

WORDS OF TRUTH.

"The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words:
and that which was written was upright, even words of
truth." (Eccles. xii. 10).

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The Vision of the Ransomed Throng.

(Rev. vii. 9-17.)

Before the Lamb, before the throne,
Behold a vast, innumerable throng,
From every kindred, people, zone,
Of every various speech and tongue.
In snowy robes, with boughs of palm,
Their glory charmed my raptured gaze;
While, jubilant, a lofty psalm
The many-voiced chorus raise.
Solemn and grand arose the strains;
And high the joyous anthem rang;
"Salvation to our God Who reigns,
And to the Lamb!" the theme they sang.
And all the angels gathered round
The elders and the living four,
Fall with their faces to the ground,
And God upon the throne adore.
"Amen! Let blessing, glory, power,
Thanksgiving, honour, wisdom, might,
Be to our God for evermore,
Through never-ending day and night!"
Then said an elder, "What these bands,
Bright-shining in their white array,
With palms of victory in their hands?
Tell me, O seer, whence came they?"
"Outcame they to this glorious height,
From the Great Tribulation-flood:
They've washed their robes, and made them
white
In the Lamb's precious, cleansing blood."

“ Therefore, before God’s holy throne,
 They day and night His praises tell;
 Their worship HE WHO REIGNS shall own,
 And with them will for ever dwell.

“ Hunger no more, nor thirst, nor heat,
 Nor sun-blight shall they ever know;
 Fed by the Lamb, Who guides their feet
 Where founts of living water flow.

“ Grief ne’er shall cast a shadow there,
 To cloud the gladness of the way;
 And GOD HIMSELF, with tenderest care,
 Shall wipe all sorrowing tears away ! ”

The Gift of the Holy Ghost.

“ **W**HY do you not pray for the gift of the Holy Ghost ? ” said a Christian lady one night after a Scripture reading.

“ Because, having believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal salvation, we have received the Holy Ghost. Hence we read, ‘ The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. ’ ” (Eph. i. 13; Rom. v. 5.)

“ But are we not plainly taught by our Lord Himself to pray *for* the Holy Ghost ? Did He not say, ‘ How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him ? ’ ” (Luke xi. 13.)

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True. It was quite right then, before the Holy Ghost came; but our Lord had to die and rise again, and ascend to the right hand of the Father, before this could be; for we read in the Gospel of John that "the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." (Chap. vii. 39.) But where, after He came down on the day of Pentecost, do we read of the apostles or any of the saints praying *for* the Holy Ghost? On the contrary, do they not constantly refer to the Holy Ghost as *dwelling in* the believer, and in the Church? The fact is that the world do not believe He is here because they cannot see Him, and the believer knows His presence and dwelling in him, not because he sees Him, but because Scripture says so, and he realises His gracious operations in him in various ways; and especially in His taking of the things of the Father and of the Son, and showing them unto him, shedding abroad the love of God in his heart, causing him to cry, "Abba, Father," and to confess that "Jesus is the Lord." (John xvi. 15; Rom. v. 5, viii. 15; 1 Cor. xii. 3.)

"But I suppose you pray for a greater measure of the Spirit?"

"How can I, if the Holy Ghost Himself dwells in me? If it were merely an action of the Spirit in me, or a certain amount of influence of the Spirit which I had received, I

might *then* ask for more. But while this might have been true as to the saints who lived before the Lord had accomplished redemption and was glorified, nothing can be clearer than the Holy Ghost being a divine Person, co-equal with the Father and the Son. The Father sent the Son; the Son came, took flesh, and died for us; and when Jesus had gone into heaven itself, the Holy Ghost came down, and took up His abode in those who were freed from their sins by the Saviour's blood. The Holy Ghost is a distinct Person from the Son, who died for us; and from the Father, who sent the Son; and yet He is one in divine essence and Godhead with the Father and the Son. The Holy Ghost is called 'God'; He has divine attributes; and it is He by whom we are sealed and indwelt till the day of redemption. How, then, could I ask for a greater measure, when the Person Himself dwells in me? I might and do ask to be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man; to abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost; that sinners may be saved by the Spirit working in them, and such like; but where in the Scriptures of the apostles is there an idea of a believer asking for a greater measure of the Spirit?"

"But do you not look for a further outpouring of the Spirit?"

"Most certainly I do; for God has de-

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clared, 'I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh,' which, I judge, will be in the millenium, because the prophecy refers to deliverance in Mount Zion and Jerusalem. This same prophecy was partially quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost, to show, from the signs which accompanied it, that it really was the coming of the Spirit, and not carnal excitement, as some of them supposed." (Joel ii. 28-32.)

"But what I meant in asking this question was, Will there not be a greater outpouring of the Holy Ghost in the Church?"

"How can there be, if the Holy Ghost Himself is here in consequence of Jesus, the Son of God, the Accomplisher of redemption, being glorified as Man at God's right hand? Where is there such an expectation held out by the apostles? On the contrary, does not Paul give us a most appalling picture of 'the last days'? Did he not warn the saints of grievous wolves not sparing the flock, seducers waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived? Did not Peter predict there would be 'false teachers . . . denying the Lord that bought them. . . . And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of,' etc.? And did not loving John also say, 'Even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know it is the last time'? Surely,

then, the apostles did not look for what some call a greater outpouring of the Spirit; nor could they, because the Holy Ghost Himself, the other Comforter, was here, and to abide with us for ever. It is this which invests the subject with such solemn importance."

"Then I suppose you would object also to pray for a fresh baptism of the Spirit?"

"If you look at Scripture, you will see there that, in reference to the gift of the Holy Ghost, our Lord said to His disciples, 'Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.' (Luke xxiv. 49): and the same writer tells us that Jesus added, 'John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be *baptized with the Holy Ghost* not many days hence. . . . Ye shall receive *power*, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses,' etc., and in the next chapter we are told that the Holy Ghost did come, and we see the spiritual *power* that followed. (Acts i. 5-8, ii. 1-7.) But if we turn to 1 Cor. xii. 13, we shall see what the baptism of the Holy Ghost is—'By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.' The baptism of the Holy Ghost, then, was the uniting of all believers together into 'one body,' by uniting them all to Christ the Head in heaven, and to one another on earth as members one of another. We are, therefore, spoken of as 'members of His body, of His flesh, and of

His bones'; and can this ever need to be repeated? The idea of a fresh baptism of the Spirit has no place in Scripture.

"The truth is, that Scripture teaches us, who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, that God dwelleth in us by the Spirit which He hath given us; that He dwells in our bodies, has been sent into our hearts to guide us into all truth, and teach us all things, and by whom we are anointed, united to Christ, sealed, and who is the earnest of the inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. (Read prayerfully 1 John iii. 24; 1 Cor. vi. 19; Gal. iv. 6; 2 Cor. i. 21, 22; Eph. i. 13, 14.) The Holy Ghost also dwells in the Church on earth. (1 Cor. iii. 16.) He is the power on earth for everything which is the work of God in souls. It is by the Spirit through the Word that sinners are brought to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and have eternal life. They are thus 'born of the Spirit,' and therefore 'born of God'; and *then* He is sent forth to dwell in them. 'Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' We are therefore enjoined not to 'grieve' Him; and as it is by His power 'gifts' are used for the ministry of the truth it is also said, 'Quench not the Spirit.' 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.'" (Rom. viii. 14.)

The Two Aspects of the Lord's Second Advent.

“ We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep ” (1 Thess. iv. 15.)

“ The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night ” (1 Thess. v. 2.)

THESE verses with their context form a very distinct section of this instructive and valuable epistle, in which the inspired apostle sets forth the two great phases of the second advent of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, namely, (1) That phase of it which bears upon A SORROWING CHURCH; (2) That phase of it which bears upon A REJOICING WORLD.”

The Holy Ghost makes use of the same grand truth at once to comfort the heart of a weeping saint and to warn the heart of an exultant worldling. The tears of the former and the boastings of the latter are both met by the same all-important and most influential doctrine.

Now, it is usual to ascribe to DEATH what the apostle here ascribes only to THE LORD'S COMING. We frequently hear it said, when a Christian friend has departed, “ We shall soon follow him.”

This is not what the apostle says; but quite the reverse. He says: “ I would not have

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you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that have fallen asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."

And why not? Is it because they were so soon to follow them? By no means. This would be to put death in the place of a returning Christ. The comfort which the Holy Ghost had to offer to the bereaved heart of a saint rested on a totally different ground. Therefore the apostle continues: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so also them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

The coming of Christ was so near to the apostle's heart, so vividly and so naturally before his soul, as the proper object of hope, that he could say, "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." (v. 15.) The worldly heart would say, "My Lord delayeth His coming"; but the true attitude of a saint, in reference to the second advent of Christ, is set forth in the expression, "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord."

The two great boundaries of the Church's existence down here are the cross and the coming of Christ. In the cross, death and judgment are for ever set aside, as regards the Church; and instead thereof the whole scene is filled with glory. "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after that the judgment;

so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." (Heb. ix. 27, 28.) Christ's coming in glory, without any reference to or connection with sin, is the distinctive hope of the Church. "He hath appeared once, in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"; and hence He has nothing more to say to sin; but when He comes again, it will be unto salvation.

Now, it is important to see with distinctness the double aspect of Christ's second coming, as set forth in Thessalonians by the two expressions, "the *coming* of the Lord" and "the *day* of the Lord." The former has particular reference to the Church; the latter to the world. The former has nothing to do with "times and seasons"; the latter has much to do with them. The former is not connected with events amongst the nations; the latter is closely connected with those events.

The great burden of the prophets is THE MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD amongst the nations of the earth, including His dealings with that peculiar nation, Israel. This is a subject of immense interest to the saint, not because of his personal connection therewith, but because it involves the counsels of God, and His ways with man on the earth. But we may look in vain throughout the pages of

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Old Testament prophecy for any enunciation of the doctrine of the Church's position, of her calling, or of her hope. These things "were not in other ages made known to the sons of men, as they are now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets, by the Spirit." (Eph. iii. 5.)

Such being the case, it is evident that THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH cannot be affected by those events which form the more immediate subject of the Old Testament prophecies. "That blessed hope" shines out in all its peculiar brightness without so much as a single intervening cloud. "The bright and morning star" glitters on the Church's horizon, and the fondly cherished hope of seeing it cheers her heart and animates her spirit during the dreary watches of this dark night. "I will give him the Bright and Morning Star," is Christ's own promise; and He Himself is that Star.

The Holy Ghost, by the prophet Malachi, presents Christ to the hopes and expectations of the pious remnant of Israel as "the Sun of Righteousness" who shall "arise with healing in His wings"; but "the Bright and Morning Star" awakens an entirely different order of thought in the soul. The Church will have been in the enjoyment of the light of her Morning Star before the beams of the Sun of Righteousness cheer the sorrowing

heart of the remnant of Israel. It is only those who are on the watch during the night who are favoured with the sight of the morning star; when the Sun shines forth over the earth, at the opening of the millennial morning, the God-fearing remnant shall catch the first glimpse of His beams; and when He comes to His meridian height "every eye shall see Him." (Rev. i. 7.)

The moment Christ rises up from the Father's throne, the Church rises from earth to meet Him in the air. For that moment the Church waits. Till then, the Holy Ghost works, in connection with the gospel of Christ, for the purpose of gathering out the remainder of God's elect. Till then, He also works to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. But when the time arranged in the divine counsels has fully come, "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." This is the Church's special hope, and in full keeping with Christ's gracious promise in John xiv. : "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Observe the peculiar grace of the words "*I will come again*"; "*the Lord Himself shall descend.*" He will not send an angel, nor a legion of angels; no, He will come Himself. Such is His grace; such, too, the dignity put upon His beloved bride.

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And all this is founded upon the truth that "Jesus died, and rose again." "If," says the inspired apostle, "we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." The Lord Jesus was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; and all who sleep in Jesus, being part of His body (Eph. i. 22, 23), shall be raised up, and presented with Him in His coming glory. God raised Christ from the dead; and if we believe that, we can in like manner believe that all who sleep in Jesus shall be raised up, and brought with Him at His glorious appearing. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. viii. 11.)

All is founded upon our connection with Christ. The Head and the body, being one, shall appear together in glory. "For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep; for the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be

with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Similar is the teaching in 1 Cor. xv.: "Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep; but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed," (vv. 51, 52.)

Here we have the hope of the Church very clearly and simply enunciated; and most needful is it that the saints should receive it as clearly and simply as it is here laid down, seeing that the enemy has sought to encumber it with a variety of other things, which, however interesting as subjects of study, are nowise attractive as objects of hope.

For example, some would teach the saints that they must be trampled down under the feet of the beast, before their hearts can be gladdened by the sight of the Morning Star. Where do they find this in 1 Cor. xv., or 1 Thess. iv.?

And yet these Scriptures do, as we have said, clearly set forth that which constitutes the Church's hope. So also in chap. i. we read, "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living God, and to wait"—for what? The beast? No. The man of sin? No. The false prophet? No. The full development and final destruction of Nebuchadnezzar's

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image? No. What then? "To wait for His Son from heaven."

This is simple and conclusive enough for any mind that is desirous of being subject to the authority of Holy Scripture.

The Church is not taught to wait for any movements amongst the nations, for the restoration of the Jews, for the development of the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image, for the consolidation of the Roman Empire, for the drying up of the river Euphrates, in order to prepare the way of the kings of the east; in short, she is not to wait for any earthly event whatever, but simply for God's Son from heaven, "the Bright and Morning Star." True, all these things are the direct subject of prophetic testimony, and, as such, profoundly interesting to the spiritual student of Scripture; just as the destinies of Sodom were interesting to Abraham, though, personally, he had nothing whatever to do with them.

Every Christian, whatever may be the measure of his prophetic knowledge, should take an interest in the study of prophecy; not that he may build up a system, or defend a theory, but simply that he may be more or less acquainted with the ways and counsels of God, and the destinies of this lower world. But his specific hope is a totally different thing. He will not find that in the pages of Old Testament prophecy. There is nothing

there about the Head and the body, the Bridegroom and the bride, meeting in the air. He will read of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Tyre, Gog and Magog; and the connection of all these with the city of Jerusalem and the land of Israel. But these have nought to do with the outshining of "the Bright and Morning Star." That Star is the emblem of a celestial glory, far removed from this dark and stormy world; a glory which shall appear to the Church while a Christ-rejecting world is still wrapped in profound slumber, or intoxicated with its own proud and godless schemes.

Now, when we turn to the second aspect of the advent, as presented in 1 Thessalonians v. 1-11, we find something entirely different. We here come to "times and seasons," concerning which the apostle felt he had no need to write to the Church, because she had nothing to do with such, so far as she herself was personally concerned. The Church belongs to the day and to the light, and therefore has no need to be guided by "times and seasons," or "the signs of the times." Such things have direct reference to those who shall be involved in the terrors of "the day of the Lord," and by no means to those who have to do with the Morning Star, those who shall have met Christ as a Bridegroom in the air, before the revelation of the day.

It must be evident, to every reflecting mind,

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that there is a vast difference between the appearance of the morning star, and the revelation of the sun's full brightness. Nor is the difference less striking between the coming of a bridegroom to an expecting bride, and the bursting in of a thief upon an intoxicated or a slumbering household; and yet the two phases of the advent are thus strikingly contrasted: "Yourselves know perfectly, that *the day* of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night; for when *they* [not ye] shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon *them* [not upon you] as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

This is peculiarly solemn, and eminently calculated to strike terror into a worldly heart. Indeed, the coming of the thief is as terrifying as the coming of the Bridegroom is attractive. But the two things are as distinct as they can be, and they cannot be confounded without serious damage to the mind of a saint.

It would seem as if the Thessalonian believers had suffered from having so confounded them. They seem to have at first feared lest their departed friends should not participate in the joy of Christ's return; and when corrected as to this, they would appear to have run into another error; namely, that of fearing lest they themselves should be involved in the terrors accompanying "the day of the Lord." This latter thought is fully

corrected in the second epistle; and, in the apostle's mode of correction there is, if possible, a still fuller and clearer presentation of the double phase of the advent. He says, "We beseech you, brethren, by *the coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that *the day of the Lord* is at hand," or has actually set in.

Here the two things are brought into direct contrast, and the saints are exhorted, on the ground of their participation in the joys of the former, not to dread being involved in the terrors of the latter.

This is most conclusive. "The COMING of the Lord" is the Church's hope, "the DAY of the Lord" is the world's dread. The former will be the consummation of the saint's joy; the latter will be the death-knell of the worldling's happiness.

"The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." It is never said that the Morning Star shall come as a thief in the night. True, the Lord says to the angel of the church in Sardis, "If, therefore, thou wilt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." (Rev. iii. 3.) This passage, so far from presenting any difficulty,

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rather affords a strong confirmation of the truth on which we have been dwelling. The Church of Sardis had a name to live, and was dead. It had sunk down very much to the level of the world; and therefore it is that the Lord presents to it that phase of His advent which properly belongs to the world.

If the saint mingles with the world, he must expect to be threatened with the world's portion. If Lot goes down to Sodom, he must participate in Sodom's woes. But we know full well that "a thief" is not Christ's proper aspect to the Church. "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." We properly belong to the day; but if, through ignorance or unfaithfulness, we get out of our proper position, we cannot expect the Spirit to animate us with our proper hopes. If we sink to the world's level, we shall look at the future from the world's point of view. "Ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Wherefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night; but let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain

salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him."

Such is our proper position, our proper hope. And be it observed that our living together with Christ is founded on the fact that Christ died for us. His dying for us secures our living with Him, whether we wake or sleep. It is well to note this. It sweetly reveals the grace of Him with Whom we have to do, whose death for us secures infallibly our being linked with Him in that eternal glory, for which both He and His saints now wait. By this gracious assurance, and not by any feeling of dread or uncertainty, would the blessed Spirit produce in us a watchful condition of soul. And assuredly the heart that could use such a truth as an excuse for not watching can know but little of the real power of either grace or glory. Such a one would say, "Let us continue in sin, that grace may abound."

I would only remark, in conclusion, that the apostle closes his view of both phases of the advent with the same sweet exhortation, "COMFORT YOURSELVES WITH THESE WORDS."

David's Last Words; or, The Saint's Prospect and Retrospect.

READ 2 SAM. xxiii.

THERE is something deeply touching and most consolatory in the last words of "The sweet Psalmist of Israel." It is good and profitable to listen to the "last words" of any saint of God or servant of Christ; well to hearken to the mellow accents of the hoary-headed and experienced; seasonable to those who have reached the final stage of life's rough journey. We all know that, upon our first starting on our course, there is a quantity of romance about us. We cherish large expectations from men and things. We fondly imagine that all is gold that glitters, and we foolishly hope that all the promises and pretensions of the scene around will be fully actualized.

But, alas! as we get on in years we discover we have made a mistake. Stern reality cures us of much of our youthful romance, and the keen blasts of the desert carry away much of the bloom of our young days. The young believer is apt to confide in every one who makes a profession; and this artless confidence is very lovely. Would that it always met with a more worthy response. But it does not. One meets with much, even in an ordinary Christian career,

to chill, to wither, to contract, and repulse. Hence the weight and value of "last words," in any case, but especially when we get them, not merely as the fruit of matured judgment, but, as in David's case, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

"Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." (*vv. 1-4.*)

Here David sets up the divine standard of character for one called to rule over men. "He must be just"; and upon the basis of justice is erected a superstructure of cloudless light, richest blessing, and abundant fruitfulness. All this will, as we very well know, be only realized when the Son of David, now hidden in the heavens, shall ascend the throne of His Father, and stretch forth His sceptre over a restored creation.

But not only does David set up the divine

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standard; he compares himself with it, and it is in this comparison we have the great moral and practical truth which I desire to fasten on my reader's heart.

“ALTHOUGH,” says David, “my house be not so with God; YET He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow.” (v. 5.)

The only way to get a right view of ourselves is by looking at Christ. This is what David does in these last words. He weighs himself in a perfect balance, and declares himself wanting. He measures himself with a perfect rule, and confesses himself entirely defective. He gazes upon the perfect model, and exclaims, “I am not like that.” He looks back over the past, and sees the failings and the faults. He turns over page after page of life's chequered story, and his eye, enlightened by beams of light from the sanctuary, sees the blots and the blemishes in his career. But (blessed be God!) he can fall back upon “an everlasting covenant, *ordered in all things*, and sure,” and he finds in that well-ordered covenant “all his *salvation*, and all his *desire*.”

There is uncommon beauty and power in the connection between the “*although*” and the “*yet*” in the above passage. The former

leaves a wide margin in which to insert the utterance of a convicted and chastened heart; the latter opens the floodgates to let in the full tide of divine mercy and loving-kindness. "Although" puts man in the dust as a failing one; "yet" introduces God in all the fulness of His pardoning love. *That* is the language of a soul that has learnt itself; *this* the breathing of a heart that had learnt something about God.

Oh! beloved reader, is it not a signal mercy that, when we reach the close of our history, and review the past, when, as regards ourselves, we have only to say, "My house is not so with God," we shall then fully prove the eternal stability of that grace in which we have found "*all* our salvation, and all our desire" ?

In the angels, God glorifies Himself in creation. They excel us in strength. In Christians, God glorifies Himself in reconciliation, to make them the firstfruits of His *new* creation, when He shall have reconciled all things in heaven and on earth by Christ. Therefore it is written, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children [sons] of God." They have His nature and His character.

Man's World and Christ's World.

Read Luke xiv. and xv.

PUT together, these are two wonderful chapters.

In the fourteenth, the Lord visits *our* world; in the fifteenth, we visit *His*.

In the fourteenth, He makes Himself acquainted with *our* ways; in the fifteenth we are called to acquaint ourselves with *His*.

This is the grand moral distinction between the two chapters; and nothing can exceed them in interest.

In the fourteenth chapter we find that *nothing* satisfies Him.

Are you prepared for this conclusion? There is *nothing* thoroughly according to His mind.

In the fifteenth *everything* is suited to Him; and if *we* were divinely intelligent, and divinely sensitive, we should find that nothing in *man's* world, and everything in *Christ's* world, would do for us. It is the grand character of the Apocalypse, that there is not a thing in it but suits the mind of the glorified Church.

Chapter xiv. opens by the Lord being invited to eat bread in a Pharisee's house, and as He enters, at once all the sympathies of His mind are intruded on.

The house is a type of man's world. "As He went into the house. . . . they watched

Him." And there came in a poor man that had the dropsy, and He asked them, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath Day?"

"And they held their peace."

Now, why did they hold their peace?

It was a hypocritical silence. They ought to have answered; but they wanted to catch Him. Oh! what wretched, miserable tricks these hearts of ours can play! Your heart is under the lion and serpent: violence and subtlety. Satan is represented as both these.

The Lord, having healed the dropsical man, said to them, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?" Ought you not to have gathered your answer to the question from your own ways?

The Lord takes us on our own showing, and exposes us out of our own mouth and our own ways. I do not want any one to show me what I am, I know very well.

In verse 7 He has entered the house, and looked around. That is exactly where we fail. We are so much taken up with ourselves that we do not look round to see things with the eyes of the Lord. The Lord came with the heart and resources of God to dispense blessing; but with the eye and ear and sensibility of God, to acquaint Himself with the moral of the scene here.

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What does He see here? First the guests; and *they* do not please Him. He saw they chose the highest rooms. Now, suppose you had the eye of God, and looked on the scene around you, day by day, would you not see the same thing? We savour too much of it ourselves, and therefore cannot testify against it.

Christ was infinitely pure, so that He could detect the smallest bit of impurity. He saw that it was pride that animated the scene under His eye; and you and I must have very false notions of what is abroad if we do not see the same thing. "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" mark the spirit that animates the activities around us.

Now He looked at the host; but there was no relief for Him there. Selfishness in another form shows itself to Him. It was not the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind that the Pharisee asked to his feast, but his *rich* neighbours were seated on his right hand and on his left.

Here the heart of *Christ* tells itself out in calling those who cannot recompense Him. It is very happy that Christ cannot be pleased with your world. What would your Lord Jesus be to you if He could put up with such a world? If Christ could have found sym-

pathy with man's world as delineated here, you and I should never have been saved. He acted on directly contrary principles, or we should never have had to talk of salvation.

Now one of the company says, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." This was a gracious movement, I believe. I do not say whether it ended in good or not, but a certain gracious instant passed over the soul.

The Lord was not unaffected by it. He pays attention to the interruption. Oh! the precious and perfect humanity of Jesus. His Deity was equal to the Father's. His humanity was equal to yours and mine; not in its corruption, but in all the beautiful traits that could adorn it in its perfection.

He waits, and indites the parable of the marriage supper. The man had said, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God," and the Lord brings out this parable to exhibit what it is to eat bread in the Kingdom of God.

This shows that the Lord is willing to wait on the secret stirring of your spirit, and give it a suited response. And that word of the man that sat at table gives him occasion to expand before his eyes a feast spread in the heavenly country. And oh! what a different one from that here! Not one of the bidden

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guests came. No, and not a single bidden guest since Adam will be at that table.

What do I mean?

There must be *more* than an invitation. God must fill the chairs as well as the table. He must *force* His guests in, as well as fill the board.

He sends His servants, and says, "*Compel* them to come in, that My house may be filled."

There is a peep into heaven! Did you ever know such a place in all your life? The richest feast ever seen, and not one at it that has not been *compelled* to come in!

And does God put up with this? If there had only been the mission of the Son, there would never have been a single guest. If there had only been the mission of the Holy Ghost, there would have been no feast spread.

What a wonderful exhibition of the love of God! If you had prepared a kindness for another, would you like to find an indisposed heart in him? No, you would not ask him again, but would say, "Let him go, and get what he values more."

But there is the double mission of the Son and the Spirit. The Son prepares the feast, and the Spirit prepares the guests. So that there is not a single merely *bidden* guest there; they are *compelled* guests.

What a wretched exhibition of the heart you carry! One has bought a piece of ground,

another has bought five yoke of oxen. Anything but the Lord's feast. This is the contrast between God's table and man's.

When the Lord had delivered the parable, as He was leaving the house great multitudes followed Him, and He turned and said, "Who-soever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple."

Now, how do you treat the Lord Jesus? Do you look at Him as a pattern, an example?

"Well," you will say, "I *ought* to do so," and I grant it; but you and I are thoroughly wrong if our first communion with Him is as a *pattern*; it must be as with a *Saviour*. The multitudes followed Him as a pattern, and the Lord says, "If you *will* be like Me, you must give up everything."

The next chapter opens with publicans and sinners, and *there* is seen communion of soul with Him as a *Saviour*.

The moment the Lord got that object, He was at home. He passes on through all scenes till "publicans and sinners" draw near to Him.

He had entered and left the Pharisee's house, and His spirit had not breathed a comfortable atmosphere; but when a poor sinner comes and looks at Him, that moment His whole heart gave itself out, and uttered itself in the three beautiful parables that follow.

It is impossible to follow the spirit of Christ

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in this chapter without being comforted. Could I know Christ as I would know Him if He could find a *home* in *my* world?

No! But He says, "If I cannot find a home *here*, do you come and find a home with *Me*. You have disappointed *Me*, but I will not disappoint *you*." As one said once, "In preaching the gospel, the Lord said, 'Well, if *I* cannot trust *you*, *you* must trust *Me*.' "

It is another version of the same thought here; and these beautiful parables show one leading and commanding truth: that God's world is made happy by sinners getting into it.

Do you believe that you, as a sinner, are important to heaven?

Whether you believe it or not, it is true. It is not our gain in the matter of salvation that is presented here, but God's joy, and that only. He takes these homely figures that our thoughts may not be distracted, and that you may learn that you are *lost*. But you learn, too, the joy of God in recovering you.

I do not believe a richer thought can enter the soul of man. I sit down in heaven, not as a recovered sinner only, but as one whose recovery has formed the joy of heaven.

Now you are at Christ's table, in Christ's world, and you see what kind of a place it is. As for the poor lost sheep, if left to itself it would only have wandered farther still;

and as for the piece of money, it would have lain there till this hour if the woman had not searched diligently till she found it.

Now let us combine these two chapters. In xiv. you get the words, "Compel them to come in," and in xv. you get the prodigal compelled.

We were observing the missions of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost never gives me my title to glory, but He enables me to read it. If I could not read it, it would be no use to me.

Now I ask, *What* is this compulsion? It is not against your will, but you are *made* willing in the day of His power. Take, for instance, the prodigal. When he was brought to his last penny, and began to be in want, "he came to himself."

This was the beginning of the compelling, when the poor prodigal opened his eyes to his condition.

What, at a later day, did the Lord do to the heart of Lydia?

He *opened* it, and her opened heart listened to what Paul spoke.

The mighty compelling power showed itself here, when the poor prodigal looked round on his condition, and said, "What shall I do?"

The Holy Ghost makes you willing when He makes you see your need, and that death and judgment are before you. He stirs you

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up by this, till He puts you on the road to God.

One poor soul says, "I had better begin to look out for eternity." Another is terrified by the thought of death and judgment to come. God will take you in any way. The thing is to get your back to the land where once you lingered. The poor prodigal says, "I will arise; I have found out the end of my own doings; I will go to my father." And back he goes; and back he is welcomed!

The story of the prodigal beautifully illustrates the *compelling* of the previous chapter. Zacchæus wished to see Jesus one morning, and up he got into the tree. That was the compelling of the Holy Ghost.

Oh! what two chapters! Christ disappointed in *your world*, and you satiated in *Christ's world*!

God not only meets the desires that His children have: He is the source of new desires to the new man by the revelation of Himself in love. Thus there is the opposite to weariness in the heavenly enjoyment of God. Because He Who is the infinite object of enjoyment is the infinite source and strength of capacity to enjoy; though we enjoy as recipient creatures. He is both the source of the nature and its infinite object, and that in *love*.

In the Way to Emmaus.

Read Luke xxiv. 13-36.

THERE is much that is very suggestive and beautiful in the words, "And He made as though He would have gone further." Indited as they were by the Holy Ghost, they have a place in the inspired page in order that we, by prayerful meditation, might cull from them their sweetness and blessedness; sweetness and blessedness which indeed lie more in what they suggest than in what they openly declare.

The words occur in the narrative of the journey to Emmaus, whither Cleopas and his companion were going, on the morrow after the Sabbath on which the Lord of glory lay in the tomb. It is a narrative that might with perfect propriety be termed a sacred poem, one indeed of the highest order, so full is it of incident, circumstance, and instruction.

Three days earlier, the Lord Jesus had been hanging upon the cross, hanging there as the sinner's Substitute, enduring the hiding of God's face, while bearing the sinner's sins and their just deserts. Men looked on astonished. Thousands had been crucified before; but *this* crucifixion had something about it that made it unlike all others which had preceded it. The Person, the circumstances, and the attendant manifestations, were all peculiar. It aroused

emotions, dissipated fond expectations, excited fears, disappointed hopes, and gave birth and being to floods of thought of the greatest interest and importance. The city of Jerusalem was moved. The powers were alarmed. Nature was convulsed. Heaven and hell were deeply concerned.

But in the narrative before us we enter upon quite another condition of things altogether.

We look at the brighter side of the cross. The OLD creation has vanished, as it were, from our view. The world had had its last glimpse of Jesus, as He hung upon the tree. The NEW creation is just emerging from its mystery into an intelligent outline. Jesus is risen. He lives. The sufferings are past. The glory is about to follow. The "first-fruits" have been presented, and the first sheaf has been waved before God, bright promise of the coming harvest. (Lev. xxiii. 9-11.) The "corn of wheat" has fallen into the ground and died, and "much fruit" is springing forth unto God. (John xii. 24.) All this might not be very distinctly traced as yet; but all was as real as it shall be at the consummation of all things.

Yet not ostensibly as a conqueror comes the Risen One forth. By no material glory is He surrounded. No public herald announces His resurrection. His first manifestation is to women at the sepulchre; His first prolonged

stay is with two weary travellers; poor, yet withal fit company for Him Who had an especial commission to speak "a word to them who were weary."

As a "stranger" He joins them; not turning them aside; not diverting their course; but going their way, and adapting Himself to their pleasure. They are speaking of the question of the day, the late crucifixion. They are "sad," and they "reason."

Here then is material suited for Jesus to work upon; clay ready for the Potter's hands; hearts, though ignorant, sad, and despondent, yet thoroughly set upon Himself.

How does He act in this interesting scene?

He enlightens their ignorance, gladdens their hearts, increases their attachment to Himself. Yet He does so in such a way as to leave their hearts free and their expression unfettered. He does not reveal Himself. He is the "stranger" still; and they consequently are not restrained. He leaves room for their hearts to have full liberty. He sees something behind their speech upon which He sets value, and which only needs to be informed, and rightly turned, to be made available for His own gracious purposes. And thus He proceeds with them; not for one moment exciting their suspicions as to Who He was, or what His ultimate intentions were.

So they travel on in happy converse to-

gether; He willing to be reproved by them for His ignorance; they all the while willing to be enlightened and comforted by Him. In time they reached their destination, Emmaus, a name dear to every Christian, a locality round which the sweetest associations cluster.

Now was the moment for Him *to prove to themselves* the hold He had gained upon their souls. "He made *as though* He would have gone further."

Had He an errand further on, then?

No; but He thus graciously gives them an opportunity to express their love to Himself, and their interest in His theme.

Had they been indifferent, He might have simply passed on. Had they been offended, it had been a relief to them to be rid of His company. How then was it with them? Hear the sacred historian: "But they constrained [*margin, urged*] Him, saying, Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."

Surely this simple plea bespeaks their earnestness, though we learn the secret of it by and by.

Did the Lord refuse? Ah! did He ever refuse the voice of entreaty? "And He went in to tarry with them." He had gained His point; they had proved their love; and richly were they rewarded for their simple, honest, loving hospitality.

But what a glad surprise He had prepared for them! What a solemn moment in their lives was about to dawn upon them! What a crisis in their souls' experience were they about to enter upon. Ah! when they ordered that simple repast they little dreamt of what it was to lead to! When they sat down to that meal, how little they thought what a surprise awaited them!

But the scene gradually opens. They dispose themselves for their evening meal, still conversing doubtless upon the theme of their journeying moments, and their hearts still burning at the "stranger's" talk and expositions of Holy Writ. But they had not been sitting long before this fascinating "stranger" took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave to them. Not, you note, "gave thanks." No; as the "Lord of all" He simply blesses His creatures; and, as the Maker and Sustainer of all, He divides it to them. What a moment!

"Their eyes were opened." It is Jesus! Blessed discovery! How they gaze upon Him, yet in that gaze lose the object of their rapt amazement, for "He ceased to be seen of them."

Could it be a dream? Was it but the delusion of a heated or excited imagination? Assuredly not. They had in reality walked and conversed together; and there was the

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very bread which He had broken. Besides, they had before seen Him take bread, and bless it, and break it; and now the repetition of the act awakens their, till then, dormant memories.

“ And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem.” What their errand was at Emmaus we are not told; neither do we find that, if they had one, it was attended to. It might be that, like Samaria's daughter at the well of Sychar, who left her water-pot when she had found the Lord, these disciples forgot their errand in the one grand thought which now possessed them: “ The Lord is risen indeed ! ” They *reason* no more. They are no longer “ sad.” Light of heart, and full of faith, they retrace their steps, going straight to their “ own company,” and finding them gathered together. There they were rehearsing the whole matter, when Jesus again appeared, with those memorable words, “ Peace be unto you ! ”

All this is very precious. And why? Because it is about JESUS, His acts of grace, His ways of love here below. He is still “ the same ”; and those who know and love Him most still find that He gives opportunity for their hearts to prove their love to Him. Oh ! let us seek to improve every such occasion. And if in our experience “ He makes as though He would go further,” let us cleave

to Him, and say, "Abide with us." We shall find that, as He went in to tarry with the disciples at Emmaus, so will He stay with us, change all our sadness into joy, and our reasonings into faith, strong and active. He seeks the fellowship and companionship of His saints now as when below. He is still the same; "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever"; the "brother born for adversity"; the "friend that loveth at all times"; the "friend that sticketh closeth than a brother." Such, and infinitely more, is He Whom our soul loveth. (Heb. xiii. 8; Prov. xvii. 17; xviii. 24; Song of Sol. i. 7.)

In Christ, and by His work, God has brought us into the place of blessed relationship with Himself. There is nothing between us and God but the exercise of His love, the enjoyment of our happiness, and the worship of our hearts. We are the proof before Him, the testimony, the fruit of the accomplishment of all that He holds most precious; of that which has perfectly glorified Him; of that in which He delights, and of the glory of the One Who has accomplished it, of Christ, and of His work. We are the fruit of the redemption that Christ has accomplished, and the objects of the satisfaction which God must feel in the exercise of His love,

Faith Answered; Patience Rewarded; The Promise Fulfilled.

· Read 2 Chron. xxii. 10; xxiii.

ATHALIAH was a daughter of the wicked King Ahab, and daughter-in-law of the good king Jehoshaphat. This was a connection entirely opposed to the mind of God, and, in His righteous judgment, He marked it with His sore displeasure. One disaster after another befell Jehoshaphat and his house, because he "joined affinity with Ahab."

It is said that when Jehoshaphat commenced his reign, he "strengthened himself against Israel, and placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah. . . . And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat." But afterwards he greatly erred in forming an alliance with Ahab, to recover Ramoth-Gilead, which all ended in disaster and confusion. (2 Chron. xvii., xviii.)

Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, who reigned in his father's stead, had Athaliah, "the daughter of Ahab, to wife." She was filled with the cruel and persecuting spirit of her father's house, and lent herself to Satan to do his work. She was an instrument of cruelty in his hands. For, although her immediate object, in killing all the seed royal, was to take possession of the throne herself, the object of Satan was very different. From

the beginning his aim had been to cut off, by means of death, the line of the promised Seed, and thereby frustrate the purpose of God, destroy the faith of His people, and break them off from trusting in His word.

God had promised to David that He would establish his seed for ever, and build up his throne to all generations. (2 Samuel vii.; Psalm lxxxix.) Hence, Satan's great object now was to prevent the accomplishment of this promise by destroying all the seed royal. "But when Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, she arose, and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah."

Having thus, as she thought, got completely rid of the true heir, she took possession of the throne herself, and "reigned over the land."

This was indeed a sad sight in Judah, and most trying to the faith of the faithful. God had promised the throne, in solemn covenant, to David and to his sons for ever, and now a wicked usurper of the apostate house of Ahab occupies it.

But faith endures as seeing Him Who is invisible. The enemy may appear for a time to triumph; but it is only in appearance, and for a short duration. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of His heart to all generations." (Psalm xxxiii.

11.) God is over all, and above all. His word can never fail. Let us "only believe," and trust in Him. Faith, in due time, will be answered, the promise fulfilled, and every enemy utterly confounded.

Satan had now done his utmost; he could do no more. Death is the full display of his power; but God is the God of resurrection. Where Satan ends, God begins. He quickens the dead. At this very moment, when the hopes of the house of Judah seemed lost, He in His faithful love was watching over the true heir of the throne of David.

Accordingly we read, "But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him *from among the king's sons that were slain*, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest (for she was the sister of Ahaziah), hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not. And he was with them hid in the house of God six years."

Thus Joash, the true heir, was preserved by the intervention of God. He was rescued "from among the king's sons that were slain." He was like one that had been raised up "from among" the dead. It was a resurrection "from among" the slain ones. The power and instrumentality of Satan end when he has brought in death; but the power and

instrumentality of God come into operation just where those of Satan are exhausted. All his malignant efforts, and the cruelty of his instruments, only prove more fully the unchangeableness of God's purpose, and the eternal stability of His word.

There are several points of special interest in this instructive narrative which I desire to notice in order.

1. In the wonderful deliverance of the infant Joash from the hand of Athaliah we have a striking illustration of the resurrection of Jesus by the mighty power of God. Joash was stolen "from among the king's sons that were slain." Jesus was raised up "from among the dead." The former was hidden in the house of God; the latter is hidden in His Father's house on high.

2. In Athaliah on the throne of David we have an equally clear illustration of the present position and guilt of the world, with reference to the crucifixion of Christ, Who is the true Heir of every Divine promise. The world, led on by Satan, killed Christ. God holds it guilty of the deed. It "is condemned already." When the Jewish "husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." (Matt. xxi. 38.) The religious Jew and the godless Gentile joined hands to shed the blood of Jesus.

They together crucified the "Heir of all things," "the Lord of glory." (Heb. i. 2; 1 Cor. ii. 8.) "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord, and against His Christ. For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together." (Acts iv. 26, 27.)

Here we find, gathered around the cross of Jesus, the representatives of every class; namely, Jew and Gentile, king and subject, priest and people. The whole world was representatively at the cross, and took part in the crowning act of man's sin. Jesus referred to this when He said, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John xii. 31.) The world was judged in the death of Christ, and its prince cast out. They go together. God will keep every man to his colours. Those that fight under the banner of the Prince of life will at last enter into the joy of their Lord; but those that fight under the banner of the prince of this world must be cast out with him.

The whole power of Satan was concentrated at the cross. He brought up all his forces to this point. He staked everything: the power of the world, and the power of

darkness. (Luke xxii. 53.) He had ever watched, with most malignant jealousy, God's chosen vessel of wondrous grace to man. He missed Him when he slew the babes in Bethlehem. He was overcome in the temptation in the wilderness, and bound by a stronger than he. But he returned to Him again: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." (John xiv. 30.) He had no power of death over God's unblemished Lamb. Jesus laid down His life of His "own voluntary will." "Therefore doth My Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." (John x. 17, 18.) The death of Christ, then, was not the result of the power of man or Satan over Him, but of His own perfect subjection to His Father's will. At the same time it clearly proved the extent of Satan's power in the world. As the obedient One He lays down His life.

In appearance the enemy triumphs. But it was not so. Through death Jesus destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. (Heb. ii. 14.) This was absolute victory. He bore the judgment of God against sin in His death, and thereby completely annihilated all the rights and power of the enemy. Morally, judicially, totally and absolutely, the true Seed Royal triumphed over

the great enemy of God and man. True, "He was crucified through weakness." But He entered the regions of the dead as "the Son of God with power." His presence was felt throughout the deep caverns of the grave. He burst its bars asunder, and carried off in triumph the spoils of the enemy. "He ascended up on high, leading captivity captive." A risen Christ is "LORD OF ALL." (Acts x. 36.)

But my reader may be disposed to ask, On whom, at the present period of the world's history, does the guilt of the death of Christ rest?

We answer, Most assuredly on all who side with the world. God has not yet publicly vindicated the honour of His beloved Son, nor judged the world for its awful guilt in murdering Him. If the blood of Abel cried to God for vengeance on Cain, surely the blood of the holy, spotless Jesus cries for vengeance on those who not only shed it, but despise it.

If we are not justified by faith in the shed blood of Jesus, we are condemned by it. There is no such thing as neutral ground between Christ and the world. There is not a single line of middle ground for any soul to stand upon. If we are not by faith on the side of Christ we must be with the world, and as it were approving of what the world did, though we may not express it in words. In

the sight of God we are on the world's ground, and under the world's guilt and condemnation.

In vain did the chief priests remonstrate with Peter and John on this point. They said, "Behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and *intend to bring this man's blood upon us.*" (Acts v. 28.) It is quite plain, from this and other passages, that these divinely qualified preachers brought home to the consciences of their hearers the truly solemn charge of blood-guiltiness.

But the same precious blood of Christ speaks of the love of God, as well as of the sin of man. All who have faith in the blood of Christ are cleansed from all their sins, justified in the presence of God, and "accepted in the Beloved." (Eph. i. 6.)

3. If Athaliah illustrates the present position of the world, Jehoshabeath illustrates the present position of the Church. She was hidden in the house of God with Joash, the rejected and unknown king, whom the world thought to be dead, but whom she knew to be alive. Of the Church it is said, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii. 1-4.) The eye of Jehoshabeath rested in the fulness of hope on the true and living heir. And "we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." (Heb. ii.

9.) "When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, *then* shall ye also appear with Him in glory." (Col. iii. 4.)

And now let me ask, What sympathy could there be between Jehoshabeath and Athaliah? Surely none whatever! Could the former take any part in the schemes, plans, or principles of the latter? Could she assist her, in any way, in the administration of her affairs, or conform to the fashion of her court? Oh, no! There was not a particle of fellowship between them. Athaliah was a murderer and a usurper; her garments were deeply stained with the blood of the sons of David. Besides, Jehoshabeath knew that the moment Joash was revealed, the usurper would be hurled from her throne, that his appearance would be the death-blow to her reign; therefore she was content to wait until then. The "six years" would soon run their rapid course; it was but "A LITTLE WHILE," and God would place the true heir upon the throne of David. (Heb. x. 37.)

The application of all this to the Church is very easy. Whole-hearted separation from the world is her true place; and holy, happy, living association with Christ, her divine Lord and Bridegroom. If the believer is indeed enjoying communion with Christ, he can have no fellowship with the world, either in its spirit, principles, or ways. "For I am

jealous over you," says the apostle, "with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin [an unearthly virgin] to Christ." (2 Cor. xi. 2.) And again, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John ii, 15, 16.) May we have no sympathy with either the mother or her children. The first blast of the last trumpet will be the death-knell to them all.

4. If, in Jehoshabeath, we see *heart* for Joash, in Jehoiada, her husband, we see *faith* in activity for him. The *affections* of the former were gathered around the person of the prince; the *faith* of the latter was energetic, in making every necessary arrangement for the glory and stability of his throne. He was a man of faith, energy and devotedness. In leading so many to make a covenant with Joash, while yet unseen, he illustrates the present energy of the Holy Spirit, in connection with the preaching of the Gospel, in leading souls to trust an unseen JESUS, and to rejoice in hope of His coming kingdom and glory.

"And in the seventh year Jehoiada

strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds. . . . And they went about in Judah, and gathered all the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. *And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God.* And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the Lord hath said of the sons of David."

5. The position of the Levites illustrates the future position of the Church in glory, with reference to its place of nearness to the Person of Christ. They were typically a dead and risen people; and also typical of the Church in its priestly character as "a royal priesthood." "And the Levites shall compass the king round about. . . . but be ye with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out."

The bride of the Lamb, the beloved Eve of the Last Adam, will have her own special place of blessed nearness to the Person of Christ in millennial and everlasting glory. She has the temporary title of "bride," but also the permanent one of "wife." The affections of the bride will be as lasting as the relationship of wife.

Oh! wondrous grace! wondrous glory! What a "BLESSED HOPE" the Christian's is; to be chosen by a greater than Jehoiada, "to

compass the King round about. . . . to be with the King when He cometh in, and when He goeth out!" Is the heart of my reader established in this most blessed truth? Is he looking, not for an *advent* merely, but for a *Person*? His true place and proper hope is "to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." "But we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (1 Thess. i. 10; 1 John iii. 2.) We shall see His glory, witness His power, hear His wisdom, and enjoy His love. "We shall be like Him"; shining in His grace, and reflecting His glory.

6. Every needful step having been taken by the active and faithful Jehoiada, *all things were ready*. The seventh, or millennial, year was come, and now Joash, the rightful heir to the throne of David, is brought forth from his secret hiding-place. He comes in the glory of his father's house. He is surrounded with the "spears, and bucklers, and shields, that had been king David's," the bright memorials of the victories of David. "Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony, and made him king; and Jehoiada anointed him, and said, God save the king. . . . The king stood at his pillar at the entering in, the princes, and the trumpets by

the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced and sounded with trumpets, also the singers with instruments of music, and such as taught to sing praise."

This was a day of great joy and gladness of heart to Joash, to Jerusalem, and to all who waited for his appearing. Faith was now answered, patience rewarded, and *the promise fulfilled*. "Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the Lord hath said of the sons of David."

But if it was a day of light and joy and rejoicing to Joash, and to all who had sided with him during his rejection, it was a day of darkness, and gloom, and terrible despair to Athaliah, and to all who had sided with her during her reign. The day of vengeance was come, and oh! what a day to the despisers of the True Heir, Christ! "Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the Lord. And she looked, and, behold, the king stood at his pillar."

This was enough; the first glimpse of Joash filled her whole soul with the terrors of judgment. "Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason! Treason!"

But Jehoiada answered her vain cry with Judgment! Judgment! "Have her forth of the ranges," was the imperative word of command, "and whoso followeth her let him be

slain with the sword." And "they slew her there."

Thus judgment, unmitigated judgment closed the six years' reign of the guilty Athaliah, and came upon all her deluded followers. Solemn foreshadowing of the final doom of this guilty world and all its deluded followers, who are willingly ignorant that the True Heir is alive in the house of God on high, and justly claims our allegiance!

The scene being now completely cleared of the usurper and her followers, the king is peacefully, gloriously and triumphantly placed on the throne of his father David. The nobles, governors and people of the land "set the king upon the throne of the kingdom. And all the people of the land rejoiced; and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword."

What a solemn lesson we learn from these concluding words! The people "rejoiced," and the city was "quiet." When? "AFTER that they had slain Athaliah with the sword." When, oh! when will this groaning creation rejoice? When will the whole earth be quiet? AFTER the judgment already passed has been executed. AFTER the vials of God's wrath have been poured out. But not until then.

Could Joash have reigned in fellowship with Athaliah? Impossible! The scene must be cleared of the enemies of the king before he

sits upon his throne. Christ's "hand will take hold on judgment" before He takes hold of the sceptre of righteousness. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with THEE?" (Ps. xciv. 20.) The whole scene must be cleared of His enemies, and Satan bound. Then "the Prince of the kings of the earth" will ascend His throne of righteousness, and sway His sceptre of peace over a restored and delivered creation. Then, UNTO HIM, "whose right it is" to reign, shall all its tribes and tongues, roll their loud, and long, and rapturous Hosanna, around a peaceful, happy and rejoicing millennial earth. (Isa. xxxii.)

Ministry of the Word.

THE great object of ministry of the Word is to bring the resources of God to bear upon the actual condition and circumstances of those by whom it is needed.

Of course I am looking at ministry in its aspect towards men, converted or unconverted. Principally, however, my thoughts ranged over the children of God. The varied circumstances and conditions of the saints call for a continued application of the Word to their hearts and consciences.

There are daily needs which call for daily supplies, and this is true both as regards the

body and the soul, a fact almost too evident to need writing down. The blessed grace of God, flowing ever from the risen Christ in glory, makes it a labour of love for the Christian to minister to others, the Holy Ghost being the sole power of action for this, whether the grace bestowed be towards the body or the soul.

Christ is the spring of all the blessing. It is He Who ministers really *in* His saints. They, from love to Him, minister to one another, as serving Him ; His love constraining all they do, or it is valueless.

I see in Him the Head and pattern of all ministry. He washes the feet daily. (John xiii.) He ever lives to make intercession. (Heb. vii.)

Not long ago a dear old saint said to me (in allusion to Rom. viii. 26, 27, 34), "The double intercession goes on night and day." And blessed it is when the saint is carried into the current of this. There are deep needs among the people of God, needs of many kinds. Only God can supply those needs, and it is His glory to do so. "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." (Psa. cvii. 9.)

There is in the heart of God a deep well-spring of mercy which is never exhausted ; and He that died upon the tree to give it free flow, ever lives to administer it. I think we

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get a pattern of His way in John vi. He is the Creator, but the multitude do not know it. He gratifies His loving heart by doing them good, working miracles of healing on the diseased among them. They wonder and they follow ; but they know Him not. Who, indeed, *does* know Him in the fulness of His glory, in the exceeding blessedness of what He is ? Disciples surround Him on the mountain, far above the busy scene of His gracious labours below. How peaceful, how blessed, is converse with Him there ! Apart from earth, as it were ; not *of* the world, nor *in* it even, for the moment. How blessed are they who can thus retire, who can be *alone with Jesus* ! This is what the heart longs for ; this is what the blood of atonement has secured for every saint. Oh ! praise His blessed, everlasting name ! The deep dungeon, the craft of man, the malice of hell itself, cannot shut out from the soul of the believer the precious consciousness of the power and of the love of Jesus.

“ He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve His might ;
His every act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light.”

But I come to what I was thinking of, *His way* in blessing. He will *feed* the multitudes ; but *how* will He feed them ? Disciples do not know. His ways are higher than their

ways ; His thoughts than their thoughts. They see the need, and they measure it ; but they measure it by visible resources. "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient," one says. Another counts the barley loaves and fishes, and says, "What are they among so many ?"

Ah ! Jesus speaks : "Make the men sit down," He says.

This is the first thing ; they must *rest*. Such is His way with sinners : "I will give you rest," He says. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. xi. 28.) Oh ! that men would listen, that the still small voice that speaks from Calvary, that speaks of sins forgiven, sins put away for ever, would reach their hearts ! "Why will ye die ?" He says. "God was in Christ *reconciling* the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Cor. v. 19.) Wondrous grace ! Wondrous long-suffering !

Jesus takes the loaves. He waits upon the creatures of His hand. As the Sent One, the Son of God, He lifts His eyes to His heavenly Father. Blessed Lord ! He will glorify God in all things. He owns Him as Creator, Giver, All-bounteous Lord of all. As another scripture says, "The eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat

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in due season. Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." (Psa. cxlv. 15, 16.) If none beside will give to God the glory due unto His name, the blessed Son of His love will. Jesus will honour the Father, will *declare* the Father. If disciples even fail, and show themselves unequal to the occasion, Jesus will not fail ; He never does.

But they are to learn *His* way, the way of grace and love. In the 103rd Psalm it is said, "He made known His ways unto Moses, His *acts* unto the children of Israel." (v. 7.) And so it is here. Moses was nearer than the people in his day ; disciples were nearer than the multitude in the day of John vi. ; but each and all have to learn, in their several spheres, while the glory passes by, those near to Him, His ways ; those lower down, His *acts*.

Not that there is veil or distance in the case of believers. All have a common standing in the Lord. All are brought nigh to God by that most precious blood. But only those who wait on Jesus learn His ways. All benefit by His bounty and His goodness, but *saved* souls do more. They learn of Him.

He shows His order here : you must first *rest*, then *feed*. You cannot feed upon the pastures of the word, unless you first *rest* upon the finished work. You must rest as a

sinner, before you can feed as a saint. I am not giving an exposition of the scripture here, but gathering a lesson of the ways of Jesus.

And now I come to what I had in my thoughts in referring to this scripture : "He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down." Here is His order : the bread of life, Himself, all He is, all He has ; God's gift for a ruined world, the precious gift of His unutterable love, laid in the hands of disciples.

For what ? To be dispensed. "A plentiful treasure to give to the poor," surely. Mark the order. God gives His Son ; the Son gives Himself ; He breaks His body ; sheds His blood for sinners. God is glorified ; disciples have their hands filled with the fruits of the heavenly mission ; the poor are satisfied, and take their portion. An order of blessing streaming down from the highest to the lowest ; the joy of giving communicated to the disciples, though they receive all first.

Is it so with us ? Are we receivers and communicators, looking unto Jesus daily, seeking that He should be glorified not only in the supply of all *our* need, but in the blessing of *all* His saints, the spread of His glorious gospel, the salvation of multitudes on every hand ?

The Divine Double Intercession.

Read Rom. viii. 26-34.

IN these verses we are furnished with a truth of the most precious and consolatory nature, namely, the double intercession which is being exercised in our behalf continually.

In verse 26 the apostle speaks of the intercession of the Holy Spirit **IN US**: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself **MAKETH INTERCESSION** for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (v. 26.)

The Holy Spirit, dwelling in us, graciously helps our infirmities, and carries on His intercessory work with unutterable groanings. He creates desires in the soul which are too deep for utterance, and cannot be clothed in human language.

But there is more than this. We have not only the Holy Ghost dwelling and acting **IN US** here below, but we have also the Lord Jesus Christ living and acting **FOR US** up in heaven: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also **MAKETH INTERCESSION** for us." (v. 34.)

What full provision of divine grace! What abounding consolation for our souls! What

precious encouragement to our hearts! What a mercy to know that even in our coldest, darkest, and most barren seasons, when we seem hardly able to utter a single syllable, when our hearts seem as cold and as hard as the very boards we are kneeling upon, how truly blessed at such times to remember the solid and soul-sustaining truth that the Holy Ghost is making intercession for us, and that Christ takes His unutterable groanings, and presents them to the Father in all the preciousness and acceptableness of the One Who produces them and of the One Who presents them!

The divine double intercession is constantly going on. Morning, noon, eventide and night, the Holy Ghost is acting *IN US*, and Christ is acting *FOR US*. "I will pray the Father," Jesus said, "and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you *for ever*." (John xiv. 16.) "Wherefore He [Jesus] is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He *ever liveth* to make intercession for them." (Heb. vii. 25.)

This double action can never be interrupted for a single moment. The very weakest believer is maintained before God in the divine power of this double intercession, the intercession of the Spirit *IN* him, the intercession of Christ *FOR* him. What comfort for the heart

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there is in this! What ample provision "for the exigence of every hour"!

It frequently happens that the Christian finds himself afflicted, in his seasons of retirement, with excessive barrenness and wandering. He tries to pray, but cannot. He finds it impossible to throw his desires into an intelligible form. He groans, and that groan is the fruit of the Spirit's mighty operation; it ascends as such to the throne of God, and is presented there by that blessed Advocate Who ever liveth to make intercession for us. Nothing goes up except that which is of the Spirit. The unutterable groanings are produced in us BY God the Spirit; they pass up THROUGH the priestly hands of God the Son, and are thus presented to God the Father.

The Lord Jesus knows how to "separate the precious from the vile," in all our actings and exercises. He casts the vile away, and presents the precious to God in our behalf.

We have an illustration of this at the close of the first chapter of the Book of Leviticus. There we see the offerer bringing an offering of fowls to the priest. "And the priest shall bring it unto the altar, and wring off his head, and burn it on the altar, and the blood thereof shall be wrung out at the side of the altar; and he shall pluck away his crop with his feathers, and cast it beside the altar on

the east part, by the place of the ashes; and he shall cleave it with the wings thereof, but shall not divide it asunder; and the priest shall burn it upon the altar, upon the wood that is upon the fire; it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord." (*vv.* 15-17.)

The priest's eye discerned at once what parts of the offering were fit for God's altar, and what for "the place of the ashes." This was his business. The offerer brought the sacrifice to the priest, and the priest prepared it for the altar. He separated "the precious from the vile." The priestly eye and the priestly knife were needful before the sacrifice was in a fit condition to be presented upon the altar of the God of Israel.

All this is full of meaning, full of instruction, full of comfort for the Christian. In our very best services, our costliest sacrifices, there is abundance answering to "the crop and feathers" of the Levitical ceremonial; but, blessed be God! we have "a Great High Priest" in Whose hand we can place all our offerings, in the fullest assurance that He knows what to do with those offerings, and that when they have passed under His priestly eye, and under the action of His priestly hand, they shall ascend to the throne of God in all the fragrance of His most excellent name.

This is eminently calculated to impart con-

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fidence to our hearts, while we seek, notwithstanding our felt weakness, to respond to the exhortation of the apostle, "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But to do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Heb. xiii. 15, 16.)

We need not be afraid to bring the very smallest offering. We may not be able to present "a bullock" or "a lamb"; our measure may be only that of "a turtle dove," or "a young pigeon." It matters not. If only the Holy Ghost originates the sacrifice, then Christ will assuredly present it, and God will be "well pleased."

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.

Much incense is ascending
 Before th' eternal throne;
 God graciously is bending
 To hear each feeble groan;
 To all our prayers and praises
 Christ adds His sweet perfume,
 And Love the censer raises,
 These odours to consume.

"The Light of Life,"

THE enmity of the Pharisees to our Lord Jesus Christ was very unwearied. It continued till it "prevailed"; for it was through their "envy" that He was at last delivered into the hands of Pilate.

Among other ways in which this enmity worked, they sought at times to ensnare Him by subtle questions, and to lead Him to commit Himself, either to the prejudices of the people, or the jealousy of the Romans. The opening of John viii. is a well-known instance of this kind.

These religionists could not but have observed His constant ways of grace, and they think, to be sure, that they may easily force Him, either to deny Himself this way, or be publicly convicted as a breaker of their laws.

Accordingly, they bring to Him a woman taken in adultery, and demand of Him to say what should be done to her, testifying to her clear guilt, and citing the authority of Moses in such cases.

He refuses to act; refuses to entertain the case; stoops down and writes on the ground, as though He heard them not. He is not presiding in any court for the trial of such matters.

But they persist, and then the Lord, in effect, replies that, if they *will* have Mount Sinai, they *shall*; if, like Israel of old, they

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will challenge the law, and undertake the terms of the fiery mount, they must take it in all its strength. And accordingly He lets out something of the genuine heat of that place, and they soon find that it reaches *them*, as well as the poor convicted one, and the place becomes too hot for them.

They had not reckoned on this. They had not thought that the thunders of Sinai would make them quake, and its horrible darkness enwrap them, as immediately and completely as the open and shamed sinner whom their own hands had dragged into the presence of the law.

But as they had *chosen* the fiery mount, they must now take it for better or worse, and just as they find it.

The Lord Jesus, however, in giving the law this character, in causing it to reach the judges as well as their prisoner, saying, “ He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,” proved that He was the Lord of that fiery mount. He let, as I said, some of its genuine heat out. He marshalled its thunder, and directed its lightning, and spread out its horrible darkness, as the Lord of it all. He made the hosts of Sinai take their march, and address themselves to their proper work; and this, exactly as of old in the same place, is found to be intolerable.

“ Let not God speak to us,” said Israel

then (Exod. xx.); as now these Pharisees "*being convicted* by their own conscience, went out one by one." They can no more stand the heat of that place which they themselves had challenged, than Israel of old could stand under Mount Sinai when that mount let them know what it really was.

All this has a very great character in it. The Lord Jesus is greatly glorified. They desire to expose Him as Moses' enemy, but He displays Himself as Moses' Lord, or the Conductor of that lightning which had made the heart of that stoutest Israelite himself exceedingly fear and quake.

I read all this as something very excellent indeed.

But further. If this is His glory, it is equally our blessing. If the Lord Jesus is thus honoured as the conductor of the fiery power of the law, we find also that He does this for us. And He lets the poor sinner know it is so. The Pharisees accuse her, but He is deaf to all they are saying, and when they still urge Him, He gives her to see Him direct the hot thunderbolts on the heads of her accusers, to cause them to leave her alone with Him Who had thus proved Himself the Lord of Sinai, and HER DELIVERER !

Could she desire more? Could she desire to leave the place where she now found herself? Impossible. She was as able as the

very Lord of the hill Himself to stand there. Sinai had no more terror for her than for Him.

Need she leave the place? She was free to do so, if she pleased. Those who had forced her there were now gone. The passage was open. She had nothing to do but to go out after the rest, if she desired it. If she would hide her shame, and make the best of her cause herself, she may. Now is the time; let her go out. The Lord knows her sin in all its magnitude. She need not think of remaining where she is, and be accounted guiltless. If this is her hope, let her rather follow her convicted accusers, and hide her shame outside.

But no; she had learnt from the words and acts of Jesus, the tale of *delivering grace and power*, and she need not go out. Nature would have retired. Flesh and blood, or the mere moral principles of man, would have sent her after the rest. But the faith which had read the story of redemption acts above nature, and beside the judgment of the moral man.

And so it is now. She remains where she is. This Mount Sinai (as her accusers have made that place, as we have seen) is not too hot for her. The "still small voice" of mercy, which once answered Moses there, had now answered her. The pledges of salvation

are exposed to her, as of old to him, and the spot is green and fresh and sunny to her spirit. It has become "the gate of heaven" to her. The darkness of death has been turned into "the light of life." She need not go; she cannot go. She *will not* leave the presence of Jesus, Who had so gloriously proved Himself the Lord of Sinai, and her Deliverer.

It is this earth that we inhabit that God has taken to make the scene for the manifestation of His character and His works of grace. This earth is the place where sin has entered, and fixed its residence. It is here that Satan has displayed his energy for evil. It is here that the Son of God has been in humiliation, has died, and has risen. It is upon this earth that sin and grace have done their wonders. It is upon this earth that sin has abounded, if, notwithstanding, grace has much more abounded. If now Christ is hid in the heavens, it is upon this earth He will be revealed; it is here that the angels have best penetrated the depths of the love of God; it is here also that they will comprehend its results, manifested in glory. Upon this earth, where the Son of Man has been in humiliation, the Son of Man shall be glorified.

The Cross and the Throne.

ON the great day of atonement in Israel, Aaron the high priest laid his hands on the head of the scapegoat, and there confessed the sins of the whole congregation. In this part of the service, he acted more as the *representative* of the people than as their priest. Doubtless he was their priest, and acted as such all through the work of that most interesting day. But in this special act he stood before the Lord as the *representative* of the congregation.

“And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit person into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited.” (Lev. xvi. 21, 22.)

In this deeply significant action Aaron stands before us as a most expressive type of Christ ON THE CROSS, as the representative of His people; of all who, in every land, and in every age, believe in His name.

But mark the striking contrast, notwithstanding the resemblance.

Aaron, as the representative of the congregation, confesses over the head of the live goat, the sins of all Israel. Typically, their

sins are transferred to the head of the goat. The blessed Lord Jesus, as the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, "offered Himself without spot to God." It was an entirely voluntary act. "And the Lord laid upon Him the iniquities of us all." These iniquities He confessed as His own. "*Mine iniquities,*" He says, "have taken hold upon me." He was both the REPRESENTATIVE and the VICTIM. He takes our sins upon Himself, and in perfect love to us becomes our sin-Bearer; Himself, the holy, spotless, sinless Lamb; He is made sin for us.

This is grace, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is boundless, an ocean without a shore. Listen to His own mournful and pathetic language in those circumstances. "Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up. They are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me." (Compare Isaiah liii.; Psalm xl.)

Thus he became *on the cross* our sin-Bearer, and made Himself responsible to God for all our iniquity. The precious blood of that cross was a perfect answer to all the demands of heaven, and a perfect atonement for the whole condition and character of the sinner. By the shedding of His own blood He put away for ever ALL our sins.

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“JESUS put all my sins away,
 When bruised to make me whole;
 Who shall accuse, or who condemn,
 My blameless, ransomed soul?”

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we learn that the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings. He reached the *throne* through sufferings. He is *perfect there*, on the throne, in glory. Of course I now speak of Him as the *sinner's Substitute*, for He ever was, in Himself, intrinsically perfect. We are contrasting the *throne* with the *cross*, as set forth in the first chapter, which speaks of Him as God, and in the second, which treats of Him as man.

Seeing, then, that Christ is on the throne, where are my sins? They are not on Him now. Oh! no! no! They were all put away on the cross, and buried in the grave of everlasting forgetfulness. Not one of them will ever be found. They have even gone from the very recollection of God, Who says: “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” (Heb. x. 17.) And faith's judgment always agrees with God's.

But suppose for a moment that they are not all put away. What then? Where would they be? They could only be on the head of Jesus still. Because He was my sin-Bearer. This, you will see at a glance, is utterly impossible, and altogether out of the question.

The believer is not his own sin-bearer. "Who shall lay anything to the *charge* of God's elect?" (Rom. viii. 33.) It is not, observe, who shall prove them *guilty*? But who shall lay anything to their *charge*? The *cross*, not the believer, answers every charge. One glance at Jesus on the throne in glory is rest to the heart for ever. Faith's triumphant answer to every accuser is: "But we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." (Heb. ii. 9.)

Now, you will here see two things of immense value.

1. That the believer is not his own sin-bearer. Christ is the sin-Bearer: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." (1 Peter ii. 24.)

2. That by blood *shedding* they were all put away. And "without shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb. ix. 22.) Observe, it is not said without *sprinkling* of blood is no remission, but without *shedding* of blood. This is all important. The victim's blood can only be shed ONCE. Oh! how conclusive this passage is as to WHEN our sins were put away. "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." With the Jew, it was a sin and a sacrifice, a sin and a sacrifice, continually; simply because he never had a perfect sacrifice. But

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we are perfected for ever, "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE." (Heb. x. 10, 14.)

You may sometimes hear Christians speaking about "coming afresh to the blood of sprinkling," and that "we daily need a fresh application of the blood to put away our daily sins."

Now, although they mean a right thing, they express it in a wrong way. The blood of Jesus can never lose its efficacy. If a *second* application were necessary, that would prove that the *first* had lost its value. True, Scripture speaks of various uses and applications of the blood, such as cleansing the leper, consecrating the priests, "and almost all things are by the law purged with blood"; and when the apostle speaks of REMISSION, he uses the word SHEDDING: "And without *shedding* of blood is no remission."

There must be sufferings and death to put away sin; but the soul that has been ONCE washed in that precious blood is "clean every whit," clean for ever. Its efficacy is eternal. But the soul needs to have this precious truth constantly applied by the Holy Spirit, and that is called "the washing of water by the word." (Eph. v. 26.) There is a needful daily application of *water*. The brazen laver in Exodus xxx. and the basin and towel in John xiii. clearly teach us this. As Jesus says to

Peter, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."

Thus are we cleansed from the defilements of the way, and have our hearts assured that all our sins were for ever put away by the sufferings and death of Christ on the CROSS. *There* he bore our sins. *There* the Victim's blood was shed. *There* a full, a perfect, and eternal atonement was made. And the moment I see Him on the THRONE, my conscience is at perfect rest as to sin, and my heart finds perfect joy in Himself. For I know He has brought me into the same position as Himself. "For Christ also hath *once* suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (1 Peter iii. 18.)

With these eternally precious truths simple faith will have no difficulty.

"PRAISE ye the Lord," again, again,
The Spirit strikes the chord;
Nor toucheth He our hearts in vain;
We praise, we praise the Lord.

"Stand fast in Christ"; ah! yet again
He teacheth all the band;
If human efforts are in vain,
"In Christ" it is we stand.

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

A Glance Through the Epistle to the Hebrews with Reference to Faith and Hope.

THE Lord is our Object, as surely as He is our Refuge. He awakens HOPE when He establishes the soul by FAITH. It could not be otherwise.

If Adam had the presence of God, he had also the garden of Eden; and so the saved sinner has a portion, or inheritance. Indeed, in the larger sense of it, salvation embraces both faith and hope. It bespeaks a purged conscience, and also the hope of a kingdom. These are necessarily linked together, and by their union and combination in the course of Scripture, we get some interesting witnesses.

Melchizedek was such a witness in patriarchal days. He was a priest dispensing righteousness and peace, providing like a priest for the need of the conscience. But he had also bread and wine—the refreshment of the kingdom for the heirs of promise, after their toil and conflict were over.

Aaron under the law, in the day of his consecration, was another like witness, as we see in Leviticus viii. 9. For he and Moses came down as from above to bless the people, as before, and all alone, he had blessed them on the ground of the sacrifice. The glory appears, as well as the fire on that great occa-

sion, the pledge of the kingdom as well as the acceptance of the sacrifice. (Lev. ix. 22-24.)

And in the same Mosaic age, I may say, the constant link of Joshua with Moses is an expression of the same combination.

With this thought, let me ask you to read the Epistle to the Hebrews, where you will find this combination strikingly maintained throughout; all the presentations of Christ or of our calling which you get there, and all the exhortations which you listen to there, embrace the two, our OBJECT as well as our REFUGE; all find HOPE as well as FAITH.

At the very outset Christ is thus presented. He is declared "Heir of all things," as well as the One Who has "purged our sins"; and all the Old Testament Scriptures quoted in chapter ii. will be found to have respect to the coming kingdom.

So in chapter ii. it is the Lord of Psalm viii. Who is presented to us; and the Lord of that Psalm is as much the One Who is to be the Head of the world to come, as He is the One Who has already been humbled for our sins.

Again, in chapters v.-vii. He is presented to us as Priest, but as such He is like Melchizedek, and, as we know, the priesthood of Melchizedek reaches out to the day of glory, when the toil and warfare are over. And not

only so: He is declared to have gone within the veil as a Forerunner, as well as a High Priest; and such a title intimates that the glory, as well as a sanctuary, is within the veil. So when He is presented as a victim, the sufficiency of His sacrifice is declared; but together with that, His appearing the second time, bringing salvation or the Kingdom with Him. The accomplishment of the purpose of His first appearing is the sure pledge of His second. (ix. 28.)

And then again, presented in the heavens as having sat down in the perfection of His work for sinners, He is declared to be sitting there in expectation of His coming day of power. (x. 13.) Our calling is displayed to us as Christ is thus presented; we see this in chapter xii. 22-24. But that gives us a view of glory as well as of blood; we see the top of the mystic hill, as well as the foot of it. The blood of sprinkling at the bottom sustains the whole, but there is no stopping short of the city and the church of the First-born, and the angels, etc., or the whole system of coming glory.

So in chapter xiii. 9-15, the city is shown to us as what we are called to as well as the altar. And as I said, if we are exhorted as well as taught in this epistle, we still get encouragement for HOPE as well as for FAITH. Thus in chapter iii. we are told to hold fast

the beginning of our confidence and rejoicing of HOPE firm unto the end. So in chapter x. we are exhorted to have "full assurance of FAITH," but also to "hold fast the profession of our HOPE without wavering."

And thus the voice that is heard in the epistle is a witness to hope as well as to faith: it tells of glory as well as of blood. It is the voice of the Son from heaven, of Him Who is Heir of all things and expectant of a kingdom, as He is the Purger of our sins. And when the apostle defines faith, he links with it hope, in every way sustaining the combination. (xi. 1.)

FOR ever with the Lord!
 Amen! so let it be:
 Life from the dead is in that word,
 'Tis immortality.

Jerusalem on high,
 Home of my soul, how near
 At times, to faith's transpiercing eye,
 Thy golden gates appear.

'Tis then my spirit faints
 To reach the home I love;
 The bright inheritance of saints,
 Jerusalem above.

And though there intervene
 Rough roads and stormy skies,
 Faith will not suffer aught to screen
 Thy glory from mine eyes.

There shall all clouds depart,
 The wilderness shall cease;
 And sweetly shall each gladdened heart,
 Enjoy eternal peace.

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WORDS OF TRUTH

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"The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words:  
and that which was written was upright, even words  
of truth" (Eccles. xii. 10).

## A King's Sleepless Night.

READ ESTHER vi.

"ON that night could not the king sleep."  
How was this? What was it that drove  
sleep from the monarch's eyes, and  
slumber from his eyelids? Why could not the  
mighty Ahasuerus enjoy a mercy which, doubt-  
less, was the portion of the very meanest of the  
subjects?

Some may say, "The heavy cares of royalty  
robbed him of that which 'a labouring man' en-  
joys." (Eccles. v. 12.)

This might have been so on other nights; but,  
"on *that* night" we must account for his restless-  
ness in quite another way. The finger of the  
Almighty was in that sleepless night. "The  
Lord God of the Hebrews" had a mighty work  
to accomplish on behalf of His beloved people,

and, in order to bring that about, He drove "balmy sleep" from the luxurious couch of the autocrat of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces.

This brings out in a very marked way the character of the Book of Esther. The reader will observe that, throughout this interesting section of inspiration, the name of God is never heard, and yet His finger is visibly stamped upon everything. The most trivial circumstance manifests that He is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." (Isa. xxviii. 29.)

Nature's vision cannot trace the movement of the wheels of Jehovah's chariot; but faith not only traces it, but knows the direction in which it tends. The enemy plots, but God is above him. Satan's every movement is seen to be but a link in the marvellous chain of events by which the God of Israel was bringing about His purpose of grace respecting His people.

Thus it has been; thus it is; and thus it shall ever be. Satan's malice, man's pride, the most hostile influences, all are but so many instruments in the hand of God for the accomplishment of His gracious purposes. This gives the sweetest rest to the heart, amid the ceaseless tossings and fluctuations of human affairs. "The end of the Lord" shall assuredly be seen. His counsel shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure. (James v. 11., Isa. xlvi. 10.) Blessed be His name for this soul-sustaining assurance! It quiets the heart at all times. Jehovah is behind the scenes. Every wheel, every screw, every pivot in the vast machine of human affairs is under His control. Though His name be not known or acknowledged by the children of earth,

## A KING'S SLEEPLESS NIGHT.

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His finger is seen, His word is trusted, and His end expected by the children of faith.

How clearly is all this seen in the Book of Esther! Vashti's beauty; the king's pride therein; his unseemly command; her indignant refusal; the advice of the king's counsellors; all, in short, is but the unfolding of Jehovah's ripening purposes.

Of "all the fair young virgins gathered at Shushan the palace" not one must be allowed to win the king's heart except Esther, the daughter of an obscure Jewish house, a desolate orphan.

Again, of all the officers, ministers, and attendants, about the palace, not one must be allowed to discover the conspiracy against the king's life but "a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai."

And, on that sleepless night, nothing must be brought to while away the monarch's weary hours besides "the book of the records of the chronicles." Strange recreation for a voluptuous king!

But God was at the back of all this. There was a certain record in that book, about "a certain Jew," which must be brought immediately under the eye of the restless monarch. Mordecai must come into notice. He must be rewarded for his fidelity; and so rewarded as to cover with overwhelming confusion the face of the proud Amalekite.

At the very moment that this record was passing under review, none other than the haughty and wicked Haman must be seen in the court of the king's house. He had come in order to compass the death of Mordecai. But, lo! he is forced, by the providence of God, to plan for Mordecai's

triumph and dignity. He had come to get him hanged on a gallows. But, lo! he is made to clothe him with the king's robe, to set him on the king's horse, and, like a footman, to conduct him through the streets of the city; and, like a mere herald, to announce his triumph.

"Oh! scenes surpassing fable, and yet true."

Who could have imagined that the noblest lord in all the dominions of Ahasuerus, a descendant of the house of Agag, should be compelled thus to wait upon a poor Jew, and that, too, such a lord, such a Jew, and at such a moment? Surely, the finger of the Almighty was in all this. Who but an atheist or an infidel could question a truth so obvious?

Thus much as to the providence of God. Let us now look for a moment at the pride of Haman. Despite of all his dignity, wealth, and splendour, his wretched heart was wounded by one little matter, not worth a thought, in the judgment of a really great mind or a well-regulated heart. He was rendered miserable by the simple fact that Mordecai would not bow to him! Albeit he occupied the nearest place to the throne, entrusted with the king's ring, possessed of princely wealth, and placed in a princely station, "Yet," he says, "all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." (Chapter v. 13.)

Miserable man! The highest position, the greatest wealth, the most extensive influence, the most flattering tokens of royal favour, all availed nothing, just because a poor Jew refused to bow to him! Such is the human heart; such is man; such is the world. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Prov.



xvi. 18.) Haman proved this. At the very moment when he seemed to be about to plant his foot on the loftiest summit of his ambition, a just and retributive Providence had so brought it about that he was, in a most marvellous manner, compelled to prepare a triumph for Mordecai, a gallows for himself. The man whose very presence embittered a life of magnificence and splendour, he is obliged to wait upon; and the very gallows which he had ordered to be prepared for his intended victim, was made use of for his own execution.

And let us ask here, Why did Mordecai refuse to bow to Haman? Did it not seem like a blind obstinacy to refuse the customary honour to the king's noblest lord, his highest officer?

Assuredly not. Haman, it is true, was the highest officer of Ahasuerus; but he was the greatest "enemy of Jehovah," being the greatest "enemy of the Jews." He was an Amalekite; and Jehovah had sworn that He would "have war with Amalek from generation to generation." (Exodus xvii. 16.) How, then, could a true son of Abraham bow to one with whom Jehovah was at war? Impossible. Mordecai could save the life of an Ahasuerus, but he never could bow to an Amalekite. As a faithful Jew, he walked too closely with the God of his fathers to admit of his paying court to one of the seed of Amalek.

Hence Mordecai's stern refusal to bow to Haman was not the fruit of a blind obstinacy and senseless pride, but of lovely faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and high communion with Him. Mordecai could never relinquish the dignity which belonged to the Israel of God. He

would abide by faith under Jehovah's banner; and while so abiding he could never do obeisance to an Amalekite. What though God's people were "scattered and peeled"; though their "beautiful house" was in ruins; though Jerusalem's ancient glory was departed: was faith therefore to abandon the high position assigned by God's counsels to His people?

By no means. Faith would recognize the ruin, and walk softly; while, at the same time, it laid hold of God's promise, and in holy dignity occupied the platform which that promise had opened up for all who believed it. Mordecai was made to feel deeply the ruin. He clothed himself in sackcloth, but he would never bow to an Amalekite. And what was the result? His sackcloth was exchanged for royal apparel. His place at the king's gate was exchanged for a place next the throne. He realized, in his own happy experience, the truth of that ancient promise, that Israel should be "the head and not the tail." (Deut. xxviii. 13.) Thus it was with this faithful Jew of old. He took his stand on that elevated ground where faith ever places the soul. He shaped his way, not according to nature's view of things around, but according to faith's view of the word of God. Nature might say, "Why not lower your standard of action to the level of your circumstances? Why not suit yourself to your outward condition? Had you not better acknowledge the Amalekite, seeing that the Amalekite is in the place of power?" Nature might speak thus, but faith's answer was simple: "Jehovah hath sworn that He will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." Thus it is ever. Faith lays hold of THE LIVING GOD AND HIS

ETERNAL WORD, and abides in peace, and walks in holy elevation.

Christian reader, may the hallowed instruction of the Book of Esther be brought home to our souls in the power of the Holy Ghost. In it we see the providence of God; the pride of man; the power of faith. Moreover, we are furnished with a striking picture of the actings of Jehovah on behalf of His people Israel; the sudden overthrow of their last proud oppressor; and their final restoration, their everlasting blessedness and rest and glory.

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## Atonement and Pardon.

**W**ILL you allow me to ask you a question? Do you believe that, when the sinner's heart is truly turned to Christ, all his sins, past, present, and to come, are pardoned?

Well, that is a very important question; I should not like to say that they are, or that they are not. So much depends on the way you look at the subject. It would require some explanation. My difficulty is with the expression "and to come," when you speak of "pardon."

Oh! I thought that was what you believed! I know some who not only hold it, but are always speaking about it. It seems to me a dangerous doctrine; but a very comforting one, if true.

Perhaps you do not exactly understand what they mean. I firmly believe that my sins were all *atoned* for on the cross; then, of course, they were all "to come"; but when you speak of "pardon," you speak of something which takes place *now*,

in connexion with myself, and with my state before God.

Then you do not hold that our sins are all *pardoned*, past, present, and to come, when we first believe in Jesus.

I certainly should not use this language,\* and that for the following reasons. My first difficulty is with the word "*pardoned*." As I said before, I am perfectly sure that the sins of every believer were atoned for, and put away for ever, on the cross, by the precious blood of Jesus. But to speak of pardoning an offence before it is committed, appears to me to be incorrect. Forgiveness of sins, according to Scripture, is connected with the confession of it. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John i. 9.) I quite understand what is meant, and one would not seek to make a man an offender for a word. Still we should consider what we say. Then, secondly, we read nothing in Scripture, so far as I can recollect, of "*sins to come*," as regards a believer. Their possibility is supposed, and God's gracious provision for them declared.

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\* Plainly, I believe this form of expression to be unscriptural. Scripture never speaks of our sin, or sins, in this way. There is a past, present, and future, spoken of in Scripture, which is very blessed. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 1.) This passage refers to our *past*, which, blessed be His name, is blotted out. "By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." (v. 2.) Here the Holy Ghost refers to our *present*, our present standing in the Divine favour. "And rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (v. 2.) We wait for glory, this is still *future*. Our title is clear, there is no uncertainty; but it is still *glory to come*. The feast of the passover, the feast of weeks, the feast of tabernacles, teach in type the same blessed truths. (Deut. xvi.)

"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." But this is immediately preceded by the statement, "These things write I unto you, *that ye sin not.*" (1 John ii. 1.) Believers are exhorted to reckon themselves "dead indeed unto sin"; and we are told, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." (1 John iii. 9.)

But, surely, you do not mean to say that believers have no sin?

Far from it. Every intelligent believer will say, "In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." (Rom. vii. 18.) But the sin of my flesh was condemned, and the many sins of my life were all atoned for, on the cross. They were all judged there by God Himself, the Judge of all; so that no question as to my sins can ever again be raised. God made the demand, Christ answered it, and the whole system of sin, in which I stood, was cancelled for ever. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. viii.) "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x.) The believer is perfect in Christ now, he will be perfect with Him by and by.

Yes, quite so: it is very easy quoting texts. But when shall we be "sanctified"? If I were sure that I am among the sanctified ones, I should be happy.

If you are among the *believing* ones, you are among the *sanctified* ones. We are sanctified by faith in Jesus.

I never understood that. We think sanctification a matter of great attainment, which can only be reached by constant watchfulness, prayer, and self-denial. There is nothing said about faith in the passage.

No; the apostle's theme in this chapter is worship and the perfectness of the worshippers in the presence of God, through the perfect sacrifice of Christ. But we have it distinctly stated in other places. See Acts xxvi., for example. Here the apostle is giving an account of his conversion and mission. Jesus sends him to the Gentiles, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are *sanctified, by faith that is in Me.*" The moment the poor, dark, degraded Gentile had faith in Jesus, he was turned from darkness to light, from Satan unto God. His sins were forgiven, and his inheritance was on high. This is sanctification, namely, being separated from evil, and set apart for God.

But sanctification is not an *act*, surely: it is a work. Justification is an act, but sanctification is progressive; it means growing in holiness.

Well, I have no wish to weaken that meaning of the word. There ought to be progressive holiness in every believer. But you must first separate the stone from the quarry before you can prepare it for its destined place in the building. The great principle of sanctification, or being set apart for God, ought to be applied daily to our thoughts, affections, and to all our practical ways. As the apostle prays in 1 Thess. v. 23, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The one is the result of the other. You must be separated from the world, and set apart for God, before you can grow up in practical conformity to Him. In the passage before us (Acts

xxvi. 18) the word clearly means an *act*, something done by God, which only He could do. In what condition does the gospel find the Gentiles? The slaves of sin and Satan. And what did it do for them that believed? It separated them from their own sad condition, and set them apart for God, through the operation of His Holy Spirit. They were sanctified by faith in Jesus. But in 1 Cor. vi. 11 the apostle states, in the most distinct and positive way, that *sanctification* is as much an *act* of God as *justification*. "And such were some of you; but ye *are washed*, but ye *are sanctified*, but ye *are justified*, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (vv. 9, 10). Nothing can be plainer than this. Here, you will observe, sanctification is as directly and absolutely an *act* of God, as either washing or justification. If *cleansing* is an *act*, so is *sanctification*. If *justification* is an *act*, so is *sanctification*. Oh! what comfort this gives to the mind that can simply receive it. "Some" of these Corinthians had been sunk in the deepest mire of sin, but the moment they believed the gospel they were, by the immediate act of God Himself, *washed*, *sanctified*, and *justified*, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Of course, they had much to learn, break off, and the like. But God's work was perfect. He never does things by halves.

Well, certainly, I never saw things in that light before. I feel as if God were opening my eyes. I have never been in the habit of examining and comparing scripture with scripture in that way. I have believed certain doctrines drawn from the Scriptures; this is taking God's word as it is. I

confess that I have never before seen so many blessed consequences flowing from faith. I could sit ever so long and listen.

The Lord be praised! The Bible being God's own book, we ought to try and get at His meaning in it. But now one word, before we part, about "pardon." You have seen that the sins of every believer were "put away" by the one perfect sacrifice of Christ. "But now once in the end of the world had He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (Heb. ix. 26.) This He assuredly accomplished. "When He had by Himself thus "purged our sins," He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb. i. 3.) Such was the completeness and such the efficacy of the work He accomplished for all who through grace believe in Him. But it is when we believe in Him that we personally become partakers of the results of that work. Until we believe we are "children of wrath, even as others." (Eph. ii. 3.) But the moment Christ is really received by us we participate in all the value of His sacrifice. FULL AND ABSOLUTE FORGIVENESS is one blessed effect of this work. But it is not the whole, as we have already seen. Through its wondrous efficacy every believer is also a *justified* person and a *sanctified* person. God regards the believer as having died with Christ to the sins which once were chargeable upon him; and as being now alive *in* and *with* Christ. The truth is that we are one with Him. We have everything in Christ. All fulness dwells in Him. (Col. i. 19; ii. 9.) Oh! reckon on what you *have in Him*, and not on what you *feel in yourself*: and keep close to God's word; keep "looking - o Jesus." (Heb. xii. 2.) He Himself is the portion of our



## FOUR POINTS OF PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE. 93

souls. In Him we have redemption, sanctification, life, righteousness, and the hope of glory. (1 Cor. i. 30; Col. iii. 4.)

## Four Points of Practical Knowledge.

READ DEUT. viii. 1—9.

**I**N these verses we have four valuable points of knowledge connected with our walk through the wilderness of this world: namely, (1) The knowledge of ourselves. (2) The knowledge of God. (3) The knowledge of our relationship. (4) The knowledge of our hope.

1. First, as to the knowledge of self, we read, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, *to know what was in thine heart.*"

Here is a wondrous point of knowledge. Who can utter it? Who can penetrate the depths of a human heart? Who can tell its windings and labyrinths? The details of a wilderness life tend to bring out a vast deal of the evil that is in us. At our first starting upon our Christian career we are apt to be so occupied with the present joy of deliverance from the power of darkness that we know but very little of the real character of the flesh in us. It is as we go on from stage to stage of our desert course that we become really acquainted with self.

2. But then we are not to suppose that, as we grow in self-knowledge, our joy must decline. Quite the opposite. This would be to make our

joy depend upon *ignorance of self*; whereas it really depends upon *the knowledge of God*. In point of fact, as the believer advances in the knowledge of himself, his joy becomes deeper and more solid, inasmuch as he is led more thoroughly out of and away from himself, to find his sole object in Christ. He learns that nature's total ruin is not merely a true doctrine of the Christian faith, but a deep reality in his own experience. He also learns that divine grace is a reality; that salvation is a reality, a deep, personal reality; that sin is a reality; the cross a reality; the advocacy of Christ a reality. In a word, he learns the depth, the fulness, the power, the application, of God's gracious resources. "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger," not that you might be driven to despair, but that He might feed "thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years."

Touching and beautiful appeal! "Forty years" of uninterrupted evidence of what was in the heart of God toward His redeemed people. "Six hundred thousand footmen" clothed, fed, kept and cared for, during "forty years," in "a vast howling wilderness"! What a noble and soul-satisfying display of the fulness of divine resources! How is it possible that, with the history of Israel's desert wanderings lying open before us, we could ever harbour a single doubt or fear? Oh! that our hearts may be more completely emptied of self, for this is true humility; and more

## FOUR POINTS OF PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE. 95

completely filled with Christ, for this is true happiness and true holiness. "For the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand; HE knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; THOU HAST LACKED NOTHING." (Deut. ii. 7.)

3. All that we have been dwelling upon flows out of another thing, and that is the relationship in which we stand. "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." This accounts for all. The hunger and the food; the thirst and the water; the trackless desert and the guiding pillar; the toil and the refreshment; the sickness and the healing; all tell of the same thing: a Father's hand, a Father's heart. It is well to remember this, "lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." (Heb. xii.) An earthly father will have to wield the rod of discipline, as well as to imprint the kiss of affection; to administer the rebuke as well as express his approval; to chasten, as well as minister supplies. Thus it is with our Father in heaven. All His dealings flow out of that marvellous relationship in which He stands towards us. He is a "Holy Father." All is summed up in this. Our Father is the "*Holy One*"; and "*the Holy One*" is our Father. To walk with, lean on, and imitate Him, "as dear children," must secure everything in the way of genuine happiness, real strength, and true holiness. When we walk with Him, we are happy; when we lean on Him we are strong; and when we imitate Him, we are practically holy and gracious.

4. Finally, in the midst of all the exercises,

the trials, the conflicts, and even the mercies and privileges of the wilderness, we must keep the eye steadily fixed on that which lies before us. "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." Bright and blessed prospect! The joys of the kingdom are to fill our hearts, and to give vigour and buoyancy to our steps, as we pass across the desert. The green fields and vine-clad hills of the heavenly Canaan, the pearly gates and golden streets of the New Jerusalem, are to fill the vision of our souls. We are called to cherish the hope of glory, a hope which will never make ashamed. When the sand of the desert tries us, let the thought of Canaan cheer us, the thought of the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us." (1 Peter i. 4.) May we dwell upon it, and upon Him who will be the eternal source of all its brightness and blessedness!

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Whenever we see evil increasing, and God at the same time acting in drawing away from it those who believe, we may take it as a sign that the judgment of God is nigh.

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# WORDS OF TRUTH

"The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words:  
and that which was written was upright, even words  
of truth" (Eccles. xii. 10).

## The Offerings in Leviticus.

I N glancing rapidly through the sacrifices of the Book of Leviticus I shall take it for granted that we have in them so many striking and beautiful types of that one great Sacrifice offered on the cross for us and our salvation. Whatever they were, DEATH formed THE grand prominent circumstance in them all. I speak not of the meat or meal-offering in which there was nothing whatever about blood-shedding. Whether we look at the burnt offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, or the trespass offering, we find the same thing. In each and all we meet the words, "He shall *kill* it." Blood-shedding was essentially necessary to the completion of the sacrifice. Accomplished death lies at the foundation of everything. This point cannot be too strongly insisted upon. It is clearly and fully established in

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every part of Scripture, and in none more fully than in the types of Leviticus at which we are about to look, not indeed in their marvellous detail, but simply for the purpose of establishing the truth.

I. And, first, as to the burnt offering. (Lev. i.) Here we have the death of Christ as the expression of His perfect devotedness to God. This offering was wholly burnt. Neither the worshipper nor the priest partook of it. It was all consumed on the altar. All went up as a sweet savour to the throne of God.

But how was the devotedness expressed? Was it by a spotless life merely? No. It was by accomplished death. True, there was a spotless life, a holy life, a devoted life, a precious life, a matchless life; but all this would not have availed to make an atonement, or to tell forth the living depths of devotion in the heart of Christ, had the blood not been shed. "A male of the first year without blemish" might be "voluntarily" presented at "the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." It might be all that was required by the terms of the ceremonial law; but until life was taken, until the blood was shed, there could be no "atonement" made, no "sweet savour" presented. It was DEATH that formed the basis of everything. Ten thousand unblemished males, voluntarily presented, could not have made an atonement for man, nor presented a fragrant odour to God, save on the ground of accomplished death. True, the life of Christ was most precious to God, infinitely precious, in every aspect of it; but, as the Antitype of the burnt offering, He laid down His life, in order to give full expression to His devotedness.

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Here, then, we have a soul-satisfying view of the death of Christ, and of atonement through that death. The burnt offering prefigures Christ on the cross, not as a sin-Bearer, but as accomplishing the will of God. How do we know this? Because "the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest *for sin*, are burned *without the camp*." (Heb. xiii. 11.) But the burnt offering was consumed on the altar, and not "without the camp."\* (Lev. i. 6.) In it there was no question of the imputation of sin. It is the figure of Christ offering Himself without spot to God. (Heb. ix. 14.) It does not set forth the hatefulness of sin, but the preciousness and divine excellency of Christ, and His devotedness to God even unto death. It was wholly burnt. It all went up as a sweet savour. Its blood was not "brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin," and therefore its body was not "burned without the camp," but "on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord." (Lev. i. 9.) The death of the burnt-offering does not tell us how God hated sin, but how Christ loved God, and did His will, even unto the death of the cross.

When therefore, we look at Christ as the burnt-offering, we see "atonement" made according to the perfection of Christ's obedience. It is not Christ putting away sin (though that is a thing divinely true, blessed be God), but Christ doing the will of God. Did He do it perfectly? Truly so. Well, then, "atonement" has been

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\* The reader should be informed that the Hebrew word which is rendered "burn," in reference to the burnt-offering, is quite different to that used in the sin-offering. This is an interesting fact.

made just as perfectly. Christ, in the burnt-offering, acted directly for God. True, He met man's need likewise, his very deepest need, the need of heart and conscience; but it was as accomplishing the will of God that He did so. This is a grand truth to get hold of. The doctrine of the cross, the doctrine of atonement, the doctrine of life through death, cannot be rightly understood unless we see the special point set forth in the burnt offering.

2. In the peace-offering (Lev. iii.) we have a type of Christ as the One Who is our peace. Here, too, death was essential. "He shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and *kill* it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron's sons the priests shall *sprinkle the blood* upon the altar round about." Before ever "the fat" could be consumed on the altar of God, before ever the offerer could feed on "the flesh," before ever the priest could feed upon "the wave-breast and the heave-shoulder," the life of the sacrifice had to be poured out. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb. ix. 22.) And if there is no "remission" there can be no "peace," no worship, no communion with God. In order to enjoy perfect peace, I must have perfect justification; and in order to have perfect justification, I must have a perfect atonement; and in order to have a perfect atonement, I must have accomplished death.

All this I have in CHRIST. He is the true peace-offering. He has "made peace through the blood of His cross." (Col. i. 20.) Observe, it was "through the blood of His cross" that He made peace. It was not by His obedient life, how precious soever that life might be; and



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truly it was precious beyond all human thought. It was by His blood, and by it alone, He made peace. He gave up His life on the cross, and with that life went all the sin that was by imputation attached thereto, so that in resurrection all His members might be eternally linked with Him, partaking of the same life, and standing in the same righteousness, and in the same infinite favour before God.

Christian reader, remember this. The entire question is settled. An eternal peace has been established by the finished work of the cross. The blood of your divine peace-offering has put away all that could by any possibility keep you out from God's presence; and it is your happy privilege to feed upon the flesh of your peace-offering, in the clear sense of your perfect justification and acceptance. There is not a speck upon you in "the vision of the Almighty." You are "in Christ," and *as Christ*, before the throne of God. (Eph. i. 6, 7; 1 John iv. 17). You are no longer looked at in your former or old creation-state. "You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." (2 Cor. v. 17; Rom. viii. 9.) You are in the body, as to the plain fact of your condition, but you are not in the flesh as to the ground of your standing before God. The flesh is in you, and will be in you to the end of your earthly career; but God views it as a dead thing. It came to its end when your peace-offering yielded up His life on the cross; and now He is your life, your righteousness, your peace, your sanctification, your redemption, your hope, your glory, your eternal all.

3. The sin-offering (Lev. iv.) bears witness to the same great gospel thought. In it we see a

shadow of Christ as our sin-Bearer, as the One Who was "made sin for us." (2 Cor. v. 21.) If we compare the sin-offering with the burnt-offering, we shall find two very different aspects of Christ. But, although the aspects are different, it is one and the same Christ; and hence, the sacrifice in each case was "a male without blemish." This is easily understood. No matter in what aspect I view the Lord Jesus Christ, He must ever be seen as the same pure, spotless, holy, perfect One. True, He did, in perfect grace, stoop to be the sin-Bearer of His people; but it was a perfect, spotless Christ Who did so. The intrinsic excellence, the unsullied purity, and the divine glory of our blessed Lord appear in the sin-offering, as well as in the burnt-offering. It matters not in what relationship He stands, what office He fills, what work He performs, what position He occupies; His personal, His inherent, His essential glories shine out in all their proper, their divine effulgence. Like the sun in the natural heavens, he may, as astronomers teach, pass through a different sign every month; but, let the sign be what it may, it is one and the same sun which gladdens and enlightens us by his beams.

Thus it is with the burnt-offering and the sin-offering. Both types point to the same great Anti-type, though they set Him forth in such contrasted aspects of His work. In the burnt-offering, Christ is seen meeting the affections of the heart of God; in the sin-offering, He is seen meeting the necessities of the sinner's conscience. That presents Him to us as the accomplisher of the will of God; this as the Bearer of the sins of man. In the former, we are taught the precious-

ness of the sacrifice; in the latter, the hateful-ness of sin. Thus much as to the two offerings in the main. The most minute and accurate examination of the details will only tend to establish the mind in the truth of this general statement. Into these details I do not attempt to enter here. I merely call my reader's attention to the fact that, whether we look at the burnt-offering, the peace-offering, or the sin-offering, we see that a sacrificed life was essential. The "sweet savour" of the burnt-offering ascended when the blood was shed, and not till then. "The flesh of the peace-offering" was eaten when the blood was shed, and not till then. Sin was put away by the sin-offering when the blood was shed, and not till then.

4. Lastly, the trespass-offering (Lev. v.) passes before us as a witness to the place which death occupies on the page of inspiration. In it we see Christ as the One Who not only answered for *sin* in the believer's nature, but also for sins in the believer's life. It was by blood-shedding, and by that alone, that He did both the one and the other. Christ was not only "made *sin* for us" (2 Cor. v. 21), but He also "bare our *sins* in His own body on the tree." (1 Peter ii. 24.) He was not made sin during His life, but in His DEATH. He did not bear our sins during His life, but "on the tree." This is plain and absolute enough. Whether we look at the types of the Old Testament, or hearken to the statements of the New, all set forth the same glorious truth, namely, that BLOOD must be shed, for sins to be forgiven, righteousness imputed, peace enjoyed, communion with God realised, or acceptable worship presented.

## **“In the Way Going Up to Jerusalem.”**

Read Mark x. 17-52.

**I**N the above scripture we have three distinct types of character presented to us in (1), the rich man; (2), the disciples; and (3), blind Bartimeus.

In the person of the rich man we may see a very numerous class set forth. He was not by any means without real anxiety respecting his soul's interests. He was seeking “eternal life,” and had evidently struggled to obtain it “by works of law.” Yet with all his legal efforts he was ill at ease. He felt there was something lacking, and therefore he comes to Christ.

But in his very first question we detect the wrong ground on which this singularly interesting man was standing. He says, “What must *I do*, that *I* may inherit eternal life?” His mind, still darkened by the mists of legalism, had never admitted the wondrous truth that “eternal life” is “the *gift* of God,” and not the reward of human doings. His question proved him to be very far behind in his apprehension, not only of God's dealings with man, but also of his own real state in God's sight.

Accordingly, the Lord Jesus sends him back to Moses. He sends him back, as it were, to the foot of Mount Sinai, to learn the solemn and impressive lessons taught there, amid thunders and lightnings, blackness, darkness and tempest. Such is the real bent and object of the Lord's reply: “Thou knowest the commandments.” It is as though He had said to him, “You are hundreds of years too late in your inquiry. The *doing*

principle has been tried long since at Mount Sinai, where it ended in failure. I am here on the ground that man's doings are set aside. Eternal life is God's *gift*, not man's *earning*.”

However, the rich man did not know where the law really put him. He was ignorant of the holiness of the law, and of his own ruined condition. He says, “ All these have I observed from my youth.”

No one who knew the height of God's law and the depth of man's ruin could make such a statement. Persons who speak of keeping the law “ know neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.” If man could keep the law, then either he is perfect or the law is imperfect. But the “ law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” (Rom. vii. 12.) Therefore it is not possible that a sinful being could so keep the law as to get life by it; and thus this rich man was quite astray in saying he had kept all the commandments; for, had he done so, he would not have lacked anything; whereas Christ says to him, “ One thing thou lackest.”

“ Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.” (Rom. x. 5.) If, then, a man should say he had kept the commandments, he would have a right to life as a matter of positive earning.

But who would dare to put forth such a claim? Who has so kept the law as to be able to claim life from God? Not one. “ By works of law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.” (Rom. iii. 20.) “ For as many as are of works of law are under the curse.” (Gal. iii. 10.) “ If there had been a law given which could have

given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." (Gal. iii. 21.)

Why, then, it may be asked, does the Lord refer this man to the commandments? Simply that he might see by them how far short he was of what he ought to be, and so learn his need of something outside of himself. He sends him back to the "schoolmaster" (Gal. iii. 24); and when he *professes* to have learnt all that the "schoolmaster" had to teach him, the Lord applies another and a more searching test, by calling on him to let go the world, and take up the cross.

This was far more than he was prepared for. The world shone too brightly, and the cross seemed too gloomy, in his eyes, to admit of any response to such a call. The world was heavier, in the balance of his heart's affections, than Christ. It would be all well enough if he could get eternal life and hold the world as well. The heart likes right well "to make the best of both worlds." But it will not do. If a man comes to Christ to bargain about eternal life, he will assuredly find the price far beyond his means. Whereas, as we shall see presently, if a man comes as a beggar, he gets all he wants for nothing. If a man comes as a *doer*, he must be told what *to do*. If a man comes as a *sinner*, he is told what *to believe*.

However, it will always be found that the cross is too heavy for any one to take up who has not first seen Christ nailed to that cross for him and for his salvation. Further, "the way going up to Jerusalem," that is, the way which Christ trod, and which all must tread who walk in His steps, will be found too rough for all, except

those whose “ feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” I must, by faith, *lean* on the cross before I can *carry* it; and I must possess eternal life, before I can walk in the footsteps of Jesus. To attempt to carry the cross until I enjoy a crucified Saviour is more difficult than even to stand beneath “ the fiery mount.” This rich man, who thought he had kept all the commandments, was repulsed by the dark shadow of the cross, and “ went away grieved.”

But did the Lord Jesus mean to teach this man that he could “ inherit eternal life ” by doing, selling, or giving? By no means. What then? He was answering him on his own ground. He had come as a *doer*, and he went away because he could not *do*. Like Israel in Exodus xix. They said, “ All that Jehovah hath spoken will we do ”; and when Jehovah did speak, “ they could not endure that which was commanded.” (Heb. xii. 20.)

Man speaks about doing; and when he is told what to do, he is neither willing nor able to do it. God’s word to all “ who desire to be under the law ” is “ Do you not hear the law? ” (Gal. iv. 21.) “ The man that doeth these things shall live by them.” (Rom. x. 5.) “ What is written in the law? how readest thou? ” (Luke x. 26.)

This amiable and interesting person was not disposed even to set his foot upon “ the way going up to Jerusalem.” The thought of relinquishing the world, its riches and its pleasures, was far beyond him. He wanted “ eternal life ”; but if it was to be purchased by giving up his riches, he would not pay the price, and so he “ went away grieved.”

2. The disciples furnish us with another type

of character. They were able through grace to say, "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee." They were a stage beyond the rich man. They had seen sufficient attraction in Christ to lead them to give up their earthly all, and attach themselves to His blessed Person. This was all well. They should be no losers; for Christ will be no man's debtor. Whatever is devoted to Him, He will pay back "a hundredfold now in this time, . . . and in the world to come eternal life." But then, "Many that are first shall be last, and the last first." It is one thing to begin; it is another thing to continue. It is one thing to enter upon the path; it is another to pursue it. This is a most solemn truth.

"And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid." (v. 32.)

Why was this? Why this fear and amazement? Had they not voluntarily given up all to follow Christ? Yes; but they had not anticipated that the cross would be so heavy, or the way so rough. They had given up this world's brilliant offers; but they did not reckon upon the dark clouds which hung over the path leading to Jerusalem; and so, when called to encounter these things, they were "amazed" and "afraid." They had not, like the rich man, to go away "grieved," because unable to shake off the influence of this world's wealth; but they followed Christ in amazement and fear, because of the roughness and darkness of that path along which He was conducting them.

Theirs was obviously a different case. They had life, and did not need to "inherit" it by



works of law, or works of self-denial. But if they wanted to follow Christ, they had to count the cost; for He was on His way up to Jerusalem. He had “stedfastly set His face” to meet the terrific array of all the powers of darkness, together with the scorn, the reproach, the enmity, and derision of those whom He had come to save.

And mark the grace of those words, “Jesus WENT BEFORE THEM.” He put Himself in the forefront of the battle. He exposed Himself to the marshalled hosts of earth and hell. “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him; and the third day He shall rise again.” (*vv.* 33, 34). With a steady gaze He contemplates the whole scene; but most graciously omits all mention of one ingredient in His approaching cup of unutterable sorrow, namely, His desertion and denial by those who had left all to follow Him.

How little they entered into all these things is evident from the fact that, while on the way up to Jerusalem, they were occupied about the question of their respective places in the Kingdom. A heart that is filled with love to Christ will find full satisfaction in the assurance of being *near to Him*. It is not so much the PLACE I am to get, as the PERSON who will be the centre and spring of all my joy for ever. The apostle Paul, in Phil. iii. was not occupied with the place which he was to have in the coming kingdom. No; to “*win Christ*” was the fondly cherished object of that devoted heart. From the moment he beheld the

beauty and excellency of that blessed One near the city of Damascus, until he was "offered up" in the city of Rome, he was carried forward by the intensity of love to His Person and His cause. And assuredly no one ever drank more deeply of His "cup," or entered more thoroughly into His "baptism" than Paul.

3. It only remains for us to look at the case of "blind Bartimeus." In this poor blind beggar we see one who virtually rebuked both the rich man and the disciples; for the moment he laid his open eyes on the Son of David, without casting back a lingering look at his garment, which he had "cast away" in order to come to Jesus, and without a single thought about the roughness and darkness of the path, he "followed Jesus in *the way*."

What "way"? "The way going up to Jerusalem." It may be said that he had no possessions to give up, and knew nothing of the direction or end of that way. Very likely so; but that does not alter the matter. The valuable point for us to get hold of is that, when the eye is filled and the heart is occupied with Christ we never stop to think of what we have to give up in order to get Him, or what we have to endure in order to follow Him. HE HIMSELF ENGROSSES THE WHOLE SOUL; and nought but this will enable us to tread the path after Him.

What was all the world to Bartimeus? Or what the roughness of the way? His eyes had been opened, and not only opened, but filled with the fairest vision that ever fixed the gaze of men or angels, even the Person of the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh; and, therefore, leaving far behind his blindness and his beggary, he

pressed forward in the footsteps of that wondrous Person who had met all his need.

Why did not Christ tell him about the commandments? Why did He not call upon him to take up his cross, and follow Him? Why did He not hold up before his view the “cup” and the “baptism”? Because Bartimeus was not a bargainer, but a beggar. Because he was not talking about his *doings*, but confessing his *need*. Because he was not thinking about what place he should get in the kingdom, or about the roughness of the way thither, but seeking to get to Jesus, and to follow Him when found.

This is simple enough. Christ never proposed conditions to a poor, blind, broken-hearted sinner. He came down from heaven, “not to be ministered unto, but to *minister*, and to *give* His life a ransom for many.” (v. 45.)

It is beginning at the wrong end to call upon a ruined and helpless sinner to give up the world in order to find Christ. He is “without strength.” What can he do? If I tell a miser that he must give up his gold, or a sportsman that he must give up his sport, or a drunkard that he must give up his drink, before he can come to Christ, he will tell me I might just as well ask him to cut off his right hand. But let such a one have his eyes opened to behold the Lamb of God; let him see God’s salvation; let him hear the glad news of sins forgiven, and eternal life and righteousness bestowed through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then mark the difference. Instead of “going away grieved” at the hardness of the conditions proposed, “he goes on his way rejoicing” in the fulness of the salvation revealed; and instead of

moving along "amazed" and "afraid," because of the roughness and gloom of the path, he presses toward the mark with a cheerful alacrity which nought but companionship with Christ can impart. (Phil. iii. 14.)

Reader, can you see your own character in any of the foregoing types? What is the present condition of your soul? Are you anxious to get eternal life, but still shrinking from the immense sacrifice which you think is involved? Let me entreat you to "behold the Lamb of God" bleeding on the cursed tree to put away sin. Think not of any sacrifice which *you must make*, but of that sacrifice which *He has made*. This will give you peace. Look away from self straight to Jesus; let not the weight of a feather come between. He has done ALL; and the soul that believes in a dead and risen Christ is quickened, pardoned, and justified.

However, it may be that you have found pardon and peace in Jesus; and that moreover, you have let go your hold of this world, and pushed out from the shore to go to Jesus. But you find the way very rough, and the cross very heavy. The contemptuous sneer of old associates; the bitter reproach and opposition of many around you; the narrowness of your sphere, and the loneliness of your path, all these things are against you; and you find amazement and terror creeping at times over your spirit.

Well, be not afraid. Remember that the Master is *before* you. You can distinctly trace His blessed footprints all along that rough and cloudy path. Persevere! You must "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts xiv. 22.) Keep your eye steadily fixed on Jesus.

JULY, 1918.

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# WORDS OF TRUTH

"The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words :  
and that which was written was upright, even words  
of truth" (Eccles. xii. 10).

## God's Workmen and their Work.

READ NUMBERS III. AND IV.

WE want the reader to turn with us to Numbers iii. and iv., where we shall find a most instructive and interesting picture of God's workmen in the wilderness. It is a suggestive picture, and one well worthy of our deepest attention at a moment like the present, in which we all are so sadly prone to do that which is right in our own eyes.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation, before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle. And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation,

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and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons : they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel." (Chap. iii. 5—9.)

The Levites represented the whole congregation of Israel, and acted on their behalf. This appears from the fact that the children of Israel laid their hands on the heads of the Levites, just as the Levites laid their hands on the heads of the sacrifices. (See chap. viii. 10.) The act of imposition expressed identification. According to this, the Levites furnish a distinct view of the people of God in the wilderness. They present them to us as a company of earnest workers, and that too, be it noted, not as mere desultory labourers, running to and fro, and doing each one what seemed right in his own eyes. Nothing of the sort. If the men of war had their pedigree to shew, and their standard to adhere to, so had the Levites their centre to gather round, and their work to do. All was as clear, distinct, and defined as God could make it; and, moreover, all was under the immediate authority and direction of the high priest.

It is most needful for all who would be true Levites, proper workmen, intelligent servants, to weigh with all seriousness this point. Levite service was to be regulated by the appointment of the priest. There was no more room for the exercise of self-will in the service of the Levites, than there was in the position of the men of war. All was divinely settled, and this was a signal mercy to all whose hearts were in a right condition. To one whose will was unbroken it might seem a hardship and a most irksome task to be obliged continually to occupy the same position, or

to be always engaged in precisely the same line of work. But on the contrary, where the will was subdued, and the heart adjusted, each one would say, "I bless God I have not got to think; I have merely to do as I am bidden."

This is ever the business of the true servant. It was pre-eminently so with Him who was the only perfect servant that ever trod this earth. He could say, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." And again: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and finish His work." (John vi. 38, iv. 34.)

But there is another fact which claims our attention in reference to the Levites, and that is, their service had exclusively to do with the tabernacle and its belongings. They had nothing else to do. For a Levite to think of putting his hand to aught beside would have been to deny his calling, to abandon his divinely appointed work, and to fly in the face of God's commandments.

Just so it is with Christians now. Their exclusive business, their one grand work, their absorbing service, is Christ and His belongings. They have nothing else to do. For a Christian to think of putting his hand to aught beside, is to deny his calling, to abandon his divinely appointed work, and fly in the face of divine commandments. A true Levite of old could say, "To me to live is the tabernacle", and a true Christian now can say, "To me to live is Christ." The grand question, in every matter which may present itself before the Christian, is this, "Can I connect Christ with it?" If not, I have nothing whatever to do with it.

This is the true way to look at things. It is

not a question as to the right or wrong of this or that. No ; it is simply a question as to how far it concerns the name and glory of Christ. This simplifies everything amazingly. It answers a thousand questions, solves a thousand difficulties, and makes the path of the true and earnest Christian as clear as the sun-beam. A Levite had no difficulty as to his work. It was all settled for him with divine precision. The burden that each had to carry, and the work that each had to do, was laid down with a clearness which left no room for the questionings of the heart. Each man could know his job, and stick to it ; and, let us add, the work was done by each one discharging his own specific functions. It was not by running hither and thither, and doing this or that ; but by each man sedulously adhering to his own particular calling, that the service of the tabernacle was duly discharged.

It is well to bear this in mind. We, as Christians, are very apt to jostle one another ; indeed, we are sure to do so if we do not each one pursue his own divinely appointed line of work. We say, "*divinely* appointed," and would press the word. We have no right to choose our own work. If the Lord has made one man an evangelist, another a teacher, another a pastor, and another an exhorter, how is the work to go on ? Surely it is not by the evangelist trying to teach, and the teacher to exhort, or the one who is not fitted for either, trying to do both. No ; it is by each one exercising his own divinely imparted gift.

No doubt it may please the Lord to endow one individual with a variety of gifts ; but this does not, in the smallest degree, touch the principle on which we are dwelling, which is simply this :



## GOD'S WORKMEN AND THEIR WORK. 117

Every one of us is responsible to know his own special line, and to pursue it. If this be lost sight of we shall get into hopeless confusion. God has His quarry-men, His stone-squarers, and His masons. The work progresses by each man attending diligently to his own work. If all were quarry-men, where were the stone-squarers? If all were stone-squarers, where were the masons? The greatest possible damage is done to the cause of Christ, and to God's work in the world, by one man aiming at another's line of things, or seeking to imitate another's gift. It is a miserable mistake, against which we would solemnly warn the reader. Nothing can be more senseless. God never repeats Himself. There are no two faces alike; not two leaves in the forest alike; not two blades of grass alike. Why, then, should any one aim at another's line of work, or affect to possess another's gift? Let each one be satisfied to be just what his Master has made him. This is the secret of real peace and progress.

All this finds a very vivid illustration in the inspired record concerning the service of three distinct classes of the Levites, which is detailed in the chapter named above.

Kohath was called to bear "the sanctuary," as we read in chapter x. "And the tabernacle was taken down, and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari set forward, bearing the tabernacle..... And the Kohathites set forward bearing the sanctuary: and the other [i.e., the Gershonites and the Merarites] did set up the tabernacle against they came."

There was a strong moral link connecting Gershon and Merari in their service, although their work was perfectly distinct. Gershon had

nothing to do with the boards and the pins ; and Merari had nothing to do with the curtains or the coverings : and yet they were very intimately connected, as they were mutually dependent (chap. iv. 21—33.). “The boards and the sockets” would not do without “the curtains” ; and “the curtains” would not do without “the boards and sockets.” And as to “the pins,” though apparently so insignificant, who could estimate their importance in keeping things together, and maintaining the visible unity of the whole? Thus all worked together to one common end, and that end was gained by each attending to his own special line. If a Gershonite had taken it into his head to abandon “the curtains” and address himself to “the pins,” he would have left his own work undone, and interfered with the work of the Merarite. This would never do. It would have thrown everything into hopeless confusion ; whereas, by adhering to the divine rule, all was maintained in the most exquisite order.

It must have been perfectly beautiful to mark God’s workers in the wilderness. Each one was at his post, and each moved in his divinely appointed sphere. Hence, the moment the cloud was lifted up, and the order given to move, every man knew what he had to do, and he addressed himself to that and nothing else. No man had any right to think for himself. Jehovah thought for all. The Levites had declared themselves “on the Lord’s side” ; they had yielded themselves to His authority ; and this fact lay at the very base of all their wilderness work and service. Looked at in this light, it would be deemed a matter of total indifference whether a man had to carry a pin, a curtain, or a golden candlestick. The grand

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question for each and for all was simply. "Is this my work? Is this what the Lord has given me to do?"

This settled everything. Had it been left to human thinking or human choosing, one man might like this ; another might like that ; and a third might like something else. How then could the tabernacle ever be borne along through the wilderness, or set up in its place? Impossible. There could be but one supreme authority, namely, Jehovah Himself. He arranged for all, and all had to submit to Him. There was no room at all for the exercise of the human will. This was a signal mercy. It prevented a world of strife and confusion. There must be subjection ; there must be a broken will ; there must be a cordial yielding to divine authority, otherwise it will turn out to be like the Book of Judges, every man doing that which is right in his own eyes. A Merarite might say (or think if he did not say it), "What ! am I to spend the very best portion of my life upon earth, the days of my prime and vigour, in looking after a few pins? Was this the end for which I was born? Am I to have nothing higher before me as an object in life? Is this to be my occupation from thirty to fifty?"

To such questions there was a twofold reply. In the first place, it was enough for the Merarite to know that Jehovah had assigned him his work. This was sufficient to impart dignity to what nature might esteem the smallest and meanest matter. It does not matter what we are doing, provided always we are doing our divinely appointed work. A man may pursue what his fellows would deem a most brilliant career ; he may spend his energies, his time, his talents, his fortune, in

pursuits which the men of this world esteem grand and glorious, and all the while his life may prove to be but a splendid bubble. But, on the other hand, the man who simply does the will of God, whatever that may be ; the man who executes his Lord's commands, whatever such commands may enjoin ; that is the man whose path is illuminated by the beams of divine approbation, and whose work shall be remembered when the most splendid schemes of the children of this world have sunk into eternal oblivion.

But, besides the moral worth attaching always to the act of doing what we are told to do, there was also a special dignity belonging to the work of a Merarite, even though that work was merely attending to a few " pins " or " sockets." Everything connected with the tabernacle was of the very deepest interest and highest value. There was not, in the whole world, anything to be compared with that boarded tent with all its mystic belongings. It was a holy dignity and privilege to be allowed to touch the smallest pin that formed a part of that wonderful tabernacle in the wilderness. It was more glorious by far to be a Merarite looking after the pins of God's tabernacle, than to wield the sceptre of Egypt or Assyria. True, the Merarite, according to the import of his name, might seem a poor " sorrowful " labouring man ; but oh ! his labour stood connected with the dwelling-place of the Most High God, the Possessor of heaven and earth. His hands handled the things which were the patterns of things in the heavens. Every pin, every socket every curtain, and every covering was a shadow of good things to come, a foreshadowing of CHRIST.

## Three Parables and their Lessons.

**I**N the Gospel of Matthew, from verse 45 of chapter xxiv. to verse 31 of chapter xxv., we have three parables, in which the Lord addresses the disciples as to their conduct during His absence.

1. The subject of the first is *the responsibility of ministry within the house*, in the Church, "Whose house are we." (Heb. iii. 6.) Thus we read, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods."

Real ministry is of the Lord, and of Him alone. This is what we have to note in view of what took place on the very threshold of Christianity. And He makes much of faithfulness or unfaithfulness in His house. His people are near and dear to His heart. Those who have been humble and faithful during His absence will be made rulers over all His goods when He returns. The true minister of Christ has to do directly with Himself. He is the hireling of no man, or of any particular body of men. "Blessed is that servant, *whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*"

Failure in ministry is also spoken of and dealt with by the Lord Himself. "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken." This is the other and sad side of the picture. The character of ministry is greatly affected by holding or rejecting the truth of the Lord's coming.

In place of devoted service to the household, with his heart set on the master's approval, on his return, there is assumption, tyranny, and worldliness. The doom of such, when the Lord comes, will be worse than that of the world. "He shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrite" (Judas's place) where "there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth."

Such are the fearful consequences of forgetfulness of the Lord's return. But this is more than a mere doctrinal mistake, or a difference of opinion about the coming of the Lord. It was "*in his heart*" his will was concerned in it. He wished in his heart that the Lord would stay away, as His coming would spoil all his schemes, and bring to a close all his worldly greatness. Is not this too true a picture of what has happened? And what a solemn lesson for those who take to themselves a place of service in the Church. The mere appointment of the sovereign, or the choice of the people, will not be enough in that day, unless they have also been the chosen of the Lord and the faithful in His house.

2. In the second parable, professing Christians, during the Lord's absence, are represented as virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom and light him to his house. This was the attitude of the early Christians. They came out from the world, and from Judaism, to go forth and meet the heavenly Bridegroom. But we know what happened. He tarries: they all slumbered and slept. "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." From the first century, till the beginning of the nineteenth, we hear very little about the

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coming of the Lord. Now and then, here and there, a feeble voice may be heard on the subject ; but not until the early part of the last century did the midnight cry go forth. Now we have many tracts and volumes on the subject, and many are preaching it in nearly all lands under heaven. The midnight is past, the morning cometh.

The revival of the truth of the Lord's coming marks a distinct epoch in the history of the Church. And, like all revivals, it was the work of the Holy Spirit, and that by instruments of His own choosing, and by means which He saw fitting. And how like the Lord's long-suffering, that in this great movement there should be time given between the cry to go out to meet the Bridegroom and His arrival to prove the condition of each ! Five of the ten virgins had no oil in their lamps ; no Christ, no Holy Spirit, dwelling in them. They had only the outward lamp of profession. How awfully solemn the thought, if we look at Christendom from this point of view ! Five of every ten are *unreal*, and against them the door will be shut for ever. How this thought should move to earnestness and energy in evangelizing ! May we wisely improve the time thus graciously given between the going forth of the midnight cry, and the coming of the Bridegroom.

3. In the first parable, it is ministry *inside the house* ; in the third, it is ministry *outside the house*, that is, evangelizing. In the second parable, it is the personal expectation of the Lord's coming, with the possession of that which is requisite to go in with Him to the marriage supper of the King's Son.

“ The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants,

and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability ; and straightway took his journey." Here the Lord is represented as leaving this world, and going back to heaven ; and while He is gone there, His servants are to trade with the talents committed to them.

"Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two." Here we have the true principle and the true character of Christian ministry. The Lord Himself called the servants, and gave them the talents ; and the servant is responsible to the Lord Himself for the fulfilment of his calling. The exercise of gift, whether *inside* or *outside* the house, although subject to the directions of the word, and always to be exercised in love and for blessing, is in no wise dependent on the will of sovereign, priest or people, but on Christ only, the true Head of the Church. It is a grave and solemn thing for any one to interfere with Christ's claims on the service of His servant. To touch this is to set aside responsibility to CHRIST, and to overthrow the fundamental principle of Christianity.

PRIESTHOOD was the distinguishing characteristic of the Jewish dispensation ; MINISTRY according to God, is characteristic of the Christian period. Hence the utter failure of the professing church, when it sought to imitate Judaism in so many ways, both in its priesthood and its ritualism. If a priestly order, with rites and ceremonies, be still necessary, the efficacy of the work of Christ is called in question. In fact, though not in words,



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it strikes at the root of Christianity. But all is settled by the word of God. "This man, after He had offered *one* sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God: from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.....And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." (Hebrews x. 1—25.)

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY, then, is a subject of the highest dignity and the deepest interest. It testifies to the work, the victory, and the glory of Jesus, that the lost may be saved. It is the activity of God's love going out to an alienated and ruined world, and earnestly beseeching souls to be reconciled to Him. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; *and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation.*" (2 Cor. v. 19-21.)

JEWISH PRIESTHOOD maintained the people in their relations with God; CHRISTIAN MINISTRY is God in grace delivering souls from sin and ruin, and bringing them near to Himself, as happy worshippers in the most holy place.

To return to our parable. There is one thing specially to be noticed here, as showing the Lord's sovereignty and wisdom in connection with ministry. He gave differently to each, and to each according to his ability. Each one had a natural capacity which fitted him for the service in which he was employed, and gifts bestowed, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, for its fulfilment. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." (Eph. iv.) The servant must

have certain natural qualifications for his work, besides the power of the Spirit of God. If the Lord calls a man to preach the gospel, there will be a natural ability for it. Then the Lord may create in his heart by the Holy Spirit a real love for souls, which is the best gift of the evangelist. Then he ought to stir up and exercise his gift according to his ability, for the blessing of souls and the glory of God.

May we remember that we are responsible for these two things : the gift graciously bestowed and the ability in which the gift is to be exercised. When the Lord comes to reckon with His servants, it will not be enough to say, I was never educated for, or appointed to, the ministry. The question will be, Did I wait on the Lord to be used by Him according to what He fitted me for? or did I hide my talent in the earth? Faithfulness or unfaithfulness to Him will be the only thing in question.

That which distinguished the faithful from the unfaithful servant was *confidence* in their master. The unfaithful servant knew not the Lord : he acted from fear, not from love, and so hid his one talent in the earth. The faithful ones knew the Lord, trusted Him, and served from love, and were rewarded.

Love is the only true spring of service for Christ, either in the Church or in the outside world. May we never be found making excuses for ourselves, like the "wicked and slothful" servant, but be ever reckoning on the love, grace, truth, and power of our blessed Saviour and Lord.

## Christ our Objective Portion and Occupation.

(From a Letter.)

I AM more and more satisfied daily that we live in a time when, if ever, there must be the individual clinging to CHRIST HIMSELF. Ripening friendships are in a moment broken through; fellowship in the Spirit interrupted by intervening distances; but nothing can alter with HIM. He maintains His place of nearness in spite of everything, washing our feet. . . . in order that He may do this, and insisting upon His right to retain the first place in our hearts; knowing full well that it *must* be His [in that glory] where there is no flesh to hinder, and no enemy to seduce.

Happy, beloved brother, to think of that time when He shall no longer allow our eyes to rest on things around, but only on Him. The cry of the heart is, "Come, Lord Jesus." I doubt not you can echo it. In the meantime (as you say) it is well to be "stedfast, unmoveable, *always* abounding in the work of the Lord," leaving the [question of] rewards to Himself, satisfied to "WIN CHRIST." And surely both you and I may rejoice that it is our privilege to be thus; for though our lives are different, yours being to serve Him in an earthly calling (1 Thess. iv., 11, 12), and mine being to serve Him in the Word alone, yet we both serve the same Master, and both can ask His blessing on our work, doing "all in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Col. iii. 17.)

With *me* I find there is plenty of work; but I

have much reason to complain of the way it is done. For we must ever remember it is not the amount we do, but to do what we have in hand *well*, as if His eye was upon us. I look at Him as a Servant (say in the Gospel of Mark), and I find that, though there never was a moment lost (you have observed how often "straightway" occurs), yet never was the work ill done. His prayer was interrupted; but He took it as from the Lord [His Father], and went on with His preaching.

He could feel the danger of overwork for others; for in this very Gospel we find the invitation: "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." (vi. 31.) And surely this has a word for us. Are we as happy and peaceful sitting in alone with Jesus, as mixed up with the toil of necessary commerce, or engaged in the more exciting scenes of night after night of meetings?

I believe this true secret of happiness is to sit at His feet *while* we serve, enjoying His presence continually, which is quite possible amid the most bustling scenes. May it be your portion and mine to do this, abiding in Him and in His LOVE; fruit-bearing resulting from the former, joy from the latter. (John xv. 5, 9.)

Let us our feebleness recline  
On that eternal love of Thine,  
And human thoughts forget;  
Child-like attend what Thou wilt say,  
Go forth and serve Thee while 'tis day,  
Yet leave not our retreat.

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# WORDS OF TRUTH

"The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words:  
and that which was written was upright, even words  
of truth" (Eccles. xii. 10).

## The Shepherd's Hand.

READ JOHN x. 28, 29.

**G**REAT comfort there is in John's Gospel in this day of confusion. The ministry there is so desultory. The Lord laboured alone, and in a scene of recognised apostasies. His own, to whom He had come, had not received Him; the world which He had made, had not known Him; He was outside everything. But to HIMSELF in that condition He calls His sheep.

He finds them here and there. All places in the wilderness are alike to Him, Samaria or Judea. He deals with souls immediately, personally, closely, and in solitude. He deals with them individually. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." (John i. 12.) He entered in among them "by

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the door "; coming to sinners in the way of grace, and forth from the Father.

And the sheep became distinguished by one characteristic, namely, their ears were awakened by the Spirit to know the voice of Him who thus came to them in grace, as from the Father, with words of life and salvation. For so we find it in all the early chapters of this Gospel, where the Lord's ministry is recorded. Each of those whom He finds and gathers is seen to be awakened to know His voice, and to follow Him. Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael, in chapter i.; the Samaritan, in chapter iv.; the convicted sinner, in chapter viii.; the blind beggar, in chapter ix.; all are given ears to hear His voice, and all, as it were, had their ears nailed to His door-post. In other words, their hearts are fixed, their thoughts are centred, their confidence is set, and He is the common Object. Their need is brought to Jesus only, and left with Him.

They listened; they knew His voice; they followed. This listening is a sinner's wisdom and a sinner's salvation. He is wise to be silent, for he can say nothing for himself; he is saved by being silent, if he thus take occasion to listen to Jesus. And such were all these. They listen; they know His voice; they follow. Some have a quicker ear, others a more dull one. But no matter. Their ears are opened to Him.

They are not seen as linked together, but each one gathered to Him. A wandering, free, unprescribed ministry we trace here: and the elect are not seen as linked together, save in this characteristic I have been noticing, that each and all of them have an ear for the voice of that Shepherd who had entered by the door, who had come

from the Father, doing His works, and speaking His words.\*

For in such a character as this, in *grace*, the Lord enters *every* scene in the early chapters of this Gospel. This we may at once perceive. He enters the place where Andrew and his companions go to Him, as the *Lamb of God*. He enters on the spirit or on the solitude of Nathanael, as the One who was about to *open heaven to him*. He enters on the thoughts of Nicodemus, as the One whom the Father had sent *for healing and life*. He enters the conscience of the Samaritan woman as the *Gift of God*. He enters on the impotent man at Bethesda as his *immediate Healer*, working after the pattern of the Father. He enters into the midst of the multitude in chapter vi. as the sealed of the Father, *to give life to the world*. He enters on the guilt of the convicted sinner as the *Light of life*. He enters on the blindness of the beggar as the *Light of the world*.

Thus, entering by the door, as the Shepherd of the sheep, He saves, and blesses, and quickens; and refuses to do anything else. He will not be a Judge or a King, nor will He display His power or get Himself a name in the world. He came from, and was declaring the Father. He was "full of grace and truth," and entering in upon the flock, He entered only to bless.

But again I observe, He meets them in all conditions, one here, and another there; one now, and another then. A wandering, free, unpre-

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\*The reader will bear in mind that the statement in the text refers only to the early chapters of John's Gospel. In the Acts and Epistles we are taught that believers should be gathered together. "There is one body, and one Spirit," down here on this earth.

scribed ministry we trace, and such only, in these early chapters of John. And He does not *fold* them together in this Gospel. They enter by Him, the door, and find salvation and pasture, and aboundings of life; but it is "one *flock*, and one Shepherd." He does not put them again as in the fold of Jerusalem. He does not encamp them again around the tabernacle, or put them under the shade of Lebanon.

But are they unsheltered? Have they been gathered to be exposed? He goes on, in chapter x. (where we have His own commentary upon His own ministry) to satisfy this question. And He tells us that, though the sheep had been gathered after this free and broken manner, yet are they gathered to a place of everlasting security. They had been found in a world of apostasies, a scene of infinite confusion, a trackless desert, where death and darkness brooded, where all foundations were out of course. The Lord had found them, some in Samaria, some in Galilee, some in Judea. But now, having gathered them, He has everlasting rest and security for them. They have come to *Himself*, and they shall find *that* a place of strength, a fortress, a strong tower, a munition of rocks which no malice of all their enemies can ever touch. *It is His own hand and the Father's hand.* No place less than that, folded there, if we please so to speak, a flock kept in that hand, out of which none can ever pluck them.

Great comfort, again I say, in all this! for we find ourselves in scenes of confusion and apostasy, such as the ministry of the Lord in John's Gospel recognises. The work of Christ, by His Spirit and His gospel, is desultory now as it was then.



## THE SAREPTAN AND THE SHUNAMMITE. 133

His elect are found everywhere; but they have an ear to hear His voice, an ear nailed to His doorpost; round Himself they have gathered for salvation, and pasture, and life in its aboundings, and they are kept in the unassailable fortress of His hand and the Father's.

Well, let me add, if the Spirit lead us, through the further teaching of the Epistles, to take our place in the *body* of Christ, as here we see it in the *hand* of Christ, I would not apprehend it merely, but I would desire grace to enjoy the calling that gives me to Him, who is the Head over all things to the Church, and makes me of the fulness of Him who filleth all in all. (Eph. i. 23.)

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## The Sareptan and the Shunammite.

READ 1 KINGS xvii. 9-24. 2 KINGS iv. 8-37.

**I**T is a most profitable exercise for the heart to trace, in the history of the people of God, the varied effects of divine discipline. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Rom. xv. 4.)

It is so very encouraging to observe that from the beginning God has been dealing with "men of like passions" with ourselves. For somehow one is tempted at times to think that there never was one, in all the ranks of God's redeemed, like *me*. But the Holy Ghost has, in perfect grace and wisdom, left on record in the Scrip-

tures such a variety of cases in some one of which we may recognise, as it were, a full-length portrait of our very selves.

In the Sareptan and the Shunammite we see two women who were honoured by God in being allowed to entertain respectively His prophets Elijah and Elisha. But they furnish two very different types of character. Indeed they exhibit as striking a contrast in their spiritual history as they do in their outward condition and circumstances.

In the first place, let us look at the Sareptan. "The word of the Lord came unto Elijah, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there; behold, I have commanded a woman there to sustain thee." (1 Kings xvii. 8, 9.)

This was a most remarkable command, whether we look at it in reference to Israel, to Elijah, or to the poor Gentile widow.

As to Israel it spoke volumes. The Lord's prophet was allowed to be a debtor to the ministrations of a Gentile. This was indeed a striking commentary upon Israel's condition. Ages afterwards, the bare reference to it in the synagogue of Nazareth, cut the Jews to the heart, and filled them with wrath. (Luke iv.) It told the double tale of their ruin, and of grace to the Gentiles. It pointed forward to a period when drought and sterility should prevail throughout the promised land, and the Dayspring from on high should visit the Gentiles.

Then, as to the prophet, it was like an emptying from vessel to vessel. The ravens and the brook Cherith had been ministering to his need; but now he must pass into other circumstances, and be a

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debtor to a poor Gentile widow. And what were her resources? Gloomy enough in the judgment of nature ! Hear her own piteous tale : “ As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse : and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.”

But faith looked beyond that almost empty barrel and exhausted cruse to that liberal hand which was able to fill both the one and the other. Had Elijah been walking by the sight of his eyes, his heart would have utterly failed him at the prospect which met his view, “ when he came to the gate of the city.” But he knew in whom he had believed, and was persuaded that the God of Israel could feed him by the hand of a starving widow of the Gentiles just as easily as by the instrumentality of ravens.

Finally, as to the Sareptan herself, she was in the very best possible position to prove the reality of that grace which was flowing beyond the enclosure of Israel, to reach to those who were “ strangers and foreigners.” But then we find the blessing had to be *forced* upon her. She would rather not have it. Her heart was not prepared to prize the holy dignity which was being conferred upon her. She would fain have put it from her. She had to be “ compelled ” to taste of the fulness of divine love and mercy. There was slowness of heart to commit herself to the truth of the promise. Alas ! how like her are we ! How tardy are we to open our mouths wide ! How unwilling to lean on the promise of God, because we know so little of the God of the promise !

But not only was she unwilling to be a recipient of divine *grace*; she was also unable to interpret the voice of divine *judgment*.

“ It came to pass, after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to call *my sin* to remembrance, and to slay my son? ”

How little have we here of the dignity of a soul in communion with God! How little of the calm and holy subduedness of one passing through divine discipline, in the secret of the divine presence!

“ What have I to do with thee? ”

This question exhibits the impatience and fretfulness of unsubdued nature. Terrible evils!

“ Art thou come unto me to call *my sin* to remembrance? ”

All this argues a very low spiritual condition. The object of divine discipline can only be understood in the light of the divine presence, and if that object be lost sight of the soul is in danger of losing the “ profit ” which such discipline is designed to yield. “ No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.” Unto whom? “ Unto them which are exercised thereby.” (Heb. xii. 2.) There is far more depth in the words “*afterward*” and “*exercised*” than the majority of us are aware of.

The Sareptan seemed to think there could be no other object in the Lord’s dealings than to “bring her sin to remembrance.” Blessed be

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God ! the believer is privileged to know that God "has cast all his sins behind His back," that they are plunged in the waters of eternal forgetfulness. Therefore, He can never do aught for the purpose of bringing sins to remembrance. His own peace-giving assurance is, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Heb. x. 17.) Instead of seeing the sins of His people, God sees only the blood of His own dear Son which has blotted them out for ever. If their sins could ever again come into God's view, or into God's remembrance, it could only argue that the blood of the cross was not sufficient to cancel them.

What, then, is the object of God's discipline or chastisement ? "That we might be partakers of His holiness." (Heb. xii. 10.) It is not for the remembrance of sins which He has promised to "remember no more." Nor is it for the punishment of sins which were all judged in the Person of the sin-Bearer, on the cross. The object is stated to be, "That we might be partakers of His holiness." And again, "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." (1 Cor. xi. 32.)

Thus it is neither to remember nor punish sins : it is that we should not be condemned with the world, but be partakers of the holiness of God. It is well to be clear as to this, not only as it respects our own spiritual history, but also that we may avoid a habit which many fall into, of surmising evil in the case of any one who may be passing in any way under the rod. There are some who, the moment they see a Christian visited with chastening, judge, like the Sareptan, that it must needs be to bring sins to "remembrance."

This is a serious mistake, which we ought carefully to guard against.

In the case of the Sareptan, we may easily see, from the *effect* of the discipline, what was the *object* of it. She says, on receiving her son from the dead, "Now by this I know thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth." (1 Kings xvii. 24.) It was to lead her into the knowledge of what she ought to have known at a much earlier point in her career.

How often is this the case with us ! How much truth have we professed, which our souls never knew experimentally until we were brought into the deep waters of affliction, that we might be chastened, disciplined, and exercised, under the hand of "the Father of spirits." (Heb. xii. 9.)

And here let me say that the Shunammite began where the Sareptan left off.

"It fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman ; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that, as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. And she said unto her husband, Behold, now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God which passeth by us continually." (2 Kings iv. 8, 9.)

She recognised, at once, by the exercise of a spiritual judgment, what the Sareptan had to be taught by a heavy affliction. In a word, we have in the Shunammite a pupil higher up in the school of Christ than the Sareptan. Everything about her bears the stamp of advanced scholarship. She moves before the spiritual eye with a dignity, an elevation, a moral grace, peculiar to those who breathe the air of the inner sanctuary.

It is not, by any means, that the grace which

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visited the "great woman" of Shunem was a whit brighter or richer than that which had reached the "widow woman" of Sarepta. Quite the contrary. The grace which could travel out to an alien of the Gentiles, was ever richer than that which acted within the enclosures of Israel.

But the difference in these two women was not merely a difference of circumstances. True, the Sareptan was a poor widow, who had to stand, with anxious mind and troubled heart, over a "handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse," and by her thrifty plans, to make the trifle go as far as possible. Whereas the Shunammite was "a great woman," surrounded with abundance.

Again, the prophet had to constrain the Sareptan to give him bread; the Shunammite had to constrain the prophet to take it. These, no doubt, are points of difference; but they are only circumstantial, and not personal. The real difference lay not in the *condition* but in the *communion*; and this difference is apparent in every movement of the Shunammite.

She has a want which neither "the king" nor "the captain of the host" can supply. She ardently longs to know the quickening power of the God of resurrection. She sighs to occupy the same ground with the Sarahs and the Hannahs of former generations. She desires to behold the Living God, travelling in the greatness of His strength, and in her case triumphing over all the weakness and death of nature. She longs to bask in the brightest beams of the divine glory, to have communion with the deepest truth, to tread the highest walks in the divine life.

Such were the aspirations of the Shunammite.

She was not, like the Sareptan, contemplating *death*, standing at the other side of an exhausted barrel and cruse; she rather saw the God of resurrection, at the other side of nature's death and barrenness. Her faith expected "great things" from the Living God; and she was not disappointed. She was allowed to "embrace a son." She was permitted to experience, in her own person, "the power of resurrection." With her, it was not the God of Providence filling the barrel, but the God of resurrection quickening the dead.

Then again mark her, as she bows her head in the presence of the divine visitation. Instead of having, like the Sareptan, to go down into the depths to get her knowledge, she carries her knowledge into the depths, and, as a consequence, she gets deeper knowledge still. The Sareptan stood in the presence of death, knowing nothing of resurrection. The Shunammite, in the power of resurrection, was enabled to walk as a conqueror through the circumstances of death. (Comp. Phil. iii. 10.) She was enabled to lay her dead son where she had already laid her dead body, even at the feet of the God of resurrection, who, she knew, could quicken the one as well as the other.

Can any one fail to see the difference? Alas! it is to be feared that too many of us know but little of this. Too many of us are satisfied with the low ground of the Sareptan, instead of earnestly breathing after the elevated ground of the Shunammite. We count ourselves happy if we find the barrel and cruse replenished by a liberal Providence, and fail to seek after that deeper character of fellowship which flows from a view of God that raiseth the dead. Truly sweet are



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the providential mercies of our God; but surely there is something higher far than these. There is communion with Himself. And where is this to be tasted? At the other side of death. It does not need the power of resurrection to replenish a barrel and cruse; but it does to quicken a dead body, and raise a dead son.

Obviously, therefore, the Shunammite stood on loftier ground than the Sareptan. Subjects of grace they both assuredly were; but though the subjects of the same grace, their communion was very different. To the Sareptan death was bringing her sin to remembrance. To the Shunammite, death was only furnishing a sphere in which the God of resurrection might show Himself. The Sareptan said to the man of God, "What have I to do with thee?" The Shunammite would not have "to do" with any one else.

Thus much as to the difference between these honoured women, when passing through similar circumstances. But then the Shunammite leaves the Sareptan far behind. The former was carried, by the pinions of a more vigorous faith, into regions which the latter could not reach. She moved in a far higher sphere of communion. The spiritual world has its spheres, as well as the natural or the social world; and the sphere in which we move will depend upon the measure of our communion; and our communion will be according to our faith.

Now, the Shunammite seems to have moved in the very highest spiritual circle. Her knowledge of God and His ways was profound. She was in possession of a secret which she could not communicate, either to her husband or to the

official Gehazi. Neither the one nor the other could have understood her. She had shut the door upon her dead son, and turned her back upon the dark chamber of death, as much as to say that no one could or ought to enter there save the God of resurrection. She just wrote upon a cheque the amount of her need, and took it to Jehovah to sign it. Did He refuse? Did He complain of the amount? Oh! no; the faith of this noble woman was bringing Him into a scene where, above all others, the beams of His glory could shine in all their lustre. He could fill a dark chamber with beams of light, and a silent chamber with the activities of life. This was glorious work, and faith knew that God could do it. "It shall be well," and "It is well," said the Shunammite; for her whole soul was filled with the assurance that the beloved object which she had just left in the chamber of death would be raised by the God of resurrection.

And she was not disappointed. "Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out." When the God of resurrection had been there as a *Worker*, she could go in as a *worshipper*.

Christian reader, let us learn from this Shunammite to seek a closer, more continual walk with God.

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Resurrection [is] the glorious interpreter of God's ways and purposes, and the full and eternal witness of His love and power.

## Two Points of Practical Christianity.

PRACTICAL Christianity may be said to consist of two things: (1) In nourishing the new life through occupation with Christ. (2) In judging the old, on which God has put the sentence of death in the most awfully solemn manner, in the cross.

But some may ask, "How are we to watch against its rising, and judge it?" The apostle answers, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." (Gal. v. 16.) We have no power against nature but in the Holy Spirit, and in the assurance, by faith, that the flesh is a crucified thing in God's sight, and done with for ever.

It was on the cross that our old man was crucified; there it was nailed to the tree, and made a full end of. We have to believe this, and walk in the power and liberty which faith gives. By the cross we get rid of that which is ours. In resurrection we are put in possession of that which is Christ's. Not a particle of the *old* creation shall ever be found in the *new*.

The apostle gives us a full statement of this blessed truth, as in his own case. "I am crucified with Christ," he says; "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 20.) Here he speaks of himself in one point of view, as dead; and in another, as alive. How can this be understood? By faith only. He speaks of two "I's"; the old "I," or self as slain, or crucified. The new "I" as his new life, Christ in him. The first he treats as dead, and for ever done with; the second, as his only life now: "Christ liveth in me."

The practical effect of this truth, when believed, is immense. *Self, wretched self*, which is the end and object of the natural man, in all he does, is gone, gone, I mean, to faith. Christ enters and takes the place of self. "For me to live is Christ," is to have Christ, not self, for my end and object Christ, not self, is the spring now.

We know, of course, that Paul had his natural life here below, the life he ever had as a man; but the life which he lived was a wholly new one, Christ *in him*: "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."

All this is as true now, in principle, of every Christian, as it was of the apostle though it may not be so brightly manifested. There must first be faith in the truth; then a life answering to the strength which that faith gives. However, it is plainly written, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. v. 24). Not, observe, *are crucifying* it but *have crucified* it.

But of whom is this great truth stated? Of highly 'advanced' Christians? No, simply of "they that are Christ's." It is as true of the babe, as of the young man, or the father in Christ. What was it that needed crucifying on the cross? Something that belonged to Christ, or to me? It was the old and evil "I" that needed to be slain, nailed to the tree. And that was done in Christ, for ever blessed be His name! Oh! to believe it; to keep self where the cross has put it; to walk in the liberty and power of the Holy Spirit, and be only and always occupied with the risen and glorified Christ.

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# WORDS OF TRUTH

"The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words :  
and that which was written was upright, even words  
of truth" (Eccles. xii. 10).

## "I will Guide Thee with Mine Eye."

**T**HERE are three special characters of blessing mentioned in the Psalms.

1. First, that which we get at the very opening of them : "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of Jehovah ; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water," etc. (Ps. i.) It is here a contrast between the ungodly and Christ, the righteous Man.

2. In Psalm cxix. we go a little farther. This psalm speaks of one's having wandered, and of being restored. It is here, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of Jeho-

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vah." It speaks here of one who has the word of God, delights in it, looks to it, and seeks to be guided by it; still the blessedness is not so absolute. (vv. 67, 71, 176.)

3. In Psalm xxxii. we get the blessedness of, and God's dealings with, the sinner whose transgressions are removed. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered [not who has not transgressed, who has not sinned]. Blessed is the man unto whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (that is, the restored soul).

It is important to notice the work of the Spirit of God, in the process through which the soul is going here (as it says, "*Thy hand* was heavy upon me"), God's dealings with the soul that does not submit itself entirely, in bringing it down into full subjection and confession. "When I kept silence my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night *Thy hand* was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto Jehovah; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (vv. 2—5.)

This is always true, if the Lord's hand is upon a man, until he recognizes the evil before God; and then there is forgiveness of the iniquity. It is very important that we should distinguish the government of God towards our souls in forgiveness. Until there is confession of *sin*, and not merely of *a sin*, there is no forgiveness.

We find David, when he was confessing his sin in Psalm li., saying, "Behold I was shapen

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in iniquity ; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” etc. ; not merely, “ I have done this particular evil ;” that he does in verses 1—4 ; but he recognizes *the root and principle of sin*.

When our hearts are brought to recognize God’s hand, it is not merely then a question of what particular sin, or of what particular iniquity, may need forgiveness ; God has brought down the soul, through the working of His Spirit on it, to detect the *principle of sin*, and so there is confession of that, and not merely of a *particular sin*. There is then positive restoration of soul.

Now this is a much deeper thing in its practical consequences, and the Lord’s dealings thereon, than we are apt to suppose. Freed from the bondage of things which hindered its intercourse with God, the soul learns to lean upon God, instead of upon those things which, so to speak, had taken the place of God. “ For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found : surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding place ; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble ; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.” (vv. 6, 7.) There is its confidence.

And then follows what more especially is the object of this paper : “ I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go : I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding : whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle lest they come near unto thee.” (vv. 8, 9.)

Now, we are often like the horse, or the mule, every one of us ; and this because our souls have not been ploughed up. When there is anything

in which the *will* of man is at work, the Lord deals with us, as with the horse or the mule, holding us in. When every part of the heart is in contact with Himself, He guides us with His "eye." "The light of the body is the eye : therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light ; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." (Luke xi. 34—36.)

When there is anything wherein the eye is not single, so long as this is the case, there is not free intercourse in heart and affections with God ; and the consequence is, our *will* not being subdued, we are not led simply of God. When the heart is in a right state, the whole body is "full of light," and there is the quick perception of the will of God. He just teaches us by His "eye" all He wishes, and produces in us "quickness of understanding in the fear of Jehovah," hearts without any objects, save the will and glory of God. And that is just what Christ was ; "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), I delight to do Thy will, O my God ; yea, Thy law is within my heart." (Ps. xi. 7, 8 ; Heb. x. 7.) When there is this, it may be bitter and painful as to the circumstances of the path, but there is in it the joy of obedience as obedience. There is always joy, and the consequence God guiding us by His eye.

Before anything can be done, if we have **not** this certainty, before we enter upon any particular service, we should seek to get it, judging our own



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hearts as to what may be hindering. Suppose I set about doing a thing, and meet with difficulties, I shall begin to get uncertain, as to whether it is God's mind, or not ; and hence, there will be feebleness and discouragement. But on the other hand, if acting in the intelligence of God's mind in communion, I shall be “ more than conqueror,” whatever may meet me by the way. (Rom. viii. 37.) And note, here, not only does the power of faith remove mountains; but the Lord deals morally, and will not let me find out His way, unless there be in me the spirit of obedience. What would it avail ? Unless indeed God should provide for His own dishonour.

“ If any man will do [wills to do] His will,” says our Lord, “ he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” (John vii. 17.) This is precisely the obedience of faith. The heart must be in the condition of obedience, as Christ's was, “ Lo, I come,” etc. The apostle speaks to the Colossians of being “ filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” (Col. i. 9.) Here it is quickness of understanding in the fear of the Lord, the condition of a man's own soul, though his spirit of mind will be necessarily shewn in outward acts, when that will is set before him ; as Paul goes on to say, “ that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful unto every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” (Col. i. 10.)

Here then is the blessed, joyful state of being guided by God's “ eye.” “ I have meat to eat,” says our Lord to the disciples, “ that ye know not of.” And what was that meat ? “ My meat is

do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." (John. iv.)

The Lord guides, or rather controls, us in another way by providential circumstances, so that we may not go wrong, even though we are those which have no understanding. And thankful we ought to be that He does so. But it is only as the horse or the mule. Your wills being subject to mine, He says, "I will guide you with mine eye"—but, if you are not subject, I must keep you in with "bit and bridle." This is evidently a very different thing.

May our hearts be led to desire to know and to do God's will. It will then be not so much a question of what that will is, but of knowing and doing God's will. And then we shall have the certain and blessed knowledge of being guided by His "eye."

There is all this government of God with those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile; whose whole dependence is upon Him, and who feel they are sure to go wrong if not guided by Himself.

There is a guidance with knowledge, and there is also guidance without knowledge. The former is our blessed privilege; but it may be the latter is needed to humble us.

In Christ there was everything exactly according to God. In a certain sense He had no character. When I look at Him, what do I see? A constant, never-failing, life-manifestation of obedience. He goes up to Bethany just when He is to go up, regardless of the fears of the disciples; He abides two days still in the same

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place where He is, after He has heard that Lazarus is sick. (John xi.) He is nothing but to do all, to accomplish all, for the glory of God. One man is tender and soft ; in another firmness and decision predominate. There is great diversity of character among men. You do not see that in Christ at all ; there is no unevenness ; every faculty in His humanity obeyed, and was the instrument of the impulse the divine will gave to it.

Divine life has to be guided in a vessel that has constantly to be kept down. Thus even for the apostles the command not to go into Bithynia was not guidance by the Spirit of the highest sort. (Acts xvi. 7.) It was blessed guidance, yet not the highest character of guidance an apostle knew. It was more like the government of the horse or the mule, not so much the intelligence of God's mind in communion.

A vast quantity of the guidance of the Spirit is just what we get in Colossians i. 9—11 to those in communion with God. There we find the individual to be “ filled with the knowledge of His will.” The Holy Ghost guides into the knowledge of the divine will, and there is no occasion even to pray about it. If I have spiritual understanding about a given thing, it may be the result of a great deal of previous prayer, and not necessarily of the things having been prayed about at the time. One has often had to pray about a thing, because not in communion. I may have my mind exercised about that to-day, honestly, truly, graciously exercised, which, five years hence, it might be, I should not have a doubt about. When God is using us, if we have lost ourselves, He may put it into our hearts to go

here, or to go there ; then God is positively guiding us. But this assumes a person walking with God, and that diligently ; it assumes death to self. If we are walking humbly, God will guide us.

I may be in a certain place, and there have one say to me, " Will you go to —— ?" (naming some other place). Now, if I have not the mind of God as to my going or otherwise, I shall have to pray for guidance ; but this, of course, assumes that I am not walking *in* the knowledge of God's mind. I may have motives pulling me one way or the other, and clouding my spiritual judgment.

The Lord, when the disciples speak of the Jews having of late sought to stone Him, and ask, " Goest Thou thither again ?" replies, " Are there not twelve hours in the day ? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." (John xi.) This is just an application of the simple fact that, if walking in the night, I must be on the look out for stones, lest I stumble over them. So Paul prays for the Philippians, that their love might abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment ; that they might approve things that are excellent [try things that differ] ; that they might be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, without a single stumble all the way along. (Phil. i.)

Many speak of providence as a guide. Providence does sometimes control, but it never, properly speaking, guides us ; it guides *things*.

All we get of this guidance of providence is very blessed ; but it is not guidance by the Spirit of God, not guidance by the " eye " of God, but rather by " bit and bridle."

## The Paschal Feast.

**I** SRAEL, saved by the blood, was one thing ; and Israel, feeding on the lamb, was quite another. They were saved *only* by the blood ; but the object round which they were gathered was, manifestly, the roasted lamb. This is not, by any means, a distinction without a difference. The blood of the lamb forms the foundation both of our connexion with God, and our connexion with one another. It is as those who washed in that blood, that we are introduced to God and to one another. Apart from the perfect atonement of Christ, there could obviously be no fellowship either with God or His assembly. Christ is our centre. Having found peace, through His blood, we own Him as our grand gathering-point and connecting-link. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.) The Holy Ghost is the only Gatherer ; Christ Himself is the only object to which we are gathered ; and our assembly, when thus convened, is to be characterized by holiness and truth, so that the Lord our God may dwell among us. The Holy Ghost can only gather to Christ. He cannot gather to a system, a name, a doctrine, or an ordinance. He gathers to a Person, and that person is Christ. This must stamp a peculiar character on God's assembly. Men may associate on any ground, round any centre, for any object they please ; but when the Holy Ghost associates, it is on the ground of accomplished redemption, around the Person of Christ, in order to form a holy dwelling-place for God. (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17 ; vi. 19 ; Eph. ii. 21, 22 ; 1 Peter 4, 5.)

Let us look at the principles brought before us in the paschal feast. (Exod. xii.) The assembly of Israel, as under the cover of the blood, was to be ordered by Jehovah in a manner worthy of Himself. In the matter of safety from judgment, as we have already seen, nothing was needed but the blood ; but in the fellowship which flowed out of this safety, other things were needed which could not be neglected with impunity.

1. And first, then, we read, " They shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread ; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire ; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof." (vv. 8, 9.) The lamb, round which the congregation was assembled, and on which it feasted, was a roasted lamb—a lamb which had undergone the action of fire. In this we see " Christ our passover " presenting Himself to the action of fire of divine holiness and judgment which found in Him a perfect material.

2. " Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water." Had it been eaten thus, there would have been no expression of the great truth which it was the divine purpose to shadow forth ; namely, that our paschal Lamb was to endure, on the cross, the fire of Jehovah's righteous wrath—a truth of infinite preciousness to the soul. We are not merely under the eternal shelter of the blood of the Lamb, but we feed, by faith, upon the Person of the Lamb. Many of us come short here. We are apt to rest satisfied with being saved by what Christ has done for us, without cultivating holy communion with Himself. His

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loving heart could never be satisfied with this. He has brought us nigh to Himself, that we might enjoy Him, that we might feed **on Him**, and delight in Him. He presents **Himself** to us as the One who has endured, to the uttermost, the intense fire of the wrath of God, that He may, in this wondrous character, be the food of our ransomed souls.

3. But how was this lamb to be eaten ? “ With unleavened bread and bitter herbs.” Leaven is invariably used throughout Scripture as emblematical of evil. Neither in the Old nor in the New Testament is it ever used to set forth anything pure, holy, or good. Thus, in this chapter, “ the feast of unleavened bread ” is the type of that practical separation from evil which is the proper result of being washed from our sins in the blood of the Lamb, and the proper accompaniment of communion with His sufferings. Nought but perfectly unleavened bread could at all comport with a roasted lamb. A single particle of that which was the marked type of evil, would have destroyed the moral character of the entire ordinance. How could we connect any species of evil with our fellowship with a suffering Christ ? Impossible. All who enter, by the power of the Holy Ghost, into the meaning of the cross will, assuredly, by the same power, put away leaven from all their borders. “ For *even* Christ our passover is sacrificed for us : *therefore* let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness ; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” (1 Cor. *v.v.* 7, 8.) The feast spoken of in this passage is that which, in the life and conduct of the Church, corresponds with the feast of unleavened bread.

This latter lasted "seven days"; and the Church collectively, and the believer individually, are called to walk in practical holiness, during the seven days, or entire period, of their course here below; and this, moreover, as the direct result of being washed in the blood, and having communion with the sufferings of Christ.

Blessed be God, we know that nothing can ever snap asunder the link which binds the true believer to Him. We are "saved in the Lord," not with a temporary or conditional, but "with an everlasting salvation." But then salvation and communion are not the same thing. Many are saved who do not know it; and many, also, who do not enjoy it. It is quite impossible that I can enjoy a blood-stained lintel if I have leavened borders. This is an axiom of divine life. May it be written on our hearts. Practical holiness, though not the basis of our *salvation*, is intimately connected with our *enjoyment* thereof. An Isrealite was not saved by unleavened bread, but by the blood; and yet leaven would have cut him off from communion. And as to the Christian, he is not saved by his practical holiness, but by the blood; but if he indulges in evil, in thought, word, or deed, he will have no true enjoyment or salvation, and no true communion with the Person of the Lamb.

This, I cannot doubt, is the secret of much of the spiritual barrenness and lack of settled peace which one finds among the children of God. They are not cultivating holiness; they are not keeping "the feast of unleavened bread." The blood is on the lintel, but the leaven within their borders keeps them from enjoying the security which the blood provides. The allowance of evil destroys



our fellowship, though it does not break the link which binds our souls eternally to God. Those who belong to God's assembly must be holy. They have not only been delivered from the guilt and consequences of sin, but also from the practice of it, the power of it, and the love of it. The very fact of being delivered by the blood of the paschal lamb, rendered Israel responsible to put away leaven from all their quarters. They could not say, in the frightful language of the antinomian, "Now that we are delivered, we may conduct ourselves as we please." By no means. If they were saved *by grace*, they were saved *to holiness*. The soul that can take occasion, from the freedom of divine grace, and the completeness of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, to "continue in sin," proves very distinctly that he understands neither the one nor the other.

4. We may perceive equal significancy and moral propriety in that which was to accompany the unleavened bread, namely, the "bitter herbs." We cannot enjoy communion with the sufferings of Christ without remembering what it was which rendered those sufferings needful, and this remembrance must necessarily produce a chastened and subdued tone of spirit, which is aptly expressed by the bitter herbs in the paschal feast. If the roasted lamb expressed Christ's endurance of the wrath of God in His own Person on the cross, the bitter herbs express the believer's recognition of the truth that He "suffered *for us*." "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him ; and with His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah liii. 5.)

Is there not a deep joy for the soul in the consciousness that Christ has borne our sins ;

that He has fully drained, on our behalf, the cup of God's righteous wrath? Unquestionably. This is the solid foundation of all our joy. But can we ever forget that it was for "*our sins*" He suffered? Can we ever lose sight of the soul-subduing truth that the blessed Lamb of God bowed His head beneath the weight of our transgressions? Surely not. We must eat our lamb with bitter herbs, which, be it remembered, do not set forth the tears of a worthless and shallow sentimentality, but the deep and real experiences of a soul that enters, with spiritual intelligence and power, into the meaning and into the practical effect of the cross. In contemplating the cross, we find in it that which cancels all our guilt. This imparts sweet peace and joy. But we find in it also the complete setting aside of nature, the crucifixion of "*the flesh*," the death of "*the old man*." (See Rom. vi. 6 ; Gal. ii. 20 ; vi. 14 ; Col. ii. 11.)

5. "And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning ; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire." (v. 10.) In this command, we are taught that the communion of the congregation was in no wise to be separated from the sacrifice on which the communion was founded. The heart must ever cherish the vivid remembrance that all true fellowship is inseparably connected with accomplished redemption.

To think of having communion *with God*, on any other ground is to imagine that He could have fellowship with our evil; and to think of fellowship *with man*, on any other ground, is but to form an unholy club, from which nothing could

issue but confusion and iniquity. In a word, all must be founded upon, and inseparably linked with, the blood.

What a beauteous picture, then, we have in the blood-sheltered assembly of Israel feeding peacefully on the roasted lamb, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs ! No fear of judgment, no fear of the wrath of Jehovah, no fear of the terrible hurricane of righteous vengeance which was sweeping vehemently over the land of Egypt at the midnight hour. All was profound peace within the blood-stained lintel. They had no need to fear anything from without ; and nothing within could trouble them, save leaven, which would have proved a death-blow to all their peace and blessedness.

6. " And thus shall ye eat it ; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand ; and ye shall eat it in haste ; it is the Lord's passover." (*v.* 11.) They were to eat it as a people prepared to leave behind them the land of death and darkness, wrath and judgment, to move onward toward the land of promise, their destined inheritance. The blood which had preserved them from the fate of Egypt's first-born was also the foundation of their deliverance from Egypt's bondage ; and they were now to set out, and walk with God toward the land that flowed with milk and honey. Free, they had not yet crossed the Red Sea ; they had not yet gone the " three days' journey." Still they were, in principle, a redeemed people, a separated people, a pilgrim people, an expectant people, a dependent people ; and their entire habit was to be in keeping with their present position and future destiny. The girded loins bespoke intense separation from

all around them, together with a readiness to serve. The shod feet declared their preparedness to leave that scene ; while the staff was the expressive emblem of a pilgrim people, in the attitude of leaning on something outside themselves. Precious characteristics ! Would that they were more exhibited by every member of God's redeemed family.

7. In the institution of the passover Israel's *unity* was also clearly set forth. "In one house shall it be eaten ; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house ; neither shall ye break a bone thereof." (v. 46.) Here is as fair and beauteous a type as we could have of the "one body and one Spirit." The Church of God is one. God sees it as such, maintains it as such, and will manifest it as such, in the view of angels, men and devils, notwithstanding all that has been done to interfere with that hallowed unity.

Blessed be God, the unity of His Church is as much in His keeping as is her justification, acceptance, and eternal security. "He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken." (Psalm xxxiv. 26.) And again : "A bone of Him shall not be broken." (John xix. 36.) Despite the rudeness and hard-heartedness of Rome's soldiers, and despite all the hostile influences which have been set to work from age to age, the body of Christ is *one*, and its divine unity can never be broken. "There is one body and one Spirit," ; and that, moreover, down here on this very earth.

Happy are they who have faith to recognize this precious truth, and faithfulness to carry it out, in these last days, notwithstanding the almost insuperable difficulties which attend upon their profession and their practice !

OCTOBER, 1918.

Vol. X. No. 118.

# WORDS OF TRUTH

"The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words:  
and that which was written was upright, even words  
of truth" (Eccles. xii. 10).

## The Camp and the Cloud.

**A** MORE lovely picture of absolute dependence upon divine guidance, and subjection thereto, it were impossible to conceive than that presented in the following paragraph.

"And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. *So it was alway*: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. At the commandment of the LORD the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the LORD they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the

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tabernacle they rested in their tents. And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD, and journeyed not. And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the LORD they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the LORD they journeyed. And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed; whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not; but when it was taken up, they journeyed. At the commandment of the LORD they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed: they kept the charge of the LORD, at the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses." (Num. ix. 15-23.)

There was not a footprint nor a landmark throughout that "great and terrible wilderness." It was therefore useless to look for any guidance from those who had gone before. They were wholly cast upon God for every step of the way. They were in a position of constant waiting upon Him. This, to an unsubdued mind, an unbroken will, would be intolerable; but to a soul knowing, loving, confiding, and delighting in God, nothing could be more deeply blessed.

Here lies the real gist of the whole matter. Is God known, loved, and trusted? If He is, the heart will delight in the most absolute dependence

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upon Him. If not, such dependence would be perfectly insufferable. The unrenewed man loves to think himself independent, loves to fancy himself free, loves to believe that he may do what he likes, go where he likes, say what he likes.

Alas! it is the merest delusion. Man is not free. He is the slave of Satan. It is now well nigh six thousand years since he sold himself into the hands of that great spiritual slave-holder, who has held him ever since, and who holds him still. Yes, Satan holds the natural man, the unconverted, unrepentant man, in terrible bondage. He has him bound hand and foot with chains and fetters, which are not seen in their true character, because of the gilding wherewith he has so artfully covered them. Satan rules man by means of his lusts, his passions, and his pleasures. He forms lusts in the heart, and then gratifies them with the things that are in the world; and man vainly imagines himself free because he can gratify his desires. But it is a melancholy delusion; and sooner or later it will be found to be such. There is no freedom save that with which Christ makes His people free. He it is who says, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And again, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John viii. 32, 36.)

Here is true liberty. It is the liberty which the new nature finds in walking in the Spirit, and doing those things that are pleasing in the sight of God. "The service of the Lord is perfect freedom." But this service, in all its departments, involves the most simple dependence upon the living God.

Thus it was with the only verily perfect Ser-

vant that ever trod this earth. He was ever dependent. Every movement, every act, every word, all that He did, all that He left undone, was the fruit of the most absolute dependence upon God, and subjection to Him. He moved when God would have Him move, and He stood still when God would have Him stand. He spoke when God would have Him speak, and He was silent when God would have Him silent. Such was Jesus when He lived in this world; and we, as partakers of His nature, His life, and as having His Spirit dwelling in us, are called to walk in His steps, and live a life of simple dependence upon God from day to day.

Of this life of dependence, in one special phase of it, we have a graphic and beautiful type at the close of our chapter. The Israel of God, the camp in the desert, that pilgrim host, followed the movement of the cloud. They had to *look up* for guidance. This is man's proper work. He was made to turn his countenance upward, in contrast with the brute, who is formed to look downward.\* Israel could form no plans. They could not say, "To-morrow we shall go to such a place." They were entirely dependent upon the movement of the cloud.

Thus it was with Israel, and thus it should be with us. We are passing through a trackless desert, a moral wilderness. There is absolutely no way. We should not know how to walk, or where to go, were it not for that one most precious, most deep, most comprehensive sentence which fell from the lips of our blessed Lord, "I AM THE WAY." Here is divine, infallible guidance. We are to

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\* The Greek word for man (*anthropos*) signifies to turn the face upwards.



follow Him. "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John viii. 12.) This is living guidance. It is not acting according to the letter of certain rules and regulations: it is following a living Christ; walking as He walked; doing as He did; imitating His example in all things. This is Christian movement, Christian action. It is keeping the eye fixed on Jesus, and having the features, traits, and lineaments of His character imprinted on our new nature, and reflected back or reproduced in our daily life and ways.

Now, this will assuredly involve the surrender of our own will, our own plans, our own management altogether. We must follow the cloud; we must wait *ever*, wait *only*, upon God. We cannot say, "We shall go here or there; do this or that, to-morrow, or next week." All our movements must be placed under the regulating power of that one commanding sentence (often, alas! lightly penned and uttered by us), "If the Lord will." (James iv. 15.)

Oh, that we better understood all this! Would that we knew more perfectly the meaning of divine guidance. How often do we vainly imagine, and confidently assert, that the cloud is moving in that very direction which suits the bent of our own inclination! We want to do a certain thing, or make a certain movement, and we seek to persuade ourselves that our will is the will of God. Thus, instead of being divinely guided, we are self-deceived. Our will is unbroken, and hence we cannot be guided aright; for the real secret of being rightly guided, guided of God, is to have our own will thoroughly subdued. "The meek

will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way." (Ps. xxv. 9.) And again, "I will guide thee with mine eye." (Ps. xxxii. 8.)

But let us ponder the admonition: "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." (Ps. xxxii. 9.) If the countenance be turned upwards to catch the movement of the divine "eye," we shall not need the "bit and bridle." But here is precisely the point in which we so sadly fail. We do not live sufficiently near to God to discern the movement of His eye. The *will* is at work. We want to have our own way, and hence we are left to reap the bitter fruits thereof.

Thus it was with Jonah. He was told to go to Nineveh; but he wanted to go to Tarshish. And circumstances seemed to be favourable. Providence seemed to point in the direction of his will. But, ah! he had to find his place in the belly of the great fish; yea, in "the belly of hell" itself, where "the weeds were wrapped about his head." It was there he learnt the bitterness of following his own will. He had to be taught, in the depths of the ocean, the true meaning of the "bit and bridle," because he would not follow the gentler guidance of the "eye" of God.

But our God is so gracious, so tender, so patient! He will teach and He will guide His poor, feeble, erring children. He spares no pains with us. He occupies Himself continually about us, in order that we may be kept from our own ways (which are full of thorns and briers), and walk in His ways, which are pleasantness and peace. (Prov. iii. 17.)

There is nothing in all this world more deeply

blessed than to live a life of habitual dependence upon God ; to hang upon Him moment by moment ; to wait on Him and cling to Him for everything ; to have all our springs in Him. It is the true secret of peace, and of holy independence of the creature. The soul that can really say, “ *All* my springs are in Thee,” is lifted above all creature confidences, human hopes, and earthly expectations. (Ps. lxxxvii. 7.)

It is not that God does not use the creature in a thousand ways to minister to us. We do not at all mean this. He does use the creature ; but if we *lean* upon the creature, instead of leaning upon Him, we shall very speedily get leanness and barrenness into our own souls. There is a vast difference between God’s using the creature to bless us, and our leaning on the creature to the exclusion of Him. In the one case we are blessed and He is glorified ; in the other, we are disappointed, and He is dishonoured.

It is well that the soul should deeply and seriously ponder this distinction. We believe it is constantly overlooked. We oftentimes imagine that we are leaning upon and looking to God, when in reality, if we would only look honestly at the roots of things, and judge ourselves in the immediate presence of God, we should find an appalling amount of the leaven of creature confidence. How often do we speak of living by faith, and trusting only in God, when at the same time, if we would only look down into the depths of our hearts, we should find there a large measure of dependence upon circumstances, and reference to second causes, and the like !

Christian reader, let us look well to this. Let us see to it that our eye is fixed upon “ the living

God " alone, and not upon man, whose breath is in his nostrils. Let us wait on Him, wait patiently, wait constantly. If we are at a loss for anything, let our direct and simple reference be to Him. Are we at a loss to know our way, to know whither we should turn, what step we should take? Let us remember that He has said, " I am the way." (John xiv. 6.) Let us follow Him. He will make all clear, bright, and certain. There can be no darkness, no perplexity, no uncertainty, if we are following Him; for He has said, and we are bound to believe it: " He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness." (John viii. 12.) Therefore, if we are in darkness, it is certain we are not following Him. No darkness can ever settle down on that blessed path along which God leads those who, with a single eye, seek to follow JESUS.

But some one whose eye scans these lines may say, or at least may feel disposed to say, " Well, after all, I am in perplexity as to my path. I really do not know which way to turn, or what step to take."

If this be the language of the reader, we would simply ask him one question, " Art thou following Jesus? If so, thou canst not be in perplexity. Art thou following the cloud? If so, the way is as plain as God can make it."

Here lies the root of the whole matter. Perplexity or uncertainty is very often the fruit of the working of the *will*. We are bent upon doing something which God does not want us to do at all; upon going where God does not want us to go. We pray about it, and get no answer. We pray again and again, and get no answer. How is

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this? Why, the simple fact is that God wants us to be quiet, to stand still, to remain just where we are. Wherefore, instead of racking our brain and harassing our souls about what we ought to do, let us do nothing, but simply wait on God.

This is the secret of peace and calm elevation. If an Israelite in the desert had taken it into his head to make some movement independent of JEHOVAH; if he had taken it upon him to move when the cloud was at rest, or to halt while the cloud was moving, we can easily see what the result would have been. And so it will ever be with us. If we move when we ought to rest, or rest when we ought to move, we shall not have the divine presence with us. "At the commandment of the LORD they rested in their tents, and at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed." They were kept in constant waiting upon God, which is the most blessed position that any one can occupy.

But it must be occupied before its blessedness can be tasted. It is a reality to be known, not a mere theory to be talked of. May it be ours to prove it all our journey through!

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If ever there was a day when it was important for every professed follower of Christ to stand fast and to be true to his profession, I believe it is the present day. There is no answer to infidelity like the life of Christ displayed by the Christian. Nothing puts the madness of the infidel, and the folly of the superstitious, more to shame and silence than the humble, quiet, devoted walk of a thorough-going, heavenly minded, divinely taught Christian.

## **The Right Relations of Dispensational Truth.**

### **I.**

**I**N the course of God's dealings with men, we may observe that He is again and again *testing* them; and yet always providing for the failure in which He knew this testing would end.

He began thus with Adam in the garden. He put him to proof, setting him as under law. But in the mystery of the sleeping man, and the woman taken out of him, He would have us learn, that from the very beginning He knew where this would end, and provided another and a better thing.

So with Israel afterwards. He tested them by the law; but He revealed to them "the shadows of good things to come," the pledges of grace and salvation; knowing that man would again destroy himself, and be ruined under the Law of Mount Sinai, as he had already been under the law or command delivered to him in the Garden of Eden.

Then, by the ministry of the prophets, the Lord was leading the people back to obedience, if so be they would be led that way. But by the same prophets, He was anticipating the grace in which a self-ruined, helpless, and incorrigible people must finally stand, if blessed at all.

John the Baptist then came, according to the prophecies which went before upon him, as the Voice, the Messenger (the Elijah) of Messiah. But he was also, in another aspect of his ministry, the *Witness of the Lamb of God*, and the

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*Harbinger of the Light of the World*; characters in which the prophecies had not foreshown him, but which put him in company with the Messiah, or the Christ, as dispensing grace and salvation to Israel and to man, on the clear assumption that all would fail under the ministry that was then about to test them.

By the Lord's own personal ministry, in the cities and villages of Israel, the same process is conducted. He is testing His people by a proposal of Himself to them again and again; but He is likewise witnessing sovereign grace and redemption, knowing, as He did, that they would but again destroy themselves under the trial that was then being made of them. By His commission to the Twelve and to the Seventy, He was doing the same; for such ministries were but a reflection of His own.

And it is thus to the end. The Apostleship at Jerusalem under the Holy Ghost upon the ascension of Christ was still testing the Jew; and the Jew failed under it again. But "times of restitution" and of "refreshing" were looked at in the distance. And then, in the last commission instituted by Him, that is, in the apostleship of Paul, the good news of God's salvation was sent to the ends of the earth, to gather the elect, that they might act and shine as the Body of Christ; but in that same apostleship He anticipates what the end of that ministry would be, and makes provision accordingly. This is seen in the Second Epistle to Timothy; confirmed as that is by the challenge of the candlesticks in Rev. i.—iii.; and further by the judgment of Christendom in Revelation iv.—xix.

These foregoing thoughts may naturally intro-

duce me to my subject, namely, Dispensational Truth.

It has been said lately, "that the study of it has a withering effect upon the soul." Let us try this by the light of the wisdom of God, as we get that light (where alone we can get it) in the Word of God.

In the Epistle to the Romans, the saints of God are largely instructed in this character of truth. Chapters ix.—xi. are a very full writing on divine dispensations. But I grant that this is *after* they have been settled and established in *personal* truth; truth, I mean, that concerns themselves in their relation to God, as chapters i.—viii. show us. Now, this would let us know that there is a condition of soul in which it would be unhealthy or unseasonable for it to make the ways or dispensations of God its study. And, therefore, if the person who has thus spoken is intellectually inquiring into such matters, divine and precious as they are, before the question of his own relation to God is settled, I can suppose that he has found this study to be a withering of the soul.

Again, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, I see the apostle refusing to feed those saints of God with such knowledge as that of which we are now speaking. In the stores given him of the Spirit he had "hidden wisdom," or "the wisdom of God in a mystery," and he would bring it out to the "perfect." But the Corinthians were in a bad moral condition; and he would, therefore, attend to them personally, rather than feed or entertain them with knowledge of God and His ways. And very much in the same way, I may say, the Lord Himself had already dealt with Nicodemus, the Rabbi, as we see in John iii.



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So that again, I grant, there is a condition of soul in which it would be unhealthy for it (nay, unwarranted of the Spirit of God), to make dispensational truth its study. And, therefore, if the person who has thus spoken is walking carelessly, I do not wonder at the soul "withering" if it is thus occupied.

But further, not only is the condition of the soul to be thus considered, as we make these things our study. There is also a *mode* of studying them which the Word of God suggests, and which is to be considered also.

I would instance what I mean. The apostle, in tracing the dispensations of God, as I have already observed he does in Rom. ix.—xi., interrupts his progress through that great subject, and takes up for a time something that is strongly *personal* in its character, or in its bearing upon us individually. I mean in chapter 'x. of that wonderful scripture. For there we listen, each one for himself, sinners as we are, to the voice of *law* and to the voice of *faith*; with suited admonitions, and encouragements, and teachings.

Just, I may say, as in 1 Cor. xii.—xiv., where the same apostle is unfolding *ecclesiastical* truth, as he is here unfolding *dispensational* truth; for there in like manner he interrupts himself by something deeply and solemnly personal and practical; as we see in chapter xiii. of that scripture.

So that I fully grant that the condition of the soul, and the mode of pursuing this study, have to be considered while we are engaged in it. But with these and kindred admonitions and jealousies, I find the wisdom of God does set us down carefully and continually to the meditations of His counsels and ways in His different dispensa-

tions; and that He has been doing so from the beginning.

Have we not proof of this? Surely the very earliest divine records, the patriarchal stories of the Book of Genesis, teem with notices of God's counselled ways. In them He is issuing and telling out the end at the beginning. They are all of them true narrations. Surely they are; and we are to acquaint ourselves with them as such.

But is that all? Is it merely to tell me what happened so many thousand years ago that they are written for me? Or do I expect to find in them *disclosures of divine secrets*, good for the use of edifying one in the knowledge of God and His ways?

I have no doubt how I am to answer this. Sarah and Hagar are not merely a domestic tale; they are an allegory. And I am full sure that the same Book of Genesis, where I read that allegory, teems with kindred ones; some more, some less, rich and profound in communications of the Divine Mind in eternal counsels.

And then Mosaic ordinances take up the same wondrous tale. The Jewish year, as xxiii. of Leviticus would tell us, measures, as in a miniature and in a mystery, the way of God, from the day of Exodus out of Egypt to the day of entering and dwelling in the kingdom, the millennial glory of Christ and the creation.

Afterwards, the prophets were instructed in those ways of God, and ordained to be the witnesses of them to all generations. I admit that there was another purpose of God in calling them out; and that was, to bring back Israel to their allegiance to Jehovah, if so be they would turn and repent. But the grander, and still more

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characteristic purpose of their ministry was this: *to declare the ways of God according to His counselled wisdom in dealing with this world of ours.*

And when we come to the New Testament writings we find the same thing. Not only do certain parts of these writings make such truth their subject (for example, Rom. ix.—xi., as we have already said), but such truth will be seen through parts and passages which are more immediately dealing with other things. Dispensational truth is there called by the high titles of “wisdom” and “mystery.” And well it surely may bear such dignities. And the apostle prays that we may have spiritual understandings to entertain and read such themes. He tells us that he speaks of such among the “perfect”; and he intimates that it was the shame and loss of the Corinthians that they were not prepared for truth of that high quality.

In all this, great honour is surely put on such truth itself, and encouragement of a peculiar kind given to the study of it. And if we are in company with that Spirit who indited the whole Volume, we cannot but be acquainting ourselves with it, as we go from Genesis to Revelation, throughout Scripture from first to last.

But further. Godliness is the religion of “the truth” (1 Tim. iii. 15, 16). Our character is to be formed by it, and our service defined and directed by it. “The truth” is the instrument and the standard. It is that by which the Spirit works in us and with us; and it is that by which we try everything. It is an *instrument* in the Spirit’s hand, and a *standard* in ours; and the truth that is this, is connected with the dispensations of God.

This is seen at once. Morals, and the duties which attach to human relationships, get a peculiar character from their connection with such truth; as, among other scriptures, Eph. iv. v. vi. would, in many particulars, illustrate for us. We are now in this dispensation to learn "Christ," and to be taught "as the truth is in Jesus." What was holiness and service under one dispensation, ceases to be so under another. Actions change their character with the changing time. In order to *do* right, or to *be* right, according to God, we must "know the time," as the apostle speaks. The day was, when it was holy to call down fire from heaven to consume adversaries. (2 Kings i.) But the day came, when the offer to do such a thing had to suffer rebuke; and that too, under the same supreme, divine authority which had warranted, nay, inspired, it before. (Luke ix. 54.) "Everything is beautiful in its season" (Eccles. iii. 11); and dispensational truth is the great arbiter of seasons, telling us the times, and what the Israel of God and the Church of God ought severally to do.

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**We** do not say, "How long shall the wicked triumph?" (though we anticipate in spirit the Lord's setting aside of evil), but, How long before Thou takest us to Thyself? How long before Thou takest Thy bride to be with Thee in heaven? The difference is very great, and so are the practical results in communion and ways.

NOVEMBER, 1918.

Vol. X. No. 119.

# WORDS OF TRUTH

"The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words:  
and that which was written was upright, even words  
of truth" (Eccles. xii. 10).

## Christ and His Yoke.

**I**N the following precious and well-known passage we have two points which are very distinct, and yet intimately connected, namely, Christ and His yoke: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. xi. 28-30.)

Thus we have, first, coming to Christ, and its results; and, secondly, taking His yoke, and its results.

1. "COME UNTO ME, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST."
2. "TAKE MY YOKE, AND YE SHALL FIND REST."

These things, being distinct, should never be confounded; and, being intimately connected, should never be separated. To confound them is

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to dim the lustre of divine *grace*; to separate them, is to infringe upon the claims of divine *holiness*. Both these evils should be carefully guarded against.

1. Many there are who hold up before the eye of the "heavy laden" sinner, the yoke of Christ as something which he must "take on" before his burdened heart can taste of that blessed rest which Christ "gives" to "all" who simply "come" unto Him just as they are.

The passage before us does not teach this. It puts CHRIST first, and His yoke afterwards. It does not hide Christ behind His yoke, but rather places Him, in all His attractive grace, before the heart, as the One who can meet every need, remove every weight, hush every guilty fear, fill up every blank, satisfy every longing desire; in a word, who is able to do as He says He will, even to "*give rest*."

There are no conditions proposed, no demands made, no barriers erected. The simple, touching, melting, subduing, inviting, winning word is, "COME." It is not, "Go"; "Do"; "Give"; "Bring"; "Feel"; "Realize." No! it is "COME." And how are we to "come"? Just as we are. To whom are we to "come"? To JESUS. When are we to "come"? "Now."

Observe, then, we are to come just as we are. We are not to wait for the purpose of altering a single jot or tittle of our state, condition, or character. To do this would be to "come" to some alteration or improvement in ourselves; whereas Christ distinctly and emphatically says. "Come unto *me*."

Many souls err on this point. They think they must amend their ways, alter their course, or

improve their moral condition, before they come to Christ; whereas, in point of fact, until they really do "come" to Christ they cannot amend, or alter, or improve anything. There is no warrant whatever for any one to believe that he will be a single whit better, an hour, a day, a month or a year hence, that he is this moment. And even were he better, he would not on that account be a whit more welcome to Christ than he is now. There is no such thing as an offer of salvation *to-morrow*. The word is, "TO-DAY, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Heb. iii. 15.) "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2.)

There is nothing more certain than that all who have ever tried the self-improvement plan have found it an utter failure. They have begun in darkness, continued in misery, and ended in despair. And yet, strange to say, in view of the numberless beacons which are ranged before us, in terrible array, to warn us of the folly and danger of travelling that road, we are sure at the first to adopt it. In some way or another *self* is looked to, and wrought upon, in order to procure a warrant to come to Christ; as it is written of Israel, "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." (Rom. x. 3.)

Nothing can possibly be a more dreary, depressing, hopeless task than "going about to establish one's own righteousness." Indeed, the dreariness of the task must ever be commensurate with the earnestness and sincerity of the soul that undertakes it. Such a one will assuredly

have, sooner or later, to give utterance to the cry, "O wretched man that I am!" and also to ask the question, "Who shall deliver me?" (Rom. vii. 24.) There can be no exception. All with whom the Spirit of God has ever wrought have in one way or another been constrained to own the hopelessness of seeking to work out a righteousness for themselves. CHRIST MUST BE ALL; SELF NOTHING. This doctrine is easily stated; but oh! *the experience!*

The same is true in reference to the grand reality of sanctification. Many who have come to Christ for righteousness have not practically and experimentally laid hold of Him as their sanctification; whereas He is made of God unto us the one as well as the other. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, 'He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.' " (1 Cor. i. 30, 31.)

How deeply important, how cogent the reason! The believer is just as powerless in the work of sanctification as in the work of righteousness. If it were not so, some flesh might glory in the divine presence. I could no more subdue a single lust, or trample under foot a single passion, or gain the mastery over a single temper, than I could open the kingdom of heaven, or establish my own righteousness before God.

This is not sufficiently understood; and hence it is that many true Christians constantly suffer the most humiliating defeats in their practical career. They know that Christ is their righteousness, that their sins are forgiven, that they are children of God; but they are sorely put about



by their constant failure in personal holiness, in practical sanctification. Again and again they enter the lists with some unhallowed desire or unsanctified temper; and again and again they are compelled to retire with shame and confusion of face. A person or a circumstance crossed their path yesterday, and caused them to lose their temper, and, having to meet the same to-day, they resolve to do better; but, alas! they are again forced to retreat in disappointment and humiliation.

Now, it is not that such persons may not pray earnestly for the grace of the Holy Spirit to enable them to conquer both themselves and the influences which surround them. This is not the point. They have not yet learnt *practically* (and oh! how worthless the mere theory!) that they are as completely "without strength" in the matter of "sanctification" as they are in the matter of "righteousness," and that, as regards both the one and the other, Christ must be *all*; self *nothing*. In a word, they have not yet entered into the meaning of the words, "Come unto *me*, and I will give you *rest*."

Here lies the source of their failure. They are as thoroughly powerless in the most trivial matter connected with practical sanctification as they are in the entire question of their standing before God; and they must be brought to *believe* this, before they can know the fulness of the "rest" which Christ gives.

It is impossible that I can enjoy rest amid incessant defeats in my practical, daily life. True, I can come, over and over again, and pour into my Father's ear the humiliating tale of my failure and overthrow. I can confess my sins, and find

Him ever faithful and just to forgive me my sins, and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. (1 John i. 9.) But, then, we must learn Christ as the Lord our sanctification, as well as "The Lord our righteousness"; and, moreover, it is by *faith*, and not by *effort*, we are to enter into both the one and the other. We look to Christ for righteousness, because we have none of our own; and we look to Christ for practical sanctification, because we have none of our own. It needed no personal effort on our part to get righteousness, because Christ is our righteousness; and it needs no personal effort on our part to get sanctification, because Christ is our sanctification.

It seems strange that while the inspired apostle distinctly tells us that Christ is "made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," we nevertheless should attach the idea of personal effort to one out of the four things which he enumerates. Can we guide ourselves in ten thousand difficulties and details of our Christian course by our own wisdom or sagacity? Surely not. Ought we to make an effort? By no means. Why not? Because God has made Christ to be our "wisdom"; and therefore it is our precious privilege, having been brought to our "wits' end," to look to Christ for wisdom. In other words, when Christ says, "Come unto me," He means that we are to come unto Him for wisdom as well as for all else; and clearly we cannot come to Christ and to our own efforts at the same time. Nay, so long as we are making efforts, we must be strangers to "rest."

The same holds good with respect to "righteousness." Can we work out a righteousness for

ourselves? Surely not. Ought we not to make an effort? By no means. Why not? Because God has made Christ to be unto us "righteousness," and that righteousness is "to him that worketh *not*." (Rom. iv. 5.)

So also in the matter of "redemption," which is put last in 1 Cor. i. 30, because it includes the final deliverance of the body of the believer from under the power of death. Could we by personal effort deliver our bodies from the dominion of mortality? Surely not. Ought we not to try? The thought were monstrous, yea impious. Why? Because God has made Christ to be unto us "redemption," as regards both soul and body, and He who has already applied, by the power of His Spirit, that glorious redemption to our souls, will before long apply it to our bodies.

Why, then, let me ask, should "sanctification" be singled out from the precious category, and saddled with the legal and depressing idea of personal effort? If we cannot by our own efforts, get "wisdom," and "righteousness," and "redemption," are we a whit more likely to succeed in getting "sanctification"? Clearly not. And have we not proved this times without number? Have not our closet walls witnessed our tears and groans, evoked by the painful sense of failure after failure in our own efforts to tread with steady step and erect carriage the lofty walks of personal sanctity? Will the reader deny this? I trust not. I would fain hope he has responded to the call of Jesus, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is vain to "labour" in our own strength after sanctification. We must come to Jesus for that, as well as for everything else. And, having come

to Jesus, we shall find that there is no lust which He cannot slay, no temper that He cannot subdue, no passion that He cannot overcome. The self-same hand that has cancelled our sins, that guides us in our difficulties, and that will by and by deliver our bodies from the power of death, can give us complete victory over all our personal infirmities and besetments, and fill our hearts with His sacred rest.

It is, I believe, immensely important to have a clear understanding of the question of sanctification. Hundreds have gone on "labouring and heavy laden" for years, endeavouring to work out in one way or another, their sanctification; and, not having succeeded to their satisfaction (for who ever did, or ever could?) they have been tempted to question if they were ever converted at all. Many, were they to tell out "all the truth," could adopt as their own the mournful lines of the poet,

" 'Tis a point I long to know;  
Oft it causeth anxious thought;  
Do I love the Lord or no?  
Am I His, or am I not? "

Such persons have clear views of gospel truth. They could, with scriptural accuracy, tell an inquirer after righteousness how, where, and when he could get it. And yet if that self-same inquirer were to ask them about their own real state of *heart* before God, they could give but a sorry answer.

Why is this? Simply because they have not laid hold of Christ as their "sanctification," as well as their "righteousness." They have been endeavouring, partly in their own strength, and partly by praying for the influences of the Holy

Spirit, to stumble along the path of sanctification. They would, doubtless, deem a person very ignorant of what is called "the plan of salvation," if they found him "going about to establish his own righteousness"; but they do not see that they themselves exhibit, in another way, ignorance of that "plan" by going about to establish their own sanctification. And truly if, in the one case, it is a sorry righteousness which is wrought out, so, in the other case, it is a lame sanctification. For if it be true that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," it is equally true that all *our* sanctifications are as filthy rags.

Whatever has the word "*our*" attached to it must be altogether imperfect. Christ is God's "righteousness," and Christ is God's "sanctification." Both the one and the other are to be had by simply coming, looking, clinging, trusting to Christ. I need hardly say, it is by the power of the Spirit, and through the Holy Scriptures, that Christ is applied to us, both as our righteousness and our sanctification. But all this only takes the matter more and more out of our hands, and leaves us nothing to glory in. If we could conquer an evil temper, we might indeed think ourselves clever; but as we are not asked to pick up a feather in order to add to our "righteousness," or our "wisdom," or our "redemption," so neither are we asked to pick up a feather in order to add to our "sanctification." In this, as in those, Christ is *all*; self *nothing*. This doctrine is easily stated; but oh! *the experience*!

And now will any one say that the writer of this article is doing away with sanctification? If so, he may just as well say that he is doing away with "righteousness," "wisdom" or "redemption."

Who will contend for *self*-righteousness, *self*-wisdom or *self*-redemption? Who but the man that contends for *self*-sanctification? Who is likely to attain and exhibit the more elevated standard of personal sanctity? Is it the man who is perpetually floundering amid his own imperfect struggles and cobweb-resolutions, or he who is daily, hourly, and momentarily clinging to Christ as his sanctification? The answer is simple. The "sanctification" which we get in Christ is as perfect as the "righteousness," the "wisdom," and the "redemption."

Am I doing away with "wisdom," because I say I am foolish? Am I doing away with "righteousness," because I say, I am guilty? Am I doing away with "redemption," because I say, I am mortal? And am I doing away with "sanctification," because I say, I am vile? Yes, I am doing away with all these things so far as "*I*" am concerned, in order that I may find them all in Christ. This is the point: all, all IN CHRIST!

Oh! when shall we learn to get to the end of *self*, and cling simply to Christ? When shall we enter into the depth and power of those words "Come unto *me*"? He does not say, "Come unto my yoke." No; but, "Come unto *me*." We must cease from our own works in every shape and form, and come to Christ; come *just as we are*; come *now*.

We come to Christ, and get rest from and in Him, before ever we hear a word about the "yoke." To put the "yoke" first is to displace every thing. If a "heavy laden" sinner thinks of the "yoke," he must be overwhelmed by the thought of his own total inability to take it upon him or carry it. But when he comes to Jesus,

and enters into His precious rest, he finds that the "yoke is easy and the burden light."

2. This conducts us to the second point in our subject, namely, "the yoke." It has been already observed that we must keep the two things distinct. To confound them is to tarnish the heavenly lustre of the grace of Christ, and to put a yoke upon the sinner's neck, and a burden upon his shoulder, which he, as being "without strength," is wholly unable to bear. But then they are morally connected. All who come to Christ must take His yoke upon them, and learn of Him if they would "*find rest unto their souls.*"

To come to Christ is one thing; to walk with Him, or learn of Him, is quite another. Christ was "meek and lowly in heart." He could meet the most adverse and discouraging circumstances with an "Even so, Father." The Baptist's heart might fail amid the heavy clouds which gathered around him in Herod's dungeon; the men of that generation might refuse the double testimony of righteousness and grace, as furnished by the ministry of John and of our Lord Himself; Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum might refuse the testimony of His mighty works, a torrent of evidence which one might suppose would sweep away every opposing barrier; all these things, and many more, might cross the path of the Divine Workman; but, being "meek and lowly in heart," He could say, "I thank Thee, O Father;" "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." His "rest" in the Father's counsels was profound and perfect; and He invites us to take His yoke, to learn of Him, to drink into His spirit, to know the practical results of a subject mind, that so we may "*find rest unto our souls.*"

A broken will is the real ground of the rest which we are to "find," after we have come to Christ. If God wills one thing, and we will another, we cannot find rest in that. It matters not what the scene or circumstance may be. We may swell a list of things, to any imaginable extent, in which our will may run counter to the will of God; but in whatever it is we cannot find rest so long as our will is unbroken. We must get to the end of *self* in the matter of will, as well as in the matter of "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"; else we shall not "find rest."

This, my beloved reader, is deep, real, earnest, personal work. Moreover, it is a daily thing. It is a continual taking of Christ's yoke upon us, and learning of Him. It is not that we take the yoke in order to come to Christ. No; but we come to Christ first, and then, when His love fills and satisfies our souls, when His rest refreshes our spirits, when we can gaze by faith upon His gracious countenance, and see Him stooping down to confer upon us the high and holy privilege of wearing His yoke, and learning His lesson, we find that His yoke is indeed easy, and His burden light.

Unsubdued, unjudged, unmortified nature could never wear that yoke, or bear that burden. The first thing is, "Come unto me, and I will *give* you rest." The second thing is, "Take my yoke upon you . . . and ye shall *find* rest." We must never reverse these things, never confound them, never displace them, never separate them. To call upon a sinner to take Christ's yoke before he has got Christ's rest, is to place Christ on the top of Mount Sinai, the sinner at the foot



of that mount, and a dark impenetrable cloud between.

This must not be done. Christ stands, in all His matchless grace, before the sinner's eye, and pronounces His touching invitation, "Come," and adds His heart-assuring promise, "I will give." There is no condition, no demand, "no servile work." All is the purest, freest, richest grace. Just "come, and I will give you rest."

And what then? Is it bondage, doubt, and fear? Ah! no. "Take *my* yoke upon *you*." How marvellously near this brings us to the One who has already given us rest! What a high honour to wear the same yoke with Him! It is not that He puts a grievous yoke upon our neck, and a heavy burden upon our shoulder, which we have to carry up the rugged sides of yon fiery mount. This is not CHRIST'S way.. It is not *thus* He deals with the weary and heavy laden that come unto Him. He gives them rest. He gives them part of His yoke, and a share of His burden. In other words, He calls them into fellowship with Himself; and in proportion as they enter into this fellowship they find still deeper and deeper rest in Him and in His blessed ways; and, at the close, He will conduct them into that eternal rest which remains for the people of God. (Heb. iv.)

May the Lord enable us to enter more fully into the power of all these divine realities, that so His joy may remain in us, and our joy may be full. (John xv. 11.) There is an urgent need of a full, unreserved surrender of the heart to Christ, and a full, unreserved acceptance of Him, in all His precious adaptation to our every need. We want the whole heart, the single eye, the mortified

mind, the broken will. Where these exist, there will be little complaining of doubts and fears, ups and downs, heavy days, vacant hours, restless moments, dulness and stupor, wandering and barrenness. When one has got to the end of himself, as regards wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and all beside, and when he has *really* found Christ as God's provision for ALL, then, but not until then, he will know the depth and power of that word, "REST."

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## The Right Relations of Dispensational Truth.

### II.

**A**T one time, the Lord put the sword into the hand of His servant; at another, He took it out of such a hand. Joshua and Peter tell me this: "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. xxii. 21) was a divine decree in the days of the Evangelists; but in earlier days every trace of Gentile rule in the land of the fathers was required to be clean blotted out by the zeal and strength of the children. It was not to be "God" and "Cæsar" then, but Jehovah's name was to be written on the land of the Twelve Tribes, and every stick and stone on it be claimed in the name of Jehovah of Israel, without a rival.

Places and ordinances, in like manner, change their character with dispensations. But this is more easily admitted or apprehended than the other. Mount Sinai, where God came down, and which awful, consecrated spot none were to

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touch but Himself, is now simply "Sinai in Arabia"; and institutions, which were once divine, and the dishonouring of which was death, are now but "beggarly elements," "rudiments of the world." Nay, more; they are even put in company with idols. (Gal. iv.) Thus, what was sacred at one time, becomes common at another; while, what was unclean once, is afterwards given for the communion of the saints. The serpent of brass becomes Nehushtan (2 Kings xviii. 4). A company of those who had been repudiated as "uncircumcised," becomes "a habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. ii. 11, 22.)

Thus it is indeed so, that the character, the value with God, of actions, places, ordinances, and the like, will change with changing dispensations. We are to decide on their godliness, their sacredness, their holiness, by "the truth." And not only is it thus with changing dispensations, but with the changing phases and conditions of the same dispensation.

The harps of Israel, for instance, were struck in the days of Solomon, and songs were sung when Heman, Asaph, and Jeduthun were in the land. But in the days of Babylon, the harps were to be hung on the willows, and the songs of Zion to be silent. (Ps. cxxxvii.)

So David, according to the mind of God, when his hunger and wanderings bespoke a ruined condition of kings among the people, would ask for the showbread of the Temple for himself and his followers; though, in the day of the integrity of Israel and their dispensations, it was lawful only for the priests to eat of it.

So, again, this same David could not go on

with a purpose that was right in his heart, as the Lord Himself said of it, because it was not right or in season, *dispensationally considered* (2 Chron. vi. 8, 9).

And thus we see, from a very few samples out of many, that different stages, or eras, or conditions of things, in one and the same dispensation, have their several and peculiar truth on which to ground their own peculiar claims, just as surely and simply as if they were different dispensations. The children of Israel under Joshua, and under the Judges; the Jews at home, the Jews in Babylon, the Jews returned; though all of them alike under the same covenant, had very differently the claims and service of Jehovah to answer and do. "Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the Bridegroom is with them?" I may call to mind, in connection with this. When He is taken away, then indeed they may fast, and ought to fast. (Luke v.)

Surely, I may say, everything helps to show us that dispensational truth is the great, I say not the only, rule and manner of holiness according to God. We must "know the time," for nothing is right out of season. "The children of Issachar were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." (1 Chron. xii. 32.)

Scripture is full of instruction upon this principle, and leaves us at no liberty to judge the holy and the unholy independently of "the truth." Our godliness, our piety, in order to have a divine character, depends on our knowledge of "the truth," of times and seasons as they are with God, or according to His mind in His perfect and beautiful, though changing, dispensations.

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# WORDS OF TRUTH

"The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words:  
and that which was written was upright, even words  
of truth" (Eccles. xii. 10).

## A Risen Saviour's Challenge.

Read Luke xxiv. 17 and 38.

THE brief period during which our blessed Lord lay in the tomb must needs have proved a dark and bewildering moment to many of those who looked for redemption in Israel. It would demand a calm, clear and vigorous faith to raise the heart above the heavy clouds which gathered just then upon the horizon of God's people; and it does not appear that many possessed such a faith at that trying moment.

We may doubtless look upon the two disciples who travelled together to Emmaus as illustrating the condition of many, if not all, of the beloved saints of God during the three days and three nights that our beloved Lord lay in the heart of the earth. They were thoroughly bewildered, and at their wits' end. "They talked together of

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all those things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together, and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden, that they should not know Him." (*vv.* 13-15.)

Their minds were full of surrounding circumstances. All hope seemed gone. Their fondly cherished expectations were apparently blasted. The whole scene was overcast by the dark shadow of death, and their poor hearts were unutterably sad.

But mark how the risen Saviour's challenge falls upon their drooping spirits: "And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk and are sad?"

Surely this was a reasonable and a weighty question for those dear disciples, a question eminently calculated to recall them to their senses, as we say. It was precisely what they wanted at the moment, occupied, as they were, with circumstances, instead of resting in the eternal and immutable truth of God. Scripture was clear and plain enough, had they only hearkened to its voice. But, instead of listening only to the distinct testimony of the Eternal Spirit in the word, they had allowed their minds to get thoroughly down under the action and influences of outward circumstances. Instead of standing with firm foot on the everlasting rock of divine revelation, they were struggling amid the billows of life's stormy ocean. In a word, they had for the moment fallen under the power of death, so far as their minds were concerned, and no marvel if their hearts were sad, and their communications gloomy.

And, beloved reader, does it not sometimes happen that you and I, in like manner, get down under the power of things seen and temporal, instead of living, by faith, in the light of things unseen and eternal? Yes, even we who profess to know and believe in a risen Saviour, who believe that we are dead and risen with Him, who have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, do not we, at times, sink and cower? And do we not at such moments stand in need of a risen Saviour's challenge? Has not that precious, loving Saviour oftentimes occasion to put the question to our hearts, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another?" Does it not often happen that, when we come together, or when we walk by the way, our "communications" are anything but what they ought to be? It may be we are gloomily moping together over the depressing circumstances which surround us: the weather; the prospects of the country; the state of trade; our poor health; the difficulty of making both ends meet; anything and everything, in short, but the right thing?

Yes, and so occupied do we become with such things that our spiritual eyes are holden, and we do not take knowledge of the Blessed One who, in His tender, faithful love, is at our side; and He has to challenge our vagrant hearts with His pointed and powerful question, "What manner of communications are these that ye have?"

Let us think of this. It really demands our consideration. We are all far too apt to allow our minds to fall under the power and pressure of circumstances, instead of living in the power of faith. We get occupied with our surroundings, instead of dwelling upon "things above," those

bright and blessed realities which are ours in Christ. (Col. iii. 1.)

And what is the result? Do we better our circumstances, or brighten our prospects, by gloomily moping over them? Not in the smallest degree. What then? We simply make ourselves miserable, and our communications depressing; and, worst of all, we bring sad dishonour on the cause of Christ.

Christians have very little idea of how much is involved in their temper, manner, look, and deportment, in daily life. We sometimes forget that the Lord's glory is intimately bound up in our every movement and our every expression. We all know how, in social life, we judge of the character of the head of the household by what we see of his children and servants. If we observed the children looking miserable and downcast, we should be disposed to pronounce their father morose, severe, and arbitrary. If we see the servants crushed and overwrought, we consider the master hard-hearted and grinding. In short, as a rule, you can form a tolerably fair estimate of the head of a house by the tone, spirit, style and manner of the members of his household.

How earnestly, then, should we seek, as members of "the household of God," to give a right impression of what He is by our temper, spirit, style and manner! If men of the world, those with whom we come in contact from day to day, in the practical details of life, if they see us looking sour, morose, downcast; if they hear us giving utterance to doleful complaints about this, that, and the other; if they see us occupied about our own things, grasping, griping, and driving as hard bargains as others; if they see us grinding



our servants with heavy work, low wages, and poor fare; what estimate can they form of Him whom we call our Father and our Master in heaven?

Christian reader, let us not despise and turn away from such homely words. Depend upon it, there is need of such in this day of high profession. There is a vast amount of intellectual traffic in truth which leaves the conscience unreached, the heart untouched, the life unaffected. We profess to be dead and risen with Christ; but when anything occurs to touch us, either in our persons, in our relations, or in our interests, we very speedily show that the old thing is not practically dead at all, and that our belief in death and resurrection is very much of a mere theory.

May the good Lord give us grace to apply our hearts, very seriously and earnestly, to these things, that so there may be in our daily course a somewhat more faithful exhibition of a genuine Christianity, such an exhibition as shall glorify our own most gracious God and Father, and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and such too as shall afford, to those who come in contact with us, a fair specimen of what "pure religion" really is in its action upon the entire course and character.

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Christ's doing the will of God in the offering up of Himself is the basis of our relationship with God; and it is done; and we are accepted. As born of God, our delight is to do God's will; but it is in love, and newness of nature, not in order to be accepted.

## **The Testimony, Conflict, and Walk of the Christian.**

**I**T may be that many of God's children, when reading through the New Testament Epistles, have remarked the varied exhortations given by the Holy Ghost to "put on" (if we may so express it) the different kinds of garments in which it becomes them to be arrayed.

The believers are addressed as "saints," and recognized as "in Christ Jesus." The apostle thanks God for the reality of their confession, owns them as having redemption "in" Christ Jesus, "through" His blood, and, because they are "saints," He earnestly enjoins them to "put on" certain moral and spiritual qualities. For it is perfectly plain that if God, in the abounding riches of His love and grace towards us who believe, has brought us into oneness with Christ, and into everlasting relationship with Himself, He cannot but require from us a walk and testimony suited to His holy nature and character. This being so, we are of necessity drawn into separation from, or conflict with, all that is contrary to His will.

Looking into the epistles with reference to these points, we find that the injunctions as to what we are to "put on" are always based on the great principles set previously before us in the same epistle.

We may refer to 1 Thessalonians v., Ephesians vi., and Colossians iii., as each giving different instructions as to what we are to "put on"; and, for the sake of distinguishing between them, we may call them *testimony* garments, *battle* garments, and *walking* garments.

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## TESTIMONY GARMENTS.

In 1 Thessalonians v. 8-10 the saints are viewed, not as in conflict, or as walking consistently with a new-creation standing, as we find elsewhere, but as *sons of light and of the day* in the midst of people who belong to *the night and to darkness*. The light accordingly should be given out by them. They are therefore called on to bear *testimony to the realities of Christianity, the three essential characteristics of which are faith, and love, and hope.*

It is this testimony (or, bearing witness) to our association with Christ, that often brings us into trial. It was so with the apostle John. He tells us that he was banished to desolate Patmos for "*the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus.*" (Rev. i. 9.) If a light be set on a candlestick it is that all that enter into the house may see the light. A Christian is a light-bearer; and it is the will of God, not only that he should be blameless and harmless, but, being in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, he should give testimony to the Lord Jesus. The saints (that is to say, all believers) are to "*shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.*" (Phil. ii. 15.)

So, in Thessalonians, where the apostle, by the Spirit, is contemplating the saints as surrounded by those who are in darkness and unbelief, having no hope, and without God in the world, he beseeches them not only to be sober, but to be *putting on*. Observe, "*putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation.*" In this way they would indeed "*shine as lights in the world.*" They would be known, in an unbelieving and dark place, as

those who *trust God*; as those who do *labours of love*; who love the Lord, His word, His ways, His saints, and His blessed gospel of salvation to precious and immortal souls in a world that crucified Him, and still rejects Him; and also as having, in a world that has “no hope,” an intelligent *hope of glory*, the expectation of the coming of the Lord, and of being caught up to meet Him in the air. (1 Thess. iv. 15-18.)

This is something more than the knowledge of forgiveness of sins, peace with God, standing in Christ, and relationship with God as His children; for it involves “putting on”; it necessitates the activities of the heart flowing forth in testimony to the Lord in a world of sin and darkness, and declares that He is worthy, not only to be served, but to be *trusted*, to be *loved*, and to be *waited for*.

Fellow-Christians! are our souls going forth in true *testimony* to the Lord? Do those who surround us know us as those who really live and walk by *faith*, and who, therefore, have no fellowship with unbelieving ways and conversation? Do we, as we have opportunity, labour in *loving ways*, in the name of our Lord Jesus? And are we known as *unsettled* on earth, because we are *waiting for God's Son from heaven*? (1 Thess. i. 10.)

If so, the light does indeed shine; we have *put on* “the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation.” But what a poor thing it must be in God's sight if He sees only our heads filled with Bible knowledge, and this breastplate and helmet not “put on”! Let us see to it, beloved, that we never fail to put on our *testimony garments*.

## TESTIMONY, CONFLICT, AND WALK. 201

## BATTLE GARMENTS.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, where the believer's position, (as *now* seated in heavenly places "in Christ,") and his new relationships, are treated of, he is recognized as *battling* with wicked spirits in heavenly places, which seek to encompass him with "wiles," or to inflict "fiery darts," to withstand his entering into the place and character of blessing in the heavenlies, in Christ, in which God in His grace has set him.

Satan, though he cannot hinder our eternal salvation, does try to hinder the believer's communion with God, and joy in Him. We are, therefore, exhorted to "put on" the whole armour (the panoply) of God, and to stand consciously in, and enjoy, the blessings God has graciously given us in His own presence inside the veil.

Here the breastplate is called "the breastplate of righteousness," that is, practical righteousness, for if this be lacking, it is manifest that it would give Satan a crevice in which he might effectually lodge one of his "fiery darts." And the believer is exhorted to "put on" the panoply of God, to "be strong in the Lord," and thus to withstand Satan, and take possession of, stand in, and enjoy the marvellous position and blessings which God has so graciously given him "in heavenly places in Christ." This conflict is often sharp, for Satan and his hosts so withstand us that we are said to "wrestle" against principalities and powers. It is *not* wrestling with flesh and blood, *not* battling with circumstances down here, but conflict with wicked spirits as to our standing, abiding, and enjoyment inside the veil, where our Lord Jesus is. These battle garments then must be "put on," the conflict must be entered upon, if

we would be consciously in our true place inside the veil. This battling, too, implies the activities of the soul going out in "faith and love," skillfully using "the truth," and conscious of being in the place of entire dependance, crying unto God with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and having but one weapon of attack, namely, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." How important, yea, how absolutely necessary, it is, that we should "put on" these battle garments, if we would triumph over Satan, and possess and enjoy our true resources of happiness and strength which our gracious God and Father has given us "in heavenly places in Christ!"

Dear Christian reader, do you know the sweet liberty and joy of standing consciously before God in all the acceptableness of Christ, as already seated in Him "in heavenly places," having all your springs, resources, and blessings in and through Him? Depend upon it, unless we enjoy our real blessings *inside the veil*, we shall never really take our true place here as going forth to Him *outside the camp*, bearing His reproach. (Heb. vi. 19, 20; x. 19, 20; xiii. 13.)

#### WALKING GARMENTS.

In the Epistle to the Colossians, the believer is not looked at as in the heavenlies, nor simply as a child of light in the midst of darkness, but is seen as "risen with Christ," who is his life. (Col. iii.) His walk, therefore, should be consistent with that truth, the outflow of resurrection life. He is accordingly enjoined to "put on," not *battle garments*, for the subject is not conflict; not *testimony garments*, because it is not simply the manifestation of light in the midst of dark-

ness, though every act of godliness must be more or less that; but he is to "put on" what may be called *walking garments*; he is to walk, as we have said, suitably to such as are "risen with Christ." The walk of the Christian, therefore, is living out this new-creation life in Christ, to "Put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another in love," to be forgiving like Christ, encircling all with a girdle of "love," "peace" ruling the heart, which, endued with grace, prompts praises to the Lord. Thus occupied with Him, we shall let His word dwell richly in us, and seek to do everything in His name. Thus we shall be practically Christ-like; we shall "walk even as He walked." The path is holiness, love, faithfulness, and truth. It is obedience, self-sacrifice, Christ-honouring; happy too, for wisdom's "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." (Prov. iii. 17.) What a life of lowly dependence, self-denial, and continual occupation with the Lord Jesus such a walk involves!

We may add a word from 1 Peter i. 13, where believers are exhorted to "gird up the loins of their mind." The reason for the figure, *girding up*, being here used is plain; for in this epistle the believer is looked at as a stranger and pilgrim on earth, pressing on to the inheritance reserved for him in heaven. The path being encompassed with "afflictions," "trials," and "manifold temptations," the loins need to be girded. As travellers in the East, whose journey lies through a rough and thorny way, find it absolutely necessary to fold up their long, flowing garments, and gird them round their waists, lest they might be

caught by the thorns and briers of the way, and thus get entangled and detained in their journey, so must we "gird up" the loins of our mind. We should be so sensible of the dangers and difficulties of the way as to feel the imperative importance of bracing up the energies of our souls, and go forward, onward, and upward in the might of the Spirit; cheered too with "the hope of glory," the inheritance reserved for us in heaven, we should be prepared to avoid every entanglement, and overcome every obstacle in our path.

So may it be with us, dear Christian reader, that the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be magnified by us, and in us, "till He come."

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Christian life is characterized, not only by certain subjective qualities which flow from Christ, but by its having CHRIST HIMSELF for the aim and object of the heart and mind in all that we do in every respect. Christ personally reigns in, and is present to, the heart in everything. To the inexperienced eye of man, Nature is often confounded with grace. But the intelligent consciousness of Christ as the heart's object, of His presence, of the seal of His approval WHEN ONE THINKS OF HIM, cannot be confounded with anything. There is nothing that resembles it; nothing that can appear to take its place. When He reveals Himself to our hearts, and the heart walks with Him, and communes with Him in all things, and seeks only the light of His countenance, the seal of His favour on the soul in all things, then He is known, WELL KNOWN. There is none but He who thus communicates Himself to the soul when it walks in the way of His will, as expressed in the Word.