

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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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 Guidance of God.

(Read 1 Samuel xxiii. and xxiv.)

THE subject of Divine Guidance, in its application to the details of our every-day life and conduct, is evidently one of great importance; and it is one on which the minds of many saints are often greatly exercised. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"; but there is One of whom it is written, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." (Jer. x. 23; Prov. iii. 6.)

There are important epochs in the life of each of us when the need of divine guidance cannot but be felt. But the word is not, "Acknowledge Him at such times as these," but, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him." Habitual reference to the Lord in all the details of life, makes it easy to confide in Him when any great crisis arrives;

whereas if in general we pass on without acknowledging Him, though the heart may feel, when in straits and difficulties, the need of light from above, not being practised in consulting God, or familiar with His ways of guiding His people, it little knows how to cast itself upon Him, or even to avail itself of such guidance as He vouchsafes. And though the Lord may, and often does, exceed His promise, and guide when in extremities those who do not habitually acknowledge Him, the promise is, "In *all* thy ways acknowledge Him, and " then, when difficulties occur, " He shall direct thy paths."

It is not that we need always be asking, " What must I do? " There are things in which we know the Lord would have us to be engaged; but He is to be acknowledged in these things as well as in inquiring of Him when uncertain as to our path. " It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do." " For thou also hast wrought all our works in us." " Without me ye can do nothing." (Heb. ii. 13; Isa. xxvi. 12; John xv. 5.)

One thing we must never forget, that if we are to have practical guidance from God, it must be in a path which is itself according to His mind and will. A vast deal of the uncertainty felt by Christians as to the details of their path arises from the fact that they look for guidance as to details when their entire position is such as God cannot own. It is contrary to His word.

Suppose my child to be bent on a course which he knows, or ought to know, to be contrary to his father's wishes; if in the prosecution of his design he meets with difficulties which are quite insuperable, and asks me for instruction how to extricate himself therefrom, what am I to do?

Should his father's interposition be requisite for his safety, that would be another case. Any father would then exert himself for his child, though the child's wilfulness had involved him in the danger from which he had to be rescued. But what father would help his child to disobey him?

Can we expect God to help and guide us in a path which is throughout contrary to His revealed will? The difficulties which we meet in such a path, are the thorns by which God is hedging up our way, in order that we may relinquish it altogether; and the first step towards the enjoyment of divine guidance in such a case, is to forsake the position and manner of life *out of which*, not *in which*, the Lord will lead us.

It is our privilege to know that our position and manner of life as a whole are according to God. There may still be difficulties, and there doubtless will be; but we may then, in simple confidence, reckon on the Lord's wisdom to guide us through them all.

David's path, at the time to which our chapters refer, was one of extreme difficulty. His circumstances were scarcely two days together alike. He had to conceal himself first in one fastness, then in another. But the path he trod was one in which the Lord had set him. His position was according to God's mind. It was the path of faith; and in all simplicity of faith, he reckoned on God's guidance in that path.

"Then they they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rot the threshing floors."

Here was a new circumstance in David's path. He was at the moment concealing himself from the envy and rage of Saul; but his position had res-

pect to the Philistines as well as Saul. The Lord had raised up Saul, and anointed him captain over His people Israel, that He might save His people out of the hands of the Philistines (see ix. 16.) Saul had entirely failed in this. He had proved himself faithless and disobedient, and hence, when arrayed against the Philistines (xiv., xvii.), he had shrunk from the unequal contest.

David, having been anointed in Saul's stead (xvi.), had really in faith taken the place of Israel's shepherd; and while the ostensible shepherd proved himself a hireling, who, when the wolf cometh, flees, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep, David stood in the gap, and delivered the trembling, affrighted flock out of the jaws of the destroyer.

That was a day of triumph and of glory for Israel; a day on which it was seen "that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear," but that His people's battle is His own. It was a day of renown for David too, the daughters of Israel singing with tabrets and dances, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

Affairs had changed since that day, and David was now an outcast and a wanderer; hunted by Saul like a partridge on the mountains. But has this alienated his heart from Israel; or rendered him indifferent to their sufferings? When he hears of the Philistines having plundered Keilah, does he say, "Well, if I am to suffer thus at the hands of Israel's king, he and his people may defend themselves against the Philistines. What have I to do with their affairs?"

No, he is as ready to gird on his weapons, and hasten to the conflict, as though Saul had appreciated and rewarded all his previous services.

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But though ready to go thus to the rescue of the men of Keilah, does he, on the other hand, rush on the undertaking in the energy of his own will, the mere natural impetuosity of a man of war?

No, he inquires of the Lord, "Shall I go and smite these Philistines?"

He does not use many words, as we so often do in our prayers. With the simplicity of a child, he asks a question of Him whom he knows to be alone able to answer it.

And the answer is as direct and simple as the inquiry.

"And the Lord said, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah."

A new difficulty, however, now presents itself. David is not alone, but at the head of a band of men who had from various motives attached themselves to his person, but who do not walk in the same simplicity of faith as himself. Spiritually, they are far behind him. "Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?"

Feeling themselves unable to cope with the lesser difficulties, they shrink from encountering the greater.

What now is David's course? Does he, on the one side, despise the check he has received by the remonstrances of his men? Or does he, on the other, blindly follow their timid counsels, and give up the light he had received from God?

No; finding himself in new circumstances, *he inquires afresh of the Lord*. When he first inquired, he evidently had no doubt as to the allegiance of his men; but now, when the Lord has said "Go," and his men hold back, David applies to his former resource, and inquires *again* of the Lord. To

David's faith, the command to go was, no doubt, equivalent to a promise that the Philistines should be delivered into his hand; but now, in consideration of his timid followers, inquiring a second time of the Lord, the Lord repeats to him the direction to go, and accompanies it with the express promise, "For I will deliver the Philistines into thy hand."

This overcomes the reluctance of his men; they go down to Keilah; and a great slaughter of the Philistines ensues. "So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah."

Verses 6-13 suggest considerations of the deepest interest. "And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand."

Now, the ephod was that part of the high priest's garments in which were placed the Urim and Thummim, by which guidance from the Lord was obtained. This was the appointed, established mode of seeking counsel from God. What claims attention here is, that when the ephod is to be had, David uses it; when it is not there, he can consult God without it. He despises not the ordered way when it is available; nor is he so dependent upon the ordered means as to be unable, when they are out of his reach, to consult God without them. When the ephod is not there, he inquires directly of God, as we have seen; when Abiathar is there with the ephod he says, "Bring hither the ephod."

Surely there is instruction here for us all. We have means, advantages, helps, afforded us of God; and when He does afford them, they are not to be despised, but diligently and faithfully used. But

neither are we so dependent on these, as in their absence to be unable to have to do immediately with God Himself.

What a precious boon is God's written word! How impossible, if we neglect it, to receive guidance from the Lord! Who that believes it to be God's word, and is conversant with it can find language in which to express its value. But suppose we should lose our sight, or be imprisoned for the truth, and refused the use of the Bible, should we necessarily be deprived of instruction or counsel from the Lord? God forbid. Its effect, when we have it and use it, is to place us in His presence, and declare to us His mind. Deprived of it, as in those cases, we should find Him better to us than the book. Diligent in the use of means when vouchsafed, faith can reckon upon God Himself when they are withheld, well knowing that He never withdraws the means, except when He would cause the soul to know His sufficiency above and beyond, and, when it pleases Him, even apart from them all.

David's inquiries of the Lord served him better than any number of scouts and spies, to watch the movement of his enemy and pursuer. "Will Saul come down, as Thy servant hath heard?"

"And the Lord said, He will come down."

"Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?"

"And the Lord said, They will deliver thee up."

Thus he escapes, as a bird from the snare of the fowler.

Verses 14-18 may not strictly bear on the subject before us, that of Divine Guidance; but they are too touching and instructive to pass without notice. David was aware that Saul sought him

every day ; he needed comfort and encouragement ; the Lord also knew his need, and sent Jonathan Saul's son, to supply it. A messenger from Saul's own house strengthens David's hand in God. "Fear not," says Jonathan, "for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth."

Alas for Jonathan ! He was correct in all his anticipations except one. Saul's hand never did find David; David did become king over Israel; but Jonathan himself instead of being next to David, fell ingloriously with Saul on the mountains of Gilboa !

Nothing could be more beautiful than Jonathan's love to David; but it never broke the links which actually united him to his father's house. It never led him away from his kindred and his home to be the companion of David's exile; and adhering thus to Saul, with Saul he perished by the hand of the Philistines.

Verses 19-29 disclose to us the plotting of the Ziphites to deliver David into Saul's hand. When they offer to do this, Saul says, "Blessed be ye of the Lord; for ye have compassion on me."

Saul could use the name of the Lord as well as David, and when this is the case, very simple faith is needed, faith which looks directly to the Lord. In the present day you will often hear it said, "There are so many parties, all claiming the sanction of the Lord's name, and of God's word, while differing among themselves, that we know not which path to take."

What is the remedy in such a case?

Nothing but the faith which puts the conscience in the Lord's presence, as having to do im-

mediately with Himself. Saul may *talk* about the Lord; but David had to *do* with Him. And when the plots and treachery of his enemies seemed ripe for success (Saul on one side of the mountain, David on the other, and David fleeing for fear of Saul), just at this juncture a message is brought to Saul that the Philistines have invaded the land, and he is obliged to let go his prey.

This was not Divine Guidance of David's course; but it was interposition on behalf of the one who had sought Divine Guidance as to each detail of his path. A path in which we are thus led of the Lord may *seem* to terminate in difficulties from which nothing can extricate us. But it is in appearance only. If there be no way through the circumstances, the Lord can act in providence, and remove the circumstances altogether. Happy indeed to be under His care!

But while it is for our comfort to see how God can thus use providential circumstances, let us beware of taking providence for our guide. A most important lesson as to this is afforded by chapter xxiv. Providence places Saul completely in David's power. David's men would have had him regard this as guidance from the Lord: "Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayst do to him as it shall seem good unto thee."

How often is this argument employed! How often do Satan, worldly minded friends, and our own worldly minded hearts say, "See, the Lord has now given you the opportunity to do so and so."

But let us beware. Providence had given David the opportunity to destroy Saul, as his men

thought; but what was the estimate David's faith formed of the circumstances? *He* read them aright. *He* saw in them the opportunity for faith *to forego the opportunity of fighting his own battle or delivering himself by his own hand.*

Precious and solemn lesson for us! The opportunity to do anything is no indication of its being the Lord's will that we should do it. It may, or may not, be the Lord's will. His word, understood by His Spirit's aid and teaching, must settle that. The opportunity of doing it may be, and often is, the opportunity of *faith* to say, "No; it is not my Lord's will; it would not do for my Lord's glory; and no opportunity shall tempt me away from the path of simple obedience to Him."

The Lord makes us wiser in all *His* ways! And let us not forget His words, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." (James i. 5, 6.)

Meditations on the First Epistle of John.

XIII.

ADAM sinned against law; it was a sin unto death. But Cain sinned against the remedy for sin. This is the thing noticed in Acts. It is not "ye *sinner*s," but "ye *despiser*s," despisers of God's remedy. What can God do further, when you have despised the remedy which He has found for sin? This is sin against the Holy Ghost, which cannot be forgiven. In Hebrews x. we have it again: "Of how much sorer

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punishment, suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing." (v. 29.)

This is not ecclesiastical, but personal. It is not your sin that proves your ruin, but your despising the remedy. Some think this is ecclesiastical; I do not, for I do not see that John enters, in any wise, into Church matters.

All unrighteousness is sin. (v. 17.) This guards your making light of unrighteousness, even when it is not unto death. A wholesome exhortation, but a grave conclusion!

Then again we get the undefilableness of the new nature. (v. 18.) The wicked one has neither commerce nor conversation with him; he is morally out of his reach. The wicked one can touch *you*, but not your *new nature*. It was not so with Christ. He could predicate of His whole nature what you can of your new nature. He could say that Satan had nothing in Him; and so it was, from whatsoever point He was tried. Satan sought to engraft evil, a moral taint, but was foiled; there was "nothing" for him in Christ. You cannot, you would not, say that of yourself, but you can say it of your new nature.

Here again Christ shines out in contrast to us, and we gladly yield the pre-eminence to Him. If you can say that your new nature is beyond the reach of the wicked one, it is because you owe that new nature to Him. You have your old nature from Adam, but your new nature is of and from Christ, and is, like Him, undefilable.

The world, as we have said, is that thing which is nurtured, framed, and educated by the wicked one, and which lies in his bosom. It came into life by his lies, and is supported by them. But we are in God. The truth has separated us from the world, and given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true. (v. 20.)

Read v. 20 with the eighth chapter of John's Gospel, and you see there the wondrous argument that your understanding must be prepared to know Jesus. "Why do ye not understand my speech?" He said. "Even because ye cannot hear my word" (v. 43.)

The Jews were worse than Nicodemus asking, "How can a man be born again?" Incompetency is worse than ignorance.

Brief Explanations of the Parables of the New Testament.

THE SOWER (Matt. xiii. 3) is the result of the word sown in the heart, with the forms of evil which hinder its bringing forth fruit.

THE TARES (Matt. xiii. 24) gives us the history of the kingdom of heaven during the absence of the Son of Man till His return, the harvest included. Or the result of the sowing of the Son of Man in the world, at the close of the carelessness of man, who allowed Satan also to sow.

THE MUSTARD SEED (Matt. xiii. 31) is the outside appearance of power taken by Christendom.

THE LEAVEN (Matt. xiii. 33) dissemination, with-

in the limits permitted by the counsels of God, of an external doctrine.

These last three parables were spoken before the world.

The three parables which follow give thoughts of Christ communicated to His disciples.

THE HIDDEN TREASURE (Matt. xiii. 44.)—Christ buys the world, which in itself is worth naught, in order to have the treasure which God had hidden, and which He saw there.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE (Matt. xiii. 45.)—The Spirit of Christ apprehends the moral beauty which God has set in the Church, and will have it at any price.

THE NET (Matt. xiii. 47.)—The result of the gospel in gathering things of every kind, good and bad, which are separated, and those which are good are put into vessels.

In the parables of **THE TARES** and **THE NET** it is the angels who separate the good from the bad, in giving effect to judgment. It is they also who put that which is good into the vessels and into the barn.

THE LOST SHEEP ; THE LOST PIECE OF MONEY ; THE PRODIGAL ; (Luke xv.)—The grace of God, which saves a sinner, is far more precious than the justice of God, which would recognize a just person, if such there were.

These parables of **THE LOST SHEEP**, **THE LOST PIECE OF SILVER**, and **THE PRODIGAL SON**, show us the grand principle of action of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The *first* is the Son, the Good Shepherd, who seeks and saves the lost sheep, the sinner.

The *second* is the Spirit acting by the Truth.

The *third* is the effect of the Holy Spirit in the

heart, and the reception, by the Father, of him who is thus brought back.

The first two are pure grace, inasmuch as they speak of the sovereign action of God on an object which is entirely passive.

The third is the manifestation of that grace to one drawn from a career of sin.

THE PITILESS SERVANT (Matt. xviii. 28.)—The Jews, refusing grace to the Gentiles, have remained under their own guilt; or,

1. The grand principle of pardon to the individual; 2. Prophetically; the Jews having been pardoned the death of Christ; but, having resisted grace to the Gentiles, suffer the consequences of the rejection of Christ. As Paul said, when speaking of the Jews, "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. ii. 16.)

THE HOUSEHOLDER (Matt. xx. 16.)—The principle of grace and divine sovereignty, applied to the labours of the faithful when considered as servants; the reward. In order to understand this parable, chapter xx. 16 and chapter xix. 30 must be compared together. The parable of chapter xx. is a guard against the abuse which the flesh would make of what Christ had said of the recompense for giving up all that a man has, at the end of chapter xix:

THE FIG TREE CURSED (Matt. xxi. 19.)—This is an historic fact. It is a judgment of the Jewish nation, as a tree, that it should no more bear fruit.

THE TWO SONS (Matt. xxi. 28.)—Those who pretend to a righteousness of their own in contrast with sinners.

THE MEN OF THE VINEYARD (Matt. xxi. 33.)—

The conduct of the Jews toward the prophets and Christ, and the divine judgment thereupon.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON (Matt. xxii.) Invitation addressed first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. In Luke xiv. 16, *the poor* are introduced in contrast with *the rich*; but, to be recognized as a guest, we must of necessity *put on Christ*.

THE UNFAITHFUL SERVANT (Matt. xxiv. 45.)—The ministry of the Church as to its responsibility, and a warning, that, to defer the thought of Christ's return leads to unfaithfulness and judgment.

THE TEN VIRGINS (Matt. xxv.)—While Christ prolongs His absence, the *whole Church* loses the idea of His return, and slumbers; but the cry of His return breaks its slumber, and those who have the Holy Ghost are separated from the others. The judgment depends upon the lack or possession of grace.

THE TALENTS (Matt. xxv. 14.)—This parable judges responsibility according to the use of gifts received. In this parable, in Matthew, that which specially has prominence is the sovereignty of God; in Luke it is more peculiarly the responsibility of man (Luke xix. 18.)

THE PIECE OF NEW CLOTH PUT INTO THE OLD (Matt. ix. 16).—Jesus gives two reasons why His disciples did not fast: the first is, His presence with them; the second, that it is impossible to give new force to old habits and old traditions.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN (Luke x.) is the spirit of grace, which, acting in us, makes every one to be our neighbour. The priests and Levites were the persons who should have represented God, but love was wanting. Jesus perfectly did so.

THE SERVANT FOUND WATCHING (Luke xii. 35, etc.)—The Church, if faithful, will be set over all that Christ has. Faithfulness during the absence of Christ rewarded with the enjoyment of all that He inherits.

THE BARREN FIG TREE (Luke xiii.)—It is Christ who stays the judgments of God on the Jewish people by His intercession; but, His labour being without response, He leaves the people to the course of the judgments. The fig tree (Jews) being rejected, the mustard seed (professing Church) takes its place.

THE UNFAITHFUL STEWARD (Luke xvi.)—Man having lost, by his unfaithfulness, the *right* to dispose of the creatures of God, yet still enjoying the power of doing so, is invited, by grace, to the mansions on high, which are God's.

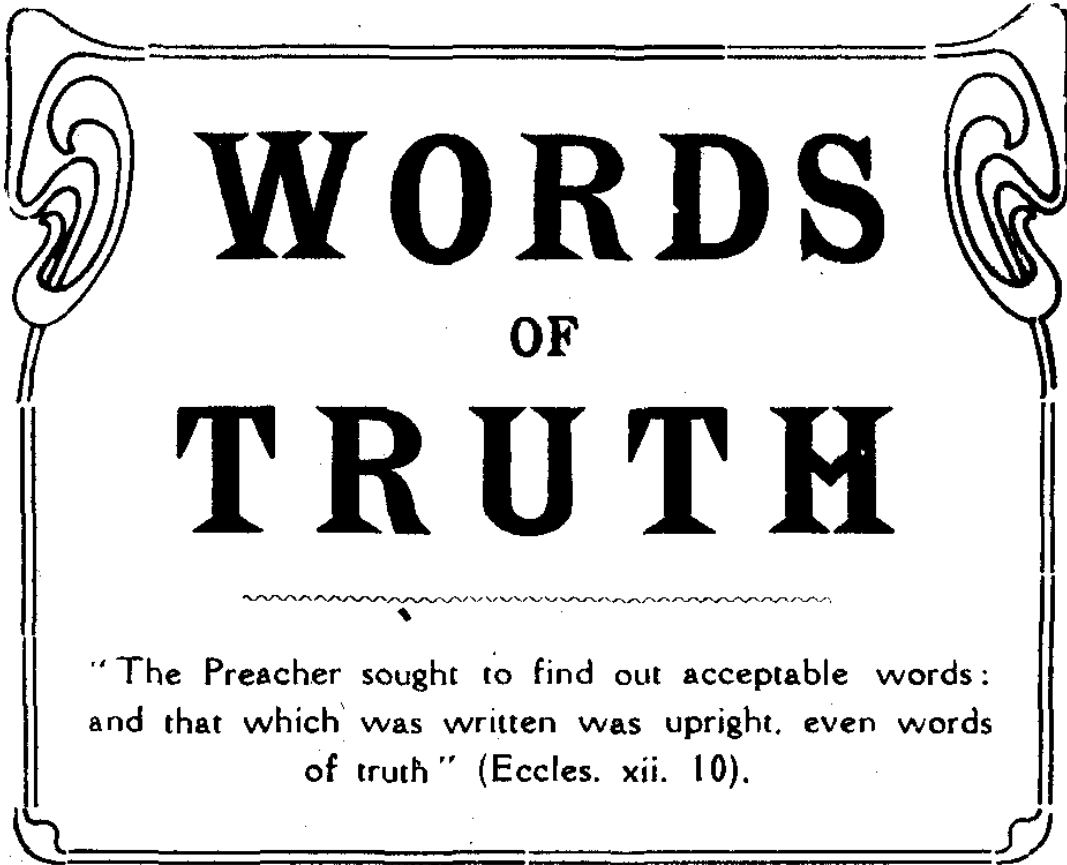
THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS (Luke xvi.)—This parable casts the light of the world to come on the circumstances of the present world, in order that we may judge morally.

THE IMPORTUNATE WIDOW (Luke xviii.)—God, who apparently delays, executes judgment in the end, for those who wait on Him. This specially applies to the Jewish residue in the last day. When Christ comes, man will not expect to find Him at His return an avenger.

JESUS THE TRUE VINE (John xv.)—Jesus, as the true Vine, takes the place of the Jewish nation (Isa. v.)

THE DOOR AND THE SHEPHERD (John x.)—Jesus, fulfilling all that God had said of the Messiah, enters by the door, which is Himself, and which is set forth as the sole way of entrance: thus He becomes the door for all His sheep.

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"We are always Confident."

"Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident; *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him" (2 Cor. v. 5-9).

WHAT God has wrought is enough to warrant every believer in the Lord Jesus having the fullest confidence in Him. There is not the least excuse for fear or mistrust. Every need has been met, and every necessity provided for. There is not a state of soul, not a step of the way the believer is called to pass, that has not been anticipated. God has been *for* us in His counsels and ways in Christ, and always will be *for* us. Not only has He redeemed us *from*

sin, and Satan, and death, and rescued us *from* this present evil age, but He has redeemed us *unto* Himself, *unto* eternal glory; predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the power whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

Christians in the apostles' days knew these things; hence they could say, "We are always confident." Like other men they had every now and then something to humble them; but this did not shake their confidence in God. Paul speaks of fightings without and fears within, of his having been so tried with troublous circumstances as to be pressed out of measure and above strength; but this did not shake his confidence in God. Whatever might be the difficulties of the path, the workings of Satan to hinder, or the failure of the saints, still he could say, "We are *always* confident."

It is well to see this, and to learn from Scripture the true secret of abiding confidence. It is clear that if this confidence on the part of Paul had been grounded on what he was, or felt, or experienced, or wrought, it would have been very changeable; for of whom could it have been said, but of the blessed Lord Himself, that he changed not? If this confidence had been based on Paul's success in his ministerial labours it would have greatly fluctuated; for if at one moment he had difficulty in restraining some from worshipping him as a god, at another moment they tried to stone him to death. The Christians who at one time were ready to pluck out their eyes for him, at another counted him as their enemy. Many

who once walked with him in brotherly affection and confidence afterward turned away from him. But with all these changes, he could still look up, and say, “ We are *always* confident.”

Paul was contemplating eternal realities when he wrote these words. He knew that his earthly tabernacle was a tent, and had the sentence of death on it. He felt that he was a sinner, chief of sinners; and that as a saint he was less than the least, and not meet to be called an apostle. But he knew whom he had believed. He knew the blessedness of the fact that Christ was delivered for his offences, and raised again for his justification. He gloried in the cross. He rejoiced in having redemption, and being made nigh to God in Christ Jesus, and through His blood. He triumphed in an already accomplished work; so that when a question suggested itself to him as to the security of the believer, his answer was, “ 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.” (Rom. viii. 34.)

These are realities on which the soul can rest, and they are enough to give the surest ground of confidence. No marvel, therefore that the apostle expressed himself thus: “ We *know* [not we hope, but we KNOW] that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2 Cor. v. 1).

Blessed confidence! The triumph and language of faith; the utterance of a soul at perfect “ peace with God.” (Rom. v. 1). There is no “ if ” here; but it is the expression of full rest and unquestionable hope. It is a soul declaring

that it has everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.

But more than this. He goes on to say, "Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us *the earnest of the Spirit.*"

This is more than forgiveness, or even acceptance; it is the consciousness of having received already part of the eternal possession; the Holy Ghost having been given as the abiding Comforter, the Earnest of all the glories that are to follow. Paul knew that, as a believer, he was "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, *the earnest of our inheritance*, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." (Eph. i. 14). He was therefore already in the enjoyment of part of the blessings that the precious blood of Christ had secured for him. That is why he could joyfully say, "Therefore we are always confident."

What more, I would ask, can the believer have to assure him of his eternal security, and of the certainty of being for ever in heavenly glory, than the present possession of the abiding Comforter? Blessed fruit this of the redemption work of Jesus! Glorious gift to the sons of God! for surely the Holy Spirit could not dwell in an unpurged temple. What could He have to seal on the heart of a sin-stricken soul who has fled to Jesus to escape the wrath to come but the infinite value, cleansing power, and sanctifying efficacy of the precious blood of Christ? And to whom could He possibly be "the Earnest" but to the heirs of God and the joint-heirs with Christ? (Rom. viii. 17.)

The subject here, then, is the security of the

believer. The truth opened up is the ground of his present and everlasting rejoicing in Christ. How blessed! What dishonour to the Lord it would be for a believer to be fearing and questioning his eternal safety, when such an unquestionable warrant for continued confidence is spread out before him in the Scriptures of infallible truth!

It is clear, then, that the faithful and unchanging love of God is the one sufficient ground of being “always confident.” Creatures cannot be trusted; every cistern becomes broken; every gourd withers; death is stamped on every thing we see; the most devoted saint knows that he is full of imperfections; experiences are ever varying; frames and feelings alter continually; but God changes not. He abides faithful. He cannot deny Himself. His mercy endures for ever. His word will never pass away. He delivered up His beloved Son that we might live through Him; and Jesus having finished the work, which it was God’s will He should do, God raised Him from the dead, and exalted Him to His own right hand. In heaven He now appears for us, pleads for us, shepherds us, blesses us, and unceasingly cares for us.

Well may we worship the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; well may we sing, “Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me, bless His holy name!” (Ps. ciii. 1.)

“ Secured in Christ, their Head on high,
 The saints below may boldly cry,
 Praise to our God! Amen!
 To God in Christ all praise be given;
 For evermore, on earth, in heaven.
 Amen! amen! amen!”

Meditations on the First Epistle of John.

XIV.

THIS is what the Jews betray, incompetency, to understand Jesus. He says to them, "You do not understand my words; my very language is that of a barbarian to you."

It is not alone that the natural man wants a lesson; he wants faculty also to understand. This is a solemn conclusion to this epistle, though it magnifies the grace of God. Nothing exhausts love; love never fails. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is anything too great to expect from Him? If I can say this of His power, why cannot I say it of His love? Can I expect too much of His love? Never! So when He finds me incompetent, darkness around and darkness within, He turns both into light. Otherwise the mission of the Son of God has not been answered. But He hath given us an understanding; and now you are debtors to Him for everything, for the lesson and the understanding. It is just what you would like to be, and that for ever: "A debtor to mercy alone."

In conclusion, I would observe that just as Jesus honoured the Father, so the Spirit honours Jesus. When Jesus speaks of the Father, it is to hide Himself behind Him. "That they might know Thee, the only true God." (John xvii. 3.) So the Spirit delights to look at the Son, and say, "This is the true God, and eternal life." (v. 20.)

It is very beautiful to study the economic

places of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Son honours the Father, and the Holy Ghost honours the Son; and in worship of this name we stand, the name in which we have been baptized.

Verse 21 is often used in a very poor, feeble, moral way, as if it were to warn against going after the world. True, the love of money is idolatry, but the thought here is higher. Go, fashion to yourself all the attributes of beauty, excellence, and wisdom, and mould them into a deity; adorn it as you please with every grace; it is but a creature of your own imagination. Your idolatry may be more refined and theistic than the worship of Jupiter or Juno, but if it be not the God who has revealed Himself in Christ whom you worship, you are but an idolater after all.

Let us now glance over a few of the leading characteristics of this epistle, as we have spoken of them.

1. We have God as "light" and "love" in contradistinction to Satan's lie in Eden.

2. Then we have Christ as the manifestation of truth, that Eternal Life which was with the Father. He came into the world freighted with truth, and went back to heaven freighted with salvation! Glorious journey that was, and full revelation.

3. The Spirit, too, has here one peculiar, defined character: it is "Unction." Other characters He has elsewhere mentioned, is "Seal," and "Earnest," but here He waits on Christ as the Spirit of Truth.

The truth of God was to be manifested, and the Spirit of God waited on the ministry, and made it the happy possession of our souls.

4. Then we have the world formed by the lie of the Serpent, and nourished by its vitalizing, kindling power.

5. We have the new undefilable nature, and we have the new life, neither committed to us, nor maintained, but drawn from an indestructible Source.

6. This brings us to victory. The new life being a divine principle, is of necessity victorious. You are often defeated; faith never is; unbelief is made a fool of, faith never. "This is the victory," etc.

7. Lastly, we have tests. "He that doeth not righteousness," etc., etc. Do you like these tests? Would you not have the divine nature produce in you its proper fruits? It must prove itself in you, as in Christ, shining forth in righteousness and love. We have God, Christ, the Spirit, the new nature, the victory of faith, and tests.

It is well to muse a little over these things, this wondrous treasury. You are not with the Church, but with God. It is blessed to walk with saints; there are duties we cannot fulfil apart from them; it is precious to be with the people of God; but after all the *great thing is to be with Himself*. The Lord grant that we may know and prize His company. Amen.

The more deeply I feel the action of the word of God in my own heart, the more I shall feel and exhibit its formative influence upon my entire course, character, and conduct.

The Walk of the Christian.

I.

AFTER the great and fundamental question of salvation, in other words, the certainty that we are sheltered from judgment, and pardoned, and that, "having been justified on the principle of faith, we have peace with God," there arises another question of the greatest importance, whether as regards the glory of God or as regards our own enjoyment of His favour in real communion.

This question is that of our walk; our walk, that is, as redeemed sinners cleansed by the blood of Christ; surrounded by a world at enmity with God, and that "lieth in the wicked one"; in the midst, too, of varied circumstances necessarily connected with our existence in this scene and with the fact of our being in a state of weakness, having the flesh within us, and subject to the attacks and snares of the enemy of our souls.

Having been delivered from the burden of our sins, having escaped the threatened judgment, what life should we henceforth lead?

Christian life, whether in outline or in detail, is portrayed for us in the Epistles. Let us take, for instance, that which Paul desired for the Colossians: "That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might *walk* worthy of the Lord *unto all pleasing*, being fruitful *unto every good work*, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, *unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks* unto the

Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” (Col. i. 9-12.)

In this same epistle the apostle exhorts the believers in these words: “Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body: and be ye thankful.” (Col. iii. 12-15.)

We might cite many other passages; such as Rom. xii. ; 1 Thess. v. 14-18; 1 Pet. i. 13-22, etc.; and add to them the one that sets forth the exalted level to which the Christian’s walk is raised: “Be ye therefore followers [more literally imitators] of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ has loved us” (Eph. v. 1-2.)

We can also see how the Christian walk is traced out in the details of reciprocal duties arising from various earthly relationships; and this not merely by a law that regulates external acts, but according to a power which penetrates to our thoughts and innermost feelings at all times. Christian walk ought to be the manifestation of the life of Christ. The believer is no longer his own; all is done for the Lord; all has reference to Him.

But how can this life be actually realised? How is it possible to walk as Christ did? (1 John ii. 6.) In a case of real conversion where there has been a deep conviction of sin, in the first

ardour of a soul who has found the Saviour, full of joy and fervour; guided (so to speak) by the instinct of the new life given, the young believer seizes with avidity upon the fact that he is no longer his own, and has no longer to live for himself. He only sees this, he only thinks of the One who has set him free, and of the salvation that has been given him; his heart overflows, and he desires neither to think nor speak of any but the Saviour.

In most cases this time of joy does not last long. There are seen, alas, Christians who, after these first moments of great happiness, when they ran well (Gal. v. 7), cool down by degrees, and fall into a kind of indifference. They content themselves, as regards their conduct, with certain religious observances, and with a simple code of morality much on a par with respectable people of the world; a very faint carrying out of the life of Christ, if indeed it can be called such at all. What is sadder still, some others, leaving Christ and His glory on one side, eventually go on as if their thoughts were confined to the things of the earth. (Phil. iii. 19.) These are the objects of their thoughts, and occupy their hearts and their lives. In this kind of life there are even some who, to excuse their shortcomings, which often expose them to the world's censure, claim that they are not under law but under grace, thus nullifying grace.

The words of Peter in his second epistle might be applied to both the above-named classes: "Blind, and cannot see afar off, and have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins." (2 Pet. i. 9.)

From a Christian there is surely something

more required than the respectability and morality current in the world; there should be above all the hatred and horror of sin, which is inexcusable in a Christian; there should be that love of holiness which results in a complete separation from evil to the glory of Christ.

On the other hand, persons may be encountered who, after conversion, have their consciences and spiritual senses exercised, are sober, and really desire to serve the Lord in all respects. In many cases, however, as the result of bad teaching, they put themselves under law, and seek to reach some visionary perfection. Sometimes they delude themselves as to the precise point they have reached; but being usually sincere and sober persons, they discover with sorrow that sin is not banished. Their efforts merely end in the demonstration of its existence within them, as also in their impotence to conquer and get rid of it. They are consequently continually troubled, and even lose the assurance of salvation, which they make to depend on their walk, and they cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?"

Now, after all, what should be the walk of one redeemed by Christ? Should it not be a path of holiness, righteousness, truth and love? For the new man has been put on, created according to God in righteousness and sanctification of the truth. The redeemed one is called upon to walk in love. How, then, can one walk in this path while here below?

As to the holiness to which we are called the Word is very explicit. (1 Thess. iv. 7). In the first place there is the fact that, as believers, we are sanctified, set apart by the Spirit, by the

Word, and by blood, and that before God we are holy and without blame in Christ. (Eph. i. 4.) He is our sanctification. On the other hand, the necessity of practical holiness is no less pressed in Scripture, so that there may be a walk to the glory of God in every detail of our lives. "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Pet. 15-16.)

But we find out (and the Word of God records the fact, and indeed insists on it, 1 John i. 8), that sin, the flesh, is always in us. How, then, can we be delivered from the difficulty that the presence of sin produces when we know that God condemns sin? How, indeed, can we be delivered from its power, so that it does not hamper our walking in practical holiness, that is, in the entire consecration to God of our whole being? (Rom. xii. 1-2.)

To answer this question we must bear in mind that the extent of the work of Christ was not only that He underwent the judgment of God as bearing our sins, and that we are pardoned sinners, and justified before God. There is another side of this wondrous work, which completes the first, and which has its bearing on our walk. We are put in a new place before God.

Scripture teaches us that not only "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1), and thus benefited by what Christ suffered for our sins, but that we are also delivered from sin which is in us, first, as to its *imputation*, and then as to its power and its rule over us.

How is this double deliverance effected?

1. Scripture teaches us that not only Christ died for us, but that we have died with Him, and are dead to sin. (Rom. vi. 1-14.) Baptism is like a public declaration of the fact that we have been buried. Now, it is only the dead that are buried. To be baptised into Christ is the public declaration that I have part in His death. Now, at the Cross, sin (not *sins*, but *sin*) was condemned in the person of Christ, made to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Cor. v. 21.) "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. viii. 3), and I, who by faith have part with Christ in His death, know that sin, which is in me, has been condemned at the Cross. I know that judicially sin has come to an end before God as regards its being imputed to me. *Sins*, the guilty acts, the fruit or evidences of *sin*, may be pardoned or remitted. But sin itself, a nature, a corrupt nature, cannot be pardoned, and can only be destroyed by death.

Now, our old man, and all that it implies, the body of sin, all that made up our old nature, has been crucified with Christ, so that the body of sin has been destroyed, has come to an end judicially before God. (Rom. vi. 6.)

The word of God is the *ground* of faith; the Lord Jesus Christ is the *object* of faith; God Himself is the *source* of faith. Seeing Him who is invisible is faith in *exercise*; holiness is the *fruit* of faith, and "It is written" is the *language* of faith. It is *by* faith, not *for* faith, that we are justified.

“One Thing is Needful.”

(Luke x 42.)

THE Christian's path through this world is so beset with dangers on every side, that a right sense of his own weakness and great responsibility will make him fear and tremble. And justly so. But this will lead him, not to despair, but to trust in the living God. Where there is no proper sense of weakness and responsibility, there can be no security for Christian consistency.

Covetousness, pride, vain-glory, carnal ease, self-indulgence, are some of the snares that surround the path of worldly prosperity. And the enemy watching our tendencies, knows how to foster and increase them. Hence we may find some who would strongly object to vain display and self-indulgence, caught in the snare of covetousness, and that under the plea of frugality, or even humility. Adversity, too, has its snares. There may be complaining, envy, and discontent, along with our difficulties.

But we dwell not on these; rather would we turn to the remedy, by which we may be preserved from every wile of the enemy. Nothing short of personal communion with the Son, who is with the Father, is adequate to raise the soul above the dangers of prosperity and adversity, above self and the world, above the association of nature, and above all the attractions of earth.

The Lord in His great mercy teach us all these lessons of faith, and enable us to manifest the efficacy of His presence as enjoyed amidst the toils and trials of this world.

“In Everything Give Thanks.”

(1 Thess. v. 18).

I thank Thee, O Lord, for the gift of affliction,
For wounding my spirit, for breaking my rest;
I bless Thee, O Lord, for the sweet benediction;
In love Thou hast done it; Thy way is the best.

I thank Thee, O Lord, for conflict, temptation,
For the harass of Satan, for weariness, pain;
In all Thou hast granted me strong consolation,
In all Thou hast shown me Thy love and my
gain.

I thank Thee, O Lord, for my tears and my
sorrow,
For frequent chastisings, for uncertainty's care;
Thy wisdom forbids me to boast of the morrow,
Thy goodness protects me 'gainst every snare.

I pray Thee, O Lord, Thou still wilt uphold me;
Thou knowest my weakness; Thou ponderest
my way:

Preserve me, support me, comfort and keep me,
Lest I should grow weary, or wander astray.

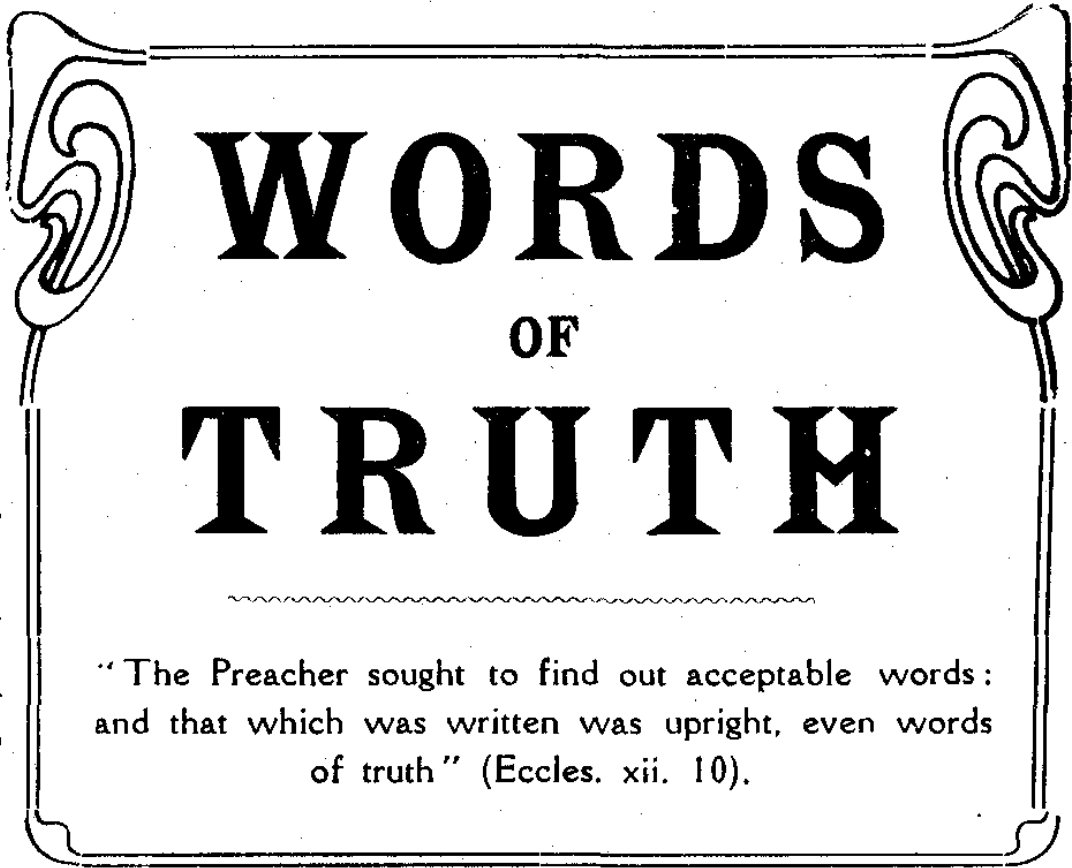
I thank Thee, O Lord, for the rest of Thy
presence!

Strong refuge! Sweet calm of my troublous
night!

Of heaven's own gladness and brightness the
essence!

The glory I look for till dawns the true light.
I thank Thee, my Lord, for the gift of affliction,
For wounding my spirit, for breaking my rest:
I bless Thee, my Lord, for Thy love's benediction;
In grace Thou hast wounded; Thy way is the
best.

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**Millennial Contrasts; or, The
Moral Power of
"the World to Come."**

(Hebrews ii. 5, vi. 5.)

I HAVE specially taken pleasure of late in considering the *moral* happiness of heaven and of the Millennium; for what a relief it must be to be free of the selfishness and pride which so spoils the pleasures of the heart now, and of many and many a working of our impure and perverted nature; and Scripture, more largely than we may suppose, gives us witnesses and examples of this character of heavenly enjoyments.

We know that great physical power or virtue will attend the coming kingdom of Christ. Then, as prophets sing, "the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom as the rose the lame shall

leap as an hart, the tongue of the dumb shall sing"; the wolf shall lie down with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid. Nature, in all its order, shall own the presence of the Lord. The floods shall lift up their voice, the trees of the wood shall rejoice before Him. As creation has already felt the bondage of corruption, it shall then feel the liberty of glory. (Rom. viii. 21.)

It will be like the awakening of latent sensibilities, like the sweeping of an exquisite instrument by the touch of a master-hand. For it is the *same* creation, the *same* vegetable and animal world still, but under new authority. Let the sons of God be manifested in their glory, let the Lord's holy mountain be established, and His knowledge cover the earth as the waters do the sea, and then the whole system, as thus pictured by the prophets, shall spring forth into new conditions.

And so in *man*, when the powers of that coming age take him for their subject. Let but the glory appear, let but the passage be made from "this present evil world" into "the world to come," and new principles will rise at once to gild the scene, and give to all personal and social life its richest enjoyments; that is, its *moral* enjoyments. This will be the sweeping with perfect skill an instrument of still finer workmanship; for there are in the renewed mind latent qualities of admirable texture and beauty.

In its present condition it has to struggle with nature, and to suffer sore let and hindrance from the flesh. It is oppressed and encumbered by a gross atmosphere which ever surrounds it; but it has qualities inlaid in it of admirable excellence. It has capabilities of acting, judging, and feeling of the highest order, partaking, as we know, of

“the divine nature.” (2 Pet. i. 4.) And let but the due power reach it and move it, and all these latent sensibilities and faculties will be awakened.

Let but the presence of Christ address itself to the renewed mind brought into the liberty of the kingdom, and forms of moral beauty in purity and benevolence throughout all personal and social life will be blessedly unfolded. It will not be another creation, but the same “new creature” in other conditions, all its powers and affections finding their exercise in their native air, and under their proper and undisturbed influences.

Scripture, as I have observed, more largely than we may suppose, gives us the witnesses of this character of the virtues and enjoyments of the kingdom. Some of them I will now look at shortly.

In Genesis xxi. 22-34, the father of Israel and the Gentile are seen together, for a mystic moment, as Israel and the nations will be in the days of the kingdom. All is peace and good-will between them. Questions which before had divided them are settled. The ways of their hearts, in themselves and towards each other, are all right. No grudging here, no provoking there. All pure social affections and principles adorn the scene of their intercourse. Abraham's grove makes the desert to blossom, and his altar makes the earth a sanctuary; but his way with Abimelech and Abimelech's with him witness the presence and power of right moral principles and pure social affections, giving the moment its highest character and richest enjoyments.

But how had it been with Abraham and Abimelech before? What was the moral of the scene

when they last met? I need not speak of it; the preceding chapter, as we know, tells us. But what a change! The very same men are here before us, the Abimelech and the Abraham of chapter xx.; but what a change! How blessed to think of it! No trespass now of defiling lusts, no practising the skill of a guileful heart. The scene is morally new, though the materials are the same. Because, in principle, there has been a passage out of "this present evil world" into "the world to come."

And so between Isaac and another Abimelech. It is of one character with this, and therefore I need not further notice it than as being another happy witness of the moral virtue that there will be in millennial days, when the atmosphere will be cleared of its noxious humours which now so dim and taint the whole social system. (Gen. xxvi.)

Exodus xviii. presents a kindred occasion. The whole family in heaven and on earth are there seen, holding high and holy communion, and nothing of nature soils it. Jethro acts the part of the heavenly visitor, Moses that of the head and representative of the earthly people, and the people themselves are there, waiting upon him in full subjection, "to enquire of God," and know "the judgment of God" in their matters. All is happy, from the highest to the lowest, throughout this mystic millennial heavens and earth; all is full of moral beauty and order.

And only remember of what materials such a lovely scene is formed! The last time that Moses and Zipporah were together, they parted as in a rage; the last time the people are seen and heard, it was murmuring again and again at the

ways of the Lord, one after another. (Exod. iv., xv.—xvii.) The same Moses, the same Zipporah, the same people; but morally how different! The people enquire and obey, instead of murmuring; and Zipporah's offence with her "bloody husband" ends in her bringing back her children to greet and rejoice with her lord.

Is there to be in those coming days, as we know there is, a transfiguration, and in the heavenly places that which is now natural will then be spiritual, and the corruptible will be raised in glory? And is there to be then, in the earthly places, as we know there is, the leopard dwelling with the kid, and the child playing upon the hole of the asp? And are such prospects bright and animating? And shall these *moral* transfigurations be left so? Is not the hope of them bright and animating also, yea, unspeakably so? Is it not deeply cheering to our spirits, that such an air as this shall be breathed, when once "the mount of God" is reached? (Exod. xviii. 5.) Cloud and vapour gather over the road to it, where now we travel; but the sunshine of purity and love gilds the hill itself for ever and ever.

But again; that generation in Israel which lived in the closing days of David and in the opening days of Solomon gives us another witness and example of the same mystery. As David was ending his reign, they carry themselves very badly. Absalom had stolen their hearts from his father, and Sheba, the son of Bichri, had headed them against his king. And at the very end Adonijah makes a party for himself out of them. The whole moral state, with the exception of a remnant, is **forbidding indeed.**

But millennial days were at hand. The sceptre

of the King of glory waves across the scene, and there is virtue in it, strange and precious virtue. Confusion and enmities cease. Roots of bitterness are extracted from the soil. The people are happy in each other's happiness. Instead of Judah and Israel numbering each other to the sword, "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry." Instead of going again to the wood of Ephraim to battle, they sit under their vines and fig-trees, calling each other their neighbour, and none making them afraid. The sword is turned into the plough-share, I may say, in more senses than one. (2 Sam. xv. ; 1 Kings iv.)

What comfort is there in all this? Pass but the boundaries of the two worlds, leave man's day for the day of the Lord, and all this moral renovation, with its thousand shrines and streams of social happiness, will be known even in the place where pride and selfishness now spoil, or at least depreciate, all the pleasures of our hearts.

And again in the mouth of another witness the same joy is proved to us. The sight we get of "the holy mount" tells the same wondrous, happy tale. (Mark ix. 1-8.) There, the kingdom shines before us in its heavenly and earthly places. We see the *progression* of glory in some, and the *vision* of it only in others. But no grudging, no provoking attends this. Peter utters the moral power of such a moment as this, for all with him is gladness and benevolence, satisfaction and unselfishness. And yet who was this Peter? The man who shortly before, as at the foot of that hill, had been an offence to the Lord; resisting that very truth which the heavenly

strangers, who now so ravish him, talk about; savouring there of the things "of men," but now so richly of those that be "of God"! (Luke ix. 27-36.)

And yet all this exquisite moral change in Peter does not bespeak him so much as the virtue of the place he was in. He wist not what to say. All that, however, makes it only the more blessed to us. For it is the presence of Christ that forms him and fills him, making him thus the necessary witness of its benevolence and joy.

And I ask, If the possession of glory, or even the vision of glory, be thus to be desired, what says the heart to this prospect of being freed of its own selfishness, breathing elements which gender love and purity like this? Surely we are now harassed by our corruption; again and again discouraged and depressed by the low condition of the saints, the contrary sources into which changeful tempers and passions are urging us; with jealousies that daily arise; heart-burnings, debates, and whisperings. But all this is to end. All this shall yield to the authority of all personal and social virtues, as soon as "the mountain of the Lord's house" is established. (Isa. ii. 2.) "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." (Isa. xi. 13.)

It is this one feature, common to each of these samples of millennial days, that has at this time particularly attracted one. In each of these scenes and illustrations there was so much of the working of perverted nature just before, but immediately on reaching the place of the power of the day of the Lord, the purest and happiest principles and affections adorn and animate everything.

Such is the moral power of "the world to come," or *in* it, if we would rather that it were so expressed. It is but a little while, and thus shall it be. And happy to apply all this to our own history. The *very same brethren*, who now so often grieve one another, will ere long be sharers, yea, helpers, of each other's joy. The air of the kingdom, the presence of Christ, will have such virtue accompanying it.

But then, I ask, can we indeed say that we prize such a prospect of moral happiness as this, which is to be ours in the presence of the Lord, and not even now cherish that presence, and the virtues of it in spirit?

Surely we cannot. And though I have hinted it before, I may just add, If the atmosphere of the coming kingdom be thus *a cure for corruption*, how will it have *power to nourish and expand the virtues of the renewed mind*? In the Holy Ghost it will then unfold its affections and faculties, as in its native air; the day-star, at least in the heavenly places, will then have arisen in the heart. (2 Pet. i. 19.)

HOLY delight in God, having Him always before the face, leads to perfect delight and joy in God, when His presence makes it full. Faithfulness, internal and external, to God, in the midst of an opposing and perhaps oppressing world, leads to righteous recompense of glory, and God's presence in righteousness. Both are perfect in Christ, and through Christ the portion of the saints.

The Walk of the Christian.

II.

WHAT is important to lay hold of by faith is that I am dead to sin with Christ, for God has declared it. Christ, after being made sin, has passed through death, has made an end of sin, for "He that is dead is freed from sin." (Rom. vi. 7.) For no crime whatever can a dead man be condemned. Christ has come, in the likeness of sinful flesh (there was no sin in Him). He was made sin, and as such, was a sacrifice for sin. Thus sin in the flesh was judged and condemned at the Cross. The sin that I find in myself has been condemned, and in the sight of God has come to an end, and God no longer condemns me on account of it.

To put the matter shortly, I was formerly in the flesh as a child of Adam. Sin was then in me by nature. But now, having believed, I am in Christ, who was made sin, and was a sacrifice for sin. The condemnation due to sin thus no longer exists for me. I have died even as Christ died, to the old order of things, and I am no longer condemned or brought into judgment by its presence in me. This is an immense truth, highly important for all of us to accept in all simplicity; more especially as regards those who are troubled by feeling that sin, the corrupt nature, is always in us. That nature is not dead, but I am dead, and I know that if it is in me it is there as a thing both judged and condemned, and that I have to consider it so.

2. But it may be said, This does not prevent sin showing its presence by deeds, and am I not condemned for those acts? How can I walk without giving way to sin? No doubt if I give

way to the corrupt nature which is in me, and is always seeking manifestation, I am guilty. The question is now to know how to escape from the rule or sway of sin. It is there, and the mere fact of its *existence* does not condemn me, but its activity, if I allow it to act. How can I be delivered from its activity? The answer is the same as for imputation. It can only be done by *death*.

In the sixth chapter of Romans we see that if we have died with Christ to sin; if our old man has been crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, it is that we might henceforth not serve sin (*v. 6*) to which we are dead. A dead person can do nothing. We are to consider ourselves dead to sin, and no longer have anything to do with it, nor it with us. If it stirs we must leave it aside, neither pausing to consider or reason with it, but pressing forward.

In order to carry out this line of action we must seize upon another aspect of the truth; that is, if we are dead to sin, we are by no means dead before God. In reality, if we have part with Christ in His death as regards sin, we also have part with Him in His life as regards God. (Col. ii. 20, iii. 1). Christ has been raised from among the dead by the glory of the Father. (Rom. vi. 4.) He went down into death enduring the penalty of our sins, and as a victim for sins. But God, fully satisfied, has not left His Son in the grave. In His glorious power, and as Father, He has raised from the dead the Son who had glorified Him by obedience. It was an act of divine righteousness. (John xvi. 10.) Christ has thus entered into the power of a life new and eternal. He dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him. He died unto sin once for all. He

liveth unto God, and that for ever. (Rom. vi. 9, 10.) And we, identified with Him in the likeness of His death, being dead to sin, enter with Him, like Him, upon a new life "so that as Christ was raised up from the dead . . . so also we *should walk* in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 4); life beyond the reach of death, of sin, of judgment, and of Satan's power.

So we are identified with Christ in His death, and have done with the old man. We are now identified with His present life. He liveth to God; and this is the ground of our walk in newness of life; as it is written: "*So that* like as Christ was raised from among the dead . . . we should walk in newness of life."

Note well it is not said, "We ought to walk," as if a law were laid down; but it is a result of our identification with Christ. Normally it cannot be otherwise, and should not be in practice.

We would point out that we are not looked upon in Romans vi. as risen with Christ, as we find in Colossians iii., but only as identified with Him to walk in "newness of life." It is no longer the life we lived when sin had sway over us, but a new manner, a new method, of life. It is a life according to God, before Him and for Him. Our resurrection (that of our bodies) is put before us as future, entirely a result of our identification with Christ. "For if we be dead with Christ we believe we shall also live with Him." (v. 8.)

So that even as Christ lives in a life free from sin, which He took upon Himself, we are also there with Him to live no longer to sin but to God. We have passed from one state to another, we have to apprehend by faith that vital exhorta-

tion, the result of our identification with Christ: "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God *through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" It is the basis and starting-point of our walk as Christians.

Now what really is the consequence of what the Apostle has just established? "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but *yield yourselves unto God* as those that are *alive from the dead*, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin *shall not have dominion* over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Rom. vi. 12-14.) Sin, while reigning in our mortal bodies, makes us yield to the lusts of the flesh, and uses our members to do evil. The ear is pleased at that which flatters our senses and imagination, and listens to seductive and impure words, foolish talking or jesting. (Eph. v. 3, 4.) The eye is caught by that which shines, by that which produces pleasant sensations, or by unseemly things which cause envy in the heart. The mouth is used by sin for talk that may be either idle, false, flattering, backbiting, scandalous, or even blasphemous. (James iii.) The feet carry us whither we should not go, into the midst of the world, amongst mockers and profane people. Our hands become the tools of unrighteousness, violence, or even death. (Rom. iii. 13-16.)

Thus it is that sin, reigning over man, makes his members carry out all kinds of iniquity. But, on the one hand, if I am a Christian, being dead to sin, if I reckon myself dead, I escape from its

rule. Can one have dominion over a dead person? Can you make such a one do anything? While I reckon myself dead, sin will not reign over me; I shall not give way to it; and I shall not yield my members to do evil.

But there is another aspect of the truth. I am alive, but in a new life, given me in grace, and as identified with Christ; I am alive unto God. As dead with Christ I no longer serve sin; as alive I serve God, I yield myself to Him, and those same members that served sin, to do all kinds of evil, become instruments of righteousness, given up to God, to serve Him as He pleases. Marvelous and happy change!

We may note in passing that unconverted souls are often exhorted, "Give yourselves to God." No doubt by this is meant, "Be converted; turn to God." But the phrase may give the false impression that man is worth something, and can do something in his own strength. To give myself I must have life, and to have this, I must have believed that Christ died for me. Man would give himself in order to live. The word of God, on the contrary, says, "You are alive to God in Christ Jesus; yield yourselves up to Him." The Christian, dead to sin, and living to God, finds himself put into the only real and happy liberty where Christ has placed him in setting him free. (See Gal. v. 1.) He can yield himself up to God to serve Him. Note the phrase "*in Christ Jesus*," for apart from Him there is no life for God, there is nothing.

What says the law to us? "Do this, and thou shalt live." Obedience to what is laid down is the condition of life. But how can one act so as to carry out the law if one has not life? or, even

if life were possessed, strength should be lacking? I try then to do what the law ordains, but even if I reach abstinence from outward evil, I find within me envy, desires after forbidden things, evil thoughts, bad feelings. I struggle in vain; sin is too strong. (See Rom. vii. 7, 8, 15-23.) While I am under the law, sin dominates, the strength of sin is the law. (1 Cor. xv. 56.)

Divine Grace in the Christian.

I.

IT is very striking to find that in every epistle of the Apostle Paul, with the exception of that to the Galatians, he gives thanks unceasingly to God for the saints to whom he writes, remembering them in his prayers night and day. His heart being with God, praise to Him is the first thing that rises up; though afterwards he may have to instruct or rebuke or correct them in his letters. The heart being thus with God gets at that which God gives.

In the case of the Galatians they had apparently got off the ground of justification by faith, so that the apostle stands in doubt of them; and yet, after he has expressed his feelings of perplexity and sorrow at their state, we find his heart is still with God above the circumstances, enabling him to say, "I have confidence in you through the Lord." (Gal. v. 10.)

Now, this is just what we need in passing through the world. We must go through it, and God means that we should find it a place of trial and difficulty, that it may test our hearts, and teach us what He is to us under all.

It is important, however, to remember that all our exercises, I mean Christian exercises, follow complete and finished redemption. There are exercises in Egypt before we know redemption; making bricks without straw, and the taskmaster's lash. But the Red Sea delivered God's redeemed for ever from Egypt, as we read in the song of Moses: "Thou hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength to Thy holy habitation." (Exod. xv. 10.) The wilderness journey is not contemplated in this song. It is deliverance from Egypt, and God setting the redeemed in His inheritance.

So with us. Our redemption in Christ has delivered us from the world, and sin, and death, and has brought us, in Christ, into the heavenly places. (Eph. i. 3.) But, as a matter of fact, there is the wilderness to go through. God might have brought them into the land by a short way, but He led them round by the longer, "lest," as He said, "peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt." (Exodus xiii. 17.) He counts the hairs of their heads. He thinks of what is best for them in every circumstance. After forty years they find their clothes have not waxed old, neither have their feet swelled. They have not thought of this till the journey was over; but their God had thought of their clothing every day. He had never omitted to rain manna upon them. True, He suffered them to hunger and thirst, to humble them and prove them, but only that He might supply their bread and their water for them. Through their unbelief they would not go into the land at the end of two years, and were turned back to wander thirty-eight years longer in the desert. *But God turned back with*

them, and took not away from them His pillar of cloud by day, nor His pillar of fire by night.

It is thus that God deals with us in all the trials and difficulties of life. He means us to have trouble and to feel the opposition of everything around to the life He has given us. What, then, we want is to have the heart living with God, and then we shall have His mind about all our circumstances. Do you suppose that, if Israel had been thinking of God's interest and care for them, they would have murmured as they did? Surely not.

It does not matter what our troubles are. One may have the care of God's people pressing on him; another the cares of the world; another, trouble in his family. Countless varieties of exercises there are no doubt appointed by Him for His people; but the answer to every trouble is having the heart *living with God* above the circumstances.

If we turn to the state of the Thessalonians, we shall see them bright and happy in the midst of most terrible persecutions. There is no epistle so happy as this. They are in what we call their first love. The springs of divine affections were bright in them. In the third verse we find that "faith," and "hope," and "love," those qualities which constituted the full expression of grace working in the Christian were active in them. The apostle remembers their "work of faith," their "labour of love," and their "patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. i.)

How far is it thus with you, dear friends? It is a blessed thing to work for the Lord. It is a great privilege to be allowed to have any service for Christ; but how far is it with you a "work of faith?"

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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 Walk of the Christian.

III.

BUT what does grace say? I am told that Christ died for me; and much more, that I am dead with Him, dead to sin that is found within me; my old man having been crucified with Him. From henceforth I know that, being under grace, sin is no longer my master. I am dead to that master; I have nothing more to do with him; he has no rights over me; I can and ought to treat him as a stranger. I am under another ruler, who has set me free from the law of sin and death, and has placed me under the law of the spirit of life (Rom. viii. 2).

Now, this is not merely a doctrine one ought to receive and believe in our intellects, and on which we can expatiate. It is more. What we have been examining are realities for faith to seize

upon, even as upon the fact of being pardoned, and they should have results on our hearts and lives. They are intensely experimental. To reason upon them will not benefit our walk at all. Deliverance is a real thing, and one to be realised. We are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. It is the precious privilege of the Christian. Being under grace, sin has no longer authority to rule over us. The word of God says so; I have only to bow to it, without reasoning, but with thankfulness to God. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," cries the man who sees and bows to deliverance where it is, namely, in Christ Jesus (Rom. vii. 25).

But how can we actually realize this death to sin, this life to God, so that we may walk free from the law of sin, "worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," according to the exhortations He has given in His word; pleasing Him whether it be in things to avoid or in those to carry out; in brief, acting so that our walk as Christians may be one in true and complete separation from evil, in a real and entire devotion to God?

In the first place, it is a fact that on believing in Christ we are not only delivered from all the guilt that burdened us, but that we have a new life. We are alive unto God, but in a new nature; newly born, born of water and the Spirit; and in this new nature we live in a new life, which is that of Christ in resurrection. We are the same individuals, with the same bodies, our various faculties, memories, intellects, feelings and the like; but a new life animates us, a life the fruit of the Holy Spirit; it is life from God, the life of Christ. It is obvious that we do not possess this life apart from Christ; we have it in Him.

Hence there is a new creation, a new man, with fresh thoughts, fresh objects, fresh desires, fresh affections. We have passed from death unto life; it is no longer we that live but Christ lives in us, and He is the Object of that life which we have in Him.

Now, to be in accordance with this life (of which Christ in glory is the supreme Object), a walk is required which manifests the life we have received. If (as says the apostle), we are "bearing always about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" (2 Cor. iv. 10); that is, if we constantly realize in every place and in all circumstances the fact that we are dead with Christ, it is that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. Now, "he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked" (1 John ii. 6). In this new life we possess the life of Jesus, which we have to show forth here below. It is He who is our example. His walk is the standard for ours, since He it is who lives in us. It is His life we have to manifest in our bodies; that is, in our conduct; and this walk is infinitely above that prescribed by the law; so that truly "the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 4). Such a path realizes true holiness; and the only standard for real holiness is Christ. "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John iii. 3).

But is this really possible, to walk as Christ Himself walked? It is beyond human capacity.

Very true. As long as I seek within myself the power of carrying out the life of Christ in my walk, while I expect this of myself, even if I

were a sincere believer, a soul born again, I should not reach the goal. Or if I think I have reached it I delude myself. One must look away from one's self, and seek power elsewhere. As Peter, when he left the ship, and walked on the waves, began to sink directly his eyes failed to rest on Christ, so if I look at myself I shall fail. But when Peter obeyed the voice of the Master, and only looked at Him, he walked on the waves without sinking, like Jesus.

In the same way, if our walk is to resemble that of Christ, it is of the first importance that we should not cease to have Him before our eyes by faith. "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image" (2 Cor. iii. 18).

But this is not yet all. To walk thus to the glory of the Lord, to please Him in all things, and bear fruit in every good work, we need power. In me there is none. Where then can I find it? The power of life is the Holy Spirit given to us. Paul prays that the Ephesians should be "strengthened with might by His Spirit" (the Spirit of God) "in the inner man" (Eph. iii. 16). He says again, "If we live in the Spirit let us also walk in the Spirit." And yet again, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. v. 25, 16). It is by the Spirit that the deeds of the body are mortified (Rom. viii. 13). It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to us the things of Christ, who gives us to contemplate His glory, and fills our hearts with holy and divine thoughts (John xvi. 14; 2 Cor. iii. 18; Rom. viii. 5). He is thus the power that separates us from the world and from ourselves, and links us with Christ. Led on by Him,

and strengthened by His great might, we reject the enticements and works of the flesh, and He Himself produces in us the blessed fruit: "Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. v. 22, 23). That is why the apostle exhorts us to be "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. v. 18).

Having then realized that we are dead to sin with Christ, and alive to God in Christ Jesus, reckoning ourselves to be dead to sin, which (since we are under grace) has no longer dominion over us, being by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus set free from the law of sin and death, having a new nature, a new life (Christ our life), life in Him, and the power of that life the Holy Spirit, having before us, too, the perfect example, Christ, whom we are to follow (1 Pet. ii. 21), and a divine object, Christ again (Gal. ii. 20), now in glory, whom by faith we contemplate with open face; having realized all these things, what is lacking to prevent us "walking worthy of the Lord to all pleasing"?

Absolutely nothing. And if this be so, what responsibility do not they assume who neglect to apply themselves with zeal "to be agreeable to the Lord" by a walk like this; or who lower the standard; or, again, excuse their failures because they claim to be "under grace."

On the one hand, we should not put ourselves under law, for it would be bondage and death; we have to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. On the other hand, this liberty should not be used as allowing the flesh to act. We have this freedom to give ourselves up to God, ourselves, our members, our whole being.

Let us not therefore lower the standard of our walk. It is high, no doubt, but it cannot be less so, when we take into account our place in Christ before God, our relationship to God, and what we owe to the Lord who has redeemed us. We ought to walk as Christ walked; we should be “*blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation*” (a testimony here below to the glory of the Lord) “*shining as lights in the world*”; “holding forth the word of life,” not only in words but in holy conduct and piety. We are called to be nothing less than “imitators of God, as dear children” walking in love like Christ (Eph. v. 1, 2). All this is positive, and if God has said it, should we not take it into careful and serious consideration? He has also said, “*Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.*” (Col. iii. 17). Have I any right to reserve something? Does not this [exhortation] apply to my whole walk as redeemed, a child of God, set free by Christ?

Grace brings us into the fellowship of the Father and the Son, of that God who is light; and the apostle says, “*These things write I unto you that ye sin not.*” This is again very positive. It is a matter of walking without sinning. Can we be in fellowship with the Father and the Son if we are going on in lightness, vain thoughts, in conformity to the world, the satisfaction of our own tastes, in our lusts? It is impossible. God cannot tolerate such things. To enjoy the precious privilege of His fellowship we must be altogether His, and for Him.

Do not say, “We cannot but fail of this.”

The Word says, "That ye sin not." One may fail, alas! and in God's grace there is a resource, but one should not think that failure is necessary. It would be in effect to say to Him, "Thou hast not given me all that is needed for me to walk to Thy glory. Thou hast told me to be Thy imitator, to walk like Christ, and Thou knowest it is impossible."

Far be the thought. That which we have to say to ourselves is, "You should not fail." If a man of the world sins he acts according to his nature. But of the Christian it is said, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin"; the new nature, the divine nature, in him cannot sin; and he is to walk according to this new nature, and to pay no heed to his old nature, the flesh or sin, to which he is dead.

The Christian has "put off the old man with his deeds." It is not said "ought to put off," but it is a thing done. He has "put on the new man," and is not told he ought to do it. This being so, it is the new man the Christian should show forth. Hence the exhortation, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another," all which things are seen in Christ, the perfect example for the new man.

There is, therefore, the fact that the old man has been put off with his deeds; he is no longer seen; the other has been put on, and is manifested in the power of the Spirit. We read again, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," not "should do so," it is a thing accomplished. And then living in the

Spirit we walk by the Spirit, and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.

Dear reader, let us seriously ponder that to which we are called. It is to walk worthy of the Lord, and suited to God. Let us leave that so-called Christianity without power, without living reality, which is content with receiving doctrines intellectually, and in practice goes no further than the respectable world. Let us beware lest occupation with material things encroaches on and stifles our spiritual life, so that our walk comes short of our calling, short of what the Lord desires of us. Your enjoyment of the divine blessings and hopes in fellowship with God are at stake, the glory of the Lord and the testimony we should render to Him in this world are concerned.

Is there not an immensely powerful motive in the love of God for us, in the love of the Father for His children, in the love of Christ for His own, to induce us to walk thus, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God"? Let us bear in mind that if we have passed from death unto life we have no longer to live *for ourselves*, but *for Him* who, in His perfect love and grace, died for us and rose again, so that now that He is above He may be a living object for our hearts.

At the same time let us not forget that if we have at heart that our Christian walk should be such as the Word puts before us, we have need of constant watchfulness and incessant prayer. The Word of God insists in several passages on these two points, rendered necessary by our feebleness and ignorance amid the temptations, pitfalls and snares of Satan, the allurements of the world, the solicitations of our evil hearts. Let us also not forget the urgent exhortation of

the apostle to put on the whole armour of God (Eph. vi.), and these too : "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly " (Col. iii. 16); and, " Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ " (2 Pet. ii. 18).

In concluding the important subject we have been considering, I would warn my reader against a book that, under abstract forms, is really subversive of real Christianity. It was widely circulated, much praised and had an alluring title, " In His steps. What would Jesus do? " well suited to attract believers and serious-minded persons who wished to walk to the glory of the Lord. But without saying more of the Lord this book ignored redemption by blood, the total ruin of man, and would exhort to the imitation of Christ souls not born again, Christians merely in name, and ignorant of what Christ has done for them.

How can those still dead in their sins follow Christ and take Him as their example? To walk in reality, and not only in appearance, in the foot-steps of Jesus one must first be alive. Divine life is only for those who, as lost sinners, have come to Christ, and have believed in the necessity of His death to save them. The moral character of our adorable Saviour is so great and so beautiful that even a natural man can admire it; but to walk " in His steps " in all the details of life is only for those who are identified with Him in His death, and in His risen life, alive to God in Him, and are guided by the Spirit of God.

Translated from the French.

Seeing Christ in the Glory of God.

WHEN I behold Christ in the glory of God, instead of seeing my sins, I see that they are gone. I have seen my sins laid on the Mediator. (1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.) I have seen my sins confessed on the head of the scapegoat; and they have been borne away (Lev. xvi.). So much has God been glorified about my sins (that is, in respect of what Christ has done on account of my sins), that this is the title of Christ to be above at the right hand of God. I am not afraid to look at Christ there.

Where are my sins now? Where are they to be found in heaven or on earth? I see Christ in the glory of God. Once they were found upon the head of that Blessed One; but they are gone, never more to be found. Were it a dead Christ, so to speak, that I saw, I might fear that my sins would be found again; but with Christ alive in the glory of God the search is in vain. He who bore them all has been received up to the throne of God, and no sin can be there.

As a practical consequence of this I am being changed into His likeness. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) It is the Holy Ghost taking of the things of Christ, and revealing them to the soul, that is the power of present practical conformity to Christ. I delight in Christ, I feast upon Christ, I love Christ. It is the very model and forming of my soul according to Christ by the Holy Ghost. This is His revelation of Christ. I not only get to love the glory; it is Christ Himself that I love; Christ that I admire; Christ that I care for;

Christ whose flesh I eat, and whose blood drink. (John vi. 53-58.) What wonder if I am like Christ? The Christian thus becomes the epistle of Christ; he speaks for Christ, owns Christ, acts for Christ; he does not want to be rich, he has riches in Christ, unsearchable riches; he does not want the pleasures of the world, he has pleasures at God's right hand for evermore. (Ps. xvi. 11.)

Does the heart still say, "Oh, but I do not, and cannot, see this transcript in myself"?

No, but you see Christ; and is not that better? It is not my looking at myself, but my looking at Christ, that is God's appointed means for my growing in the likeness of Christ. If I would copy the work of some great artist, is it by fixing my eyes on the imitation, and being taken up with regrets about my failing attempt, that I shall be likely to succeed? No, but by looking at my model; by fixing my eyes there; tracing the various points, and getting into the spirit of the thing.

Mark the comfort of this. The Holy Ghost having revealed to my soul CHRIST IN GLORY as the assurance of my acceptance, I can look without fear, and therefore steadfastly, full at that glory, and rejoice in the measure of its brightness. Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, could look up steadfastly into heaven (doubtless in his case it was with more than ordinary power), and see the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, when his face shone as the face of an angel.

And look at his death. Just like his Master, he prays for his very murderers. Stephen died, saying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their

charge"; Christ had died saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." In Stephen there was the expression of Christ's love for his enemies. By the Holy Ghost he was changed, and that in a very blessed way too, into the same image. (Acts vii. 3; Luke xxiii. 34.)

Divine Grace in the Christian.

II.

I DO not mean to question your sincerity. You may work for the Lord, and earnestly desire His blessing; but is every word you say uttered in direct faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus the expression of what your faith in Him is enjoying? Or do you say what you know to be blessed truth, and what you desire God to bless; while the secret spring that should link the work with your communion to Christ is gone?

It is not that you may not have faith in the work. That may be all sure, and yet, in those inner springs of your spirit, your work may not be a work of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, you may labour abundantly, and you may love the labour, and do it willingly and honestly; but is the labour so completely the result of your own personal love to Christ that it is really what these Thessalonians' labour was, a "labour of love"? But there was more than "work" and "labour"; there was also the condition of their hearts. They looked for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, not as a doctrine, but as the object of their affections.

A mother looks for a son, who is to return from sea, not as a mere truth, but his return is in her heart. If it be delayed, can she settle down, and say, "I have made a mistake," and think no more of him? Oh no, she must exercise patience, but hers is the "patience of hope." She may attend to her household duties as before; that is quite right; but where will her thoughts be? Why, wondering when her son will be home.

All truths in Scripture are *persons* or *facts*. People may say, "Why, you have talked of the Lord's coming now for forty years, and He is not come yet." Well, but that alters nothing. We look for Him because we love Him, and wait to see Him; and so we exercise the "patience of hope." He is Himself waiting, and we wait with Him. We are companions in the patience of Jesus Christ. (Rev. i. 9.) We know the reason of His delay. It is God's long-suffering in saving sinners; therefore we are not left in ignorance; but we cannot give up the hope of His return; to do so would make us the most miserable of all men. (1 Cor. xv. 19.) We find the "patience of hope" in our blessed Lord when in this world. He served and laboured in faith and love to His Father; but He also waited for the coming glory; His life was the "patience of hope."

But if we had not more than the "work of faith," "labour of love," and "patience of hope," the character of Christian walk would be very imperfect.

In Christ there was perfect obedience. All His "work of faith," "labour of love," and "patience of hope," was in obedience to God, His Father. As He says in John xiv. 31, "But that the world may know that I love the Father; and

as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do."

These Thessalonians did all "in the sight of God and our Father." This obedience is most blessed; and yet it is a check upon us which we need, carrying about with us the evil we do. Their "faith," "hope," and "love," sweet as they were in themselves, needed to be "in the sight of God" their Father; under His eye, and done in obedience to Him.

Now, of *such* the apostle can speak as "knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." He knew it, not by God's secret counsels, for none but God Himself thus knows it, but by the exhibition of His grace in them. He could see, indeed, that they were God's elect. Of the Galatians he had to say, "I stand in doubt of you." (Gal. iv. 20.) These Thessalonians he can rejoice in, as *evidently chosen of God*.

When we see such blessed fruits of grace in any, how sweet it is to rejoice over them, and to know they are indeed God's elect! while of others we can say nothing, but must stand in doubt of them, as Paul did of the Galatians.

And this testimony not only rejoices the apostle, but in every place their faith to God is spread abroad, so that he needs to say nothing about them. People exclaimed, What a wonderful thing has happened in Thessalonica! A man came there and preached to them, and a number of the people have turned to God, and broken all their idols, and whatever you do, you cannot overcome. They are so happy in what they believe, that even if you kill them, they do not mind, for they are waiting for a Son of God from heaven. No doubt their lips testified too; but their lives

spoke, so that Paul had no need of saying what they were.

Is it so with you, beloved? Are you thus waiting for God's Son from heaven, having turned to God from idols? And whatever may be your circumstances and trials, are you living above them in communion with God? Or are you happy in the world, whether Christ comes or not?

The Midnight Cry.

“Behold, the Bridegroom cometh”! (Matt. xxv. 6)

He comes! He comes! The Bridegroom comes!

The “Morning Star” appears;

The cloudless morning sweetly dawns;

Saints, quit this vale of tears!

Your absent Lord no longer mourn:

Reproach no longer bear;

He comes! He comes! Rise, happy saints,

To meet Him in the air!

He comes! He comes! The Bridegroom comes!

The Church is now complete;

Her Lord beholds her clean and fair,

A partner for Him meet.

He comes! His purchased bride to claim;

Her mansion is prepared;

He comes! He comes! Rise, ransomed saints,

To meet your coming Lord!

He comes! He comes! The Bridegroom comes!

He shouts, for great His joy;

As yet, unseen by mortal eyes,

He tarries in the sky.

The marriage o'er, to earth He'll come,

No longer hid from men:

He'll come! He'll come! *With* all His saints

As “Son of David” then!

He comes! He comes! The "Son of Man,"
 The great Messiah, now
 The "King of kings" and "Lord of lords";
 All knees before Him bow.

He comes! His Israel in the Land
 Of Promise to install;
 He comes! He comes! to clear away
 The ruins of the Fall!

He comes! He comes! The "Lion" now!
 Alas! rejecting world!
 He'll meet your rebel standard raised,
 Defiantly unfurled!
 But nought shall stand before Him, then
 In terror you will cry,
 He comes! He comes! Alas! Alas!
 Where from Him can we fly?

He comes! He comes! The Bridegroom comes!
 O sinners, hear the sound!
 Accept Him *now*, if you among
 His chosen would be found!
 Still mercy's offered, costless, free;
 No longer turn away;
 He comes! He comes! Oh! linger not;
 Come "while 'tis called to-day"!

A. M.

For the Christian, a most difficult path, that which leads to the sharpest conflict, is but the road to victory and repose, causing him to increase in the knowledge of God. It is the road in which he is in communion with God, with Him who is the source of all joy; it is the earnest and the foretaste of eternal and infinite happiness.

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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).

Elijah and Elisha.

THE ministries of ELIJAH and ELISHA occupied the days of the family of Ahab, of the house of Omri; the time of deepest corruption in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes. The testimony of the Lord about those times is this: "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him." (1 Kings xvi. 30.)

It was in those days that Hiel the Bethelite dared the arm of the Lord by rebuilding Jericho; an act which, affronting the truth and power of the Lord, looked with infidel boldness, and said, "Where is the God of judgment?" (Mal. ii. 17.) For Ahab's days were days of man's proud provocation and temptation again.

At such a time, just on the act of Hiel, ELIJAH is called out (1 Kings xvi. 34; xvii. 1). And in

him we see an entirely independent call of God and energy of the Spirit. He is quite in the Lord's own hand. He does not belong to the priesthood. He never seeks the Temple. He never consults established oracles, nor walks orderly according to the statutes or ordinances of Israel. But the Lord takes him up, and fills him with light and power altogether His own, not reaching him by any prescribed channel at all.

And so ELISHA. He was independent of all that was already instituted in the land. The hand of the Lord uses him, the Spirit of God fills him, without respect to the Temple or the priesthood.

And we get the common, and yet most blessed instruction of Scripture out of this, that when man had corrupted and righteously lost everything (as in Ahab, and in his times), the Lord finds occasion by that to bring forth His own resources. Man's wilderness was Christ's storehouse (Matt. xiv. 15-21).

But though there is this common character and moral in the call of these two prophets (and indeed, in measure, of all the prophets), yet their ministries are in detail very distinct.

Testimony against evil, and consequent suffering, mark the history of Elijah.

Power, and grace in using it for others, mark that of Elisha.

Both are seen in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose shadows of course, they were. In one aspect of His history on earth we see the suffering, driven, persecuted Witness; the world hating Him because He testified that its works were evil. In another aspect we see the powerful, gracious, ready Friend of others; all that had sorrows or necessities getting healing and blessing from Him.

More than even this stands reflected in the histories of these prophets; for Elijah's sorrow here, and rejection by the world, ends in heaven; Elisha's power carries him ahead of all that might resist, and keeps him in constant honour and triumph on the earth. And these things foreshadow the heavenly and earthly things of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the King of Israel.

I would now pass through the history of Elisha given to us in 2 Kings ii.-xiii. I do so, however, only rapidly, though in this little journey noticing each detached scene in order, and seeking to draw forth something of the divine counsel, and the divine moral, having found it a scripture of great interest to my own soul.

The Translation of Elijah.

(READ 2 KINGS II. 1-14.)

THESE verses give us the first distinct portion.

Long before this, Elijah had invited Elisha into ministry with him by passing by and casting his mantle upon him. But Elisha was not then quite prepared. He pleaded his father and his mother: "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee." Upon which Elijah, as it were, withdrew his mantle from him, recalled his invitation, saying, "Go back again, for what have I done to thee?" (1 Kings xix. 20.)

This was significant. For, though Elisha is for a moment seen ministering to Elijah after this, yet we do not again find him expressly in com-

pany with his master till now that his master is just about to be taken from him.

And to what end is he now seen with him? Just to abide the fire, just to stand the test, whether indeed he were, or were not, fully prepared for the mantle.

Elijah can leave his mantle behind him. He needed it not in the heaven to which he was going. As soon as he entered the fiery chariot on which the whirlwind attended, as soon as he was borne by angels (Heb. i. 7) up to heaven, he may, and must, disrobe himself.

The mantle was the instrument of power, the gift of service *here*; and the servant lays that aside when his service is over; just as the sinner at his conversion, when his old estate is past, can cast away his garments (Mark x. 15). "We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor. xiii. 9,10.)

But though Elijah may now dispense with his mantle, is Elisha prepared for it?

That is the question. And this trial is made by two instruments, Elijah himself, and the sons of the prophets. But both were used by God to prove if indeed Elijah's mantle were chief in Elisha's esteem, whether he carried within him the spirit of a true Levite, of one with whom the Urim and Thummim might be, being found able now to say to his father and his mother, "I have not seen him" (Deut. xxxiii. 8, 9).

This was the test. The Lord was weighing Elisha's value for glory; He was ascertaining how heavy a share with the joy and honour of being one in the spirit and ministry of Elijah was in the scales of Elisha's affections. And he stands

the test. Nothing slackens his hand. He silences all temptations. He declares plainly that he coveted the mantle, the double portion of the Spirit. He turns his eye from every object but the glory. It is no more his father or his mother behind him to whom he would return to kiss, but it is his father in the faith, his kindred in the Spirit, he clings to, and towards whom, and whom alone, he looks upward and onward: "My father, my father," says he, as Elijah was ascending, "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof."

This was enough. There was a slight flaw in his title to the mantle at first (1 Kings xix.), as we saw, but now his title is perfect. He is a true Levite. "He knows no man after the flesh" (2 Cor. v. 16), and the mantle is his.

And this is a holy lesson for us. For how little do our hearts (surely we know), value the mantle, value the honour of serving Jesus, or a share of His coming glories. This tested not the prophet's title to God Himself or salvation. Elijah had no doubt that Elisha was the Lord's: but this was trying his estimation of glory. And that is properly our only question. We are to examine ourselves whether we be walking worthy of the Lord's glory; whether we value a share in it. And well for us if discipline lead us to covet it, as it did Elisha; well if nature, which is so tenacious of its life in us, be rebuked, and while it says, Go back and kiss father and mother, we rather listen to the voice of the mantle, which tells us to go forward after the prophet of God.

And humbling it is to know that the heart, left to itself without the Spirit, cares not for God or His glory. It once sold Him for a mess of

pottage, then for a herd of swine, and then for thirty pieces of silver. And would still for anything. The chariot may go back to heaven empty, for aught we care. This is the language of the heart. But oh! for grace to value a portion with *Thee*, blessed Saviour! Oh! for power in our souls to long for a seat with *Thee* in that heavenly chariot that shall separate us from earth and its interests, and take us in *Thee*, and with *Thee*, and through *Thee*, to the height of glorious bliss!

The True Means of Christian Growth.

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious. To whom coming, *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and* precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe *He is* precious. (1 Peter ii. 1-7.)

IN one sense, as here taught us by the Spirit of God through the apostle, the healthful position of the saint is ever that of the "new-born babe"; whilst in another sense we are, of

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course, to be making progress, so as to become "young men" and "fathers" in Christ.

As to practical position of soul in receiving truth from God, it is that of the "new-born babe." "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." This is the place in which, as believers, we are set by the Spirit in order that we may grow up into Christ.

I. AS NEW-BORN BABES THE POSITION FOR GROWTH.

But if we are to "grow" by "the sincere milk of the Word," it is not by the exercise of our minds upon the Word, nor yet even by great study of it merely. We need the teaching of the Holy Spirit; and in order to that, there must be the exercising of ourselves unto godliness, this "laying aside all malice, and all guile, and all hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings," so that the Holy Spirit be not grieved. The Christian with these evil dispositions allowedly working in his heart, cannot "grow" in the true knowledge of the things of God. He is therefore called upon to be ever as a "new-born babe," coming to receive, in the consciousness of his own weakness, littleness, and ignorance, and in simplicity of heart, food from the Word of God.

The Lord keeps His simple, dependent ones thus, as the apostle says, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." (2 Pet. i. 2.) The knowledge of God always humbles: the more we know of Him, the more shall we know of our own emptiness. "If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." (1 Cor. viii. 2.)

Just as the babe is constantly receiving

nourishment from the mother, so need we to be constantly receiving spiritual nourishment from the Word of God. When the Word is received by us in faith we become strengthened, we "grow thereby," in the knowledge of God, and of His grace.

The apostle Paul, on hearing of the faith of the Ephesians in the Lord Jesus, prays that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

Having "tasted that the Lord is gracious," we come to His Word, and thence receive from Him that which we need to comfort, nourish, and refresh our souls. The Word always comes with savour from Himself: it is known as "the Word of His grace." (Acts xx. 32.) I may study it again and again; but unless I get into communion with Him, it will profit me nothing, at least at the time.

God reveals not His things "to the wise and prudent," but unto "babes." It is not the strength of man's mind judging about "the things of God," that gets the blessing; it is the spirit of the babe desiring "the sincere milk of the Word," that it may "grow thereby." He says, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Ps. lxxxix. 10.) The strongest mind must come to the Word of God as the "new-born babe."

And so, too, in speaking of God's truth, whenever we cannot "speak as the oracles of God," through the power of communion, it is our

business to be silent. We should be cautious not to trifle with unascertained truth. Nothing hinders growth more than trifling with unascertained truth. We then act as masters, and not as learners.

But there is nothing so hard for our hearts as to be humble; nothing so easy for them as to get out of this place of lowliness. It is not merely by precepts that we are either brought into this state, or preserved there; it is by tasting that "the Lord is gracious." It is quite true that God is a God of judgment; that He will exercise vengeance on His enemies; but that is not the way in which He stands towards the Christian. He is made known unto us as "the God of all grace," and the position in which we are set is that of tasting that He is "gracious."

2. TASTING THAT THE LORD IS GRACIOUS.

How hard it is for us to believe this, that "the Lord is gracious." The *natural* feeling of our hearts is, "I know that thou art an austere man." (Luke xix. 21.) Are our wills thwarted, we quarrel with God's ways, and are angry because we cannot have our own. It may be, perhaps, that this feeling is not manifested, but still at any rate there is the want in all of us naturally of the understanding of "the grace of God," the inability to apprehend it. See the case of the poor prodigal in the gospel. The thought of his father's GRACE never once entered into his mind when he set out on his return, and therefore he only reckoned on being received as a "hired servant." But what does the father say? What are the feelings of HIS heart? "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes

on his feet : and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it : for this my son was DEAD, and is alive again ; he was LOST, and is found." (Luke xv.) This is grace, free grace.

So, too, in the case of the woman of Samaria, the poor adulteress, ignorant of the character of Him who spoke with her, " the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," and therefore just the suited one to meet her need. The Lord says to her, " If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." Hadst thou only understood what GRACE is, THOU wouldest have ASKED, and I would have GIVEN. (John iv.)

It is not only where there is open rebellion against God, and utter carelessness and unconcern about salvation, that there is this darkness of understanding as to grace. Our natural heart has got so far away from God, that it will look to anything in the world, to the devil, even, to get happiness, anywhere, but to " the grace of God." Our consciences, when at all awakened to a sense of sin, and of its hateful-ness in the sight of God, think that He CANNOT be gracious. Adam, had he known " the grace of God," when he found himself naked, would at once have gone to God to cover him. But no ; he was ignorant of it. And what was the consequence ? He saw his state, and sought to hide himself FROM God amongst the trees of the garden. And so it is with us. The consciousness of being naked before God, apart from the understanding of His GRACE, makes us flee from Him.

Nay, further, as believers in Jesus, when our

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consciences come to be exercised, and we feel that we must have to do with God in everything, we may not have the distinct sense of the Lord's being "gracious"; and there will then be not only a deep sense of our responsibility, but at the same time the thought that we have to answer to God's requirements, and shall be judged of Him according to the way in which we do so.

There is a measure of truth in this. The requirements of God must be met; but then the wrongness is in thinking that if we do not find in ourselves what will please God, He will condemn us because of it.

3. GRACE SHOWS THE EVIL OF SIN.

On the other hand, there is sometimes the thought that "grace" implies God's *PASSING BY SIN*. Quite the contrary; "grace" supposes sin to be so horridly bad a thing that God cannot tolerate it. Were it in the power of man, after *being unrighteous and evil, to patch up his ways, and mend himself so as to stand before God, there would then be no need of "grace."* The very fact of the Lord's being "gracious," shows sin to be so evil a thing that man being a sinner, his state utterly ruined and hopeless, nothing but free grace will do for him, can meet his need.

I may see sin to be a deadly thing, that nothing that defileth can enter into the presence of God; my own conscience may be under true conviction, yet this is not "tasting that the Lord is *GRACIOUS*." It is a very good thing to be brought even to that, for I am then tasting that the Lord is *RIGHTEOUS*, and it is needful for me to know it; but I must not stop there; sin without grace would put me in a hopeless state. Peter had not "tasted that the Lord was gracious" when he

said, "DEPART FROM ME, for I am a SINFUL MAN, O Lord!" He thought that his sin unfitted him for the presence of the Lord. (Luke v. 8.)

What was the thought of Simon the leper respecting the poor woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head? Ah, if this man had been a prophet (if he had known the mind of God), He would have SENT AWAY this woman out of His presence, "FOR SHE IS A SINNER." And why? Because he did not know that the Lord was "gracious." He had a certain sense of the RIGHTEOUSNESS of God, but not the knowledge of His grace. I cannot say that God OUGHT to be GRACIOUS, but I can say (if ignorant of His grace) that He ought to cast me, as a SINNER, away from His presence, because He is RIGHTEOUS. (Luke vii.)

Thus we see that we must learn what God is to us, not by our own thoughts, but by what He has REVEALED Himself to be, and that is, "THE GOD OF ALL GRACE." (1 Pet. v. 10.)

The moment I understand (as Peter did) that I am "a sinful man," and yet that it was BECAUSE the Lord knew the full extent of my sin, and what its hatefulness was, that HE CAME to me, I understand what grace is. Faith makes me see that God is greater than my sin, and not that my sin is greater than God. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet SINNERS, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) As soon as I believe Jesus to be the Son of God, I see that God has COME TO ME because I was a sinner, and could not GO TO HIM.

Man's ability to meet the requirements of the holiness of God has been fully tried; but the

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plainer the light came, the more did it show to man his darkness; and the stricter the rule, the more did it bring out his self-will. And then it was, "when we were YET WITHOUT STRENGTH, in due time Christ died for the ungodly," "when we were YET SINNERS, Christ died for us." THIS IS GRACE.

God seeing the blood of His Son is satisfied with it; and if I am satisfied with it, this is what glorifies God.

But the Lord that I have known as laying down His life for me, is the SAME Lord that I have to do with every day of my life; and all His dealings with me are on this SAME principle of GRACE. Do I want to learn what His love is? It is taught in the cross. But He gave Himself for me in order that all the fulness and joy that is in Him might be mine. I must be a learner of it still; a new-born babe, desiring "the sincere milk of the Word," that I may "grow thereby."

4. THE GREAT SECRET OF GROWTH IS THE LOOKING UP TO THE LORD AS GRACIOUS.

How precious, how strengthening it is to know that Jesus is at this moment feeling and exercising the same love towards me as when He died upon the cross for me. This is a truth that should be used by us in the most common, everyday circumstances of life. Suppose, for instance, I find an evil temper in myself, which I feel it difficult to overcome; let me bring it to Jesus as my friend; virtue goes out of Him for my need. Faith should be ever thus in exercise against temptation, and not simply my own effort; my own effort against it will never be sufficient. The source of real strength is in the sense of the Lord's being "gracious."

But the natural man in us always dis-allows Christ as the ONLY source of strength and of every blessing. Suppose my soul is out of communion with God, the natural heart says, I must correct the cause of this before I can come to Christ; but He is "gracious," and knowing this, the way is to return to Him at once, just as we are, and there humble ourselves. It is only in Him and from Him that we shall find that which will restore our souls. Humbleness in His presence is the only real humbleness. If we own ourselves in His presence to be just what we are, we shall find that He will show us NOTHING BUT GRACE.

But though "disallowed indeed of MEN," of the NATURAL HEART in every one of us, who is this that says, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded"?

It is God. He laid this corner stone, not man; and He says, "This is what I think of Christ." By learning of God, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, I come to have the same thoughts about Jesus that He has. Here I find strength, comfort, joy. That in which God delights, and will delight in for ever, is MY joy also.

God says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," "mine elect in whom my soul delighteth" (Matt. iii. 17; Isa. xlii. 1); and working these (His) thoughts into my soul I, too, see Jesus to be precious, and find delight in Him. Thus He who was crucified for me, who "bare my sins in His own body on the tree," is precious to God and precious to me.

God could find no rest save in Jesus. We may look throughout the world, we shall find nothing which can satisfy our hearts but Jesus.

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If God looked for truth, for righteousness, all He could desire He found in Jesus, and He found it in Him FOR US. Here is that which gives comfort to the soul. I see Jesus "now in the presence of God for us," and God is satisfied; God delights in Him. (Heb. ix. 24.)

It is Jesus Himself in whom God rests, and will rest in for ever; but then He, having borne my sins and blotted them out by His own blood, has united me to Himself in heaven. He (Christ) descended from above, bringing God down to us here: He has ascended, taking up the Church in union with Himself there. If God finds Him precious, He finds me (in Him) precious also.

5. ABIDING REST TO OUR SOULS.

Jesus, as man, has glorified God on the earth. As man, and "the Head of His body the Church," He has "passed into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God FOR US." It is this which gives abiding rest to our souls, and not what our thoughts about ourselves may be. Faith never thinks about that which is in ourselves as its ground of rest; it receives, loves, and apprehends what God has revealed, and what are God's thoughts about Jesus, in whom is His rest.

It is not by human knowledge or intellect that we attain to this. The poor ignorant sinner, when enlightened by the Spirit, can understand as well as the most intellectual, how precious Jesus is to the heart of God. The poor dying thief could give a better account of the whole life of Jesus, than all around him, saying, "This man hath done nothing amiss." He was taught by the Spirit. (Luke xxiii.)

Are we much in communion with God, our faces will shine, and others will discover it,

though we may not be conscious of it ourselves. Moses, when he had been talking with God, wist not that the skin of his face shone. He forgot himself; he was absorbed in God. (Exod. xxxiv. 29.) As knowing Jesus to be precious to our souls, our eyes and our hearts being occupied with Him, they will be effectually prevented from being taken up with the vanity and sin around. And this, too, will be our strength against the sin and corruption of our own hearts. Whatever I see in myself, that is not in Him, is sin. But then it is not thinking upon my own sins, upon my own vileness, and being occupied with them, that will humble me; but thinking of the Lord Jesus, dwelling upon the excellencies in Him. It is well to have done with ourselves, and to be taken up with Jesus. We are entitled to forget ourselves, we are entitled to forget our sins; we are entitled to forget all but Jesus. It is by looking unto Jesus that we can give up anything, that we can walk as obedient children. His love constrains us. Were it simply a command, we should have no power to obey.

The Lord give us thus to be learners of the fulness of grace which is in Jesus, the beloved and elect one of God, so that "we may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

May we, beloved, in searching into the truth of God, having "tasted that the Lord is gracious," ever be found "as new-born babes," desiring "the sincere milk of the Word," that we may "grow thereby."

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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).

The Race and the Goal.

(UNREVISED NOTES OF AN ADDRESS ON PHIL. III.)

YOU know that the Christian is looked at in this chapter as running a race, on a *journey*; and it is a very blessed thing for us to get hold in our souls of that, that we are on a *journey*, then there won't be any thought of *settling down*.

I want to speak to you a little to-night of three things in this chapter:—1. The Start. 2. The Race. 3. The Finish.

1. It is a great thing to get a good start. You know the start is *everything*. It is a wonderful thing, and I thank God for it, that there is such a thing as the ministry of the forgiveness of sins (Acts xiii. 38-39); that I can walk up and down in this world and say, “Not a cloud above, not a spot within.” But there are many who can say that, and do not know they have started on a

race. Let not all of you suppose that the race is not something more than that.

You all know the story of Paul, of Saul, what a moment it was for him when he found that there was One up in the glory who *knew his name*. *Jesus spoke to him*. That voice calling him, "Saul, Saul," showed him that all *he* had to boast of as a man in the flesh was absolute loss to him. And he *had* much to boast of. He says, "If *any other man* has whereof to glory, I more." That is a very sweeping challenge. He recounts it all in verses 5 and 6, and says he counted it "*loss for Christ*."

But you might say, Yes, that was in the first light of that glory, when first Christ made Himself known to him.

Stop a bit; I can give you his mature judgment, after he had suffered the loss of all things, when he had known perils of every kind, been a day and night in the deep, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness; and now he writes, not from an easy chair in a comfortable room, but from a dungeon, with a chain on his hand; Paul is a prisoner for Christ's sake, and his deliberate judgment is, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Ah! it was for Christ's sake he was a prisoner; Christ, the One who had died for him; the One who lived for Him every moment; the One he was going to meet. Verse 8 is not a repetition. Mark the difference. He does not say now, "the knowledge of Christ," but "Christ Jesus *my Lord*."

These are wonderful words, "*MY Lord*." Do we all say that? The Lord said to His disciples,

“ Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well ; for so I am ” (John xiii. 13). It is a wonderful thing to say, I have a Master in heaven. He is my Master ; the only One I have to consult. We often consult this one and that one ; but it is a blessed thing to know that He is our Lord and Master ; we belong to Him, and we own it. This is a day of insubjection, when men are asking for liberty, equality. There is no truth of greater importance for this day than the Lordship of Christ.

You know there is a day coming when even on this earth everything will be subdued to Him. He will reign from the river to the ends of the earth. Read Psalm lxxii. to see the blessedness of that day. We call it the millennium. The blessing of it consists entirely in His being Lord ; and it is our blessing to-day to own Him as Lord, and be in subjection to Him as our Master. He is not Lord of the body, but of the individual. Show me a man who is walking in subjection to Christ, and I will show you a man who is walking in positive blessing.

Well then, the *start* is when you have accepted in your souls that Christ is sufficient for you ; you will give up all for Him. Such language is, of course, utterly inadequate, all language is. He is not only *sufficient*, but how much more ! More than sufficient, we shall say, throughout eternity for our poor hearts ; and how we say, Shame that we do not find it so already down here as a reality to our souls ! We may not be able to say with the apostle that we have suffered the loss of all things ; but do we say, “ Nothing has any value to us compared with *Christ* ; there are no ropes tying us to this scene. We have started ” ?

We cast aside every weight. You know how a man casts aside a coat that is too heavy. Well, we must not cut off the tails, and pare it, and keep the rest; we must not hold to a little bit of the world, but let the whole thing go. It is a *weight*.

I don't say we don't cast off more weights as we go on; but it is a wonderful thing to have *started*, saying, "Well, nothing down here is of any value to me compared with Him. He has laid hold of me, and I am following after to lay hold of Him." We get it in Hebrews xii., "Looking unto Jesus." The Holy Spirit dwelling in us ever turns our eyes to Christ when He is ungrieved. If He is not turning our eyes to Jesus, we know He is grieved, and we must judge ourselves, and humble ourselves; and then, when He is again ungrieved, He will surely point us to Christ.

2. Then Paul was "following after"; he was on a journey; and do not suppose for a moment that it is not a stand-up fight. All the power of evil is against you; the world is against you; the flesh is against you; and the devil is against you. But if you have a trinity of evil against you, you have the Trinity of the Godhead for you; you have all the care of the Father; all the grace of the Son, the *Saviour*; and all the comfort of the Holy Ghost waiting on you; and if it is a question of your poor body, angels are there to minister to it; but it is a great thing to know you are going *forward*.

It is quite consistent with Christian humility to know that we as Christians are going forward, that we are not going back, or standing still; it may be ever so slowly, but we ought to know that we *are* going on.

Paul says he was not perfected (but perfect means standing on resurrection ground, see verse 15; and Hebrews v. 9 will help you to understand how the word is used in the Scriptures); but he had only ONE thing to do. What a blessed thing for our souls to say, "I have only one thing to do." Often in the morning I wake, and I dare say it is the same with you, and *many* things come crowding before my mind, all that is before me, all that has to be done, perhaps cares too; what a blessed thing to say, "I have only *one* thing to do." Christ is before me, and I have to live to Him, and *press* forward, forgetting the things that are behind, forgetting everything that went before, all of self, the world, etc. (not forgetting God's mercies, you know we are to *remember them*, as we get in Deuteronomy viii. 2: "Thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God led thee"). There is no room, you know, for self in Christianity. Christianity is living Christ, instead of myself. If I were offering to fill your house with something very nice, and when I came to do so, found your room filled with old moth-eaten furniture, I should say, All this must go to make room for the good things I have for you; *self* must go. Christ is everything in Christianity; not, as people often say, "all and all," but Christ is everything and in all (as their life).

There is energy in "this one thing I *do*." It is not, "I desire." The sluggard desires, and has nothing. It is "I *do*." *Do*. It is a wonderful thing to say; it is not going *to sleep*. Do you know a great many Christians are asleep? if not, we should not have that word, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee." Mind you don't

go to sleep. No Christian ever went to sleep all at *once*. No, they begin by getting *drowsy*; the virgins *slumbered*, and then *slept*. You know that word to Peter, "Strengthen thy brethren." The Lord knew that Peter would fall, and deny Him, and He says to *Peter*, "When thou art restored, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32). What a wonderful word! I meet a brother coming along a lane or a field, and I grasp his hand. In dependence on God, I ask the Lord for a little word for him, and he goes on strengthened, feeling, "I have had a cheer." What a commission from the Lord! "Strengthen the brethren." Don't stay at home from the meeting for a drop of rain; go and strengthen the brethren. That word came to me wonderfully the other day, when I was thinking if I would go to the meeting; it sent me off like the wind!

3. Then the finish is verse 20: "We look for the *Saviour*" (what a beautiful title, "The Saviour"! "who shall change these bodies of humiliation." You see this body in which I go about; I come over to see you to-night in it; a body of humiliation; but He is going to *fashion* it, FASHION it, like unto *His* body of glory! What a thought! Look at some decrepit old woman, hardly able to get along; but she is *Christ's*, and He is going to fashion that poor body like unto His own body of glory! There are three things said about these bodies in 1 Cor. xv.: "Sown in corruption, raised in incorruption; sown in dishonour, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power," "according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

Well, I have said a little word on "the start,"

and it is a great thing to feel we have really started. Then comes the way, and as one has said, "If you are looking for experience, you won't have it; but if you look to the end, the prize in view, you will have good experience," cheerful experience, you know, Christian experience, all the way along. And then the end: we shall be fashioned in glory!

E. P. CORIN.

The Waters of Jericho Healed.

(Read 2 Kings ii. 15-22.)

THERE are different elevations even among the saints. Lot did not stand on a level with Abraham, nor did the seven thousand hidden ones with Elijah. But all were equally the elect of God, known to Him, as reserved by Him. So here Elisha and the sons of the prophets illustrate the same thing. We have just seen the one pressing through all hindrances after heavenly glory, but now we are to see the other with a mind too sadly formed by the earth.

These sons of the prophets were, Nicodemus-like, slow-hearted to believe. Their thoughts do not rise above the mountains and valleys of the earth. They had never seen a heavenly chariot. They cannot think but that Elijah is still somewhere *here*; and they search for him here. Elisha would have led them at once to his place of light and elevation; but they must be taught through their own mistakes.

Elisha can, however, own them. Weak and inapprehensive as they may be, and in the power of the Spirit far below the prophet of God, they still share his company and his blessing. The city

where they dwelt had been under a curse (Josh. vi.) But he brings healing to it. "There shall be no more curse," was the language of the prophet over Jericho, as it will be the language of the Lord over the inheritance (Rom. viii.; Rev. xxii.) And this is comforting while it is humbling to us consciously weak ones; to us who, from what we know of our poor souls, stand more with the sons of the prophets round Jericho than travel in the strength of the Holy Ghost, with Elisha, through the Jordan. It should humble us to think that we are not on his level; while it may blessedly comfort us to know that the Lord is still ours. The small and the great stand before Him.

But here I would observe that, from the moment when our prophet took up the mantle of his master, God was all he had; but he found Him enough for all he needed. His need, however, like that of Jesus, was not his own. It was for others he occupied his resource and strength in God. He was rich, but not for himself. Thus he meets the inconveniences of nature; without a purse he relieves the poor; without a commissariat he feeds armies; the deadly thing he makes harmless; without bread he gives food to a multitude, and gathers fragments; without medicine he heals disease; without arms or soldiers he defeats enemies; in famine he supplies a nation; though dead he communicates life.

All this tells us of JESUS. For Jesus had nothing, yet He made many rich. He had the worlds of nature and of grace for the needy children of men. And His ways shine in the reflections of His servant Elisha.

The Armies of the Kings Supplied with Water.

(READ 2 KINGS III.)

WE do not find Elisha the sport of wicked kings as Elijah had been. No rude hand of theirs prevails against him, but their fate the rather hangs on his word, and the power of God that was with him.

Without him we here see three kings brought to destruction with all their armies. But the word of the Lord by him changes the scene, and distress of nations, with perplexity, is turned into victory and spoils.

But in the progress of this we have something to notice.

The king of Judah is here found in bad company. This confederacy with the apostate house of Ahab was a symptom of sad unguardedness in Jehoshaphat.

But in the divine grace, occasions are allowed to manifest the hidden life that was in him. Trouble surprises him, and then the voice of his better nature is heard: "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him?"

This shows the uneasiness of the renewed mind of Jehoshaphat in such a scene as the present, though in an unwatched moment he had consented to it. And it was in the Lord's goodness to send the trouble, that the life which was indeed in him might appear. (1 Kings xxii. 7.)

This is comforting to us.

But there is something further in this narrative. Elisha finds, when in the presence of these kings that he cannot readily prophesy. Jehoshaphat may claim the word of the Lord from him, it is

true, for Jehoshaphat is the Lord's servant: but Jehoshaphat is not where he should be, and the Spirit in Elisha is checked.

This is solemn. A minstrel must be brought before the Spirit in the prophet can have His full and graceful flow. What a rebuke to the king of Judah!

What a rebuke to any saint, that another finds the Spirit in him restrained in his presence! Is not this often so? Does not our fleshliness interrupt the fine, free, and easy current of the Spirit; and has not the minstrel still to be thus called for? Some delay, some effort, something incidental, is to be exercised or suffered by those that are spiritual before all can be in tune again.

So it was here, and so oftentimes is it yet. This was the symptom of Jehoshaphat's bad condition, but of Elisha's heavenly mindedness. Had Elisha been less in communion, he would not have stood in such need of the minstrel. Had he been in the flesh, and not in the Spirit, he would not have felt the breach that Jehoshaphat, now in the flesh, was occasioning. His heavenliness of mind may be known by this sensitiveness, and the need that he had of restoration.

JESUS had continually to call for the minstrel. His communion met its constant hindrance here, even from His own, who understood neither His joys nor His sorrows. He had to leave them. He had to rise before day, to continue all night, to go into a solitary place, for prayer to God. It was the perfectness of His communion that made this necessary. He needed the minstrel. Had He been on ground nearer the earth, He would not have been so quick in feeling the earthliness of all around Him! But He knew it all by the

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deepest contrast with His own soul; and the charm and melody of His own converse with the Father restored Him.

Such was the blessed Master, the pattern of all perfections; and such, in his measure, was Elisha. A mere instrument of divine power, or of a spiritual gift, may perform its part or exercise itself anywhere with equal freedom. Balaam is not hindered by the presence of Balak and the altars from uttering his prophecies. For he is merely the instrument, a carnal material, as it were, through which another breathes. But where a renewed mind is the instrument this cannot be. It will be alive in its own proper affections and in its sensitive holiness all the while it is used as an instrument of power.

And such was Elisha. He cannot but be grieved at the scene now before him. Jehoshaphat ought not to have been there; and Elisha must let him know that he must enter it in another way altogether. A saint is called to serve or testify in places of deepest defilement. But he can never be there with the sympathies or consent of his soul.

It was Elisha's praise, as a saint, to be thus like his Lord. To be quick in feeling the weight and pressure of such a scene as this, where another saint was walking in the flesh, and not in the Spirit. And how should we covet this, beloved! How should we so live and move and have our being in the sanctuary, that the unclean could not touch it unperceived!

The Laver as a Symbol.

READ EXODUS XXX. 17-21.

EVERY one interpreting the Old Testament by the light of the New must be struck by the singular beauty of some of the figures therein contained, and the marvellous accuracy with which each component part fits into its fellow. Like a Chinese puzzle: looked at in its separate compartments it has no attraction, but carefully put together it makes a whole of perfect harmony.

Among these types the Laver occupies an important place, and deserves our closest scrutiny. Let us, then, trust to the Spirit's aid to interpret it for us.

Three things arrest our attention concerning it: its materials, its position, and its use.

Brass was its *material*, and as we further read, brass of the finest quality, for chapter xxxviii. 8 tells us that "the looking glasses of the women" were given to construct it; and, as we know, in the East it was customary for the mirrors to be made of metal.

Its *position* was between the Tabernacle (where Jehovah was pleased to dwell) and the Altar (where Israel were allowed to approach to offer sacrifices).

And its *use* or purpose was for the priests, and the priests alone, to cleanse away any defilement or impurity that might adhere to their hands and feet in passing between the Altar and the Tabernacle to worship, or between the Tabernacle and the Altar while serving.

Thus, then, most suitably, the Laver is of brass, as if to tell us that the washing in it must be

according to the righteousness of the One who "loveth righteousness"; and the looking-glasses would also point us to the fact that the Laver is not merely to judge all that needs removal, but that it detects also the impurity by its unsullied lustre. Thus the priest was ever reminded of God's claims, and could not pass with defilement undetected.

The position, too, was most suitable. The priest's office kept him continually passing to and fro between God and the people, and the people and God. Towards the one he acted in the capacity of a servant, towards the others as a worshipper. How natural, then, that ample provision should be made that all that might hinder him in worship or service could be purged away, so that he might be clean who bore the vessels of the Lord (Isa. lii. 11).

Lastly, the Laver was for the *priests* to wash their hands and feet in. They were the privileged class (the congregation could draw no nearer than to the brazen altar), and to these alone belonged the privilege of making use of the brazen Laver. Their hands might be soiled through touching the offerings, or from other causes; their feet defiled by the sand of the court; but to meet their need God had provided the pure water of the Laver so that they might ever walk worthy of Him who had said, "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. i. 16).

May we not learn a lesson from each of these things? In the first place, the use of metals in the Scriptures is of much interest and beauty, and gold, silver, brass, and iron are found frequently to be used both in the structure of the Tabernacle and Temple, and in the symbolic language of

prophecy. The ark was overlaid with pure gold; similarly the interior of the temple; similarly the head of Daniel's image. The sockets on which the Tabernacle rested were of silver, as also the breast and arms of Daniel's image. The Altar of burnt-offering was of brass, as also the belly and thighs of the image already referred to. Its legs were of iron and clay.

Thus we shall find that that which was of divine origin exclusively was of the most precious metal; whereas, when man is brought in, the metal is of baser character, though what is of God, of course, remains the same. Rev. iii. 17, 18 gives us the key to the meaning of "gold." What can make the wretched, miserable, poor one rich but divine righteousness, the gold tried in the fire? "Gold," then, is the righteousness of God. Brass is evidently inferior, and yet has that in it that tells of a righteous God. May we not say that "brass," then, is righteousness dealing with responsible man? Thus the Son of Man (Rev. i. 15) is seen with feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace; as if to say that where He touched the earth or dealt with man His claims were according to the righteousness of His nature.

When we come to the arrangements of Solomon's Temple we find that the Laver is replaced by a Molten Sea, and that the *material* of this also was brass, the *position* also between the dwelling-place of Jehovah and the place where Israel approached to offer; and this also was for the priests to wash in (2 Chron. iv. 2-6).

There are, however, in the construction of this "sea" some points that demand our notice. It was supported on twelve oxen, these turning to each of the four quarters of the globe, and the

brim of it was "like the work of the brim of a cup with flowers of lilies."

Three points here are added to what we have already noticed. The basis on which the Sea rested was formed of oxen, they were twelve in number, and the brim of the Sea was of lilies, and lilies in full bloom.

From the ox we get the thought of patience; from the number twelve, perfection; from the lilies, purity, and this of the most perfect kind.

One of the four characteristic features of the cherubim, the symbols of God's judgment and government, is the ox (Ezek. i., Rev. iv.), showing that patience is combined with power, intelligence, and rapidity of execution.

Twice in the New Testament is the minister of God compared to an ox (1 Cor. ix.), and twice in the Scriptures is patience enjoined on the minister of God, as almost the first among his qualifications (2 Cor. vi. ; 2 Tim. ii. 24).

Thus the oxen give us the thought of patience; and because twelve is ever the perfect number of things on earth (twelve patriarchs, twelve tribes, twelve apostles), we have the thought of patience, and that in perfection. The lily at once too gives us the thought of purity; and its flowers remind us that such purity is of the highest order and most complete display.

Thus all is in character: righteousness that must detect and deal with defilement, seeing its purity is of the highest order, and yet the dealing is with the utmost patience and with perfect graciousness, and on behalf of those whose privilege it is to worship and to serve.

We will now turn to Rev. iv. 6, where, in that heavenly scene, we find "before the throne a sea

of glass like unto crystal ”; and to chapter xv. 2, where we see also in heaven a sea of glass, as it were, mingled with fire, and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

At once the meaning of this strikes one. The water was for earth, the glass for heaven; the water cleanses away defilement *here*; *there* the glass reflects God’s unsullied holiness, where defilement cannot approach.

So perfect is the work of Christ, that the redeemed who come out of “ the great tribulation ” (as the “ mingled with fire ” signifies), can *stand on* the sea of glass, and as it were challenge its perfect purity to detect one spot in them.

Blessed thus to pass from earth to heaven, and find the sea there; but that which is the emblem of fixed purity is contained in it, and its purpose, not to fit the saints to worship or serve, but to reflect and display their perfect fitness through the work of Christ both to worship and to serve for ever.

In old time those who used the Laver had sung the song of Moses, now those who stand upon the sea sing “ the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of *the Lamb* ” (Rev. xv. 3).

BLEST Lamb of God! with grateful praise
 Our voices now to Thee we raise;
 O’er earth to reign, redeemed by blood,
 Kingdom and priests are we to God.
 Soon, too, in glory shall we sing,
 And louder praises to Thee bring;
 While every nation, tongue and tribe,
 Strength, glory, might, to Thee ascribe!

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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 World, the Christian, and Christ.

IT is a wonderfully blessed thing to be able to say, "I have found an object that perfectly satisfies my heart; I have found Christ." It is this which gives true elevation above the world. It renders us thoroughly independent of the resources to which the unconverted heart ever betakes itself. It gives settled rest. It imparts a calmness and quietness to the spirit which the world cannot comprehend.

The poor votary of the world may think the life of the true Christian a very slow, dull, stupid affair indeed. He may marvel how such a one can manage to get on without what he calls amusement, recreation and pleasure; no theatres; no balls or parties; no concerts; no cards or billiards; no hunts or races; no club or news-room; no

cricket or croquet parties. To deprive the unconverted man of such things would almost drive him to despair or lunacy. But the Christian does not want such things, would not have them. They would be a perfect weariness to him.

We speak, of course, of the true Christian, of one who is not merely a Christian in name but in reality. Alas! alas! many profess to be Christians, and take very high ground in their profession, who are, nevertheless, to be found mixed up in all the vain and frivolous pursuits of the men of this world. They may be seen at the communion-table on the Lord's Day, and at a theatre or concert on Monday. They may be found essaying to take part in some one or other of the many branches of Christian work on Sunday, and during the week they may be seen in the ball-room, at the race-course, or some such scene of folly and vanity.

It is very evident that such persons know nothing of Christ as an object of the heart. Indeed, it is very questionable how any one with a single spark of divine life in the soul can find pleasure in the wretched pursuits of a godless world. The true and earnest Christian turns away from such things, turns away instinctively. And this not merely because of the positive wrong and evil of them, though most surely he feels them to be wrong and evil, but because he has no taste for them, and because he has found something infinitely superior, something which perfectly satisfies all the desires of the new nature. Could we imagine an angel from heaven taking pleasure at a ball, a theatre, or a race-course? The bare thought is supremely ridiculous. All such scenes are perfectly foreign to a heavenly being.

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And what is a Christian? He is a heavenly man; he is a partaker of the divine nature. He is dead to the world, dead to sin; alive to God. He has not a single link with the world. He belongs to heaven. He is no more of the world than Christ his Lord. Could Christ take part in the amusements, gaieties, and follies of the world? The very idea were blasphemy. Well, then, what of the Christian? Is he to be found where his Lord could not be? Can he consistently take part in things which he knows in his heart are contrary to Christ? Can he go into places, and scenes, and circumstances in which he must admit his Saviour and Lord can take no part? Can he go and have fellowship with a world which hates the One to whom he professes to owe everything?

It may, perhaps, seem to some of our readers that we are taking too high ground. We would ask such, what ground are we to take? Surely Christian ground, if we are Christians.

Well, then, if we are to take Christian ground, how are we to know what that ground really is? Assuredly from the New Testament. And what does it teach? Does it afford any warrant for the Christian to mix himself, in any shape or form, with the amusements and vain pursuits of this present evil world? Let us hearken to the weighty words of our blessed Lord in John xvii. Let us hear from His lips the truth as to our portion, our position, and our path in this world. He says, addressing the Father, "I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because *they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou

shouldest keep them from the evil. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” (vv. 14-18.)

Is it possible to conceive a closer measure of identification than that set before us in these words? Twice over, in this brief passage, our Lord declares that we are not of the world, even as He is not. What has our blessed Lord to do with the world? Nothing. The world has utterly rejected Him, and cast Him out. It nailed Him to a shameful cross, between two malefactors. The world lies as fully and as freshly under the charge of all this as though the act of the crucifixion took place yesterday, at the very centre of its civilization, and with the unanimous consent of all. There is not so much as a single moral link between Christ and the world. Yea, the world is stained with His murder, and will have to answer to God for the crime.

How solemn is this! What a serious consideration for Christians! We are passing through a world that crucified our Lord and Master, and He declares that we are not of that world, even as He is not of it. Hence it follows that in so far as we have any fellowship with the world, we are false to Christ. What should we think of a wife who could sit, and laugh and joke, with a set of men who had murdered her husband? And yet this is precisely what professing Christians do when they mix themselves up with this present evil world, and make themselves part and parcel of it.

It will perhaps be said, “What are we to do? Are we to go out of the world?” By no

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means. Our Lord expressly says, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." *In* it, but not *of* it, is the true principle for the Christian. To use a figure, the Christian in the world is like a diver. He is in the midst of an element which would destroy him, were he not protected from its action, and sustained by unbroken communication with the scene above.

And what is the Christian to do in the world? What is his mission? Here it is: "As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." And again: "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." (John xvii. 18, xx. 21).

Such is the Christian's mission. He is not to shut himself within the walls of a monastery or a convent. Christianity does not consist in joining a brotherhood or a sisterhood. Nothing of the kind. We are called to move up and down in the varied relations of life, and to act in our divinely appointed spheres to the glory of God. It is not a question of what we are doing, but of how we do it. All depends on the object which governs our hearts. If Christ be the commanding and absorbing object of the heart, all will be right. If He be not, nothing is right. Two persons may sit down at the same table to eat; the one eats to gratify his appetite, the other eats to the glory of God, eats simply to keep his body in proper working order as God's vessel, the temple of the Holy Ghost, the instrument for Christ's service.

So in everything. It is our sweet privilege to set the Lord always before us. He is our model. As He was sent into the world, so are

we. What did He come to do? To glorify God. How did He live? By the Father. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." (John vi. 57).

This makes it all so simple. Christ is the standard and touchstone for everything. It is no longer a question of mere right and wrong according to human rules. It is simply a question of what is worthy of Christ. Would He do this or that? Would He go here or there? He left us an example that we should follow *His* steps; (1 Peter ii. 21); and most assuredly we should not go where we cannot trace His blessed footsteps. If we go *hither and thither* to please ourselves, we are not treading in His steps, and we cannot expect to enjoy His blessed presence.

Christian reader, here lies the real secret of the whole matter. The grand question is just this: Is Christ my one object? What am I living for? Can I say, "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me"? Nothing less than this is worthy of a Christian. It is a poor miserable thing to be content with being saved, and then go on with the world, and live for self-pleasing and self-interest; to accept salvation as the fruit of Christ's toil and passion, and then live at a distance from Himself. What should we think of a child who only cared about the good things provided by his father's hand, and never sought his father's company, yea, preferred the company of strangers? We should justly despise him. But how much more despicable is the Christian, who owes his present and his eternal all to the work of Christ, and yet is content

JUDGMENT OF THE SCOFFING CHILDREN. 103

to live at a cold distance from His blessed Person, caring not for the furtherance of His cause, the promotion of His glory!

The Judgment of the Scoffing Children.

(Read 2 Kings ii. 23-25.)

A NOTHER meditation is suggested here. Children of Bethel are another order of persons altogether. If Elisha represent the strong one in Christ, the true Levite, who had turned his back on all but the glory and the chariot of fire to conduct him to it, and if the sons of the prophets are the weak ones, still, however, by divine grace, in the same company and blessing as Elisha, these children of Bethel, on the other hand, are the mockers, or infidels. They despise the word of the Lord. They mock the thought of ascension. "Where is the promise of His coming?" say they (2 Peter iii.) The whole mystery of God made known for salvation and glory is their sport. They put the Son of God to open shame. (Heb. vi. 6.)

"Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head," they say to Elisha, as reproaching the thought that Elijah had already gone up.

And here the curse falls. Ministers of wrath come forth, the bears on the children of Bethel, to vindicate the divine truth against the gain-sayers.

Creation is not to groan for ever under the curse which our sin has put on it, but shall be delivered from bondage into glorious liberty (Rom. viii.), as Jericho had just been here; but the curse

will rest on the Cain, the children of Bethel, who despise God's remedy for the mischief.

And it is written of such mocking, infidel children, children of disobedience, whether of Babylon or of Edom, "Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." (Psa. cxxxvii. 9.)

The Widow's Oil Multiplied.

(Read 2 Kings iv. 1-7.)

"**A**CCORDING to your faith be it unto you!" was the Lord's word to the two blind men. (Matt. ix. 29.) Wondrous and blessed indeed that thus in any wise our faith, or patience, or expectation of hope, should be allowed to measure the active and bounteous power of our Lord! But so was it. "According to your faith be it unto you." And again: "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." (Matt. viii. 13.)

And this is the voice of the miracle wrought here through the hand of Elisha. For as long as the poor widow produced her vessels, the pot produced its oil. The oil waited on the vessels. The vessels were the measure of the oil. In other words, divine power waited on faith; faith measured the active resources of God on the occasion. This was like the Lord standing with Abraham of old. For as long as Abraham stood interceding, the Lord stood promising (Gen. xviii. 17-33.)

This blessed grace of God has its illustration here. But there is another thing. "What hast thou in the house?" said the prophet to the woman. As Jesus afterwards said to His disciples, "How many loaves have ye?" Or, as

He had said to Moses at the hill, "What is that in thine hand?" For it is suitable that whatever we have should be put to use. It may be quite unequal to the necessity, but whatever it be, it should be occupied. It may be but a shepherd's staff, and Israel has to be redeemed; it may be but a pot of oil, and the creditor who had a right to sell children and all has to be paid; it may be but five barley loaves, and five thousand hungry ones have to be fed. But still let what there is be occupied and brought forth. "She hath done what she could." (Matt. xiv. 8.)

And accordingly the word here is, "What hast thou in the house?" And then on bringing forth the pot of oil, the all of the house, let faith count on the power of God, and His word of promise, and not only shall the creditor be discharged, but life sustained for many days, over and above the payment; not only shall the multitude be fed, but fragments gathered; not only shall Israel be redeemed out of Egypt, but the same shepherd's rod, now God's rod, shall feed and keep the flock to the end of the desert.

The Shunammite.

(Read 2 Kings iv. 8-37).

HERE we have another exhibition of the power of our prophet's walk through the earth. This is very glorious, savouring, as we shall see, very strikingly of the energy and authority of God that was with him. And yet, though walking thus in such power towards others, he was himself, all the while, nothing; poor indeed, while making many rich; seeming to possess all things, yet really having nothing; receiving bounty and care, in the ordinary need

of life, from those in whose behalf he, at the same time, is opening resources which were altogether beyond man. And beside, he walks *alone* in the world, and yet *all* wait on him.

All this gives us a strong impression of the ways of One who could call Himself Master and Lord, receiving the homage of faith, even while He had not where to lay His head. In all this, our prophet is marking out for us, as in a reflection, the path of JESUS.

The woman whom this passage introduces to us was evidently of the godly seed in the land. She lived in the distant tribe of Issachar, and does not appear to have personally known this mighty prophet of God. But she quickly apprehends something of the Lord about him. She had been already taught of God; her religion was that which discerned God's mind and way in an evil day, when apostasy was clouding everything. New moons and sabbaths, as her husband wrongly judged, did not constitute her service, or mark out the path of her spirit with God.

But Elisha, who was at that day the channel of the divine grace and power, apart from the temple and its ordinances, was her object and hope, as he was God's object and instrument. She accordingly prepares him a place of sojourning in her own house. And her intelligence of him is further and strikingly marked by the preparation she makes for him. It was but a little chamber, with its bed, its stool, and its candlestick. All was in the simplicity of "a man of God" who stood apart from the world, a stranger in the midst of its corruptions.

She knew him because she was like him. One spirit was in them both. She understood his

pilgrim thoughts and habits, just because she was exercised in them herself. And this is the only way really and divinely to know either the children of God, or God Himself. It is by the union and mind of the same spirit.

She dwelt among her own people, and cared not to be spoken for either to the king or to the captain of the host. Even Elisha, who, though he had the ear of the king and of the captain of the host (as well he might after feeding their armies in the day of battle) yet would be a stranger, and pilgrim in the land, and lodge in a little chamber with a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick.

These are the sympathies in the Spirit between the children of God. She could receive a prophet according to the tastes of a prophet. And the great prophet of that day, God's witness in the land, the vessel of fullest divine treasure that was then, in the name of the Lord, shedding its blessing wherever it was borne in the might of the Spirit, is of one mind with this unknown and distant daughter of Abraham in the borders of Issachar.

Precious the traces of one Spirit thus quickening and forming every elect member of the same household!

And we shall find, not only Abraham's daughter but something of Abraham's house and Abraham's faith, in this honoured and interesting place. This woman had no child, and her husband was now old. But as the Lord Himself had once said to Abraham, "According to the time of life; and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son"; so now, the lord's prophet says to this Shunammite, "According to the time of life, thou shalt

embrace a son." And so it was; as with Sarah, so with this woman. The quickening power of God entered her house, and as it was promised her, she embraced a son.

More, however, than even this is to be witnessed in this house; she is to learn through the hand of Elisha, *resurrection*, as well as *quickenings* power; just as in the house of Abraham it was learnt from the Lord Himself. Isaac, who was at the first quickened in the womb of Sarah through the power of God, was afterwards received as from the dead. And so here. The sentence of death is laid in this child of promise, but the same power of God, through Elisha, raises him from the dead.

This is Abraham's house again, and a distant woman of Issachar is thus noticed, thus honoured and graced, by the Lord God of her people. This makes this house of the Shunammite a sample of that glorious mystery in which we are all concerned, a witness of every soul where the power of God is known; for it is there a quickening and resurrection power, which calls up those who were dead in trespasses and sins to live in the life of the Son of God.

Faith possesses itself of this. Faith which apprehends death in ourselves, but life in Jesus. The simpler, the happier. The more unquestioning, the more according to God's mind.

It was so in this Shunammite. Her faith, as we saw, was ready at the first to apprehend the prophet; it was ready to know that all was well, or should be well, even when death had entered the house. And it was ready, in spite of all tempters, to cleave to God's prophet, God's object and instrument, and to him only. This was

precious simplicity of confidence. And throughout the trial of her faith, to which she is now put, as was her father Abraham in his day, I observe the same calmness and certainty of soul. When the patriarch was ordered to take his son, and offer him up for a burnt offering, he went forth to the trial without the least disturbance of soul. The ass and the young men were at once put into readiness, and the knife, and the fire, and the wood were all prepared.

Faith counted on resurrection. Abraham reckoned on God being able to raise Isaac from the dead, as of old He had quickened him in the womb of Sarah; and Abraham was *undisturbed*. And so when the deliverance did come and the voice from heaven announced the substitute for Isaac, Abraham is not *amazed*. He does not wonder or suspect, or ask again whether indeed this be so, but he looses his son in the same repose and certainty that he bound him. Oh, what depth and character there is in that calmness! Faith had anticipated resurrection.

And altogether in the same spirit is the path of faith trodden here by this dear and honoured daughter of Abraham. Death was in her house again, but she knew of a quickener of the dead. And therefore the ass and the young men are again got ready, and "It is well," is the language of her faith in sure and certain hope of resurrection of the dead. And at the end, *life* is no *amazement* to her. She received her dead brought to life again (Heb. xi.) She can loose her son by faith, as well as bind him. She falls at the prophet's feet and bows her head. She owns in thankfulness and humiliation the precious gift, but she bears it away without amazement.

It was no wonder to her. She does not curiously examine the child, whether indeed it were alive again. Faith had counted on such an hour, and already had received her child as in resurrection, and her soul had only to know that her beloved one was warm and lively in her bosom again.

Indeed, all this is a pattern of a sinner's faith. Should it be thought a thing incredible with us that God should raise the dead? "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" faith is to say. "With God all things are possible." And we are to go forth from a state of death in trespasses and sins into life and liberty; from the spirit of bondage and of fear, and from under the guilt of an unpurged conscience, without amazement or suspicion, because the Lord has done it. "Whereas I was blind, now I see," may be the calm, happy thankful certainty of the sinner who has met the Son of God in the healing virtue of His blood.

But there is still more in the faith of this dear soul. I find her faith tried in the two ways that the faith of Elisha had before been tried. The sons of the prophets on the one hand, the word of Elijah on the other, had put the faith of Elisha to sore trial: but it prevailed, and onward he followed his master till the chariot of Israel separated them.

And so here. The thought of her husband first, and then the way of Elisha, both rise as tempters of the steadfastness of her soul. "Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day?" says her husband to her, "it is neither new moon nor sabbath"; and Elisha is for Gehazi satisfying her, and would have him go forward, and lay his staff on the face of the child. But the woman's faith silences both. And she presses through

the hindrance in the same decision and fervency that Elisha himself before had done, saying, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee" (ii. 2, iv. 30.)

The great enemy and deceiver, that old serpent often proposes some delegated virtue, some servant and his staff. *But faith ever withstands.* Through his subtilty and darkening of divine counsels, confidence in ordinances was prevailing in Galatia, but Paul clung to the cross, and cast the bondwoman out of the house. For the trial of the soul, even the Lord Himself, like His prophet here, can make some such offer. "If thou wilt enter into life," says Jesus to the young ruler, "keep the commandments." But faith would have answered, "Lord, thou hast the words of life." The young ruler, however, may try the proposed remedy, and take the servant and the staff with him, and go his way, but Paul, and faith, and this dear woman of Issachar, must cling to JESUS only.

There is a greatness in the work of the Spirit in her soul here that is indeed blessed. Elisha had been already known to her in the quickening of her dead body. She had learnt him, or God's power through him, in that, and to that she now clings, in the face of every temptation. So with the sinner and JESUS.

The sinner who believes has learnt the Son of God in His quickening power. He has understood the mystery of *death and resurrection*. He has been at Calvary, and at the empty sepulchre. He has seen there things, and known the meaning of them, for the full clearing of the conscience towards God. And no ordinance, as people speak, can take the place of them in the believer's soul.

One may talk of new moons and Sabbaths, another of the prophet's staff in the hand of a vicar or delegate, but the faith of a divinely taught sinner apprehends nothing but the precious, unchanging, imperishable virtue of Him who was dead, and is alive again; from whom, as this dear woman did from Elisha, he has learnt where alone quickening, redeeming, saving power is of God to be received and enjoyed.

Sweet and fruitful indeed is this spot where the feet of the prophet oft-times tarried, and where our thoughts, wearied with ourselves and the world, may as often turn to get refreshing from God.

Nations may be quarrelling and fighting; the cry of war may be coming from all quarters; the professing Church may be passing through the several stages of apostasy, as "the way of Cain, the error of Balaam, the gainsaying of Core"; but the soul's hiding-place from the strife of nations and the divisions of the Church is the love of God, the unchangeable love of God; and faith can add, without a question, "This is His love to me, for whom He spared nothing, not even His own Son, that I might be cleansed from all my sins, possess eternal life, and be brought into the cloudless enjoyment of His perfect and eternal love." Whatever may occur in the history of the Church or of our brethren, He is unchangeable; and the individual soul that remains true amidst the general failure, will find no change in his "safe retreat," the changeless love of God (Jude xx. 21).

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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).

Salvation and Supply; or, “Speak ye unto the Rock.”

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock; so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as He commanded him” (Num. xx. 7-9).

WE find the story of the smitten rock first presented to us in the Book of Exodus. This smiting of the rock took place before the law was given, and is a eminent example of divine grace, the grace of God to ungodly, sinful man.

The people of Israel were in the deepest necessity; they had no water to drink. Day after day their distress increased. There were no wells at hand. They might make the most diligent search, and put all their energies into exercise, in digging deep in all directions; but still it was a barren and thirsty land, where no water was.

Weak, parched, and prostrate, they had no power whatever to meet their necessity. They were perishing with thirst, and had no water to drink. But more than this. They were sinners; they murmured; they tempted God, and were ready to stone His servant. They were unworthy as well as needy. God might justly have allowed them to perish, for they merited His wrath and displeasure; but He took occasion to deal in grace instead of in judgment. His pitying eye beheld their need; His loving heart compassionated them; His infinite wisdom and mercy devised a way of deliverance; and His almighty power speedily carried it out.

The question was, Could God, *would* God, give this thirsty, sinful, perishing people water to drink?

Yes, He could and would do so. Consistently with His own holy attributes, and that too in a way that should be to the praise of His glory. By smiting another instead of them, His justice would be satisfied, and His mercy freely flow. This is the way of grace to sinful, helpless man, in the cross of Christ, and this way was shown forth in the type of the smitten rock. "The Lord said unto Moses, Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt SMITE THE ROCK, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses

did so in the sight of the elders of Israel ” (Exodus xvii. 5, 6).

Thus is the way of grace, the needy sinful people had an abundant supply of water to satisfy their thirst. This is a fine example of grace, and is important because we are told in the New Testament that we are saved by grace: “ By grace are ye saved, through faith ” (Eph. ii. 8).

Perhaps few things are so little understood as grace. It is said by some that grace means that God will do His part, if we will do ours. But this entirely destroys the thought of grace. Others say that it means unmerited love. But it means more than this, for it brings favour and blessing to those who only deserve punishment and destruction; it brings eternal life and glory to such as have merited eternal death and banishment; and it flows freely to us through the smitten Son of God, who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities (Isa. liii. 5).

It is the death of Christ, then, that is here typified by the smitten rock. There the stripes that we deserved were laid upon Him, and thence the water of life flows freely. Grace, then, is suited for sinners. It springs from God, is manifested in the death of Christ, and satisfies the thirsty souls of those who there taste and see that the Lord is good; and as it was only water from the smitten rock that quenched the thirst of the perishing Israelites, so it is only the blood of the cross that gives peace to a sin-sick soul. If for a thirsty, perishing Israelite to have turned his back upon the waters gushing out so abundantly from the smitten rock, instead of drinking thereof, would be deemed to be the height of madness, how much more so for a man now to turn

away from the crucified Son of God, who died to save sinners !

Having said thus much on the smiting of the rock, let us turn more immediately to the subject before us.

First, we may notice that, after the people of Israel had drunk the water from the rock, they lived, and fought the battles of the Lord; but after a while, though the rock never left them, they thirsted again, as we find in this chapter. This is a remarkable type, and serves to show us that, after we have received the Lord Jesus, after we have obtained life and peace through faith in His name, after we have fought the battles of the Lord, after we may have drunk for months and years the water of life, and enjoyed the presence of the Lord, we shall yet be barren and thirsty if we cease to live upon Christ; if we turn from Him, and lose the taste and comfort of His love.

In pursuing our meditation, we might remark, first, On the state of the believer when not living upon Christ; secondly, On failure in the service of God; thirdly, Consider what is the Christian's true path; and fourthly, Glance at the blessings connected with it.

1. THE STATE OF THE BELIEVER WHEN NOT LIVING UPON CHRIST. So long as we abide in the Lord Jesus, dwell on His love, live in His presence, sit at His feet, rest on His faithfulness, feed on His word, love His ways, pour out our hearts to Him, and draw out of His fulness, our peace flows as a river; we overcome in conflict, escape out of temptation, bear our sufferings with fortitude, fight the good fight of faith, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

But when the eye and heart forget Christ, when we turn from Him as the smitten Rock, the fountain of life and love, then the barrenness and sorrows of the wilderness press heavily upon us, and disappointment, rebellion, murmuring, and other bitter fruits of unbelief, easily manifest themselves. Perhaps no people act more foolishly, are more miserable, or more exhibit the unlovely tempers and evils of the flesh, than those believers who forget the Lord Jesus, and draw not refreshment and blessing out of His fulness. The enemy finding such off their guard, easily overcomes them with his fiery darts, acts upon the pride and lusts of the flesh, until, instead of the triumphant song of "Worthy is the Lamb," their lips give utterance to words of discontent and despondency.

It has been said that "the blood of Christ both strengthens our inner man, and keeps down the weeds of the flesh." And so it is; for, in the exercise of faith, we draw from Christ, and so are spiritually strengthened, that we are able to keep under carnal lusts. But, though we be true disciples of Christ, yet severed from Him we grow weak spiritually, and fleshly desires and ways spring up, and are sometimes painfully manifested. Accordingly this chapter shows us that when the people had no water from the rock, and thirsted, they gathered themselves together against the servants of God; chode with Moses, complained of the barrenness of the wilderness, and concluded that they would die, and never see the land of promise. Their experience was that of darkness, barrenness, and misery, because they got away from the only fountain of refreshment and blessing. And so it is with God's people

now. Oh, how many complaining children of God may trace their present sadness of soul, not, as they suppose, to the circumstances that have crossed their path, but to the two evils of forsaking the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water! (Jer. ii. 13).

How can we be happy apart from Him who is our life and salvation? How can we be making melody in our hearts, so long as the spring of all our joy ceases to be viewed by us as the river of life to our souls? Those who cleave to the Lord Jesus, and walk in His ways, may assuredly count upon the comfort of the Holy Ghost as their portion; and while they will not be without the trials of the wilderness, they will realise the present help and mercy of God *in* trouble, and in God's own good time deliverance *from* trouble. Thus abiding in the Lord Jesus, we shall be happy and fruitful, but severed from Him we shall be barren and unhappy; and, as the apostle Peter says, such will be blind, unable to see afar off, and will forget that they were purged from their old sins (2 Pet. i. 9). How important, then, that we should not seek satisfaction at the worldling's swine-trough; but, knowing that Christ is all, live upon Him, His person, work, fitness, fulness, and offices; drink deeply into His gracious words and ways, treasure up His promises, dwell on His unutterable and unchanging love, seek more and more His unsearchable riches; so that the constant language of our souls may be, "His mouth is most sweet, yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend" (Song of Sol. v. 16).

2. FAILURE IN SERVICE is also recorded in this

affecting narrative. Moses desired to serve the Lord, and to serve His people; but he did not do so in God's way; instead, therefore, of its being acceptable service, it was so displeasing to the Lord that he was not allowed to go into the land on account of it. It was zeal, but not according to knowledge. God told Moses to take the rod, but did not tell him to use it as he did. He was also told to *speak* to the rock, but instead of that he *smote* it. God used no rebuke in speaking to His servant about the assembly, but Moses called them "rebels." All these things show that Moses was not serving in the temper and spirit of the Lord. To seek to satisfy God's thirsty people was well, but he did not act in it for the glory of God. And it is important to notice that, notwithstanding Moses' failure, God acted then as He often does now, He brought blessing to the people, though He chastened His servant for his inconsistent conduct. The failure was very great, not only in its not being obedience to the Lord's plain command, but in spoiling the type, which was, doubtless, intended to teach us that the rock once smitten, need never be smitten again, but would give forth refreshing streams at the cry of faith, as we now know Christ (1 Cor. x. 4).

The rod here was evidently not the rod of Moses, wherewith he smote the rock; that rod Moses took with him on the top of the hill, after the rock in Horeb was smitten, and we never hear of it afterwards. Moses' rod there did its work, and the type teaches us that the law had its claims met in the smiting and death of the Son of God. The rod ordered to be taken in this scene at Meribah was the rod which was *before*

the Lord (v. 9), which was Aaron's rod (see ch. xvii.), and teaches us not about smiting, but about the resurrection and priesthood of Christ. We are told that this dead rod "budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds, and was laid up before the testimony . . . and the Lord said, Thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not."

Thus we see strikingly shadowed forth the resurrection and priesthood of Christ. It can, therefore, easily be seen how consistent with the truth it would be for Moses to hold forth this beautiful rod beside the rock gushing with his waters at his word, and how contrary to the typical meaning it was to smite the rock, especially with such a rod. How blessed now to know Jesus in resurrection glory as the Rock once smitten to save His people from death, but now before the Lord; and that we have only to contemplate Him to be filled with adoring gratitude; only to speak to Him, and His blessings flow with abundant refreshment!

Much religious service in the present day, we fear, is not acceptable to God. Much there may be that God's eye detects as being chiefly the busy energy of the flesh, and not spiritual; not in the obedience of faith; not in accordance with the truth of God. How important that we should not only be addicting ourselves to the Lord's work, but that we should carry it out in God's way, and for His glory! This leads us to consider—

3. THE CHRISTIAN'S TRUE PATH. Declension of soul and failure in service, generally go together. The Christian's true path is communion

with God, and obedience to His word; and the backsliding and failing Christian must return thither, if he would be happy, and glorify God. The believer's calling is unto "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ"; to walk with God; to realise that all his springs are in Him, and to wait for His Son from heaven. Christ, the true Rock that was smitten, is his all-satisfying portion. He has to do with the Lord Jesus who was crucified, who said, "It is finished!" and bowed His head and gave up the ghost. He knows that that one finished work of eternal redemption is perfect, and that by it He has perfected for ever all those who truly believe in Him; so that there remains no more sacrifice for sins. He, therefore, looks to Jesus risen and glorified, the slain Lamb on the right hand of God, as the One who has all power in heaven and in earth. His business, then, in every need is to "speak to the Rock," and to prove that living water continually flows from Him (John vii. 37).

The Christian has generally much joy at first, because his thirst is satisfied by simply drinking of the waters of the smitten rock, and Christ is all to him. He knows little of the deceitfulness of his own heart, the trials of the wilderness, or of the seductions of Satan. After a while, however, when unexpected difficulties and necessities cross his path, he perhaps unconsciously loses sight of Christ, by being taken up with the sorrowful circumstances, and thirsts for refreshment and comfort. But where will he find it? Surely he will find it flow only from that same Rock which at first quenched his thirst, the Lamb who is now in the midst of the throne. This, then, is

the Christian's true course : looking unto Jesus, abiding in Jesus, drawing from Jesus, learning of Jesus, whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace ; or as the apostle expresses it, " Be careful for nothing ; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God " (Phil. iv. 6). Speak to the Rock ; every need should lead us to the fulness of the Lord Jesus ; every temptation to His sympathy and power ; every occasion of blessing with thanksgiving to Him ; every sorrow should lead us to contemplate the sorrows of Jesus ; every act of service should be done in dependence on the Lord Jesus ; yea, concerning everything we should speak to Him. Those who thus set the Lord always before them will experience that He is at their right hand, and that they cannot be moved (Ps. xvi. 8).

Oh, ye dear children of God ! are you cast down by reason of the trials of the way ? Are you oppressed, and fainting under a sense of your many needs, many sorrows, many achings of heart ? Oh, speak to the Rock ! Go and tell the Lord Jesus all your sorrows, and all your perplexities ; yea, tell Him all ; pour out your heart before Him. He will refresh your spirit, lift up your hands that hang down, sustain your confidence, give you wisdom, and show you that He careth for you. He bids you trust in Him at all times ; not some times, but all times ; therefore speak to Him this time. You may have proved it a blessed thing to speak to Him in times past : oh, speak to Him now ! Cast all your care on Him, for He says He careth for you. Cast every burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you.

You need not fear any sorrow, if it only lead you to the Lord Jesus; and every felt need will be a blessing, if it only be a fresh errand to the throne of grace (Heb. iv. 16). Fellow-Christians! the Rock still gives forth His water, and refreshing streams still flow freely to us from our Lord Jesus. It is vain to look elsewhere. Princes cannot help us. Creatures are broken cisterns; and it is written, "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help!" and, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." Without Christ we can do nothing; but there is no uncertainty in calling upon the Lord Jesus. "Speak ye unto the Rock, . . . and it shall give forth His water" (Isa. xxxi. 1; Jer. xvii. 5). Such is the way of blessing; for it is written, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." In this way only will true Christians be happy, and thus be fitted for the Lord's work; for "the joy of the Lord is our strength" (Ps. ii. 12; Prov. viii. 34; Neh. viii. 10).

It is only by the written word, unfolded to us by the Spirit, that we know how to serve God acceptably. "If a man love me, he will keep my words," said Jesus. It seemed a little thing when God said, "Speak ye unto the rock," that Moses should smite it; but it dishonoured God. God's word is to be heeded by us, and obeyed; and drinking of the water from the rock and honouring His word, we shall render acceptable service.

The importance of simply obeying God's word is again taught us in 1 Sam. xv. God commanded Saul to slay *all* the Amalekites, but Saul only slew some. This was disobedience; and God

told him, that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

We see another example in the days of David. God had ordered that none were to carry the ark of God but the Levites; but David ordered it otherwise. The consequence was that disappointment, chastisement, and failure, accompanied the service (see 1 Chron. xiii. 10); but afterwards, when the king acted according to the word of the Lord, and rendered acceptable service it was connected with the Lord's blessing, and the people's joy and gladness. How important, then, that we should beware of the traditions of men, and heed and obey the written word of God!

4. Let us now glance at THE BLESSINGS CONNECTED WITH DRINKING OF THE WATER FROM THE ROCK. The people's thirst was quenched, their murmurings ceased, their spirits were refreshed, and their hearts were cheered. But the sequel shows us two things more: first, that they acted graciously; and secondly, they fought against the enemies of the Lord valiantly. In reference to the first point we are told that they sent kind messages to the king of Edom, and when the Edomites repeatedly refused to let Israel pass through their land on any terms, they went another way. This was carrying out the mind of God, for Edom was Israel's brother after the flesh; and it reminds us of the fact that those who taste and enjoy most of the grace of God will be kind, yielding and gracious to others. Who would have thought, a short time before, that those rebellious Israelites would be so soon acting in such a gracious temper; but they had drunk of the water from the rock; and they had seen and be-

lieved the goodness of the Lord; and this had made the difference.

With regard to the second point, when the Canaanites attacked them, and took some of their brethren prisoners, they went forth in the strength of the Lord and fought valiantly and successfully against the enemy, and utterly destroyed both them and their cities. They fought for their fallen brethren, and against the enemies of the Lord. Is it possible that these very people were so recently chiding with Moses, and setting themselves against him and Aaron? Yes; but they had drunk of the water from the rock; they had been restored in their minds to a consciousness that God was for them, and not against them, and this had made the difference.

Soon, beloved, the Lord Jesus will come again, and our pilgrimage days will have for ever passed away; we shall then no longer know the sorrows and drought of a barren wilderness. Now it is our highest privilege to "speak to the Rock," to hold intercourse by faith with our blessed Lord Jesus, whom having not seen we love; then we shall see Him face to face, and admiring His eternal beauties and excellencies with unalloyed and unchanging joy and gratitude, we shall be FOR EVER WITH THE LORD.

We are united to Christ. He represents us before God. He is our righteousness. But at the same time, He who, in His perfection, is our righteousness is also our life; so that the Spirit aims at the manifestation of this same perfection, practical perfection, in the daily life of Christians.

The Deadly Pottage Healed.

(Read 2 Kings iv. 38-41).

THE incidents of our prophet's life are like so many emanations of glory through the cloud of his apparent poverty and nothingness in the world. And this was one character of the life of the Son of God on the earth.

Here we have a very bright expression of his ways, and of the ways of Him whom he foreshadowed.

There was "death in the pot"; death indeed where life should have been; death invading the place where life looked for its support and strengthening. But the prophet has the remedy for death here, as he had for the curse at Jericho. We know One of whom we sing,

"Where He displays His healing power,

Death and the curse are known no more."

And here our prophet, the shadow of JESUS, has meal to cast into the pot, as before he had salt to cast into the waters; and both are healed.

Moses also typified this at Marah, where he had the wood for the bitter waters. For the Son of God has cast Himself into the scene of death, and intercepted its course. He has come with His healing cross, and destroyed "him that hath the power of death" (Exod. xv. 25). "With His stripes we are healed." There is a cry at the discovery of the death that has entered; but the Son of God has answered it. We eat of what in our wilfulness we had gathered; but JESUS changes the feast, and gives us meat indeed and drink indeed, on which we live even in the time of dearth (Isa. liii. 5).

Death and the curse are altogether at the disposal of Him who has cast Himself on our side into the scene and action of this world. "I have the keys of hell and of death," says He; and His strength shall rescue creation from the curse, and cast death itself into "the lake of fire" (Rev. i. 18; xx. 14).

"Why," we may ask with amazement of soul, "did we ever gather our wild fruit, and bring death in? Why did we not sit at the feast as it was first spread for us?"

For what a miniature picture of the whole great mystery does this little incident give us! What has Adam done? What has Christ done? Have we not the answer here? The prophet prepared a feast. Though it were a time of dearth he had resources. He had pottage for his guests, and the pot was seething on the fire. But there was some one, it matters not who, save that it was neither the prophet nor his servant, who thought to improve the feast, and officiously and intrusively gathered some wild gourds. But his gourds brought death into the prophet's pot.

And what did Adam but this? The Lord, the Creator, had spread a feast, rich and dainty, and abundant for him, in Eden, but Adam must needs improve it. He gathers wild fruit, something that the Lord had not ordained for the table, something in addition; but he spoils everything, and brings death into the pot; death upon that board which the Lord had loaded with the sweetest, richest food of life!

The prophet, however, had the remedy, and heals the pot, and then his guests retake their seats at the feast, with only fresh appetite to still more savoury meat. It is now a *healed* table,

and not a *spread* table merely. They may admire and love the man and his resources, who could then, in unupbraiding grace, restore their good things, the good things which in their wanton pride they had thought to improve, but had utterly ruined and defiled.

Is not this JESUS and ourselves I ask? Do we not sit at a *healed* table? "The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations" (Rev. xxii. 2). We are at a happier table than the bowers of Eden would ever have shaded. We sit at the feast of the REDEEMER with new affections. We admire the *healing* as well as the creating virtue of His power, and lose ourselves in love and praise at the thought of the unupbraiding grace that has thus repaired the mischief.

We may store our intellect with biblical knowledge, we may have the doctrines of the Bible and the letter of Scripture at our finger-ends, without having one particle of unction or spiritual power. We must go to Scripture as a thirsty man goes to a well; as a hungry man goes to a meal; as a mariner goes to a chart. We must go to it because we cannot do without it. We go not merely to study, but to feed. The instincts of the divine nature lead us naturally to the word of God, as the new-born babe desire the milk by which he is to grow. It is by feeding on the word that the new man grows.

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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).

Naaman the Syrian.

(READ 2 KINGS V.)

VARIOUS, as well as striking and significant, are the glories that shine along the path of our prophet. Every stage tells out some great and new secret of God.

In this history we have, it seems, all the leading truths of the mystery of God's grace simply yet strikingly illustrated. A parable this of very rich instruction.

1. In the person of NAAMAN we get man in his best estate. NAAMAN must have been the world's envy, the great favourite of the day. He was made much of, as we speak, by every one; by the king himself, and all the nation. The Lord in endowments and providences had greatly signalized him. But “he was a leper.” There

was a stain on all his glory which no hand but God's could remove; and let the world flatter him as it might, it was a witness, a constant witness, to himself, that all was not right.

And such indeed is man. Let him be advantaged as he may in circumstances, or set off as he may by embellishments and attractions, there is a witness against him still.

2. In the LITTLE CAPTIVE MAID whom we next see we get just the opposite of Naaman. All was against her in circumstances. She had been dragged from friends and home, and was a bond-servant in a stranger's house and land; but she carried a secret the very opposite of Naaman's secret. She had the witness of God for her, as he had His witness against him. She knew the *healing*, while he felt the *sore*. This was a mighty difference; yea, all the difference, if God be considered. To have Him *for*, not *against* us, is surely the grand circumstance of all. And so was it here. And so is it with every true Israelite like her; in the knowledge of the same secret, in the knowledge of that *healing* of God, they can say, "If God be *for* us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31).

3. These are valuable lessons in this parable. But we have others. THE KING OF SYRIA is next introduced; and he represents man in his loftiness of thought and self-esteem, even in religion. He judges, to be sure, that nothing can be done for the divine healing of his favourite captain but through him and his resources. Who but he? Who but the king? was the language of his heart. He therefore prepares his silver, his gold, and his raiment, and writes a letter with his own hand on this business to the king of Israel; a

king to a king; for nothing less than such patronage can give fair promise of blessing.

All this is worldly religion, man's thoughts about God's way. But there is nothing that the king of Syria does that is not simply labour lost. His own personal patronage and gifts, and the countenance he sought of a brother king, all is religious vanity. And the king of Israel, who had the advantage of God's revelation in his country is able to refuse to take his part in this grand purpose and thought of the king of Syria.

4. There is, however, one higher than the king in all this, though the Syrian knows nothing of him. ELISHA had, of course, passed the notice of this great man of the earth. But Elisha, who is now also, in his turn, introduced to us in the history, is Naaman's only hope in this day of his leprosy. And Elisha, conscious that the power of God was with him, makes no stir or difficulty as the king had done. He has not, like ONE afterwards, the authority of his own word to cleanse away this stain, but he is in the secret of God's ordained remedy, and he can, with authority, preach that to the leper.

For here I may notice how JESUS shines above all. When the leper comes to Him, it is not as with the king, "Am I God, that I should heal a man of his leprosy?" nor is it as with the prophet, "Go, wash in Jordan and be clean." No; but He reveals Himself at once in the place and power of God: "I will; be thou clean." Elisha was but a *preacher of Jesus* to Naaman. Jesus was the *leper's cleansing, healing God*; as John, or the brightest of them, is but the bridegroom's friend; JESUS the only bridegroom.

5. And then in this same picture we see an-

other object of the deepest interest to us. I mean *the poor convicted leper passing through his cleansing*. At first nature is strong in him. He resents the remedy which grace had provided, a remedy most simple but most humbling; so simple that there was no mistaking it, and no difficulty in applying it, saving the difficulty which man's pride and previous thoughts had opposed to it. But these give battle at once.

But grace can plead with a slow, reluctant heart, as well as provide for a leprous body. Grace can use a ministry, as well as an open fountain, for sinners. And that ministry, like the remedy, is simple and artless, and as such fitted to its end. Naaman's servants in their way, met the risings of nature in their master, and their word or ministry is blest; the proffered fountain is tried, its virtues are proved, and the flesh that was leprous became like that of a little child. It is more than restoration; it is resurrection. Jordan was a true baptism to this Syrian. He dies, and lives again; he is buried, and rises again, and comes forth not merely as a *healed*, but as a *new* creature.

And what is the fruit of this new condition in which he finds himself? Here we trace the parable still, and get the great principle of God's way illustrated.

1. *He stands before Elisha with all his company*. It is not now the proud but the humble Naaman. Sweet fruit this of the new man that Naaman had become! He is humbled because he is healed.

2. *He makes a goodly confession to the name of the one only God*. He takes Him for his God; he had learnt Him through the health and sal-

vation He had given him. And this is the way that the new creature ever learns Him, the only way He can be learnt or known in this world.

3. *He presses his gifts, whatever he had, on the prophet; not now, as the king his master thought, to purchase the healing. He had been forgiven, and therefore he loved.*

4. *He will henceforth know no other God; and in order to that he seeks materials to raise Him an altar. God must be his God, even in the midst of infidel Syria, whither he is returning. Him, and Him only, will he worship. For this "two mules' burden of earth," was for the end of erecting, as it were, another Ed beyond the Jordan (Josh. xxii. 34). It was to bear witness, in the distant land of Syria, that this citizen of that country, like the Ethiopian eunuch afterwards, had cast in his lot with Israel, and had come, like Ruth the Moabitess before, to trust under the wings of the God of Israel.*

5. *And, lastly, he gets a renewed conscience, all quick and sensitive of the least, even apparent, departure from the God who had now blessed him. He dreads the appearance of evil. He would not have it thought that any attendance of his on his master was recurring to the old principles of Syria, and the house of Rimmon. Such he had left, and left for ever, through God's grace, and would now, at the very entrance on his new creation in Christ Jesus, enter a protestation against everything that might even look otherwise.*

This narrative, therefore, which thus occupies an important place in the ministry of our prophet, and is the scene in his labours taken up and referred to by his divine Master afterwards (Luke iv.), is one of extensive value to us, so clearly and fully

exhibiting the dealing of God with each of us. Let us, with all simplicity of heart, assure ourselves that all was written for our learning; that our God has from the beginning been allowing things to happen to others, that we might be admonished and comforted by them.

But there is one other point in this scene which I observe. The prophet (v. 26) does not challenge Gehazi on the ground of his having lied to Naaman, but on quite another form of evil that was in his conduct. And there is, I believe, great force and beauty in this. "Is it a time," says Elisha to his servant, "to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men servants and maid servants?"

This was an ingredient in the sin which belonged rather to *the Spirit* to notice; the lie was of common moral apprehension.

The Gentile had just been learning the grace of the God of Israel. The talents of silver, and pieces of gold, and changes of raiment, which the king of Syria had sent into the land of Israel, had been despised by the prophet, and Naaman was bearing them all, to the utmost "thread" or "shoe-latchet" home with him again. He had gone to the waters without money and without price, and was the witness that the gift of God was not to be purchased with money.

Terrible, then, was it to have all this testimony confounded. Well might the prophet ask, was this a time to take the Syrian's money? Could anything be more grievous to the Spirit? The lie, it is true, was abominable; the lie first to Naaman, and then to Elisha himself; it was all abominable. But what shall we say of this sad

counter-testimony, this clouding of the brightness of the grace of God, this giving occasion to them that might seek occasion?

This was the offence which the Spirit noticed, and the prophet challenged. Gehazi had sold the honour of the rich and free grace of the Lord of Israel to the reproaches of an injurious world. At least, he had done all he could to this end. His money must therefore perish with him. He must be put outside the borders of the camp; for he who could thus falsify the God of Israel, was unfit to be of the Israel of God.

The parable of the unmerciful servant reads the same warning to us. The grace of the gospel was there insulted, and the man that exposed it to reproach was cast into *outer* places like the leprous Gehazi. It was the energy of the dear apostle, on the other hand, to reflect and set off that grace continually. Read his ways in Acts xx. 33-35. For the reasonable service is this:—
“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father that is in heaven is perfect.” “Maintain the family character,” as has been the paraphrase of that lovely word; but Gehazi was not jealous of its honour or praise in the sight of the nations. Did he not count himself unworthy of a place in it?

This is the *serious* feature in this otherwise happy picture. And it is serious, that a man like Gehazi, who had companied so long and so intimately with such a servant of God as Elisha, should have been so distant from his spirit!

This part of the story, however, brings out what, on the other hand, is comforting and encouraging, that the soul of the Syrian, though it has now passed the hour of its first love, and

he is on his journey to his distant home, has not lost the generosity of that first hour. He alights at once on seeing the prophet's servant behind him, and without suspicion and without reserve, lays his treasures at the servant's feet, as he had, on the first moment, offered to do at the master's ! Oh, that on our journey the first hour may continue to be felt !

“ Manifested before the Judgment Seat of Christ.”

VERY many minds are perplexed by the statement contained in 2 Corinthians v. 10 :
“ For we must all appear [or rather “ be manifested ”] before the judgment-seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

Now in reality there is no difficulty or ground of perplexity here. All we need is to look at the matter from a divine stand-point, and with a simple mind, in order to see it clearly. This is true in reference to every subject treated of in the Word of God, and specially so as to the point now before us.

We have no doubt whatever that the real secret of the difficulty felt by so many in respect to the question of the judgment-seat of Christ is *self-occupation*. Hence it is we so often hear such questions as the following : “ Can it be possible that all our sins, all our failures, all our infirmities, all our naughty and foolish ways, shall be published, in the presence of assembled myriads, before the judgment-seat of Christ? ”

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Well, then, in the first place, we have to remark that Scripture says nothing of the kind. The passage before us, which contains the great, broad statement of the truth on this weighty subject, simply declares that "we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ."

But how shall we be manifested? Assuredly *as we are*. But how is that? As God's workmanship, as perfectly righteous, and perfectly holy, and perfectly accepted in the Person of that very One who will sit on the judgment-seat, and who Himself bore in His own body on the tree all the judgment due to us, and made a full end of the entire system in which we stood. All that which, as sinners, we had to meet, Christ met in our stead. Our *sins* He bore; our *sin* He condemned. He stood in our stead, and answered all responsibilities which rested upon us as men alive in the flesh, as members of the first man, as standing on the old creation ground. The Judge Himself is our righteousness. We are in Him. All that we are, and all that we have, we owe it to Him and to His perfect work.

If we, as sinners, had to meet Christ as a Judge, escape were utterly impossible; but, inasmuch as He is our righteousness, condemnation is utterly impossible. In short, the matter is reversed. The atoning death and triumphant resurrection of our Divine Substitute has completely changed everything, so that the effect of the judgment-seat of Christ will be to make manifest that there is not, and cannot be, a single stain or spot on that workmanship of God which the saint is declared to be. (Eph. ii 10.)

But, then, let us ask, Whence this dread of having all our naughtiness exposed at the judg-

ment-seat of Christ? Does not He know all about us? Are we more afraid of being manifested to the gaze of men and angels than to the gaze of our blessed and adorable Lord? If we are manifested to Him, what matters it to whom beside we are known? How far are Peter and David and many others affected by the fact that untold millions have read the record of their sins, and that the record thereof has been stereotyped on the page of inspiration? Will it prevent their sweeping the strings of the golden harp, or casting their crowns before the feet of Him whose precious blood has obliterated for ever all their sins, and brought them, without spot, into the full blaze of the throne of God?

Assuredly not. Why, then, need any be troubled by the thought of their being thoroughly manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ? Will not the Judge of all the earth do right? (Gen. xviii. 25.) May we not safely leave all in the hands of Him who has loved us, and washed us in His own blood? Cannot we trust ourselves implicitly to the One who loved us with such a love? Will He expose us? Will He, can He, do aught inconsistent with the love that led Him to give His precious life for us? Will the Head expose the body, or any member thereof? Will the Bridegroom expose the bride? Yes, He will, in one sense. But how? He will publicly set forth, in view of all created intelligences, that there is not a speck, nor a flaw, not a spot nor a wrinkle, or any such thing, to be seen upon that Church which He loved with a love that many waters could not quench. (Song of Sol. vii. 7.)

Ah! Christian reader, dost thou not see how that nearness to the heart of Christ, as well as

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the knowledge of His perfect work, would completely roll away the mists which enwrap the subject of the judgment-seat? If thou art washed from thy sins in the blood of Jesus, and loved by God as Jesus is loved, what reason hast thou to fear that judgment-seat, or to shrink from the thought of being manifested before it? None whatever. Nothing can possibly come up there to alter thy standing, to touch thy relationship, to blot thy title, to cloud thy prospect. Indeed, we are fully persuaded that the light of "the judgment-seat" will chase away many of the clouds that have obscured "the mercy-seat."

Many, when they come to stand before that judgment-seat, will wonder why they ever feared it for themselves. They will see their mistake, and adore the grace that has been so much better than all their legal fears. Many who have hardly ever been able to read their title here, will read it there, and rejoice and wonder, and love and worship. They will then see, in broad daylight, what poor, feeble, shallow, unworthy thoughts they had once entertained of the love of Christ, and of the true character of His work. They will perceive how sadly prone they ever were to measure Him by themselves, and to think and feel as if His thoughts and ways were like their own. All this will be seen in the light of that day, and then the burst of praise, the rapturous hallelujah, will come forth from many a heart that, when down here, had been robbed of its peace and joy by legal and unworthy thoughts of God and His Christ.

But while it is divinely true that nothing can come out before the judgment-seat of Christ to disturb, in any way, the standing or relation-

ship of the very feeblest member of the body of Christ, or of any member of the family of God, yet is the thought of that judgment most solemn and weighty. Yes, truly, and none will more feel its weight and solemnity than those who can look forward to it with perfect calmness. And be it well remembered that there are two things indispensably needful in order to enjoy this calmness of spirit. First, we must have a title without a blot; and, secondly, our moral and practical state must be sound.

No amount of mere evangelical clearness as to our title will avail unless we are walking in moral integrity before God. It will not do for a man to *say* that he is not afraid of the judgment-seat of Christ because Christ died for him, while, at the same time, he is walking in a loose, careless, self-indulgent way. This is a most dreadful delusion. It is alarming in the extreme to find persons drawing a plea from evangelic clearness to shirk the holy responsibility resting upon them as the servants of Christ. Are we to speak idle words because we know we shall never come into judgment? The bare thought is horrible; and yet we may shrink from such a thing when clothed in plain language before us; while, at the same time, we allow ourselves to be drawn, through a false application of the doctrines of grace, into most culpable laxity and carelessness as to the claims of holiness.

All this must be sedulously avoided. The grace that has delivered us from judgment should exert a more powerful influence upon our ways than the fear of that judgment. And not only so, but we must remember that, while we, *as sinners*, are delivered from judgment and wrath, yet, *as*

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servants, we must give account of ourselves and our ways. It is not a question of our being exposed here or there to men, angels, or devils. No; we must give account to God. (Rom. xiv. 11, 12.) This is far more serious, far more weighty, far more influential, than our being exposed in the view of any creature. "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as *to the Lord*, and not unto men; knowing that of *the Lord* ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve *the Lord* Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons." (Col. iii: 23-25.)

This is most serious and salutary. It may be asked, "When shall we have to give account to God? When shall we receive for the wrong?" We are not told, because that is not the question. The grand object of the Holy Ghost in the passages just quoted is to lead the conscience into holy exercise in the presence of God and of the Lord Christ. This is good and most needful in a day of easy profession like the present, when there is much said about grace, free salvation, justification without works, our standing in Christ.

Is it that we want to weaken the sense of these things? Far be the thought. Yea, we would, in every possible way, seek to lead souls into the divine knowledge and enjoyment of these most precious privileges. But then we must remember the adjusting power of *truth*. There are always two sides to a question; and we find in the pages of the New Testament the clearest and fullest statements of grace lying side by side with the most solemn and searching statements as to our

responsibility. Do the latter obscure the former? Assuredly not. But neither should the former weaken the latter. Both should have their due place, and be allowed to exert their moulding influence upon our character and ways.

Some professors seem to have a great dislike to the words "duty" and "responsibility"; but we invariably find that those who have the deepest sense of grace, have also, and as a necessary consequence, the truest sense of duty and responsibility. We know of no exception. A heart that is duly influenced by divine grace is sure to welcome every reference to the claims of holiness. It is only empty talkers about grace and standing that raise an outcry about duty and responsibility. God deals in moral realities. He is real with us, and He wants us to be real with Him. He is real in His love, and real in His faithfulness; and He would have us real in our dealings with Him, and in our response to His holy claims. It is of little use to say, "Lord, Lord," if we live in the neglect of His commandments. It is the merest sham to say, "I go, sir," if we do not go. God looks for obedience in His children. "He is a rewarder of them that *diligently seek Him.*" (Heb. xi. 6.)

May we bear these things in mind, and remember that all must come out before the judgment-seat of Christ. "We must all be manifested" there. This is unmingled joy to a really upright mind. If we do not unfeignedly rejoice at the thought of the judgment-seat of Christ, there must be something wrong. Either we are not established in grace, or we are walking in some false way. If we know that we are justified and accepted before God in Christ, and if we are

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walking in moral integrity as in His presence, the thought of the judgment-seat of Christ will not disturb our hearts.

The apostle could say, "We are made manifest to God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences." (2 Cor. v. 11.) Was Paul afraid of the judgment-seat? Not he. But why? Because he knew that he was accepted *as to his person* in a risen Christ; and *as to his ways* he "laboured that whether present or absent he might be accepted of Him." (v. 9.) Thus it was with this holy man of God and devoted servant of Christ. "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." (Acts xxiv. 16.) Paul knew that he was accepted *in* Christ, and therefore he laboured to be accepted *of* Him.

These two things should never be separated, and they never will be in any divinely taught mind or divinely regulated conscience. They will be perfectly joined together, and in holy harmony exert their formative power over the soul. It should be our aim to walk even now in the light of the judgment-seat. This would prove a wholesome regulator in many ways. It will not, in any wise, lead to legality of spirit. Impossible. Shall we have any legality when we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ? Assuredly not. Well, then, why should the thought of that judgment-seat exert a legal influence now? In point of fact, we feel assured there is and can be no greater joy to an honest heart than to know that everything shall come clearly and fully out, in the perfect light of that solemn day that is approaching. We shall see all then as Christ sees it; and judge of it as He judges.

Is it a question of our being exposed to the whole universe? By no means. Should we be concerned whether or not? Certainly not. Will it, can it, touch our acceptance? Nay, we shall shine in all the perfectness of our risen and glorified Head.. The Judge Himself is our righteousness. We stand in Him. He is our all. What can touch us? We shall appear there as the fruit of His perfect work. We shall be associated with Him in the judgment which he will execute.

Is not this enough to settle every question? No doubt. But still we have to think of our individual walk and service. We have to look to it that we bring no wood, hay and stubble into the light of the coming day, for as surely as we do we shall suffer loss, though we ourselves shall be saved through the fire (1 Cor. iii. 15). We should seek to carry ourselves now, as those who are already in the light, and whose one desire is to do what is well pleasing to our adorable Lord, not because of the fear of judgment, but under "the vast constraining influence" of His love. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." (vv. 14, 15.)

This is the true motive-spring in all Christian service. It is not the fear of judgment impelling, but the love of Christ constraining us; and we may say, with fullest assurance, that never shall we have so deep a sense of that love as when we stand before "the judgment-seat of 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).

“The Vision of the Almighty.”

READ NUMBERS XXII.-XXIV.

THE Book of Numbers gives the history of the testing and total failure of man, looked at as walking in the wilderness, and thus in responsibility; while it also unfolds the fulness of the grace of God, which takes up His people's case, and brings them through (in spite of themselves, so to speak), into the land where God had purposed they should be.

Even Moses himself fails here, and is shut out.

After two years in the wilderness the people were to go up, and possess the land. They are filled with unbelief and fears, and will not go up, and they are turned back to wander for forty years in the wilderness. God, in the most touching way, turns back, and becomes a wanderer with them for the rest of the forty years.

This book is not like that of Joshua, fighting

God's battles in heavenly places (Canaan). It is the history of the wilderness, where we learn our own hearts; as 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," and "To do thee good at thy latter end." (Deut. viii. 2, 16.)

There we are tried and tested, and pulled to pieces; and very good for us it is so, for there we learn not only our own faithlessness, but the infallible faithfulness of God. He acts on the immutability of His own eternal counsels and grace; and it is well for us it is so.

This is so exquisitely seen in that, when Israel will not go up, and possess the land (Num. xiii., xiv.), and then go to destruction (Hormah), in seeking to go up, and possess it without God, God turns, in chapter xv., to His own immutable counsels, and gives directions as to certain things to be observed "*when ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you.*"

Only two of those who came out of Egypt as men ever went into the land, namely, Caleb and Joshua. In chapter xiv. we get the complete picture. On the one hand we get, in Caleb and Joshua, two witnesses to the faithfulness of God in supporting those who followed Him fully and wholly (men of "another spirit"); and on the other, the fact that in spite of their failure and themselves, He would bring in the "little ones" to the land which they despised. The case of Caleb and Joshua shows us, as that of Paul in the Epistle to the Philippians, the energy of faith which God meets and supports, and which runs right through to the end. (Phil. iii.)

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There are two things we should ever remember, and which are never confounded in Scripture : first, if we look at ourselves as in heavenly places in Christ, united to Him, there is no responsibility at all, and no “ if ” in any scripture that looks upon us there ; and secondly, there is *always* an “ if ” when we are seen as walking down here in the wilderness. But at the same time we invariably find that God’s faithfulness in holding and lifting up runs alongside the responsibility of man as walking here below. God’s holding and keeping us go alongside our responsibility : just as if my child in my arms were looking over a precipice. I tell him, If you fall over you will be killed, but I will hold you ; so do not struggle to get out of my arms. He lies still, and does not take himself out of my hands, and is kept. There is nothing people are so afraid of in Scripture as an “ if ” ; yet you always find the other goes with it, and it is never used to enfeeble the stability of the place that sovereign grace has given us on high “ in Christ. ” (Eph. ii. 4-7.) As Paul says to the Corinthians when they were going on badly, and where an “ if ” was needed, and comes in : “ Who shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be *blameless* in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. *God is faithful.* ” (1 Cor. i. 8, 9.) He does not even say He will preserve you safe, but “ *blameless.* ”

In the Book of Numbers you find those deeply touching traits of His grace. God had in the beginning (chap. ii., iii.) directed the tribes as to the order of their march, to surround the tabernacle where He chose to dwell. He was there in their midst, to be cared for and administered to by them. But as soon as the camp set out on its

journey (ch. x.), the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord left its ordered place in the camp, and in the most touching grace, outside the order He had given, went three days' journey in advance of the tribes to seek out a resting-place for them, not in the land, but in the wilderness; thus becoming their servant in the place of need, before they came to the place where He will serve them in the joys of heaven. Blessed it is to think of possessing them, but far more so to think *He* ministers them to us. *Then*, "He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke xii. 37). *Now* "When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him; for they know His voice." (John x. 4.)

It is in this book, too, we find the provisions of the rod of priestly grace, Aaron's rod that budded, to lead a failing people through the wilderness, where the rod of authority can only smite them in asserting its power. It was the resource of grace when the people had totally failed, that God might carry out the purposes and counsels of His grace, and lead them through.

At the close of the journey we find another thing: Miriam died. She represented the joy of victorious power which had triumphed in redemption at the first dawn of their eventful history. It will be remarked in Exodus xv., that while Moses' song embraced grace and glory, hers only celebrated the triumph of grace. The remembrance of this first joy now passes away, and Miriam dies.

Next we find that Aaron dies. The service is now closing, and the journey nearly complete. Service assumes another character besides that of

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leading an unfaithful people with patience through the wilderness. Here it is turned against the foe. Enemies and difficulties are to be met and overcome, and wisdom is needed to know with whom to “ fight,” and from whom to “ turn away.” (1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. iii. 5.)

But there is a closing scene which touches the heart more than all. It is that where God and Satan are face to face about His people. The enemy tries to curse them, and to keep them out of the land. The principles of the scene apply to the Church, although primarily the facts did to Israel. It is touching now in the last days to think of it. Israel were in their tents, weak and weary of the way, on the plains of Moab; the Jordan flowing between them and the land of promise. They were encamped “ on the plains of Moab, on this side of Jordan, by Jericho.” They were perfectly unconscious of their danger, while murmuring in their tents below, that on the high place of Baal, God and Satan’s instrument were there. Unasked, He had taken their case in hand. He forces Satan’s instrument to pronounce the blessing of His people with his own lips; a blessing that could not be reversed, because of the faithfulness of Him who had spoken it. How it brings out the infallible faithfulness of God; the irreversible security of the people that God has given to Christ! It is the crown to all the grace and faithful love which we find in the other parts of the book.

It has been observed that at the same moment when God was forcing Satan to pronounce the unchangeable blessing of His people on the heights of Pisgah, He was Himself speaking to the people by the lips of Moses, in the plains

beneath, and saying, "Thou art a stiff-necked people." (Deut. ix.) This brings out the fact that the judgment of God *for us* is always the opposite of that of the Holy Ghost *in us*. If it is a question of the enemy accusing, God says, I do not see a spot or a stain. If He is dealing with ourselves, He will pass over nothing. Blessed that it is so!

The blessing of the people is four-fold; giving a complete summary of their calling, and justification; their order and beauty in His eyes; and their hope. It is useful for us to see them with "the vision of the Almighty." The heart would be utterly disheartened if it were not so at times; for when we look at them as they are in themselves, how distressing! Worldliness, and selfishness, and ugly traits of every kind, are to be seen; and the heart would be tempted either to be satisfied with the evil, and look for nothing beyond what we see, or to be totally discouraged in seeking to serve them as His. When we see with His "vision" it corrects this, and all is changed. Paul could break his heart when he looked at the Galatians, and "stand in doubt" of them; but the moment he lifts up his heart to Christ he says, "I have confidence in you through the Lord." (Gal. v. 10.) He sees with *His* vision, and thinks of *His* faithfulness; and it changes everything.

The wonderful thought is that it was not when the victorious song of redemption was going up to the Lord, in the beginning of their course, that He pronounces their blessing and beauty in His eyes; but when all their failures had come out fully, when there was not one redeeming feature to be seen in them, as they were in them-

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selves; it is *then* He chooses to unfold His thoughts of them as He saw them according to His purposes, and their comeliness in His sight. They are separate from all people. “Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.” Why? Because God dwells among them! As Moses said, “Wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? Is it not in that Thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.” (Exodus xxxiii. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 16-18.)

The people are justified; they have not to wait for this; and not only so, but it is God who has done it. “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?” (Rom. viii. 33, 34.) He does not repent. He had spoken, and will make it good. Balaam says, “I have received commandment to bless; and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel.”

Wonderful! The very people whose neck was like an iron sinew, when He deals with themselves; when the enemy comes up He refuses to see a spot or a stain! If God had brought them up from Egypt, He thinks of *His own work*, not theirs. And if He has wrought, He has wrought well. In man's eye they were weak, faint and weary. In God's they “shall rise up as a great lion.” So far their separation, and justification, that none could reverse.

Now, when Balaam sought no more for enchantments, but turned his face towards the wilderness, where Israel still were (they were not

in the land), he sees with "the vision of the Almighty." He beholds the order and beauty and freshness of the people, as gardens planted by the river of God. Drinking from God's refreshing streams, which flowed in their midst, they could invite the thirsty to drink those streams of grace. The Church can say, I have drunk of the water; I know what it is; "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. xxii. 17.) And God is the strength of their hearts, and their portion. "God brought him forth out of Egypt." This was the pledge that He who had begun a good work in them would perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. God's power was pledged for them, and the coming of Christ (ch. xxiv. 17, 19) would consummate the blessing, and make good all the purposes of His heart.

The prophecy has only been touched upon, but it is lovely in the extreme; God thus declaring His own thoughts, and confounding the malice of the enemy. He sees aright, and according to the value of His people as cleansed and purchased with the blood of Christ. Such is grace. The enemy is confounded, and cannot gainsay it.

The Lord give us to rise to His thoughts about His people! It is that which sustains the heart when the human eye can only judge by what it sees. We need "the vision of the Almighty" for this, and communion with the heart of Christ about the Church which He loves; for which He gave Himself, that He might sanctify, having purged it, with the washing of water by the word, and that He might present it to Himself glorious, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. (Eph. v. 25-27.)

The Multitude Fed.

(Read 2 Kings iv. 42-44).

IN the narrative of "The deadly pottage healed," we saw in our prophet a bright expression of the power of the Son of God in meeting the power of death. It was as the stronger man entering after the strong, to spoil him; the power of life casting itself into the place of death, to clear away death, and destroy it (Matt. xii. 29).

Here we have a gentler expression of the power of the same glorious JESUS. It was still the same time of dearth as before (v. 38). But with twenty barley loaves and some ears of corn, the prophet feeds a hundred men, to the amazement of his servitor, as afterwards JESUS fed five thousand with five barley loaves and two small fishes, to the amazement of His disciples. And fragments were left after both meals, that we might know the aboundings of our Father's house, that there is there "bread enough and to spare" (John vi. 1-14; Luke xv. 17). For we have to go to Him as One who has overflowing *treasures*, as well as overflowing *affections*. We are straitened neither in Himself nor in His resources. "His love is as large as His power" (and I may add, His power as His love), "and knows neither measure nor end."

There is a difference, however, not only in the *magnitude* of these two miracles if I may so speak of Elisha and of JESUS, but in the *style and bearing* of them. Elisha feeds the people "according to the word of the Lord," JESUS by His own word. Elisha says, "Thus saith the Lord, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof"; but JESUS says,

“Make the men sit down.” The glories are thus diverse. JESUS was “the Word,” according to whom Elisha fed the people. Elisha carried the name of the Lord with him, but JESUS was Himself the Lord, and bore about with Him, and exercised, the rights and authority of His own name.

“Blest Name! the Rock on which I build,
My Shield and Hiding-place;
My never-failing Treasury, filled
With boundless stores of grace.”

The Iron Made to Swim.

(READ 2 KINGS VI. 1-7.)

THIS is a simple domestic scene, and yet, according to the same wondrous ways of Elisha, calculated again to call the doings of the Lord Himself to mind. (Matt. xiv. 24.) For whether it be Peter or the iron that stands on the face of the waters, both are equally contrary to nature; neither is there any natural alliance between the cause and the effect, between the casting in of a stick and the swimming of the iron, as there was none afterwards between the putting clay on the eyes and the restoring of sight; for it is neither the skill of the workman nor the fitness of the instrument that is to be considered, but the excellency of the power of God.

How natural and easy was the behaviour of our prophet here! He is, in a moment, one of a company that are busied about the simplest domestic concern. The great apostle of the Gentiles would gather sticks to help to make up the

fire, and the Lord of prophets and apostles, even after He had risen from the dead, would get ready the dinner on the sea-shore. And yet what august power lay in their hands all the while! The apostle shakes a venomous beast into the very fire he was kindling, and the prophet makes the iron head of the axe to swim on the face of the water. Oh, the beautiful, God-like condescension of real power!

But I read another lesson here.

It has, I believe, been observed, that, properly speaking, there is "nothing either great or little with God." His nature opposes the thought.

That may be so. But we are less able to infer consequences or truths from God's *nature* than from His *revelation*. Indeed, we dare not assume to know His nature but from His revelation. From His revelation, however, we are led in some sense to see this to be a truth, that there is nothing either great or little with Him. We may trace some expressions of this in all His ways.

At creation, so to illustrate it, the wing of an insect was framed with the same care as the heavens or the earth. The small and the great, in that way, then stood before Him.

In settling the nation of Israel, protection for the roof of the houses by battlements, lest blood should be shed, was ascertained by a divine oracle with as full and clear decision as the services of the sanctuary or the allotments of the tribes. (Deut. xxii. 8; Num. iv.; Josh. xiv.)

Jesus, in His ministry, would take the little children in His arms, as He would His most honoured disciples up to the mount of glory. This was still of the same character. (Mark x. 16; ix. 2.)

So, in feeding and ordering the Churches afterwards, the details between men and women, old and young, with other relations, are attended to by the same Spirit, who was at the same time revealing mysteries kept secret from the foundation of the world. He gives directions about taking a little wine for the stomach's sake, as He would unfold the inheritance of the Father of glory in the saints. (Eph. iii., iv.; 1 Tim. v. 23.)

And it is the grace of the Holy Ghost in this equal care about the great and the little things which has especially dwelt on my heart at this time. For though His due, yea, and happy, work is to take of the things of the Father and of Christ, and to show them to us, still He turns to matters of discipline for the comfort of the weakest of us. And is not this done, to speak after the manner of men, at some personal cost? "Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?" (John xvi. 14; Judges ix. 11.)

The blessed Spirit's joy is to deal with JESUS. But in His grace He consents to deal with *all the possible exigencies of the saints.*

And thus indeed it is. Whether the divine action be in creation, in providence, or in redemption; whether it be in Israel or in the Churches; whether dispensationally it be the Father, the Lord, or the Holy Ghost; still we see the big and the little equally the care of God, the great and the small standing alike before Him.

This is to be observed also in more private actings of our God. By His prophet (as we have in this passage), He will raise an axe's head from the water, because the recollection that it was borrowed was distressing the mind of one of the

prophet's companions. So the Lord (as another once observed), encourages His people to pray that their flight might not be in the winter (Matt. xxiv. 20) simply, of course, because flight in that season would be the more uneasy and difficult; thus showing His care about the most ordinary conveniences of His saints, as well as about their troubles and anxieties. The little scene in this passage, as I said, is one illustration of this.

And what is all this? It is not merely the *condescension of power*, though that is beautiful, but the *grace of benevolence*. It is because these little things concern our comfort and present well-being that they are thus waited on.

And we, in our measure, should be imitators of this. It may not be the delight of the spiritual (nay, it cannot) to forsake the sweetness and good fruit of the doctrine of the Father and of Christ, for matters touching the discipline of the saints; to be promoted over such thorns and briars as they are; but still this pattern of divine benevolence which thus parcels itself out on things, be they great or small, provided they do but concern others, puts it upon us as our duty. "Be ye imitators of God," it is written, "as dear children." "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain" (Eph. v. 1; Matt. v. 41).

It is interesting to notice that, in the two epistles to the Thessalonians, there is far more allusion to the Lord's coming again than in all the other epistles put together.

The Lord's Supper.

We should, on divine authority, and in spiritual scriptural intelligence, hold that the Lord's Supper is the due characteristic expression of the Lord's Day, that which should then be made principal.

If we read Luke xxii. 7-20, we shall learn that the passover of the Jews and the supper of the Lord being then exhibited successively, the one after the other, the latter thenceforth was to displace the former, and that for ever.

The former, with other meanings attached to it, was the foreshadowing of the great Sacrifice which was, in due time, to put away sin. The latter is now the celebration of the great fact that that sacrifice has been offered, and that sin is put away.

After the Lord's Supper therefore is instituted, it is impossible to return to the passover. It would be apostasy, a giving up of God's Lamb and of the atonement.

But if the Supper has thus displaced the passover we may then inquire, *Is anything to displace it?*

We may read our answer in 1 Cor. xi. 26, and there learn that the Lord's Supper is set as a standing institution in the house of God till the Lord's return. The Holy Ghost, through the apostle, gives it an abiding place all through this age of the Lord's absence.

I conclude accordingly that we are not to allow anything to displace the Supper. It is of our faithfulness to our stewardship of the mysteries of God, to assert the right of that Supper to be principal in the assembly of the saints. It has displaced the passover by the authority of the

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Lord Himself; but we, on the authority of the Holy Ghost, are not to allow anything to displace it. It is the proper service of the house of God. The Lord's Supper is the thing for the Lord's Day.

This comes out naturally in the progress of the story of Christianity in the New Testament. We read in Acts xx. 7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread." And again in 1 Cor. xi. 33, "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another."

If we abandon the Supper for a sermon, or for a large congregation, or for any other religious scene or service, we have given up the house of God in its due characteristic and divinely appointed business and worship. So far we are guilty of apostasy. We have not, it is true, returned to the displaced or superseded passover; but we have allowed something or another to displace or supersede what the Holy Ghost has set as principal in the house of God. And, were we right-hearted, we should say, What sermon would be more profitable to us? What singing of a full congregation more sweet in our ears than the voice of that ordinance which tells us, so clearly and with such rich harmony of all kinds of music, of the forgiveness of our sins, of the acceptance of our persons, and of our waiting for the Lord from heaven? And all this is blessed and wondrous fellowship with the brightest display of the name and glory of God.

Yea, the table at which we sit is a family table. In spirit we are in the Father's house. We are made by the table to know ourselves in relation-

ship, and that lies just outside the realm of glory ; for if children, then heirs. If we be in the kingdom of God's dear Son, we are next door to the inheritance (Col. i.) And there the table is maintained until Christ comes again.

"Ye do show the Lord's Death."

SCRIPTURE is clear and definite on the subject of the Lord's Supper. The words are as distinct as possible : " As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's *death* till He come." (1 Cor. xi. 26.) Again : " This do in remembrance of *me*." (Luke xxii. 19.) We remember Him in His death, which is the basis, centre, and spring of everything to us.

No doubt, the apostle does call attention to the fact that it was in " the same night in which He was betrayed " that our blessed Lord in His thoughtful, unselfish love for us, instituted the feast ; and this is full of touching interest for our hearts. But as to the utterance of the feast itself, its significance, its object, its place, Scripture is most precise : " Ye do show the Lord's *death*." " Do this in remembrance of *me*." We remember a Christ who was *dead* ; we call Him to mind in that condition in which, thank God, He no longer is. All this can only be by faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

There is no need to enter into sensational details ; indeed, such things are most offensive to all true spiritual feeling. We cannot, in this as in all beside, keep too close to the veritable language of Holy Scripture.

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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 Syrian Host Struck with Blindness.

(READ 2 KINGS VI. 8-23.)

I HAVE already observed that testimony against evil, and consequent suffering, marked the history of Elijah; power, and the gracious use of it, the ways of Elisha.

According to this, many instances of combined power and grace in JESUS stand reflected in the doings of Elisha.

In the scene that lies before us here, we have recollections of our Lord strongly brought to mind. He had twelve legions of angels at command, had He pleased (Matt. xxvi. 53); and so a mountain full of horses and chariots wait on our prophet.

And the simplicity of his faith is very remarkable. He needed not prayer for himself; he had

already seen "the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof" (ii. 2), and rested in the certainty that they were at any time ready for his use; and now, in the time of his need, he knows that they are at hand. He has not therefore to pray for himself. All he does is to desire for his servant that he may stand on the same elevation of faith.

Elisha had seen, as I said, these horses and chariots of Israel already. He knew that the God of Jeshurun rode on the heavens for Jeshurun's help (Deut. xxxiii. 26), and he would have his servant's thoughts in the present hour of danger full of the same sense of this divine security. These chariots and horses of fire which fill the mountain, and which in the day of the translation of Elijah were accompanied by a whirlwind, were, I doubt not, a host or constellation of angels, those heavenly creatures which, excelling in strength, stand in the presence of God, or go forth to minister on account of those who are heirs of salvation (Heb. i. 14). For of them we read, "God maketh His angels spirits [winds], and His ministers a flame of fire"; and again, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." (Ps. lxxviii. 17). At the divine behest, they get ready to serve in whatever the exigency of the saint, or the occasion under the throne of God, may require. They formed a travelling chariot to convey Elijah to heaven, and to carry Lazarus to Abraham's bosom. (Luke xvi. 22.) They now form chariots of war, when Elisha is beleaguered by the hostile bands of Syria. Either singly or in company they visit the elect on earth; and either alone or in concert celebrate the joy of heaven in the

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audience of the earth. (Luke ii. 13.) They have drawn the sword to smite a guilty city, or with the strong hand of love dragged the too reluctant one forth from the doomed city. (2 Sam. xxiv. 16; Gen. xix. 15.) They are either as winds or as fire. They are messengers of mercy, and executors of judgment, as "the Lord," who "is among them," may command. (Ps. lxxviii. 17.) They attended on Mount Sinai when the law was published, and they hovered over the fields of Bethlehem when JESUS was born. And here, in their order and strength, they are as a wall of fire, a wall of salvation, round about our prophet.

Very blessed all this is. And still more blessed to know, that before long the HIDDEN glories, which are now only known to such faith as Elisha's, will become the MANIFESTED things; and the threatenings of the enemy, the noise and the din and the clang of arms, which are the present apparent things, full of fears and sorrows for the heart, shall have rolled by, like the past thunder-storm, but to leave the sunshine the brighter.

But there is more than this calmness and certainty of faith. We have traces of the power and of the grace of JESUS in this path of our prophet.

"When the wicked, mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell." Thus David spake concerning JESUS. (Ps. xxvii.) And accordingly, in the garden, when the band of men and officers came to lay hold on Him, "As soon as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground" (John xviii.) So here with our prophet. The bands of Syria came to Dothan to fetch him, but the Lord smote them with blind-

ness as they were preparing to make him their prey.

Thus the glory of power in the Lord was reflected in Elisha. But the measures of this glory were again, as we have seen before, diverse. Elisha sought the Lord's power in this; JESUS stands in that of His own person, and the enemy equally bows before it. "As soon as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground." (John xviii. 6.) But there is the *grace* as well as the *power* of the Son of God here. The Lord, in His day, refuses to break the bruised reed, or to quench the smoking flax. He refuses to use His strength and authority even for the righteous judgment of His foes. He will not strive nor cry, nor let His voice be heard in the streets, but with, "Suffer ye thus far," He overcomes evil with good. And so Elisha. He had the bruised reed, the smoking flax, at his mercy, but he will not break nor quench it. "My father, shall I smite them?" says the king, as he had the Syrian bands caught in the net of Samaria. But the prophet answered, "Thou shalt not smite them: set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master."

Blessed and precious expression of the mind of God! And thus do the ways of the Lord in combined power and grace get their image in the ways of this honoured prophet. How much he was in the intimacy of God, if I may so speak! How fully in His friendship, knowing His secrets! And how largely does his history illustrate those words, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos iii. 7). He knew of moun-

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tains of strength and salvation that were altogether invisible to others: he knew of abundance at the doors to-morrow, though to-day all was famine and death in the city. And if he be not told everything (such was the marvellous condescending love of the Lord to him, and with which his soul was familiar), it is rather his wonder (iv. 27). And so of each of us (not honoured prophets, but the weakest saints) it may as really be said, “ We have the mind of Christ.” (1 Cor. ii. 16.) Oh, for power in our souls to value such goodness in Him, and such dignity and blessing in ourselves! —————

“ I will give to him that is athirst.”

(Revelation xxi. 6).

THOU Source Divine of joys that grow,
 Eternal Spring of endless peace,
 And surest hope, whose constant flow
 Of highest bliss can never cease.
 Oh! who among us all can tell
 The unfathomed depths of love divine,
 That brought Thee here with man to dwell,
 And grace and righteousness combine?
 From Thee flows forth the living stream
 Whose waters gladden every heart,
 Which fills the soul with joy supreme,
 And heals its wounds, and soothes its smart.
 From earthly springs we turn away;
 No more a broken cistern hew;
 With heavenly draughts our souls we stay,
 With living water strength renew.
 In Thee are all our freshest springs,
 Perennial sources never dry;
 We long to spread our gladsome wings,
 And mount to drink celestial joy.

God's Nearness to us in Jesus.

Read Matt. ix. 6; Mark ii. 9; Luke v. 24.

GOD was showing His rich and various mercy in the old time: *He forgave sin; He healed disease; He fed His people.* But all this was done in a peculiar manner. There was a certain distance and reserve, as it were, a remaining still in His own sanctuary, still in the heavens, though He was thus gracious.

He met the need of the sinner; but He was in the temple withdrawn to the holiest place, and the sinner had to come through a consecrated path to get the virtue of the mercy-seat.

He met the need of His camp in the desert; but it was by remaining still in heaven, and sending from thence the angels' food, the mighty's meat, and giving them water, after His mystic rod had opened the rock.

He met the disease of a poor leper; but it was after such leper had been separated to Him outside the camp, every eye and hand, all interference and inspection of man, withdrawn and removed.

Thus He was God acting in His own due love and power; but there was a style in the action that bespoke distance from the objects of His care and goodness. Whether He *pardoned, fed, or healed*, this manner was preserved.

The Lord Jesus, "God manifest in the flesh," is seen doing the same works of divine love and power. He *pardons, feeds and heals*. And He does so in full assertion of His divine right or glory, thinking it no robbery to be equal with God.

But there is altogether another style in those

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same actions when in His hand. The reserve, the distance, is gone. It is God we see, not withdrawn into the holiest, but abroad in the prisons, the hospitals, and poor-houses of this ruined world.

He *pardons*, but He stands beside the sinner, to do this, saying, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; or, "Neither do I condemn thee."

He *feeds*, but He is at the very table with the fed.

He *heals*, but He puts forth His hand, in the crowd, on as many as were diseased; or He stands at their sick beds.

He thus comes down to the needy ones. With pardon, food, and healing, He goes among them, letting them know and see that He is supplied with various virtues to be used by them without reserve. And there is in this a glory that excelleth, so that the former has no glory by reason of it.

How should we bless Him for this display of Himself! It is the same God of love and power in both, but He has increased in the brightness of His manifestations.

The *religious rulers* found this way of Jesus interfere with them. Their interest was to keep God and the people separate; for then they had hopes of being used themselves. Thus they were angry when the Lord said to the man, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." It was a great interference with them. It trespassed on their place. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" And God was *in heaven*. The Son of man forgiving sins *on earth* was a sad disturbance of that order by which they lived in credit and had plenty in the world.

But whether they received it or not, this was the way of the Son of God on earth. He dealt with our necessities in such wise as encouraged the happy, near, and confident approach of all needy ones to Him. He did all to show that He was a cheerful giver; nay, more, that He gave Himself with His gifts. For with His own hand, as we have seen, He brought the blessing home to every man's door.

It was, therefore, only the happy confidence of faith that fully met and refreshed His spirit; that faith which knew the title of a needy one to come right up to Him; the faith of Bartimeus, which was not to be silenced by the mistaken scrupulousness of even disciples. And little children are to be in His arms, though the same mistake would forbid them.

This was His mind. He came into the world to be used by sick and needy sinners, and the faith that understood and used Him accordingly was its due answer. Such answer we see recorded by the evangelists here, in the action of the faithful little band, who, breaking up the roof, let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay, "into the midst before Jesus."

There was no ceremoniousness in this; nothing of the ancient reserve of the temple; no waiting for introduction. The little company felt their necessity; knew the virtues of the Son of God; and believed that these suited each other; nay, that the Lord carried the one because necessitous sinners were bearing the other. It was a very strong expression of this, and I believe the strength of it was according to the mind of Jesus; so that on seeing their faith, as we read, without further to do, or more words, His heart, and the

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grace that it carried, uttered itself in an expression as full and strong: "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

Here was sympathy. Jesus was rending all veils between God and sinners, and so was the faith of this happy little company. His blood was soon to rend the veil of the temple, which kept God from poor sinners, from top to bottom, and now their faith was rending that which kept them from Jesus. This surely was meeting and entertaining the Son of God in character; and His spirit deeply owns it: "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

Happy faith that can thus break down all partition-walls! Oh, this faith, that takes knowledge of Jesus the Saviour of the world as the mighty render of all veils! which knows that nothing stands before Him!

"Join thou, my soul, for thou canst tell
His sovereign grace broke up thy cell,
And burst thy native chains;
And from that dear and blessed day,
How oft art thou constrained to say
That grace triumphant reigns!"

In the lively, happy impression of this truth, through the Spirit, the soul tastes something of heaven. What blessedness to know that this is the way of God our Saviour! Grace and glory are both *brought to us*. We have not to ascend to heaven to seek them there, nor descend to the depths to *search* after them there (Rom. x. 6-10). "Behold, I come, and my reward is with me," will Jesus say, when He brings the *glory*, as we have already seen Him with His *grace* standing at the door, or by the bedside, or in the crowd of needy sinners.

This is of God indeed. It is only divine love that can account for it. But the rulers did not like it. Their interest and credit in the world was to keep the forgiveness of sins still in the hand of Him who was in heaven; for then, as the consecrated path, they hoped and judged that they themselves would still be used.

And so it is to this day. Forgiveness is brought near and sure to the soul; the word of faith to the heart and to the mouth. This shortens the path; but it does not suit those who transact (as themselves and others judge) the interests of the soul.

Nothing appears more simple than all this on the principles of nature. The Pharisees in the Lord's time represented it. They were the religious rulers; and the more God was kept in the distance, the more reserve was preserved between Him and the people, the more they were likely to be venerated, used, and enriched. Jesus, the Son of man, forgiving *sins on the earth*, was a sad trespasser on their place and plan of action. How, alas! is this principle still alive, still dominant! And the "people love to have it so"; it suits the religiousness of man's nature too well to be lightly refused. The simplicity that is in Christ is sadly thus "corrupted," and our souls, beloved, should be grieved, deeply grieved, because of it.

But we may also say that much occasion in our day has been given to this principle to live and act as vigorously as it seems to be doing. For there has not been the meeting of the *grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ, this pardoning, feeding, healing love and power of Him who has come down to walk amid our ruins, in the spirit which alone

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was due to it. There has been the assertion of grace, and the denial that God in this dispensation is to be sought for at a distance, under the hiding of ceremonies, or within the cloisters of temples. There has been the producing of the blessed Saviour, and giving Him to walk abroad among our necessities according to the place He has Himself taken in the gospel. There has been the presenting of the marvellous, condescending grace of the dispensation; but those who have asserted it have not carried themselves towards it, and in the presence of it, with that reverence, that holiness of confidence, which alone became them. And this has given *man's religiousness* (which would keep God still in heaven) occasion to revive, and be listened to and learnt again.

But is this *religiousness* the due corrective of abused grace? Is this the divine remedy? Is this God's way of rectifying evil? Or is it not simple human reaction? Many are doing what they can to withdraw the Lord to that place which He has most advisedly and for ever abandoned. They are making Him appear to build *again* the things which He had destroyed. They are putting Him back into the holiest place, there to be sought unto by the old aisles and vistas of the "worldly sanctuary"; to cover Him with veils, and cast up the long consecrated path by which of old the sinner came to Him.

It were well to be righteously angry at Jesus and His grace being treated with so indelicate and untender a hand; but these correct the error by a worse. While they would *protect the holiness* of Christ, they *obscure His grace*. They are seeking to do a service for Him that grieves Him the most deeply. They are teaching man that

He is an austere Master; they withdrew Him to the place where it is felt to be a fearful thing to plant one's foot. Indeed, this is a service He did not ask for. "Who has required this at your hands?" is, I am assured in my soul, the voice of the Son of God to those who thus withdraw Him from the nearest and most assured approach of the poor sinner. They have been doing what they could to change His place and attitude, instead of MAN'S.

Correction was needed surely. It is ever needed. Man will be spoiling or abusing everything. There has been an intellectual arrogance and carnal freedom with Christ and His truth, which may well have grieved the righteous. But it was man that ought to be corrected, and not Christ. It was man that ought to have been challenged to change his place and bearing, and not the Lord. He has not repented of having come on earth to forgive sins, of having met the poor Samaritan at the well, of having visited Levi and Zaccheus in their houses, or Peter's wife's mother on her bed of sickness. He is still the same Lord, and purposes to be so. He has not retired within the veil *again*, nor bound up that which was rent from top to bottom. He has not built again that which He had destroyed. It is not a worldly sanctuary that He fills, and furnishes *again*, nor ceremonies and observances, rites and practices, under which He is *again* concealing Himself. He has descended from heaven to earth; He is abroad among men, in the ministry of His precious gospel, and by His Spirit, beseeching sinners to be reconciled.

What then, alas! is the character of that effort that would force Him back to the "thick dark-

ness"? (2 Chron. vi. 1,2). It is an attempt made in the strength and with the subtlety of the devil, upon the Son of God, as of old. It is a taking Him, as it were, to the pinnacle of the temple, to some withdrawn and proud elevation, where the multitude may *gaze* at Him. But His purpose is, blessed be His name, to stand in the midst of them, that they may *use* Him.

We should change our place; that is equally true. We should learn to pass and repass before this gracious, blessed Son of man with the unshod foot. It is for us to change our attitude, and not to seek to make Him change His.

We have still to see Him in all the grace of this happy dispensation; we have to read "the gospel of the blessed God" (1 Tim. i.) as they read it of old who knew and felt that the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins; but we have to read all this in their spirit also. We are to wonder at the strange sight as they did; to tell Jesus (with the centurion), that we are not worthy that He should come under our roof, while we still use His immediate presence and grace, to stand before Him like Zaccheus, and call Him "Lord," though, like him, receiving Him to our house; and to follow Him in the way with adoring, thankful praise, though having refused, as Bartimeus, to be put at a distance by the vain, religious scruples of even His own disciples.

Ah! this is what should have been done. This would have been the divine corrective of the mischief that has come in. But this was not so easy. For this would have been *spiritual*; the thing that has been done is *carnal*. Elements of the world are revived and multiplied. Jesus has been

forced back at a distance from the sinner. He has been put into "the thick darkness," under cover of fleshly observances and rites, and at the end of a long path through the aisles of a sanctuary, where He waits to receive the homage of a fearing and bondaged people. This is the place and attitude which many teachers (who are daily rising in the esteem of the people) make the blessed Saviour to fill and to take.

The Lord Jesus is kept at a distance; religious observances are brought near, and the people (for they have ever been so-minded), like the feelings that come from all that which is acted before them. Their eye and ear are engaged; a certain sacred sense of God is awakened; but the precious immediate confidence of the heart and conscience is refused. Ah! shall any who love the Lord thus sink down again into *man*, when the Spirit would have them up into *Christ*? "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you? . . . Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" "Ye observe days and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal. iii. 1-3; iv. 10, 11).

Thus speaks the aggrieved Spirit in the apostle over those who once had been eminently his joy, but were now his sorrow, because *they were turning again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto they were desiring again to be in bondage*, because they were deserting faith for religiousness, "the simplicity that is in Christ," and in which the "virgin" or "un corrupted"

mind ever walks, for the ceremonies and observances of "a worldly sanctuary" (2 Cor. xi. 3; Heb. ix. 1).

But *religiousness* is neither faith nor righteousness. With the Pharisees it was adopted as a relief for a bad conscience, or a cover for evil. In them it was therefore opposed to righteousness. With the Galatians, because there had been a departure from the truth, from the simplicity that is in Christ; in them, therefore, it was opposed to faith. The Galatian cannot properly be said to have been a Pharisee, it is true; but the Spirit of God had a serious question with both.

And I may just further observe, that in our passage (Matt. ix. 6, Mark ii. 9, Luke v. 24) the Lord seeks to lead man away from his own reasonings and calculations to Himself and His works. He perceived that the scribes were "reasoning among themselves," and then proposed to them what He was doing: "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (He said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house."

How simple, how precious! And on this hangs the grand distinction between *faith* and *religiousness*, of which I have just been speaking.

Religiousness, or man's religion, gives the soul many a serious thought about itself, and many a devout thought about God. But FAITH, OR GOD'S RELIGION, GIVES THE SOUL JESUS, AND THE WORKS AND WORDS OF JESUS.

And yet it is faith, and faith only, that secures any end that is valued of God. Faith "works by love," faith "overcomes the world," faith

“purifies the heart,” by faith “the elders obtained a good report” (Gal. v. 6; 1 John v. 4; Acts xv. 9; Heb. xi. 2). Religiousness does not this. It ever works by *fear*, not by love. It does not “overcome the world,” but oftentimes *takes it away within to some recess or hiding-place*. It does not “purify the heart” by giving it an object, a divine object, to detach it from self, but *keeps self in a religious attire ever before it*, and leaves the conscience *unpurged*. And in God’s record it gets no “good report.” From the beginning to the end of that record it is the people of religion, the devout observers of carnal ceremonies, those who would not “defile themselves” with a judgment-hall, that have stood most cruel in the resistance of the truth. But it is the men of faith, the lovers of the truth, the poor, broken-hearted sinners who have found the relief in Jesus “forgiving sins,” who have stood, and laboured, and conquered, and have their happy memorial with Him, and in the records of Him whom they trusted, and in whom by faith they found their eternal life, and sure and full salvation.

“Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev. i. 5, 6).

It is not by any effort of memory, but by the power of communion in the Holy Ghost, that we can have the present consciousness and enjoyment of those things “which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10).

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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 Famine in Samaria.

(Read 2 Kings vi. 24-vii.)

WE have, in this portion of our prophet's history, something of very peculiar significance. The richest ways of divine grace are illustrated in this striking picture of Samaria's misery and deliverance.

The siege of that city by the army of Syria had reduced it to the extremest wretchedness. An ass's head was worth eighty pieces of silver, and mothers were compelled to feed upon their offspring.

One need not draw the picture of misery to greater length than this. Here it is in all its horror. It reminds one of Legion in the Gospels: another picture of what the unmitigated and unchecked power of the great captivator could do with all of us.

But man is further disclosed in this history. He is seen in the character of his mind, as well as his misery and state of captivity to his ruthless destroyer. "God do so and more also to me," says the king of Israel, "if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day."

This man was charging on God (or His servant, the same thing) all the mischief that was occurring. It was like Adam at the beginning of our sin: "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." (Gen. iii. 12.) It was laying the sin and sorrow on that head which alone was clear and free of it all.

This was the accomplishing of sin. Like the cross of Christ, this was the height of evil. This was just the moment of Samaria's fullest iniquity. But like the same cross of Christ, this same moment was just the occasion for the display of the divine grace. The ruin was complete, and without hope from man.

Then it was that Elisha's lips are opened with a promise, and he delivers a word from the Lord. For if the power of Israel be gone, and there is none shut up nor left, will not the Lord repent Himself concerning His servants? (Deut. xxxii. 36). If God sees that there is no man, no intercessor, will not His own arm bring salvation? If the enemy come in like a flood, will not the Spirit lift up a standard against him? (Isa. lix. 16-19).

And such was this moment in Samaria. Such a moment was the moment of God's glorious grace; that where sin abounded, there grace more abounded; that, as in the cross of Christ man

was at the height of his rebellion, and God was also at the height of the glory of His goodness, so now, when the sin and misery of Samaria were at the full, the cup of divine blessing was now also about to flow over.

“Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.”

“In the gate of Samaria”! Truly precious that thought is to the needy soul; blessed notice of the grace of the gospel! Salvation is not to be sought for either in heaven above or in the depths beneath. (Rom. x. 6-8.) It has come to us. The sin-offering lies at the door. (Gen. iv. 7.) The Israelite need not leave the lintel of his own house to accomplish the full security of that house from the sword of the destroyer. (Exod. xii. 23.) Grace *brings* the relief which grace has *provided*. The fine flour and the barley were to be had by the famished people *at the very gate of their city*.

How are the shining foot-marks of the salvation of God to be traced in all this, beloved! “Mercy for fetching,” as one of old said; “nay, for desiring; nay for nothing but receiving.”

This appears to me very striking indeed. And this was Elisha’s glory in this scene; he knew the mind of God. The wicked heart of man was working its worst. Like Caiaphas, the king of Israel was laying the mischief, as I have observed, on the only one who was really clear of it; as the high priest gave counsel that one must die for the people lest the whole nation perished; and that One must be He who alone was un-

guilty of all the nation's sorrow (John xi. 50). But then it is that God's remedy reveals itself. Then it is that grace abounds. And instead of the ass's head being bought for eighty pieces of silver, a measure of flour and two measures of barley should now be bought for one shekel in the gate of the self-destroyed city.

But if we have thus before us the height of human evil met by the aboundings of divine grace, we have also the varied way in which this grace is entertained in the world. It meets with rejection from some.

The nobleman exhibits that to us. He would not believe that God could do all His prophet was now pronouncing. There was a lion in the way. If windows were to be opened in heaven, this might be; but who ever heard of windows in heaven? And this is all said just in the spirit of unbelief; in the evil temper of the heart of men who refuse to receive good tidings of great joy from God; who will not have happy thoughts, nor entertain filial, holy confidence towards Him; but who, when He speaks of pardon and blessing, reject the grace, and will rather cleave to their own hard notions of such grace being a thing impossible: so ignorant, so alien from the life of God, is the heart of man.

There is a generation, however, who have no other hope; a people who have spent all on physicians for the healing of their plague, and are not a whit better. There are lepers outside the camp still, poor convicted sinners, "too bad for any but Jesus," as one once said.

Death is before, behind, and around them. The Syrian host, as they judge, before; the famishing city behind; their own diseased, leprous, dead

bodies encompassing them around. To such this grace comes in suited, needed time. They find that it is all to them. It is either certain death for them, or this last, this only resource in God Himself. And such arise, and take the spoil. Their necessities throw them into the place where Christ has gained a victory.

Like the four lepers here, they had no help for it. Their very necessities, pressed in by deaths oft, death all around, threw them into the camp of the Syrians, where the Lord, all single-handed and alone, had been gaining a victory. For it was the Lord who had made the Syrian host hear a noise of chariots and horses, and thus alone had put them all to flight. Of the people of Israel there was none with Him. It was "the day of the Lord" (Isa. ii. 12). Israel was dying in Samaria. The lepers were dying without. And God meets the Syrian host alone. And the poor lepers have nothing to do but to arise, and share the fruit of the Lord's triumph. As with the sinner now. It has been entirely and altogether the victory of Jesus. None stood with Him, or for Him. Alone He met the enemy; alone He suffered the penalty; He drank the cup alone; the three hours of darkness fell from heaven, because He was made sin; He alone hung a curse upon the tree. And the gospel is the publishing of all this strife and triumph of Jesus, that sinners, dead as lepers, may come and feed, and live for ever on that feast, that spoil of glorious war, which Jesus has won for them.

And what does their own joy communicate to them? A desire to divide the spoils. They spread the good tidings which they have them-

selves received, and by which they live. And there is no temper of soul that the spirit of the renewed mind more thoroughly condemns than the selfishness of our old wretched nature. The working of it is so contrary to the glorious and generous grace of God in the gospel, that it leaves, when indulged, the tinge of fear behind it in the soul.

“We do not well,” said one of these lepers to the others; “this is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace; if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king’s household.” And they publish it at once, as in the high places.

All this exercise of heart is easily to be understood by the renewed mind which has tasted of, and been formed by, the grace of the gospel. But there is more in this striking picture. We see weak or slow-hearted faith in the king. He reasons about the good tidings. He does not, in the bold unbelief and scorn of the nobleman, at once refuse them. But he reasons about them. Like those disciples whom the risen Jesus rebuked for their unbelief. “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken” (Luke xxiv. 25). But grace abounds. Grace, as in the case of Naaman, can provide a minister as well as a treasury; and the slow-hearted king, as well as the readier lepers, shares the spoils of the glorious victory of the Lord. And all the famishing city follow. “The lame take the prey” (Isa. xxxiii. 23). None come short but the unbelieving nobleman. Distrust of the divine bountifulness alone cuts him off in the day of this feast of Israel. All is accomplished.

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The measures of flour and of barley are sold in the gate, and the nobleman perishes alone in his unbelief.

The great things of the gospel of God are thus illustrated in this very striking picture of Samaria's misery and deliverance, materials for our holy, profitable comfort and admonition. But not merely to investigate and admire these skilful ways of the divine wisdom may it be our purpose; but to mark and digest them, that our souls may be refreshed, and our faith in the gracious Provider for all our need, and for all our delights for eternity, be blessedly strengthened.

The Christian's Position in Christ.

IN the Epistle to the Ephesians we get the whole scope of God's thoughts and purposes. It takes in two things: (1) the presence and power of the Holy Ghost on earth, and the condition that we are in as the result of it; and (2) what this is founded on; namely, the exaltation of Christ at God's right hand.

This Epistle does not speak of the second coming of the Lord, because the way our glory is brought about is not its subject, but the present blessing of the saints. There is a distinct part at the end of the Epistle where our conflict with Satan comes in; but the general scope is what I have said: the basis, the exaltation of Christ; then purpose, what is in God's mind; and then

the knowledge of it by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. "He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand" (i. 29). That was needed for us to know our place, and the most important consequences flowing from it down here.

The presence of the Holy Ghost, who has come down from heaven, the Seal of our being heirs, and the Earnest of the inheritance, forms our present condition, based upon Christ raised to the right hand of God. A *Man* is sitting at the right hand of God: a wonderful truth for us. "His delights are with the sons of men." (Prov. viii. 31). Being a man, and having died, and therein perfectly glorified God, God has raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand; and thereupon the Holy Ghost is come down here, so that we are associated with Him and with the things that are on high, in heart and mind, though, of course, not yet there as to our bodies.

That is where the heart has to be; our conversation in heaven, for the Lord is there, not here (Phil. iii. 20). He is coming to make our bodies like unto His glorious body; but at present we have the Holy Ghost associating us with the place where He is (Phil. iii. 21).

1. God has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (i. 3). That is God's mind. Though we are not yet there in fact, still it is the thought of God about us; and we ought to have it always before us. Blessings of the Jews in earthly places under Christ will be fulfilled in time; but for us it is "spiritual blessings," and "in heavenly places," and "in Christ" Himself; and our present connection

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with it all comes through the Holy Ghost (i. 13, 14).

2. We next get, in verses 4 and 5, two aspects of these spiritual blessings: they are brought before us in connection (1) with the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and (2) with the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is to say Christ is looked at as Son and looked at as Man. The Father owned Him in manhood as the Son in Matt. iii. : "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God is called the God of our Lord Jesus Christ considered as Man; He is called His Father in reference to Him as Son.

This is the great basis of the wonderful position in which we are set. It is man that God has in His mind put in this place of glory in His own Son. And this is not without its consequences, and those of the very highest nature.

God's choosing us "before the foundation of the world," is not what affirms, in the time of choosing, the sovereignty of grace; for supposing for a moment that God were to choose us now, it would be just as sovereign an act as doing it then. The practical truth brought out in His choosing us "before the foundation of the world" is, that it proves that we have nothing whatever to do with the world. Before its very foundation we were chosen; we have nothing to do with it but to get through it.

God would bring us into this blessedness with Himself which has nothing to do with the world. We have just to go through it "unspotted"; that is all we have to do with it (James i. 27). Our living place was settled with God before ever this world existed. God had this thought to have a people in Christ, "holy and without blame be-

fore Him in love." This is what God Himself is. He thus brings us to be according to His own nature: "holy and without blame" before Himself. We have an infinite Object before whom we are, and having the divine nature we can enjoy that Object. We are not taken out of the world yet; are not meant to be; but we are to pass through it as Christ did. If one looks at it in another point of view it is just what Christ was Himself, and that before God. This is the thought of "God."

Then in verse 5 I get the "Father." He might have had servants, like the angels; but this was not His thought: He "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." He insists on that. It is the blessed part of it; that it is before God, and to Himself as "*Father.*" If it be a *relationship* it is to "*Himself.*"

Thus I get the nature "holy and without blame." It does not stay there, "According to the good pleasure of His will"; for God could not have beings in His presence in a sinful state. But when it is *relationship* it is, "According to the good pleasure of His will." He chooses to have us as sons.

I get love, the nature of God ("in love") and love of predilection too. The place we get into is one that is "according to the good pleasure of His will," and He brings us according to His own nature before "Himself"; there is not a cloud between because He has "made us accepted in the Beloved" (v. 6). Christ assuredly is this; but God gives that name to Him to mark the full character of the blessedness, and thus brings us into His own presence.

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That is the purpose. It does not say here how much of it is accomplished. It will not be fully so until we are in the glory (Rom. viii. 29). Only in the end of the first chapter we get what is accomplished in fact, as the groundwork of all our present enjoyment of it in spirit. God takes Christ out of death, and sets Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. This is an accomplished thing. It is "wrought in Christ." Christ as man *is* in the glory of God.

3. And then we get the third thing: the Holy Ghost has come down meanwhile. Before the purpose is fulfilled, but when the work of Christ is accomplished, the Holy Ghost comes down to be the Seal with which God has sealed those here who have part in His purpose, and to be the Earnest, too, of their inheritance. We are then competent to contemplate God's plans about Christ Himself, His purpose "to gather together in one all things in Him, both which are in heaven and which are on earth" (v. 10). Then it will be glory.

The first verses spoke of our "calling"; here it is our "inheritance." And this inheritance is "after the counsel of His own will" (v. 11). It is sovereign grace to poor sinners that brings us into this place. It will not be consummated until He comes; but in Him we have obtained it, being "predestinated according to His purpose."

That which is believed in order to our being "sealed" is "the gospel of our salvation." John the Baptist was the forerunner of Him who was to accomplish it; but now we have the glad tidings of it consequent on the actual exaltation

of Christ, and the "seal" of the Holy Ghost as the "earnest" of what is to come.

This is where we are whilst still in the world, which is no part of the purpose of God, but in which, passing through discipline, we learn the difference between flesh and spirit. It is His *ways*; it is no part of His *purpose*. The Holy Ghost comes down from heaven; gives us to know Christ; reveals to us our inheritance; bears witness to us that we are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17). He makes us know where we are; that we belong to heaven, and not to this earth at all. As we read in Proverbs: "In the beginning of His way, before His works of old, from the beginning, or ever the earth was . . . Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him . . . and my delights were with the sons of men" (viii. 22-31). So He became a man, and is gone into glory as our Fore-runner (Heb. vi. 20).

I desire that our hearts may feel that in God's thoughts and purposes He has given us a place that is not in the world at all, and that all our business in this world is to keep ourselves "unspotted" from it. I do not belong to this world. I was set up from everlasting. Before the foundation of it I was chosen "in Christ." It is not thus simply the sovereignty that does what it pleases, but that we, as Christians, do not belong to earth at all. Epistles of Christ is what we are. We may not live up to it; but it is what we are called to: to manifest the Second Man in the midst of the world that has rejected Him (1 Cor. xv. 47; John xv. 24).