Christ went about doing good, and we are of course to follow His example ; but what of the state of things around did Christ correct or set right when down here? Nothing ! The very result of the Lord's coming into the midst of the Jewish nation was just this, that they rejected, hated, and crucified the Prince of life and Lord of glory. The Lord Jesus

went about doing good, but seemingly in vain. Still none of God's counsels have failed ; but as to the outward result, the Lord said, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought." (Is. xlix. 5.) And so far as the outward scene went in which He laboured, there was no kind of restoration ; for the more love Christ manifested, it only brought out more fully man's hatred to Him. "For My love they are My adversaries."

The resurrection introduces an entirely new scene, so that Scripture says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new" (2 Cor. v. 17). Now it is a very difficult thing for men to submit their minds to this truth, because it plainly tells man that, in himself as man, he is totally and utterly ruined. It is quite true, and I fully admit, that naturally man has great and wonderful faculties, and faculties which, it may be, will be much more developed than they now are. But still, with all this, man morally is utterly ruined and lost. Paul opens out in this chapter what the character and power of resurrection are, the resurrection of the just being the subject of it, although that of the unjust is also glanced at. It is not merely God acting in sovereign power, which can take a dead thing out of the state of death ; but by virtue of association with the life of Christ we have participation in Christ's resurrection. It is not only that we are blessed, but blessed with

Christ. If He lives, we also live together with Him : " Because I live, ye shall live also " (John xiv. 19). If He is the righteousness of God, we are " made the righteousness of God in Him " (2 Cor. v. 21). If He is the Heir of glory, we are " joint-heirs with Christ " (Rom. viii. 17), and " where He is, there shall we be also " (John xiv. 3). If He is the Son, we are sons also : " I ascend unto My Father, and your Father " (John xx. 17). We are put, through grace, into this wonderful place of sons ; so that it is a real thing ; and having thus been brought by adoption from a state of sin to that of sons, the Holy Ghost is given to us as the power of our enjoyment of it. Such is the marvellous place into which we are brought, even that of everlasting companionship with Christ, " members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones " (Eph. v. 30). Man down here on earth " disquieteth himself in vain " (Ps. xxxix. 6) ; for wonderful as his natural faculties may be, as soon as " his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish " (Ps. cxlvi. 4). What then becomes of his wondrous faculties ? All is gone ; for there is no fruit whatever reaped by himself. The man may have directed the world, but what of that, if death comes in and writes nothingness on all his powers ? Another may come after him and improve upon what he has done, but it is all gone as regards himself for ever, although the man has a moral responsibility in connection with it all.

In this chapter the apostle was meeting the minds of those who had cast doubts on the resurrection, but not on immortality. A man will cast doubts on the resurrection, while he will speak of his immortality and magnify himself in it, because it is *me*. It is *I* that am immortal. But if I am the dead thing God raises from the dead, what then—where am I? Why my pride is brought down, and God's power is brought in and exalted. Therefore if I am talking of immortality, I am talking of myself; but if talking of resurrection, I am wholly cast on God.

Resurrection is connected with death (I am now speaking of believers), but it is the coming in of God's power to deliver from the power of death; not merely an escape from my sins, but a full and perfect deliverance from all the consequences of my sins, so that even the very dust of my body will be raised in divine glory. In Christ's death I also get another truth, which is, that my resurrection is consequent on Christ's death and resurrection. I share in it as forgiven; for Christ quickens me, in virtue of having put away my sins. "And you being dead in your sins . . . hath He quickened together with Him (Christ), having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col. ii. 13). We are partakers of the life in which Christ is risen; so that I have a life totally discharged from all question of sin; for I cannot have life without having forgiveness, and hence rest and peace.

Christ had an unchangeable life as Son of God;

but He died as a man ; for there was complete evidence given through many incontrovertible proofs that He was really a dead man, and that He was raised from the dead and seen of " witnesses chosen before of God " (Acts x. 41). How entirely Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man (Heb. ii. 9) is seen by His being raised from the dead. All the gospel rests on the resurrection of Christ. There is no gospel at all unless there is the resurrection. This is a point of the deepest interest, shewing how really Christ entered into the case. So truly was Christ dead in consequence of our sins, that if He did not rise from the dead, then all is utterly gone for ever. But so completely was Christ a dead man for us, that if He is not raised from the dead, no man can ever be raised. And if dead people are not raised, then is Christ not raised. Yet we know He could not be holden of death ; that were impossible (Acts ii. 24). It is most important for us clearly to see and understand this, that our faith and hope may be " in God which raiseth the dead " (2 Cor. i. 9). Thus everything that could possibly come between the sinner and God has been entirely removed—the burden of sin on the soul—God's wrath against sin—Satan's power—the weakness of man in death. Christ put Himself under all this. " He bore our sins," for He cried, " My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? " By grace Christ put Himself entirely in our place. He who knew no sin was

made sin for us. All my sins are therefore entirely gone : He bore them all on the cross, and went down under the power of death, and rose again without them. Has death any more power over Him ? No, for He is risen in the power of an endless life. But still He has been there on account of our sins, and has entirely put away the sins that took Him there, having risen without them. What then can there be between me and God which Christ has not entirely put away ? Nothing. Seeing then that Christ has so completely acted out this condition before God, death is no longer death to me ; it has lost its power and its terror too ; for now death to me is simply “ departing to be with Christ ” (Phil. i. 23). It is to be “ absent from the body, present with the Lord ” (2 Cor. v. 8) ; it is but the getting rid of a mortal body.

The power of the resurrection is distinctive ; and it is of great importance to see this. God’s eye rested on the blessed One who had glorified Him about man’s sin ; so that He takes Him from amongst the dead up to Himself. We see a whole course of sin had gone on to the full accomplishment even of putting God’s Son to death on the cross. But over all this evil Christ gained so complete a victory, and so thoroughly glorified every attribute of God about man’s sin, that God’s eye rested on this blessed and righteous One with complete satisfaction. And thus, as He said, was the world convinced of righteousness, “ because I

go to my Father, and ye see Me no more " (John xvi. 10). But now, we who believe see Him—that is, by faith ; being quickened together with Him, having all trespasses forgiven us. For God does not raise a saint to condemn him—no ; but to make him a partaker of all Christ is. For Christ has accomplished a righteousness on which God has set His seal, in that He raised Him from the dead. God's eye being fixed on this accomplished righteousness, this object of His love, He took Him up to Himself ; and having quickened us together with Christ, we are made partakers of it. Were there no resurrection, it would be complete abandonment by God ; for He " is not the God of the dead but of the living " (Matt. xxiii. 32). And " if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." For if Christ be not raised, our preaching is vain ; we have not been preaching the truth of the Gospel, but preaching a lie : and your faith is vain ; ye are yet in your sins.

But now comes a full burst of testimony to this accomplished work : " Now is Christ risen from the dead." Thus the righteous and beloved One is raised out of this scene into an entirely new one, even that of becoming the first fruits of them that slept. For if Christ be raised, His saints must be raised, as a Head cannot be raised without a body ; it would be monstrous. There is then the broad statement in John xvii., " Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give

eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." The resurrection comes in, not by the power of God only, but also by man. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." It is the Man Christ Jesus coming in in power. Every created thing, the whole universe, is to be wholly put under this righteous Man, this now glorified Man, the second Adam. He only is excepted which did put all things under Him—that is, God the Father.

As spiritual men, we now belong to the second Adam, being content now to suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together with Him. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Christ had the heart to come down to us. He did not throw down the blessing to us from heaven, but He came Himself to bring it. Such was His wondrous love—a love which was stronger than death. Now He is set down at the right hand of God, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool (Heb. x. 12, 13). Meanwhile He is gathering out His joint-heirs—His friends. Christ came in grace, and took our place as sinners; and now takes us up to His place of righteousness: for to sit with Him on His throne is to be our place; and this through a real living association with Himself. He is the First-born among many brethren. He wrought the work alone, but He takes His power with the many. We may be burdened, groaning in conflict: still we have certainty. The Holy

Ghost is the witness of what Christ has done for us ; we are "made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). What a thought, that I have this standing before God, though vile in myself ! In virtue of this, I hate sin, because it is so different from what I actually am there.

All power in heaven and earth is given to Christ (Matt. xxviii. 18). All are to be brought under His power. Not only will His saints bow before Him—who do it now with delight; in the power of a new life ; but His enemies must bow before Him. He is gathering His friends now, but His enemies will be dealt with by-and-by. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. The wicked dead are glanced at here ; for when death's power is destroyed, the wicked dead must all rise, as being no longer holden of it. What a different resurrection will this be to the resurrection of the saints, in virtue of their association with Christ in the power of the Holy Ghost ! (Rom. viii. 11). Then, when all things are made subject, and Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, the mediatorial reign will be at an end, because God will be all in all. Therefore Christ will not be ruling as the mediatorial Man then ; but Christ the Man will never cease to be "the First-born among many brethren." Subjection is man's perfection. Therefore Christ's subjection as man results from His perfection. "Then shall the Son also Himself be subject." This is most blessed, that for ever and for ever He will be in our midst

—He whose heart is love—He who, as the “Man of sorrows” here, brought down God’s love to us ! He will take His place in our midst as the second Adam, as the Head and Source and Channel of every blessing.

If I am now joying in God, it is in virtue of being risen with Christ, God’s perfect delight. Why is it that God has given us so full a revelation of these things as He has by His word and Spirit, but that we might know and enjoy them now in our souls ? As David says, “ For Thy word’s sake and according to Thine own heart, hast Thou done all these great things to make Thy servant know them ” (2 Sam. vii. 21). God has given us intelligence of these things, that knowing and enjoying them we may be sanctified by them. The simple child who loves his father knows more about the relationship than the philosopher who might write volumes on the subject. The child would be astonished that one should be unable to understand that love of the father which he as an affectionate child was living in the enjoyment of, but still he might not be able to explain it. Unless we are in the relationship we can never enter into the feelings which result from it. The relationship is not formed in heaven. The fruits of it will be enjoyed there, but the relationship is formed here on earth ; while the One who is known and loved as a Father, being in heaven, the child wishes to be there, as it is very natural for the child to be with the father. Fellowship is more than inheritance.

It is most blessed to have the inheritance beneath our feet, but it is much more blessed to have fellowship with God as our Father above us. We have poor foolish hearts needing to be exercised ; but still we have accomplished glory, accomplished righteousness, and all in virtue of the accomplished work of Christ, so that our hearts bow before Him. The reason of all this blessedness is—" That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus " (Eph. ii. 7). The more faithfulness there is in us, the more sorrow doubtless ; but then there will be consolations abounding (2 Cor. i. 5, 7). Only let us take up the cross, and if it be really the cross, we shall find Jesus with it, and the earnest and spring of glory in our hearts.

The power then which delivers us from wrath, from sin and from Satan, is the resurrection of Christ in virtue of His accomplished righteousness, and thus we are brought into fellowship with Him. Our portion, whether in suffering down here or in glory up there, is all in Christ, as the One risen from the dead. The Lord keep our hearts full of rejoicing, through the Spirit mortifying the deeds of the body, and as being dead to law, sin and the world (cf. Rom, viii. 13 ; vii. 4 ; vi. 2-11 ; Gal. ii. 19, 20 ; vi. 14). We live to God in the same power in which Christ lives (Eph. i. 19, 20 ; ii. 4-6). The Lord give us thankful hearts for His unspeakable mercy.

“DOTH NOT EVEN NATURE ITSELF TEACH YOU?”

Nature to the mind attentive,
Teaches oft a hidden truth,
Even by a tiny insect,
Speaking to our heart's reproof.

Many a different plant will furnish
Daily food the insect needs,
But it always takes the colour
From the leaf whereon it feeds.

Christians, from the bread of heaven,
Oft-times turn to earthly fare,
But a tell-tale change of colour,
To their shame, they always wear.

If on Christ, the Lamb, we're feeding,
We'll present a heavenly blue,
But the taste of earthly follies,
Changeth to another hue. .

CHRIST AS OUR FOOD.

JOSHUA V.

I would say a word as to the way in which Christ may be considered as our food. He may be looked at as the food of the Christian in three ways.—First, as a redeemed sinner ; secondly, in connection with sitting in heavenly places in Christ ; and thirdly, as a pilgrim and stranger down here. But this last is merely accessory, and not the proper portion of the Christian. The Lord said to Israel that He had come down to deliver them from

Egypt and bring them into the land of Canaan (Ex. iii. 8). He did not say a word about the wilderness when He came to deliver them from Egypt, because His interference for them there, was in the power of redemption, and for the accomplishment of His promises. However, there was the wilderness, as well as redemption from Egypt and the entrance into Canaan; and Christ answers as our food to these three things. Two of them are permanent; for we are nourished by Christ in two ways permanently—that is, redemption and glory. The third way is as the manna, which we have all along the road. It is in these three ways that Christ meets His people, and nourishes them all the way. Two of them remain, as we have seen, but the third ceases when the circumstances it was to meet have passed away. They did eat the passover and the manna until they got into the land, then the manna ceased; but they continued to eat of the passover.

Now there are two ways in which it is proper for us ever to be feeding on Christ. First, as the passover—for they ate the paschal lamb when the wilderness had ceased and Egypt had been long left behind. When in Egypt the blood was on the lintel and the door-posts, and the Israelite ate of the lamb inside the house. The thought they had while they were eating it was, that God was going through the land as an avenging judge; and the effect of the blood on the door-posts was to keep God out, which was a great thing to do, for if

brought into God's presence as a judge, woe be to him in whom sin is found ! (Ps. cxliii. 2).

The state of the one that now eats of Christ is just according as he estimates the value of the cross, through fear of what sin actually merits. When we have got into the effect of the blood of the paschal lamb, we have got into Canaan, and enjoy the peace of the land as a delivered people, having crossed the Jordan—not only the Red Sea. That is, we have passed through death and resurrection, not as knowing Christ dead and risen for us merely, as presented in the Red Sea ; but as being dead with Him and entered into heavenly places in Him, as in Jordan. Then the character of God is known as *their God*, that is, the accomplisher of all that which He purposed toward them. It is not keeping God out now, but it is enjoying His love ; not looking at God as in the cross, pouring out wrath in judgment against sin. In Jesus on the cross there was perfect justice and perfect love. What devotedness to the Father, and what tender love to us ! And this is the way the saint who is in peace feeds on the cross. It is not feeding on it as knowing that he is safe ; for Israel's keeping the passover after they got into Canaan was very different from their keeping it when judgment was passing over. In Canaan they were in peace, and they were able to glorify God in this way, in the remembrance of their redemption from Egypt.

In this type we see presented, not the sinner

that feels he is safe, but the saint that can glorify God in his affections ; his heart confidently flowing out to Him, and feeding on Christ as the old corn of the land—the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. We see Christ now by faith at the right hand of God as the glorified Man, not only as Son of God, but as Son of man ; as Stephen, when the heavens were opened to him, beheld *Jesus* at the right hand of God. We also see Him up there. We do not see Him as He is represented in the Revelation, seated on a white horse, coming forth out of heaven. He will indeed come forth and receive us up where He is, and we shall be like Him and be for ever with Him. But we shall feed on Him as the old corn of the land when we are there, and this is our proper portion now. Manna is not our portion, though it is our provision by the way.

Joshua sees Jehovah as the Captain of Jehovah's host, and Israel feeds in the land before they fight. And our portion is to sit down in it before we fight, because God has given it to us. They do not eat the manna in Canaan, because it is for the wilderness. The manna is not Christ in the heavens, it is Christ down here. It is not our portion, our portion is the old corn of the land ; that is, the whole thing, according to God's counsels, is redemption and glory. But all our life is exercise down here, or sin (excepting that God does give us moments of joy), because, while here, there is nothing but what acts on the flesh, or

gives occasion for service to God. We may fail, and then Christ comes and feeds us with manna—that is, His sympathy with us down here, and shews how His grace is applied to all the circumstances of our daily life; and that is a happy thing. For most of our time, the far greater part of our life, we are occupied in these things, necessary and lawful things no doubt, but not occupied with heavenly joy in Christ. And these things are apt to turn away the heart from the Lord and hinder our joy. But if we would have our appetites feed on Him as the old corn of the land, we must have the habit of feeding on Him as the manna.

For instance, something may tend to make me impatient during the day; well then, Christ is my patience, and thus He is the manna to sustain me in patience. He is the source of grace, not merely the example which I am to copy. He is more than this, for I am to draw strength from Him, to feed upon Him daily; for we need Him, and it is impossible to enjoy Him as the paschal lamb unless we are also feeding on Him as the manna.

We know that God delights in Christ, and He gives us a capacity to enjoy Him too. To have such affections is the highest possible privilege, but to enjoy Him, we must feed on Him every day. It is to know Christ come down to bring the needed grace and turn the dangerous circumstances with which we are surrounded to the occasion of our feeding on Himself as the manna to sustain us and strengthen us in our trial.

THE RED HEIFER.

In Numbers xix. we learn the excessive jealousy of the Lord about sin, not in the sense of guilt, but defilement. This He measures by His sanctuary. We have to do with it, and nothing unclean can be allowed. We are "clean every whit" (John xiii. 10), but the feet-washing is needed. We belong to the sanctuary, and yet are in the world, though not of it (John xv. 19; xvii. 14); we need to have a just estimate of both. If we but touch evil, a remedy is required. Still it is not the question of justification, but of communion. Sin hinders that—hinders my coming boldly into the holiest. How was this met? The blood of the unblemished heifer, representing Christ who knew no sin and could not be brought under its power, was sprinkled before the tabernacle seven times—that is, before the place of communion, not of atonement. The sin-offering was burnt without the camp; but the blood of the red heifer was sprinkled seven times where we meet God in intercourse. This marks the full efficacy of Christ's blood when I meet God. The body was reduced to ashes, as Christ was judged and condemned for what I am apt to be careless about; but God is not careless, and would make me sensible of sin. Christ had to suffer for it, and it is gone; but the sight of His suffering shews me the dreadfulfulness of it.

God has an eye that discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart; He would have us discern

them too, and without this there can be no communion. But we do not get back into communion as quickly as we get out of it. Seven days elapsed in the type before there was full restoration. The Spirit takes and applies the ashes (that is, the remembrance of Christ's agony, and what occasioned it), and makes us feel practical horror of sin.

When I look at my sin with horror, even in the sense of the grace which has met it, it is a right feeling, but not communion : it is a holy judgment of sin in the presence of grace. Hence, there was a second sprinkling—not on the third day, but the seventh, and then there is communion with God. We see that perfect grace alone maintains the sense of perfect holiness. The result, in the end, is that we increase in the knowledge of God, both as to holiness and love. We must have been out of communion before we sinned, or we should not have yielded. How came I to fall? Because of the carelessness which left me out of God's presence, and exposed me to the evil without and within.



BABYLON.

(REVELATION XVII., XVIII.)

“Sanctify them by Thy truth, Thy word is truth.” This is a saying much to be remembered. It teaches us that we are not to make ourselves the judges of what sanctification or holiness is ; God's word is to determine this ; because holiness

is that character or mind which is formed by God's word or truth.

We are apt to think that our own moral sense of things is the rule of holiness. But the word of God claims to be such a rule : " Sanctify them by Thy truth, Thy word is truth." (John xvii.)*

If that rule were applied to many a thing which the moral sense, or the religious sense, of man approves, how it would change its character ! And the Lord cannot change His standard of holiness, though He may be infinitely gracious to the shortcomings of His saints.

These other words, " For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth," which stand in connection, have their own force and value also. Thus, in the whole of His utterance in John xvii., the Lord strongly takes a place apart from the world, and puts His saints in the like place, praying that they may be kept there. In this sense, I believe, He speaks of sanctifying Himself. Through all this church-age He is apart from the world and the earth, and sanctification depends on our communion with Him in that separated place. " The truth," testifying as it does of Him, links us with Him in that place ; and sanctification is thus " through the truth," leading us to fellowship with an unworldly Jesus.

* An act may be unholy, though done with a good conscience, because " the truth," and not the conscience, is the rule of holiness.

We may see instances of such sanctification from the beginning. When the ground was cursed for man's sake, holiness was separation from it, as in the persons of the antediluvian saints ; uncleanness was cleaving to it, as did the family of Cain.

When the earth again corrupted itself and God judged it by the scattering of the nations, holiness was separation from it, as in Abraham ; and apostasy was a clinging to it in spite of judgment, as Nimrod did.

When Canaan was judged, Achan's sin savoured of the apostate mind ; but Israel became a holy people by separation from it and from all people of the earth, by the ordinances of God and the sword of Joshua.

But Israel revolts. The circumcision becomes uncircumcision, and with them all on the face of the earth or in the world becomes defiled, and holiness is separation from it in companionship with a rejected and heavenly Christ.

The whole system, the world, is the judged or cursed thing now. It is the Jericho. While the camp lingers in the wilderness, we may be at charges or in labours on a mission to draw out the Rahabs ; but we cannot seek the improvement of Jericho, or display the resources and capabilities of the world.* Such doings would be unholy, not

* The word, as including other thoughts, is also any moral or religious system or undertaking which does not act in company with a rejected and heavenly Christ.

according "to the truth," however morally conducted, or benevolently intentioned.

Glorying in a crucified Christ will not, if alone, be the perfect thing of this age ; there must be companionship with a rejected Christ also. Babylon, I believe, the mystic Babylon of the Revelation, may be brought to boast in a crucified Christ, and be Babylon still. For what is it as delineated by the Spirit ? Is it not a thing worldly in character as well as abominable and idolatrous in doctrine and practice ? Revelation xviii. gives us a sight of Babylon in its worldliness, as chapter xvii. more in its idolatries. Babylon of old, as in the land of Chaldea, was full of idols, and guilty of the blood or of the sorrows of the righteous. But it had also this mark : it displayed greatness in the world in the time of Jerusalem's depression. So with the mystic Babylon. She has her abominations in the midst of her, and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus stains her ; but still more fully is she disclosed as great and splendid, and joyous in the earth during the age of Christ's rejection. She is important in the world in that day when the judgment of God is preparing for the world ; she can glorify herself and live deliciously in a defiled place.

It is not that she is ignorant of the cross of Christ. She is not heathen. She may publish Christ crucified, but she refuses to know Christ rejected. She does not continue with Him in His temptations, nor consider the poor and needy Jesus (Luke xxii. ; Psalm xli.) The kings of the

earth and the merchants of the earth are her friends, and the inhabitants of the earth are her subjects.

Is not, then, the rejection of Christ the thing she practically scorns? Surely it is. And again I say, the prevailing thought of the Spirit about her is this: she is that which is exalted in the world while God's Witness is depressed and in defiance of that depression, for she knows it. Babylon of old well knew of the desolations of Jerusalem; Christendom now well knows and publishes the cross of Jesus.

Babylon of old was very bold in her defiance of the grief of Zion. She made the captives of Zion to contribute to her greatness and her enjoyments. Nebuchadnezzar had done this with the captive youths, and Belshazzar with the captives' vessels.

This was Babylon, and in spirit this is Christendom. Christendom is the thing which glorifies herself and lives deliciously in the earth, trading in all that is desirable and costly in the world's esteem in the very face of the sorrow and rejection of that which is God's. Christendom practically forgets Christ rejected on the earth.

The Medo-Persian is another creature. He removes Babylon, but he exalts himself (Daniel vi.). And this is the action of "the Beast" and his ten kings. The woman, mystically Babylon, is removed by the ten kings; but then they give their power to the Beast who exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, as Darius the Mede did.

This is the closing, crowning feature in the picture of the world's apostasy. But we have not reached it yet. Our conflict is with Babylon and not with the Mede, with that which lives deliciously and in honour during the age of Jerusalem's ruins (i. e., of the rejection of Christ),



WATCHING.

The characteristic of a person who has his ear open to the Lord is watching. "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke xii. 37). I find Him serving, then, in divine love, still in the same character. He comes and brings us to heaven—to His Father's house, that where He is, there we may be also. "While you were in that wicked world," He says, "I was obliged to keep you on the watch, in a state of tension, with diligent earnestness to keep the heart waiting; but I bring you to a place where you are to sit down, and it will be my delight to minister to you."

It is one of the greatest comforts to me that I shall not want my conscience in heaven. If I let it go to sleep for a moment now, there are temptations and snares; there, there is no evil, and the more my heart goes out, the more good it is. Here I dare not let it, but I must watch and pray; I shall not need that in heaven. The full blessed-

ness of it is, the Lord being there of course ; and next, the saints being perfect. What does the heart desire that cares for the Lord's people ? That they should be just what Christ's heart would have them. That will be so there ; He will see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. Then there is after that this comfort, that my heart can go out—here it cannot—to God and the Lamb, and to the saints in measure too ; but then, roam as it will, there is nothing to roam over but a paradise where evil never comes, and it can never go wrong.

He comes, then, and takes us there ; and what heaven can find there for the heart to feed on is spread on the table of God. " You shall rest there and feed on it," He says, " and I will gird myself, and come forth and serve you. I am not going to give up my service of love." Thus, while I have the blessedness of feeding on what God has to give, I have the increased satisfaction, that if I put a morsel of divine meat into my mouth, I receive it from the hand of love that brings it to me. When He brings us there, all is turned round. " Here," He says, " you must have your lights burning, and be watching ; when I get my way, I must put you at ease, and make you happy." " Then shall the Son also Himself be subject." He was serving here. It was man's perfection to serve—the very thing the devil tried to get Him out of. If He had, it would have been doing His own will ; but " though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered." But when all

things shall have been subdued unto Him, He is subject after that. In the meanwhile He has been on His own throne ; now He is on His Father's throne, our High Priest ; but He will take His own throne and power, and reign, bringing everything into subjection. Then it is not serving, but reigning ; afterwards He gives up the kingdom in that sense to His Father, for everything is brought to order. In the millennium it is a King reigning in righteousness ; but then it is new heavens and earth, wherein *dwells* righteousness. Innocence dwelt in the first paradise ; sin dwells in the present earth ; and then, in the new heavens and earth, it will be " wherein dwelleth righteousness." He gives up the mediatorial kingdom, as it is called, to God, and takes His place as a man—" the First-born among many brethren." He never gives up a place in which He can own us as associated with Himself in the blessedness of First-born of many brethren. As all was ruined in the first Adam, all shall be blessed in the last. " As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Then I find myself enjoying everything that God can give to the objects of His love, and enjoying it with Christ then at the head of everything—Son of God and Son of man ; we associated with all the blessedness, and He administering to us so that the heart can taste His love. And He does not just bring us there, but it is to all eternity. He has purchased us too dearly to give us up. His love will be in constant exer-

cise toward us. It leads us to adore Him more than anything that can be thought of ; but we can trust a love that never ceases in heaven.

You see here His heart is going out to do it ; therefore you must have lights burning. " Let your light " (not your works) " so shine before men," that they may know where your works come from, " and glorify your Father which is in heaven," that they may attribute them to God. I do whatever God tells me to do, and it is a testimony to Christ. People say that is what comes from a man being a Christian. It is that there may be no uncertainty as to what we are—a well trimmed lamp, the testimony of the life of Christ—that it may be manifested what I am, and what I am about—a pilgrim and a stranger in a thousand different circumstances, the ordinary duties of life to perform, but one service—to be the epistle of Christ. I may be a carpenter or a shoemaker ; I must be a *Christian*. In various relationships, servants, masters, in eating or in drinking, in our houses, wherever it is, I must be a Christian.

What characterized those servants was *watching*, and they got the blessing. " Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching." Ah, beloved friends, are you watching, waiting for Christ practically ? I cannot be watching and going on in my own way. Are your lights burning, or have we slipped down to the ease and comforts of this world like other

people? That is not having our loins girded, and it is not as a *doctrine* we are to have it only.



The people of God should wait with the *girdle* and the *lamp*, which are the beautiful standing symbols of their calling, till the Lord appears—that is, with minds girt up unto holy separation from present things, and with hearts brightened up with the desire and expectation of coming things.



The adversary gets many an advantage over us through *slovenliness*. How little equal are we to the occasions that present themselves. Satan works more effectually now with the *pillow* than he formerly did with the stake.



“WATCH

YE THEREFORE : FOR YE KNOW NOT

WHEN THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE COMETH,

AT EVEN, OR AT MIDNIGHT, OR AT THE COCK-CROWING,

OR IN THE MORNING :

LEST COMING SUDDENLY HE FIND YOU SLEEPING.

AND WHAT I SAY UNTO YOU I SAY UNTO ALL,

WATCH.”