

Bible Truth Depôt, 1112, N Taylor Av., St Louis, Mo., U.S.A

WORDS OF TRUTH

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

## Assurance of Salvation.

### I.

**T**HERE is no such thing contemplated in the New Testament as the present wide-spread uncertainty among Christians as to whether they are Christians or not. The epistles are addressed to Christians, and to those who knew that they were such, and that as such they were saved persons.

All the instruction contained in these epistles tends to establish them in this assurance of their salvation. All the exhortations addressed to them in the epistles take for granted that they are Christians, and that they know it. All the motives to Christian conduct are based on this.

The two or three passages which may be alleged as proof that the early Christians were not

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so certain on the subject prove, when examined with their contexts, that they were.

Without this assurance there can be no settled peace, no power over sin, no strength to glorify God, no joy in the prospect of Christ's coming. There is nothing which Romanists and Romanizers so much dread as that people should have a well-grounded assurance of salvation; and to the want of it may doubtless be traced, in a great measure, the corruption of Christianity, and the present melancholy condition of the Church of God.

We may go further back than the epistles. No sooner had our blessed Saviour called around Him a band of disciples, taught of God the Father to discern and own in Him the Christ, the Son of the living God, than He began to address to these disciples words of light, and joy, and comfort, such as the following:—

“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke xii., 32.)

“In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” (Luke x., 20.)

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” (John v., 24.)

Such were some of His words soon after the commencement of His ministry. As He drew near its close, He began to speak still more plainly to His disciples. He promises the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and says, “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” (John xiv., 20.)

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Is not this decisive? The effect of the descent of the Holy Ghost was to be, not only that the disciples should know that Christ was in the Father, but also that they should know with equal certainty that they were in Christ, and Christ in them.

Then, after His resurrection, how He associates them with Himself in one common position before God: "But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." (John xx., 17.)

Could <sup>1</sup>those who received this message have a single doubt as to their salvation? Spoken of by the risen Saviour as His brethren, and instructed that His Father was their Father, His God their God, how could they doubt? Would that these same blessed revelations might be used of God to banish uncertainty from the soul of any harassed, weak believer who may read these pages.

We have said that the epistles are addressed to those who were Christians, and knew that they were such. See the commencement of that to the Romans. The apostle speaks of himself as having "received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations; among whom," says he, "are ye also the called of Jesus Christ. To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." (Rom. i., 5-7.)

Now, who were they that could receive this epistle as addressed to them? Who but those who were conscious of being thus called of Jesus Christ, and beloved of God?

In like manner the First Epistle to the Corinthians is directed to "the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every

place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." (I Cor. i., 2.) The Second Epistle is "to the Church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia."

Surely there were persons who knew that they formed this Church of God at Corinth, or that they were included among "all the saints in all Achaia," or that they formed a part of the "all that in every place called on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."

But we need not dwell on each case. The Epistle to the Ephesians is addressed "to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." That to the Philippians is "to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi." Obviously, had any in Philippi questioned whether they were saints in Christ Jesus or not, it would have been a question with them whether this inspired letter was addressed to them.

"To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse:" "To the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ:" these are the words in which these two churches are addressed. Evidently in each instance it is assumed that there are those who will know themselves to be the parties addressed; and the titles by which they are addressed are such that this is but saying in other words that these parties knew themselves to be Christians.

But it is not merely the formal openings of these epistles to which this character is attached. Were this the case, it might be said that there were organized assemblies, membership in which would certify any one that he was one of those thus

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addressed, whether he had the individual assurance of salvation or not. But in the body of each epistle we find passages without end which show that both they who wrote them and those to whom they were written had this assurance.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us.” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” (Rom. v., 1, 5; viii., 1, 15, 16.)

These passages are all from one epistle; and they are but a few cited at the moment, as those which first occur to the mind. Are they not decisive proofs that the apostle himself enjoyed, and that he addressed the believers at Rome as enjoying, the most definite assurance of salvation?

To turn to another epistle.

“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” And who are they of whom, in common with himself, he says, “we have received”? He describes a little further on what they had been. He speaks of fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, drunkards, etc., and then says, “And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor. vi., 11.) Could he appeal to them thus as

having undergone such a mighty change unless he knew that they had a consciousness of it which made sure their response to such an appeal?

Then again, in the same chapter: "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" What would be the meaning, and where the force, of such an inquiry, if the apostle did not take for granted that those to whom he wrote did know that they were the temple of the Holy Ghost, as he says?

The Second Epistle abounds with similar evidence. In the first chapter we read, "Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." To be established of God in Christ; to have the anointing which teacheth of all things (see 1 John ii., 27), and therefore assuredly of this; to be sealed, or have the mark of God's approval of us as His own; and to have the Spirit, not only as the anointing and the seal, but the earnest also, the present foretaste of future and eternal joys, how can all this be without the assurance of salvation? And yet all this is declared to be the portion, not only of the apostle, but of those to whom he wrote. "Now He which stablisheth *us with you*," etc. Then, in chapter v., we read, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Is not this assurance? Could assurance be more definitely and absolutely expressed? "For we **KNOW**." How different from the uncertainty which generally exists, and the language of un-

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certainly one so commonly hears. It is not, "I trust all will be right at last:" "I am not altogether without hope." The apostle does not say that he "cannot speak with certainty, that he is afraid of presumption if he should so speak." No; "For we know that . . . we HAVE a building of God," is his simple, unfaltering, unhesitating statement.

In Galatians iv., 6 we have the following words: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." In Ephesians i., 13-14, we read, "In whom also [that is, in Christ], after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance."

Both these passages are plain declarations that those to whom they were addressed enjoyed the assurance of salvation. But the Epistle to the Ephesians we shall have to consider more at large by and by.

In writing to the Colossian saints, the apostle gives thanks to God "for the hope," says he, "which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel: which is come unto you, as it is in all the world: and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth." (Col. i., 5.)

With what confidence does he speak thus of the certainty of their knowledge of the grace of God! Further, on his own behalf, and theirs, he speaks of "giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son; in whom we have

redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

Here are no if's or but's. Here is no uncertainty; but the most definite and positive assurance. "*Hath* made us meet"; "*hath* delivered us"; "*hath* translated us"; "in whom we *have* redemption through His blood!" Blessed, happy certainty! May it be unclouded in the hearts both of the reader and writer of these pages!

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## Teachings of the Psalms.

BOOK V. (Psalms cvii.-cl.)

(Concluded).

**I**N verse 8 it is, "Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest." In verses 13, 14 the Lord hath "desired it for His habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." Then in verse 9 the prayer is, "Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let Thy saints shout for joy." Then comes the answer: "I will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy." Then in verse 10 we have the prayer, "For Thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of Thine anointed." And then the answer comes: "There will I make the horn of David to bud; I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame, but upon himself shall his crown flourish."

Psalm cxxxv. is praise to Jehovah. We have His name here in connection with Israel, and in contrast with idols. In verse 13 Exod. iii. 15 is



quoted, where we have "Jehovah," the name He takes to stand by Israel for ever. In verse 14 you find a quotation from the prophetic song of Moses, when He has unfolded to them their picture as apostate, their spot not the spot of His children, etc., and then, when they should be helpless and hopeless in themselves, Jehovah would judge His people, and would repent Himself concerning His servants. (Deut. xxxii., 36.) So that these two verses give us the first deliverance and purpose of God, and the judgment and ways of God in the last days, which afford the key to the interpretation of the Psalms.

Psalm cxxxvi. takes up these things much in the same manner, but with the addition of mercy enduring for ever with each statement; the lesson *we* are learning here.

Psalm cxxxvii. We have had the Assyrian, now we get Babylon, which we have not had before. Babylon lasts on in prophecy to the Beast. (Rev. xiii, 1; xiv. 8.) We have Edom too, the old rival of Israel. Obadiah prophecies largely of Edom's judgment, for its perpetual hatred to Israel. When Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem captive, Edom stood in the way to cut them off, lest any of them should escape. The Roman Beast is Babylon in the end. (Rev. xiii., xiv.) Assyria is the enemy when Israel is owned as God's people, and Babylon when Israel is not owned.

Psalm cxxxviii. In spite of all this, the Remnant praises God in spirit, though in the presence of the power of Babylon. We have God's word and the cry of faith in this psalm; the same principle as in Heb. iv., where we have the word of God laying bare the heart and the conscience, and

the Priest on high, so that we can come boldly to the throne of grace; just as in Luke x. we have Mary hearing Christ's words; and in chapter xi. the disciples say, "Lord, teach us to pray." The word of God and prayer are the two channels of communication between God and man.

Psalm cxxxix. The Spirit of God is here searching out the heart; and faith looks to God's creation; although with Israel they are restored in the flesh. At first he cannot get out of God's hand, and cannot stand before Him in the searching out of flesh, but afterwards he sees he is God's handiwork, and that he is His creation, and now he can ask to be searched out. The principles of the new creation are here without revealing it.

Verse 16, in principle, applies to the Church, but there is no direct allusion to it.

What are the lower parts of the earth?

His mother's womb. It is curious how in the Old Testament they speak of their mother's womb as the earth. As we read in Job, "Wilt thou bring me into the dust again?" And in Eccles. iii. 20, "All are of the dust, and all return to dust again." Man comes out of the dust of death really, and returns there again. We have God's thoughts and purposes of grace brought out in the close of the psalm towards Israel.

Psalm cxl. He finds himself in the presence of the evil man, and is looking for deliverance, and counts on Jehovah. In these psalms it is always the Remnant, and sometimes a positive promise about Christ.

Psalm cxli. Looking for deliverance, but asking to be kept, both as to heart and lips, in the midst of distress; crying to the Lord in the place

of testimony in the midst of judgment and trials.

Psalm cxlii. This has a special character. "I cried unto God with *my voice*"; not merely with the heart, but an expression of it with his voice. He cries openly to God, and makes confession of Jehovah in his supplications, as his refuge and his portion in the land of the living.

Psalm cxliii. Here we are fully in the distress, but still crying and praying for deliverance.

It is one of the striking things in the Psalms, that all through them the power of evil is rampant. Even when God is praised, and He gives songs of "hallelujahs" to His people, evil is there. It supposes all the evil to be in power unto the end. It is the power of good in the midst of evil, and not the reign of good, and is analogous to our own position. It is the same with us. "I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33), yet still the world goes on, and we have the power of Christ in the midst of it. The Assyrian is destroyed after the "man of sin." (2 Thess. ii., 3, 8; Isa. xxx., 31, xxxi., 8, 9.) Western Europe is the territory of the Beast, and Russia of Gog or Assyria. (Rev. xiii.)

The Lord has come in these Psalms and destroyed the Beast and the false Prophet (the Man of Sin), and then the Assyrian comes up again and finds the Lord there, and is destroyed by the Lord Himself in Idumea. (Rev. xiii., xix., 20.)

Isaiah xxiv. and lxiii. are the same time. We find it distinctly stated in Micah v. 5: "This man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land."

Who is the King of the North in Daniel xi.?

He is the Assyrian. There we find that he shall "plant the tabernacles of his palace between the

seas *and* [it should be, not 'in'] the glorious holy mountain"; that is, between the Mediterranean and Jerusalem. Gog and Magog in Revelation refer to *all* the nations; they come up on the breadth of the whole earth. (Rev. xx., 8.)

Isaiah xxx. 33 and lvii. 9 are the only places in that prophet which refer to the Antichrist. It is Assyria we have in Isaiah; whereas in Daniel we have the Gentile Beasts, and Assyria only comes in to complete the scene in Daniel xi. In Isaiah xxx. 32 the decreed rod of God [not "grounded staff"] falls upon the Assyrian.

Psalm cxliv. We have three times the question, "What is man?" raised in Scripture. Job asks it in a complaining, haughty spirit: "How long wilt Thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?" (vii. 17.) It is, Why should He make so much of him, following him up in every detail of his life to persecute him? Here, on the contrary, the psalmist says, What is man, so wicked as he is, that the Lord should think so much of him and not cut him off directly? Why should he be spared, and the Lord be so patient with these wicked people? In Psalm viii. the question is raised, Why is he so exalted? and answered by His making His own Son a man, and setting Him in glory as man over all the works of His hands. (Heb. ii.)

Psalm cxlv. We have here the intercourse between Christ and His people during the Millennium, celebrating Jehovah's praise. It is "I" and "they." "And *men* shall speak of the might of Thy terrible acts, and *I* will declare Thy greatness. *They* shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and shall sing of Thy righteousness."

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The concluding psalms form what is called "the great Hallel."

Psalm cxlvi. Here we have God, the Creator, who has executed judgment, and delivered His people.

Psalm cxlvii. His mercy and goodness are celebrated in building up Jerusalem.

Psalm cxlviii. The angels are called upon to join the praises of Jehovah, until praise goes out to all creation.

Psalm cxlix. Here the call is to Israel to praise.

Are we in the Millennium in these psalms?

No; it is still the spirit of prophecy. See verse 6. The praises of God are in their mouth, and a two edged sword in their hand. The psalms only take you up to the time of blessing. Prophecy will not be needed when that time is arrived. The psalms never go on into the Millennium, but only up to it.

Psalm cl. is the general closing summons to praise Jehovah.

Did not the disciples sing one of the psalms of the "Hallel" at the Passover?

A Jewish tradition is the ground for believing they did.

Do we have the righteousness of God in the psalms, as in Romans?

It is more looked at as in 2 Pet. i., 1: "Through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, His righteous dealings.

Which psalms give us the sufferings of Christ?

Psalms xxii., the Cross; lxix., Gethsemane; cii., in a certain sense, only the strain there is more poetical; xl., partly, only there He is more undertaking to do it.

Do we not have them in Psalm lxxxviii.?

Only in sympathy. It is the Remnant there, under the anguish of a broken law.

Christians are expected to be their own psalmists. Therefore hymn books are right, and Presbyterians are wrong in keeping to the Book of Psalms. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." (Eph. v., 19.)

What is the distinction between them?

"Hymns" are more ascriptions of praise; "Psalms" celebrations of God's praise. "Spiritual songs" are more speaking to one another about Him. "O Lord, how blest our journey!" is a spiritual song. We are thinking of the journey, but we say, "O Lord," ascribing praise to Him for it. But when we sing, "Lord Jesus, when I think of Thee," it is higher. It is better to be thinking of Christ than of the journey; but both are right, and they are wrong who would only have direct addresses in the Hymn Book!

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## **Christ perfect Godward and Manward.**

READ MATTHEW xxvi. 31-56.

**T**HAT which is so striking in all this history is the entire contrast between "flesh" and Christ in every sense; not so much the *wickedness of man rising up against the Lord Jesus*, as the entire failure of everything around except Christ Himself.

It is not showing divine power, as in John, where they all go backward and fall to the ground

(xviii. 6); but here it is entirely a man, the wonderful divine perfectness in a man. What I see in the Lord Jesus is, that His spirit enters into it all thoroughly, as it was from God. I get two things: I see Him completely before God; and, on the other hand, He feels all that a man feels as a man. He goes through it all so entirely with God, so from God, that in dealing with men there is not a trace of it in His spirit, quiet and gracious. It is a wonderful thing, the perfectness, thorough sincerity and truth, in Him!

There is another thing that strikes me here as very peculiar, that the blessed Lord comes out with all His feelings in the garden of Gethsemane. When He was going about, working the works of God, it was not the case: there was the Divine Person; they could not enter into it. But here He tells them everything: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

Another thing is beautiful: the confidingness of His heart in His disciples, even when they were so miserable and wretched. He could not do it when He was going about in the world. Wonderful, the divine working in a man! The Lord has it all in His mind, and yet speaks to them as if nothing was happening. "After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." There He is telling them as quietly as possible.

You do not get ascension in Matthew; it is Galilee.

What is so striking in Matthew, and especially here, is the place that *the Scriptures* hold. The tempted man, He takes the Word of God, and appeals to it (Matt. iv.)

We have to overcome the wiles of Satan; but when it is resisting we feel it. I do

not *feel* the wiles; when they come, I am not aware it is the devil. The Lord Jesus, of course, was perfect in obedience. He had just been owned Son of God by the Father, and the devil takes that up: "If Thou be the Son of God," etc. It was all over simply by quoting a text.

The way in which for Christ, the Son of God, a text was sufficient, was because it came out of the mouth of God. The weapon by which He overcame was simply by quoting texts. I am led to take God's Word, and the devil can do nothing.

We have the historical order in this Gospel, the spiritual order in Luke.

We require "all the armour of God" for the *wiles* of the devil; not for his strength, because, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." When he comes openly, and says, "Worship me, and take the world," then He says, "Get thee hence, Satan."

In meeting him as man, He shows *us* how to meet Satan; only we meet him as a beaten enemy.

Before this question of Satan comes in, Christ gets His place made clear (Matt. iii. iv.)

You always get the PERSON OF CHRIST safe; that is what is so beautiful in Scripture. He came to obey, not to command. When I say I am "in Christ," redemption according to God's counsels has put me "in Christ," and the Holy Ghost is given me to know it too; but that is no conflict; it has nothing to do with my overcoming. The moment Christ took His place, the conflict and storm comes on. There is no conflict with Satan until we are saved: difficulties doubtless there are, but no warfare.

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# WORDS OF TRUTH

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

The Writings of the Apostle John.

I.

THERE is a peculiar rest to the heart in meditating on the writings of the apostle John. In them God, in the grace of the Father and the Son, seems to shine immediately on the sinner; and though all things committed to man may have failed, yet in JESUS there is a something (and that the true eternal good) outliving all wreck and failure.

The world is a ruin, we know; but the Church in the world is a ruin also. Nothing can touch or even soil her as "the LAMB's wife"; but as responsible to God on the earth, like as the garden of Eden was lost when in man's hand, and the inheritance of Israel was lost when in man's hand, so do I believe it is with the Church also. All is safe in Christ, to be manifested in due time; but man holds nothing safely.

The comfort of the soul in reading the Epistles of John is this, that he does not contemplate the Church as the Lord's "candlestick." (Rev. ii., iii.)

This the apostle Paul does. He looks at it at Corinth, at Philippi, and elsewhere; and we may have to grieve, when reading his epistles to *churches*, that things are not in the same ecclesiastical power, and order, and grace that they once were. And such grief is holy, if it be in the measure of the mind of God, who has provided the relief for all this.

But John does not call forth that grief; for he does not look at things ecclesiastical, but at things personal. He deals with the sinner and the saint in immediate personal connection with God, and thus deals with truths which are independent of all ecclesiastical, outward state.

From this I do feel and judge that there is peculiar rest to the soul in meditating with the apostle John upon God's revelations. Because we must, in the present state of things, be conscious of sad disorder. But Jesus as *Saviour* survives; the *sinner* still lives, and consciously has his being, in our very selves; and there can be a meeting between the Saviour and the sinner; happy, restoring, satisfying, though the light of the "candlestick" be gone. There can be a learning of the secrets of the Father and of the Son by the renewed mind, in the power of the Holy Ghost, who still also survives in the consciousness of our new man within; though, again I may say, the light of the "candlestick" is no more.

Thus John meets very much the desire of the wearied saint now-a-days. He rises upon the soul

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to tell it there is something better, something more enduring, something even giving a brighter light than any "candlestick." And as this is the character of the message he bears to the soul, as it is of the Father, the Son, and the Comforter he speaks, and as they live and shine still for the sinner, though all else may have failed him, so the perfect stillness of the soul is that attitude in which his message is to be listened to.

The soul is to be silent, and let the Lord pass by, revealing Himself. He will publish His own name; and what has the soul to do but, like Moses, to remain in the appointed "clift of the rock"? (Exod. xxxiii., 22.) It is God Himself who has risen. Let the shoes of a busy, talkative mind be taken off; for the place is a sanctuary where God is to be seen and heard. It is to God that the Spirit by the apostle John would conduct the soul. And as the happiest human moments are enjoyed when a tide of influences or of affections is rolling on, and the soul has nothing to do but to stoop, and let it roll on, and spend itself upon us, so our seasons of meditation on those precious divine oracles should have the savour of the like joy. God in His fulness has risen, and our joy is to look and to listen, to be, like Mary, at the feet of Jesus, simply *receivers*, drinking in the rain from such a heaven. For, as strikingly said by another, "*Mercy has now an unlimited vent towards the redeemed, as justice once had the like upon the Redeemer.*"

And I may add, there is much of the *family* of God in John's writings. This also makes his witness very grateful to the affections of the renewed mind, to the thoughts of the saint, wearied, as I have said, with anxieties and searching about

the *Church* of God. John does not contemplate the saints in their formed and ordered condition as a "church," but in their more free character as members or children of the family. Thus he addresses his First Epistle, not to any body as a "church," but "to children, young men, and fathers"; and his Second and Third to private persons.

This has much struck me before now, while meditating on them. But before we speak a little of his Second and Third Epistles, as I proposed to do, I would take leave to add a little further here.

The dealings of the blessed God in this world of ours have more simplicity of purpose than we imagine. We have to look at God passing from one dispensation to another; yet in all we are taught that the great purpose before Him is to manifest Himself in richest blessings, in love and mercy to sinners, to His own eternal glory.

When the Saviour commented on all that had gone before His ministry, He said, "My Father worketh hitherto." (John v., 17.)

There we are let into the secret of the purpose of God. He came forth in the law to test what was in us; yet our "*Father*" had a deeper purpose than that, one with which His heart mixed itself. Mount Sinai was never the place of the "FATHER'S" ministry. Moses and the angels might work in Sinai; but deeper than all, "*My Father*" wrought, said Jesus. Though a little hid under a large and more public thing, yet the mind of Christ coming to apply itself to all that had gone on before, He said, "My Father worketh hitherto."

This lets the soul into the secret that God from

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the beginning had been working in *grace*. The operation of the FATHER is another mode of expressing God's working in grace. Here we get the unity of the divine design, from the beginning to the end, to be this, to bring Himself out to us sinners as "the Father of mercies." (1 Cor. i. 3.) Whether He be manifested to us as destined for earthly or heavenly glory, it is still as "the Father of mercies" to broken-hearted sinners.

What is the Gospel of John up to chapter x.?

A trial whether man had learnt that secret, that the *Father* had been working hitherto. In chapter viii. we have the Lord's mind brought out in contrast with the Jew's on that point, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." (viii. 19.) Why did they not receive Jesus? Because they had not been seeing the Father "working hitherto"; not learning God as broken-hearted sinners; not learning Him as "*the Father*." If we do not learn Him in this character, we shall never learn Him aright.

What is the glory which passes before us in that Gospel? "The glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (i., 14.) This Gospel of John presents the passing of *that* glory across this ruined world of ours; but no eye of the children of men could discern it, except the eye of convicted sinners.

There are many signs of this throughout that Gospel. It may shine in the world, may pass from scene to scene, but it is the eye of the conscious sinner, and of none else, that meets it; it is the conscious sinner alone that understands it, that is gladdened by it, and falls into the train of it.

Thus, when John says, "Behold the LAMB OF

GOD!" Andrew follows Jesus in that character, and the door of Jesus is opened to him. He had followed Jesus as "the LAMB OF GOD"; he had gone after the "glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"; and if any follow Jesus as such, His door will be open to them. Just follow Jesus as the "LAMB OF GOD," and He opens His house, His heart, His glory. (i., 35-39.) All opens to us at once.

Nicodemus comes not so, and he has to go back to the brazen serpent, and there get the faculty to apprehend the glory of the Father, and the things of the kingdom. (iii., 14.)

In chapter iv. the despised Samaritans receive Him, and He goes and dwells with them for two days. In that village "the glory of the only begotten of the Father" could unbosom itself, because He was received in character. Where there was an eye that had learnt Jesus as the Friend of sinners, there the glory could go. This is the way to receive Him in character, and all that Jesus wants is to be thus received.

We see the opposite to this in chapter ii., where He says, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" He was shining in "the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"; and if His own mother could not see Him *in that glory* He had nought to do then even with her.

So in chapter vii. His brethren are distanced from Him; for they looked at Him in a glory that suited the world. But in the next chapter, and again in the ninth, a convicted adulteress, and an outcast, excommunicated one, are brought and kept near Him; for they learnt Him in that glory which met their necessities as conscious sinners.

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Thus is it through these chapters. And it is comforting to our souls to keep the path of this glory before us. And in chapter x. we see this blessed Son of the Father as the Shepherd full of grace in the midst of His flock, His flock of convicted, believing, accepted sinners. And after all this we see this same One looking upward to the Father's house. For in chapter xiv. this "glory of the only begotten of the Father," that had been thus shining down here to sinners for awhile, is going again to its place; and Jesus says, "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and *receive you unto myself*; that where I am, there ye may be also."

I rest on this promise of Jesus. When He comes again, He will receive me to Himself. Is there not *intimacy here*? It is the first hope to rest on the sinner's soul. He is gone to the Father's house until all are gathered. When every thing is ready, He will come out to receive the children to Himself; He "will come again to receive" these redeemed sinners. "UNTO HIMSELF," to meet Him in the air; and then they will all go together to the "FATHER'S HOUSE." This is the immediate hope, beloved, of SINNERS such as you and I.

This then is the trial in John. It is the application of "the glory of the only begotten of the Father" to the eyes and consciences of men, to see if they would receive Him in that character.

The evangelist Matthew opens in a *different style*; but the *same lesson* is taught. In chapter v. we read, "Blessed are the *poor in spirit*; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This is in the

style of Matthew, but in fullest moral harmony with the apostle John. One who had been learning law, learning God in terms of mount Sinai, must have had thoughts altogether disturbed by such a word as this. In law, it was the *flesh* trying to meet the demands of Sinai; but now He has to say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for *theirs* is the kingdom of God."

There is no kingdom of God in the world that is not the kingdom of the Father. The law never furnished the kingdom; for it is to be furnished by the Father with penitent sinners. The lesson in Matthew and in John is one and the same. Whether we be going on to the heavenly part of the kingdom now, or the Jew to the earthly by-and-by, it is still the kingdom of the "*Father*." It is the "Father's" kingdom from one end of it to the other, from the top to the foot of the hill; and none get into the kingdom, none become citizens of it, but those who, as Matthew speaks, are "the poor in spirit," or as John says, are "born again"; those who have learned Jesus as "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

So again: "Ye are the salt of the earth." "Ye are the light of the world." I judge that the word of value here is "*ye*." After Jesus had shown the character of the kingdom, that it was such as was to be taken by "the poor in spirit" (our only title to it, and we as convicted sinners are cast upon Him), He entirely changes the character of "the light" and "the salt."

The light reflected from Sinai had been proposed to man if he could gather it; but now that which constitutes the "light of the world" is not Sinai light (the light of righteousness), but the light of

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the broken-hearted sinner reflected from the glory of the Father. That which was proposed to man at Sinai he was unable to reflect; but what distinguishes us now is that we are basking in the light of our Father, His beams shining on us, our souls advancing and beaming under the light of "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." There we must go to season ourselves, there to illuminate ourselves; "salt" to season, "light" to shine.

Again: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." (Matthew v., 23-24.)

What is the value of this to our souls, beloved? Why, that our Father will not value our offerings, as children and as worshippers, unless we are cultivating the affection of brethren. And this is quite as John says: "This commandment have we received from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 John iv., 21.) There is perfect harmony between them.

Our Father is working to fill a kingdom with children and with brethren; with citizens who shall know *Him* as their *Father*, and each other as *brethren*. This was the simple purpose from the beginning, and He ever secures it. He not only brings each to Himself in love as His child, but all to each other in the sweet relationship of brethren.

Assurance of Salvation.

II.

THE First Epistle to the Thessalonians presents us with equally clear and decisive statements: "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." (i. 9, 10.) "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." (v. 9.)

So also in the Second Epistle: "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (ii. 13, 14.) Again, he says, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts." (ii. 16, 17.)

Thus, what the apostle declares of himself and of his fellow believers at Thessalonica is that Jesus had delivered them from the wrath to come; that they were not appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation; that they were from the beginning chosen of God unto salvation; that the Lord Jesus Christ, and God their Father, had loved them, and had given them everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.

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Is there here the least shadow of pretext for the endless doubts and fears which prevail among Christians now, and which, alas ! are by too many cherished as marks of humility, and as good signs of a work of grace in the soul?

If we proceed in our examination of the epistles we shall find Paul speaking with confidence of Timothy as his "own son in the faith." Of his own conversion he speaks most undoubtedly, styling himself the chief of sinners, but adding, "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." (1 Tim. i., 2, 15, 16.) He exhorts and encourages him in such words as these: "But be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God, who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling." (2 Tim. i. 8, 9.)

"Who hath saved us." Such was the assurance in which the apostle stood, and in which he takes it for granted Timothy was standing also.

To Titus he writes with equal confidence: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost! which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (iii. 5-7.)

If we turn now to the writings of another apostle, we shall not find a different testimony.

The First Epistle of Peter opens with a strain of thanksgiving and joy which leaves no room for a single doubt as to whether he and those to

whom he wrote had full assurance of their salvation: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." (i. 3-5.) So triumphant was their assurance, that in it they could rejoice, even though for a season they were in heaviness through manifold temptations. The apostle speaks to them of Christ as the One "whom," says he, "having not seen, ye love: in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (i. 8, 9.)

Surely nothing can be added to the proof this passage affords, that those to whom it was addressed had undoubting assurance of their salvation. Still, if anything had been wanting, it is furnished in the following chapter: "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious." And again. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." (ii. 7, 9, 10.)

The testimony of the beloved disciple, as it closes the canon of Scripture, so may it well complete the chain of evidence we are seeking to

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present to you, beloved readers, on this important subject.

As to his own assurance, hear his opening words. True, they speak of that which is infinitely more blessed than the assurance of his own salvation; they speak of Him who is at once salvation and the Saviour, and they testify the wondrous fact of His manifestation among men. But still the apostle could not have written as he does had he not enjoyed the most absolute assurance of his own salvation by this blessed One. As the greater, by necessity, includes the less, so his testimony to more than assurance of salvation makes it doubly evident that he was possessed of this.

But hear his words : “ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.)” (1 John i. 1, 2.)

“ Ah, yes,” the reader may perhaps be saying, “ I can understand how the disciple who lay in Jesus’ bosom could write thus, or indeed any of the apostles; and I can understand how eminent, distinguished Christians even now may have attained to something like such certainty as thus : but can it be the common privilege of Christians generally?”

Let the apostle answer, “ That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.” (v. 3).

Why? That we might look up to him and his fellow-apostles as invested with privileges which common Christians could never attain?

No; just the reverse: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, *that ye also may have fellowship with us.*"

And then, as showing what it was that made fellowship or participation with them worthy to be desired, he adds the amazing statement, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

Surely, it will now be perceived that there was good reason for the statement, that we have here something infinitely beyond the mere assurance of salvation. We might have had that without hearing of such a thing as "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." But this is what John and his fellow-disciples had; and he declares to us what he had seen and heard, that we may partake, or have fellowship, with them: and "truly" (we repeat his words), "our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." And, as though he would place it beyond doubt that this is our privilege as well as his, he adds, "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." (v. 4.)

Strictly speaking, it is in the second chapter that we get to the subject of the assurance of salvation. And who are they that are represented as enjoying it? Are they the aged, advanced Christians, those whom the apostle addresses as "fathers"? No. Are they the active, zealous, energetic Christians, those who, amid the heat of conflict and the pressure of trial, are styled by the apostle "young men"? No. Both these classes of Christians did indeed enjoy the assurance of salvation; but he says nothing of it to either of them. These are his words, "I write unto you, LITTLE CHILDREN, because your sins are

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forgiven for His name's sake." And again, "I write unto you, LITTLE CHILDREN, because ye have known the Father." (*vv.* 12, 13.)

Thus we see that forgiveness of sins, and the knowledge of the Father, are the attributes of the "little children," the babes in Christ.* How evidently, then, must these privileges be the portion of all believers!

The third chapter opens with the exclamation, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" And then the apostle says, "Beloved, *now are we the sons of God*; and it doth not yet appear (it is not yet manifest) what we shall be; BUT WE KNOW that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (*vv.* 1, 2.) Could certainly be more strongly expressed?

In the last chapter we have a passage which we cannot forbear quoting: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (*v.* 13.)

Thus one object of the Holy Ghost in inditing

* The above remarks are based on our English version of the passage. It may be well to state, however, that *teknia*, the word rendered "little children" in verse 12, is the same as that in verse 1, where all the saints are evidently intended. So that verse 12 states forgiveness of sins to be the portion of all believers. *Paidia*, the word for "little children" in verse 13, is one that really means "babes" or "*little* children." The apostle writes to all believers under the title of *teknia*, children, and says, their sins are forgiven them. He distinctly addresses babes in Christ as *paidia*, and says he writes to them, because they have known the Father.

this epistle was to sanction the assurance, and strengthen the faith, of those who believed on the name of the Son of God. The apostle writes to those who thus believe, in order that they may continue to believe, and that they may believe more firmly. But more than this, he writes to them that they may know that they have eternal life.

It was not because they were unbelievers that he wrote to them to believe in the name of the Son of God. They did believe on that blessed name; and he wrote to them that they might be confirmed in what they believed. Neither was it because they did not know they were saved that he wrote to them; they did know this already; but he writes to confirm them in the assurance that they might have it on the sanction of another divine communication, recorded, too, in the written word. Blessed foundation for assurance of salvation and eternal life to rest upon!

We only add here another quotation from the last chapter of 1 John. It is one which may well conclude an inquiry into what Scripture teaches as to assurance of salvation: "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true: and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (vv. 19, 20.)

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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 Truth of Redemption Illustrated.

TO know and enjoy the forgiveness of sins is the portion of every child of God. An unforgiven child of God is unknown in Scripture. Whether they know it or not, God's people are forgiven; but God would have them know it as well. And when they consciously receive forgiveness, He gives them the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. i. 22.)

It is no matter of attainment, but of simple faith, taking God's thoughts, and giving up their own.

"Abraham believed God." That was faith. Experience will often contradict what God says; but faith is not experience, and we are saved by faith, and not by experience. "The full assurance of faith" is the normal Christian state.

(Heb. x. 22.) It rests upon what Christ has accomplished; what the Holy Ghost declares in the word of God. (Heb. x. 14-18.) Unbelief may reject it, and be lost; but faith, childlike, Christian faith, believes God; it "sets to its seal that God is true," and God, too, sets His seal (the Holy Ghost) on him who believes. (John iii. 33; Eph. i. 13.)

But to know only forgiveness is not to know redemption. A man may know his sins are forgiven for which he would have been judged, and yet in conscience still be like the Israelites in Egypt. He may think himself merely "a sinner" still. He may suppose he is still a child of fallen Adam, and therefore he may have no sense of deliverance from that state at all.

It is one thing to know that I had *sins*, and that I had earned judgment for those sins, and that grace stepped in and sheltered me by the blood of Christ, both blotting out the sins for ever, and delivering me from a judgment to come; but it is quite another thing to know that I have been wholly delivered from a previous *state* before God, that of a responsible and sinful child of Adam, and that I am now a favoured child of God, and never can be a child of Adam any more.

It was one thing for Israel to know that they had been *safe* from judgment on the night of the Passover; it was quite another to know they were *saved* out of Egypt. They *had been* slaves there, making bricks without straw. They *are* now God's freed-men, as they sing the song of Moses on the wilderness side of the Red Sea. Here is where so many err. They are trusting in Christ as their only hope; they may know, too, that their sins are pardoned, but they go on all their lives

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through, perhaps, crying out "miserable sinners," or "sinners." Plainly they do not know where redemption has set them, or they could not do this.

Suppose that an Israelite, instead of singing Moses' song of redemption, was crying out that he was "a poor slave in Egypt" (because he found himself the same person still when he looked at himself), what would you have thought of his folly? Yet there are plenty of the people of God in no better a state. How thoroughly dishonouring to the work of Christ! But it satisfies systematic religion, and ministers to it. Redemption is ignored in its true force; I do not say in words, for, alas! that is one of the most successful plans of the enemy, to use orthodox words without their true import, and thus blind the souls of the people of God as to their real meaning, keeping them in darkness and uncertainty all their lives.

An Israelite who was redeemed was dealt with from that moment on an entirely new footing; never as a slave in Egypt again, but according to the new place and relationship in which he now stood with God. And so it is with the Christian.

And now we have to notice another thing altogether. Not merely have we to learn what we have *done*, and the *forgiveness* we need for this, but we have to learn a far more trying lesson, that is, what we *are*, and the *deliverance* we have in Christ. We never get that thorough deliverance from what we are until we are forced to cry out, "O wretched man that *I am*, who shall *deliver me*?" though forgiveness may be known at the same time, as we have seen.

This is unfolded in Exodus xiv. They started

to leave Egypt, but the bitter lesson had been learned that they could not deliver themselves. Forgiveness does not give strength, nor does the possession of life give it. And here *experience* enters, but experience before deliverance, and therefore he is not yet on proper Christian ground. Experience will never give deliverance; it will "bring me into captivity," but it will never set me free. That must be the work of Another. (Rom. vii. 14-24.)

On the night of the *Passover* it was a question between God and Israel. On the day of the *Red Sea*, the question was between God and the enemy. Was God or the enemy to have those whom the blood had purchased? In the salvation of the Red Sea we learn in type the efficacy of Christ's *death and resurrection* in delivering from the world, and Satan's power who had formed it as a sphere in which to please the flesh in man. The blood of Christ answered for our sins before God as a Judge. His death and resurrection takes us clean out by redemption into a new place, delivering us for ever from the attacks and accusations of the enemy. God counts to us in grace, and we possess by faith the efficacy of what Christ has passed through for us.

The children of Israel had encamped at Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. Pi-hahiroth bears the significant meaning of *the opening of liberty*. Here Satan's power is put forth in a final effort to frustrate "the salvation of the Lord." All his hosts are marshalled against the people, who are "sore afraid." But the Lord permits this pressure, which eventuates in their learning Him in a far more blessed way than as a Judge. They experience what souls do who

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find that a day of quiet slavery to Satan was more easy to be endured than the pressure of his power against them in their first efforts to escape. They may have dreamed of escape in days gone by; but now the trial comes. Will Satan permit it? The bondage of the Egyptians was preferable to this trying moment: "For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness" (v. 12.) Death was before them, and up to death Satan wields his power. Once death is past, Satan's power is over.

Now God's resources are seen. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord . . . The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (vv. 13, 14.) Moses lifted up the rod of judgment, and divided the waters of death; and the people passed over to the other side, as it were through death, which stood before them a moment before.

The Lord has gone into the last stronghold of Satan's power, and wrought complete salvation *for* His people. The blood which had answered for our sins has come from the side of a dead Christ, but He has risen, and left the whole domain of Satan's power, nullifying death for those who believe. (Heb. ii. 14.) A very real work may have to be done *in* them, that they may know themselves, and that when put into the pressure of such a moment they may be forced to find that all must be of God. But the Lord has wrought the work of salvation *for* us, and what He has passed through is counted to us in grace. It is not merely that His blood has cleansed us from every sin, and saved us from judgment to come, but He has died and risen, and

left the whole sphere into which He had entered. We who believe in Him have died also to the sin and sinful state for which He died in putting it away before God, and now He lives to God. "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also [that is, count as true in faith, what God has counted to you in grace] yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vi. 9-11.)

How then can Satan harm or accuse? If we have died with Christ out of the sphere into which He had entered in divine love, we have died to it for ever. Satan may try to follow (as Pharaoh and his hosts sought to follow the children of Israel), and find that therein is his ruin. He put forth his worst in leading on the whole world against Christ to drive Him out of it; but therein Christ destroyed his power. (Heb. ii. 14.) His accusations are over; his attacks frustrated. He might accuse and attack one who is alive; but we have died with Christ, and Satan can do so to us no more.

If we were simple, this truth of deliverance would be simple too. But alas, we are not simple, and hence the bitter experiences we have to pass through till we cry out, "Who shall deliver?" Then all is clear. We have been translated completely out of the place and condition in which we committed the sins, and, as cleansed from them, are put into a new place "in Christ" risen from the dead. By no efforts of our own could we ever reach this place. It is by complete surrender, and by giving up every effort, that we get this

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deliverance in Christ, who has accomplished it all, and who now stands in this new place Himself.

You find this experimentally described at length in Rom. vii. 14-24. Not that these verses give you the experience of any person at the time they were spoken. They are the *past* xperiences of a *delivered* man, who had struggled for freedom until he found he was rather getting further from *deliverance* than nearer the goal. He is now standing on dry ground, so to speak, and describing what he experienced before he was free.

You see a remarkable illustration of this in Jonah. He is put into the place where none could avail to deliver him but God alone; in the "belly of hell," as he describes it. (Jonah ii. 2.) Three things he promised that he would do, if he only could get out: "I will look again toward Thy holy temple."

No; vows and resolutions will not do. "But," he cries, "I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving."

Will this set him free? No.

Again he cries, "I will pay that I have vowed."

All in vain! Promises and vows, efforts and resolves, which are made in such a state, will not do; they all come from "I"; and as long as "I" is recognized you have not given up "I" as one in whose flesh "dwelleth no good thing," and turned the eye upon Christ.

At last Jonah is led to say, "Salvation is of the Lord."

Ah! Jonah, you have found out the secret; you have touched the spring of the lock; and you are standing on dry ground the next moment. How simple, and yet how blessed to find the eye removed from self, hopeless self, and,

in the sense of utter, helpless weakness, turned upon God. Then all is done, and we are free.

There are three steps in learning the bitter experience of Romans vii. 14-24.

First, the hopeless evil of the nature of the flesh, in which is *no* good: not merely that the tree has produced evil *fruit*, but that the *tree* itself is corrupt.

Secondly, it begins to dawn upon the soul that after all there are good desires and earnest longings to do the right thing for God. The very aspirations of a new nature, which is sanctified to the obedience of Jesus Christ, are there. The first cry of the quickened soul is, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6.) But oh! what distress of soul to find that even with good desires and earnest aspirations after God the evil nature is stronger than the good, and leads me captive, so that I do the thing I hate, and I detest and abhor the thing I do. Bitter lesson, but useful to learn.

Thirdly, then, I learn that I have no power over the old nature, and some one else must come and set me free. Sad enough to find out its total evil; sadder still to find that it is not myself, and yet I am captive to its desires. But the moment I give up "I," and cry, "Who shall deliver?" my eye has turned away from all the efforts of "I," and I am free. The Lord has been into the depths where I lay, and the evil nature has been completely condemned in Him, so that I can by *faith* and for deliverance reckon myself dead; and though in *fact* and *experience* I find the nature alive, and its tendencies unchanged, still am entitled to treat it as "not I," but as an enemy to overcome and subdue.

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Thus we are "in Christ," not "in Adam" at all, and *now*, for the *first* time, God will have fruit from us. All this work of redemption is what God has done *for* us. (Exod. xii.-xiv.) The experience we pass through is a work *in* us, that we may enter upon the enjoyment of what He has accomplished. Now, for the first time, the mouths of those who in solemn silence and urgent haste ate the paschal lamb on the night of judgment, whose cries of fear had been silenced at the Red Sea by a God of salvation, are opened in a triumphant song of praise for what the Lord has accomplished in His delivering grace.

And "the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. There remained not so much as one of them." "Thus the Lord saved Israel" (vv. 28-30.) The same waters that silenced the foe, flowed back into their mighty channel. There was no retrogression, no return. Redemption once accomplished is accomplished for ever. The waters, flowing back in the channel, precluded the possibility of returning by that pathway into the land of slavery and sin.

Sins, and *death*, and *judgment* are all behind the delivered soul. The sins are gone, for Christ has borne them. Death is past for us in Him. Through it (if we have to die physically) we pass into the presence of the Lord. Death is ours. (1 Cor. iii.22.) Death is the wages of sin; but Christ having taken those wages, we are free, and instead of receiving sinful man's portion (after death the judgment, Heb. ix. 27), we are placed in the glory where Jesus is. Judgment is past, for He has borne it. He that believes "hath

everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment ; but is passed from death unto life ” (John v. 24.)

“ Be Ye Therefore Perfect.”

„PERFECTION,” or being “ perfect,” as used in the case of Christians (Matt. v. 48), in the case of Israel (Deut. xviii. 13), and in the case of Patriarchs (Gen. xvii. 1), means, I believe, the acting consistently with the character in which God has been pleased to reveal Himself for the time, according to the revelation given, and the relationship in which the person stood to Him.

To Abraham God revealed Himself as “ Almighty.” Abraham’s perfection, therefore, was to walk before “ Almighty God ” as a pilgrim of faith, dependent on His power.

To Israel God was revealed as “ Jehovah,” the Fulfiller of all His promises, who, when redemption had been accomplished in figure, came down to dwell amongst His people. Their perfection, therefore, was to walk with Jehovah in that separateness from evil which He required, and to count on His faithfulness.

To the Christian, God has been revealed as “ Father.” The Christian’s perfection, therefore, is to display the relationship in which he is, the nature which he has, a divine nature, by acting as a child of God, governed and guided by the revealed principles on which his Father acts, and counting on His grace. He is to be an imitator of God as a dear child. (Eph. v. 1.)

Scripture makes it clear there is no such thing

as perfection, intrinsic perfection, in any on earth ; there never was since the fall, save in Christ only. (Jas. iii. 2.) The believer cannot say that he has no sin in him ; at least, if he does he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him. (1 John i. 8.) If, therefore, none can say they have no sin in them, none can say they are “ perfect ” in that sense.

This lack of intrinsic perfection, however, does not excuse or make a way for failure in practice. The believer is called to walk as Christ walked, and that, most surely, was perfectly. He could say, “ I do always those things that please Him.” (John viii. 29.) There is power for this (Phil. i. 10-11.) So that while the believer cannot say he is “ perfect,” owing to the fact of sin being in him, yet he is to be governed and guided in his walk by the principles suited to God revealed as Father, to display the nature he has as a child from the Father, and in this sense to be perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect.

You will find, I think, an illustration of what I mean in verse 16 of the same chapter. That the Christian is expected so to let his light shine before men that they, seeing the character of the works, cannot do otherwise than trace them to a divine source, “ your Father which is in heaven.” The works are such as to leave no doubt whence they flow.

It is interesting to observe that while God has been revealed to Christians as Father, He who has been so revealed is the Almighty God of Abraham and the Jehovah-God of Israel. Thus we have the fulness of all the former revelations of God, while having a further and especial one to ourselves, God in grace, the Father.

You will see this in 2 Cor. vi., where the Spirit of God, urging on His saints that holiness and separation from evil which become the place they have been called to, says, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a *Father* to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the *Lord* [Jehovah] *Almighty*."

Abraham's and Israel's God is the Christian's Father. "Behold, what manner of love the FATHER hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons [children] of God." (1 John iii. 1.)

The Writings of the Apostle John.

II.

IF we be not hallowing the confidence of brethren, our worship cannot be accepted. Our God is jealous of the right which we have to render to each other, that we maintain affection amongst ourselves. He says, as it were, "You must come to *me* in the path of brotherly love; otherwise I cannot receive your gift. My *altar* is indeed among you, but I cannot receive your *gift* whilst you are without love to one another. If I see not my beloved family in order, my children in peace and love one with another, I cannot take my place amongst them." This is the gracious desire of the Father, the head of the family, "that he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 John iv. 21.)

The Lord spoke what was familiar to His own soul from the beginning. In Eden, the patriarchs,

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Noah, Abram, Sinai, this was always the thing, and the mind of Christ goes beneath all to bring it forth, to bring out this treasure, "My Father worketh hitherto." There is one simple, undistracted design from the beginning to the end. Whether we enter into the heavenly or the earthly part of it, it is our "*Father's*" kingdom, a kingdom of children and brethren. This is His precious design, and though all else may fail, this shall be accomplished. Love never fails, for God never fails. His gifts and callings are without repentance. (1 Cor. xiii. ; Rom. xi.)

These two epistles of John come in the train of, in the harmony with, all this; and this too is the value of the Book of Revelation. We may differ in our measure of attainment in the understanding of that book; but we can *together* discern this precious feature there, that *all* may agree in this joy, that though at the very beginning of the book the "candlestick," the public witness for God, may be gone, yet to the very end of the book, "the Bride, the LAMB's wife," *remains*, as indeed I have already noticed. She may be put to shame in her stewardship; but as the beloved, the chosen of and for the LAMB, she stands for ever, she survives all.

So in these epistles. I see all else gone, save that which can never go, that which is established in the grace of God, in the love of the Father. Everything may fail, but the purpose of God before the foundation of the world can never fail.

Looking now into the Second Epistle of John we learn that the truth which dwelleth in us, the gospel truth, that which reveals "the Only Begotten of the Father," that truth shall never go;

it shall be with us for ever. (*vv.* 1, 2.) It is that precious "seed" which has constituted us, poor sinners, children of the kingdom, "that word which by the gospel is preached unto you," and it "liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Pet. i. 22-25.)

The peculiar spirit of John shows itself in *v.* 3. Paul says, in addressing the churches, "Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ", but John adds, "the Son of the Father, in truth and love." (*v.* 3.) He brought out the intimacies of the Father; he had got at the under-current; for he had lain in the bosom of Jesus, "the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John i. 14; xiii. 23.)

This love from the beginning (*v.* 5) is that which survives all. The truth (*v.* 4) survives times, place, wreck, ruin, and everything. Service may be all failure; but truth is as fresh in the wild woods now as it was in Jerusalem at first. So does love, that which it begets. Truth is the seed of life; and love is the principle of the divine nature in the saints; and as the seed, so too that which it produces survives and lives.

John does not take the place of Paul, addressing the churches in the aggregate character; but he writes to an "elect lady" whom no one knows anything about, except that she had "truth and love." She was known and "elect" of the Father, that was enough, and she is told to look to herself.

This is increasingly in our day a valuable principle of truth. If there is any thing which comes to us with peculiar value, it is that it comes to us as a personal, individual thing. In His preaching to Israel, the Lord says, "Who hath ears to

hear, let him hear.” (Matt. xiii. 9.) He could assume that blindness rested on the *nation*, and so could say, “*He* that hath ears to hear, let *him* hear.” So, too, in Rev. ii. 3, the Spirit could not trust the “candlestick” any more than Jesus could the nation of the Jews, and therefore says, “*He* that hath an ear, let *him* hear.” (Luke xiv. 35.)

So too here, the elect lady is told, “Look to yourselves.” (v. 8.) This applies to her personal and individual state of soul. And so we can now speak; for whatever the aggregate failure may be, the word remains, “Look to yourselves.” We are “the elect lady” still, and are not to be made the sport of the deceivings of unrighteousness now, any more than when the Church stood in power. The “candlestick” may be removed, but we are protected from error. The “truth and love” are with us, and we must *look to ourselves*.

The prophetess Deborah was taken up in a day of strange informality. (Judges iv.) She was a strange successor to Joshua and other leaders; but the Spirit was with her, and she could fight the battles of the Lord. So the “elect lady” here is made the guardian of the truth; she is told to let her hands hold truth in as much purity and security as though she were a “candlestick.” And this is precious to us; for though we are alone, like her, we have authority to keep the deceiver outside the door. Something irregular this may appear. But in a day of apostasy irregularity is the order of the Spirit, and the Spirit is always according to God. (vv. 7, 8.)

How simple is the point of unity, “the doctrine of Christ,” of the Father, and the Son. If our souls were drinking more simply of the precious

doctrine of the Father and the Son, we should be ashamed to talk of any difference of judgment, of being apostles of disunion. We want to get more light from "the Father and the Son." "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." If the light of that doctrine were full and clear on the soul of each of us, we should rebuke such a thought. But still he tells to this "elect lady," "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed: for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil eeds." He gives her authority to keep the deceiver outside the door. And so with us. Let every one of us be the weaker vessel (that is what she was), and if the deceiver come, we are to look to ourselves, and keep him outside! (vv. 9-11.)

And now he says, "Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full." (v. 12.) Just as the departing Spirit of Christ, at the close of the Book of Revelation, leaves the volume, saying, "Surely I come quickly," so here: I hope to come shortly, to speak *face to face* with you; and *then* our joy will be full. "I have many things to say unto you"; not all told out from Genesis to Revelation, not written "with paper and ink." He hopes to come shortly, and then it will not be communication with "paper and ink," but "face to face, that our joy may be full." O blessed hope! The lover of our souls, the LAMB in the throne, will feed us Himself at the fountain for ever!

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WORDS OF TRUTH

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

## The Book of Esther.

### I.

**I**N the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah we see the captives brought back to Jerusalem, there to await the coming of the Messiah, that it might be known whether Israel would accept the Messenger and Saviour whom God would send to them.

In this Book of Esther we are in a very different scene. The Jews are among the Gentiles still. We will look at it in its succession of ten chapters; and in the action recorded we shall find:

1. The Lord God working wondrously, but secretly.
2. The Jews themselves.
3. The Gentile, or the World Power.
4. The great Adversary.

i., ii. The Book opens by presenting to us a sight of the Gentile now in power.

It is, however, the Persian and not the Chaldean; "the breast" of "silver," not "the head" of "gold," in the great Image which Nebuchadnezzar saw. (Dan. ii. 37.)

We are here reading rather the second than the first chapter in the history of the Gentile in supremacy in the earth. We see him in the progress, rather than at the commencement, of his career; but, morally, he is the same. Moab-like, his taste remains in him, his scent is not changed. (Jer. xlviii. 11.)

All the haughtiness that declared itself in Nebuchadnezzar reappears in Ahasuerus. No spirit or fruit of repentance, no learning of himself, or of what becomes him as a creature, is seen in this "man of the earth." (Ps. x. 18.) The lie of the serpent, which formed man at the beginning, is working as actively as ever. The old desire to be as God utters itself in the Persian now, as it had before in the Chaldean.

The one had built his royal city, and looked at it in pride, and boastfully said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Dan. iv. 30.)

The other now makes a feast, and for one hundred and eighty days shows to the princes and nobles the whole power of his realm, "the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty." (Esther i. 4.)

Nay more; for the Persian exceeds. There is a bold affecting to be as God in Persia, which we did not see in Babylon. We notice this in three distinguished Persian ordinances.

(1). No one was to appear in the royal presence unbidden. In such a case, had this ordinance of the realm been violated, life and death would hang on the pleasure of the king.

(2). No one was to be sad before the king ; his face or presence was to be accepted by all his people as the spring and power of joy and gladness.

(3). No decree of his realm could be cancelled : is stood for ever.

These are assumptions indeed. This exceeds, in the way of man showing himself to be as God. And know we not that this spirit will work till the Gentile has perfected his iniquity? (Rev. xiii. 4, 15.)

But the hand of God begins to work its wonders now, in the midst of all the festivity and pride which opens the book. The joy of the royal banquet was interrupted ; a stain defaces the fair form of all this magnificence. The Gentile queen refuses to serve the occasion, or be a tributary to this day of public rejoicing ; and this leads to the manifesting of the Jew, and of ultimately making that people principal in the action, and eminent in the earth, beyond all thought or calculation.

It was a small beginning, poor and mean in its character and material. Vashti's temper, which goaded her to a course of conduct which jeopardized her life, was the " little fire " which kindled this " how great a matter." (Jas. iii. 5.) It is a miserable, despicable circumstance. What can be meaner? The temper, we may say, of an imperious woman ! And yet God by it works results, then known to Himself in counsel, but the accomplishment of which shall be seen in the coming day of Jewish glory.

“ Deep in unfathomable mines  
 Of never-failing skill,  
 He treasures up His bright designs,  
 And works His sovereign will.”

Vashti is deposed. She is disclaimed as the wife of the Persian; and another more worthy is to be sought for to take her place.

Now, the question may arise, How far can one of the Jews take advantage of such an occasion? Does holiness avail itself of corruption? Can the people of God forget their Nazaritism, their separation to Him? And yet Esther consents to go before the king at this time, as in company with all the daughters of his uncircumcised subjects!

This may amaze us, if we judge of things by any light less pure and intense than that which is of God. The moral sense of mere man, the verdict of legal ordinances, the voice of Mount Sinai itself, will not do at times. We must walk in the light as God is in the light. (1 John i. 7.) We must know “the times,” like Issachar of old, ere we can rightly say “what Israel ought to do.” (1. Chron. xii. 32.)

Did not some of Bethlehem-Judah take wives of the daughters of Moab, and that, too, without rebuke? Did not Joseph, in his marriage, deviate from the holiness of Abraham, and Moses from the ordinances of the law? Was not Rahab, though a daughter of the uncircumcised, adopted of Judah, and became conspicuous in the ancestry, after the flesh, of David's Lord? And did not Samson take to wife a woman of Timnath, that belonged to the Philistines? (Ruth i. 4; Gen. xlv. 45; Num. xii. 1; Matt. i. 5; Judges xiv. 1, 2.)

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*The people of God were not in due order on the occasions of those strange events ; and this is their moral vindication. The light of divine wisdom in divine dispensation becomes the judge, rather than ordinances. The Jews were now in the dispersion. Joseph, if we please so to express it, is in Egypt again, Moses in Midian, and the sons of Bethlehem-Judah in Moab ; and Esther is as much unrebuked for going in unto the king of Persia, as Joseph for marrying Asenath, or Moses for marrying Zipporah, or Mahlon for marrying Ruth ; and each and all of them stand without reproach or judgment before God in these things, just as David did when he ate the shew-bread. (1 Sam. xxi. 6.) Nay, these things were of God, as Samson's marriage with a Philistine woman seems distinctly to be so recognized. (Judges xiv. 4.)*

Divine counsels shall be accomplished ; the fruits of grace shall be gathered ; and the ordinances of righteousness, and the arrangements which suit us, were we in integrity, and in well-ordered condition, shall not interfere.

iii. The Jew, strange to say it, as we have seen, becomes important to the world-power ; that is, the Persian ; but more so than I have as yet noticed. important to his *safety* as well as to his *enjoyments*. For Mordecai becomes his protector. as Esther had become his wife. This we see at the close of chap. ii. The king is debtor to both. In spite of all his greatness. and all the resources for happiness and strength which attached to his greatness, he is debtor to the dispersed of Judah. They are important to him. Both his heart and his head, as I may say, have to own this.

But if the Jew be thus strangely brought into

personal favour and acceptance, equally strangely is the Jew's enemy brought into high and honourable elevation, and seated in the very position which capacitated him to gratify all his enmity. An Amalekite sits next in dignity and rule to the king. Above all the princes of the nation, Haman, the Agagite, is preferred; why we are not told. No public virtue or service is recorded of him. It is, apparently, simply the royal pleasure that has done it. A stranger to the nation he was, a distant stranger; one, too, of a race now all but forgotten, we might say, once distinguished, in the day of the infancy of nations, but now all but blotted out from the page of history, superseded by others far loftier in their bearing than ever he had been; the Assyrian first, then the Chaldean, and now the Persian. And yet there he now is before us, an Amalekite seated next to Ahasuerus the Persian; in dignity, office, and power, only second to him.

This is strange indeed, we may say. The great enemy of Israel, when Israel was in the wilderness, re-appears here in the same character in this day of Israel in the dispersion. (Exod. xvii.) It is strange; an Amalekite found nearest to the throne of Persia! The heart of the great monarch of that day turned towards him, to put him into a condition to act the old Amalekite part of defiance of God, and enmity against His people. We could not have looked for such a thing. This name, the name of Amalek, was to be put out from under heaven; and, from the days of David till now, I may say, this people had not been seen. But now they re-appear, we scarcely know how; and that, too, in bloom and strength, as in a palmy hour.

This, again I say, is strange indeed. It is as

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of one in resurrection ; as of one whose deadly wound was healed ; “ who was, and is not, and yet is.” (Rev. xvii. 8.)

The Agagite now stands forth as the representative of the great enemy, the proud apostate that withstands God, and His people, and His purposes. There has been such a one in every age ; and he is the foreshadowing of that mighty apostate who is to fall in the day of the Lord. Nimrod, in the days of Genesis, represents him ; Pharaoh, in Egypt ; Amalek, in the wilderness ; Abimelech, in the time of the Judges ; and Absalom, in the time of the Kings ; Haman, here in the day of the Dispersion ; and Herod in the New Testament.

Exaltation of self, infidel pride, and the defiance of the fear of God, with rooted enmity to His people, are, some or all, the marks on each of them ; as such will be displayed, in a full form of daring, awful apostasy, in the person of the Beast who, with his confederates, falls in the presence of the Rider on the White Horse, in the day of the Lord, or the judgment of the quick. (Rev. xiii. 6, 7 ; xix. 11-21.) Prophets have told of him as the king that is to do according to his own will (Dan. xi. 36) ; as “ Lucifer, son of the morning ” (Isa. xiv. 12) ; as “ the Prince of Tyrus ” (Ezek. xxviii. 2), we may say ; as the fool that says in his heart, “ There is no God ” (Ps. liii. 1), and variously beside. And the Book of Revelation shows him to us in the figure of a Beast, who had his Image set up for the worship and wonder of the whole world, and his mark as a brand in the forehead of every man ; whose deadly wound was healed, who was, and is not, and yet is to be.

And further, we may notice, that the *purpose*,

as well as the person of the great adversary, stands forth in this great Haman. He must have the blood of all the Jews. His heart will not be satisfied by the life of the one who had refused to do him reverence. He must have the lives of the whole nation. He breathes the spirit of the enemy of Israel, who by and by is to say, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance." (Ps. lxxxiii. 4.)

The Amalekite and his company cast the lot, the *Pur*, only to determine the day on which this deed of extermination was to be perpetrated. But, as we know, the lot may be "cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." (Prov. xvi. 33.) And so was it here. Eleven long months, from the thirteenth day of the first month, to the thirteenth day of the twelfth month; that is, from the day when the lot was cast, to the day on which the lot decided that the slaughter of the nation should take place, are given, so that God would ripen His purposes both towards His people and their adversaries.

This has a clear, loud voice in our ears. There is no speech or language but the voice is heard. (Ps. xix. 3.) God is not even named; but it is the work of His hand, and the counsel of His bosom.

Haman finds no hindrance from the king his master. He tells the king that there is a people scattered through his dominions whom it is not his profit to let live, for their customs are diverse from all people; the secret of the world's enmity then and still. (Acts xvi. 20, 21.)

The decree, according to the desire of Haman, goes forth from Shushan the palace; and it spreads



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its way in all haste to all parts of the world, the domain of the great Persian "breast" of "silver." The whole nation of the Jews, as the consequence of this, take the sentence of death into themselves. The decree would have reached the returned captives, as well as the dispersion. Judæa was but a province of the Persian power in that day.

But they are to learn to trust in Him who quickens the dead, who calls those things that be not as though they were; who acts in this world in resurrection-strength. The remnant of Israel must learn to walk in the steps of the faith of their father Abraham. It is *faith* that must be exercised; for "the Lord will not for awhile reveal Himself, though He thinks of them, and shelters them without displaying Himself."

Mordecai now appears, as the representative of this Remnant, the possessor of this Abraham-like faith, in this awful hour. The godliness of this dear and honoured man begins to show itself, in his refusal to reverence the Amalekite. The common duty of worshipping only the true God, the God of Israel, would have forbidden this. And shall a Jew bow to one of that race with whom the God of the Jews had already said that He would have war for ever and ever; bow to one who, instead of bowing himself to the Lord of heaven and earth, had even come forth to insult His presence and His majesty, and to cut off His people even before His face? (Exod. xvii.)

Mordecai will jeopard his life by this refusal. But be it so. He is in the mind of his brethren Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who can say to an earlier Haman, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God

whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (Dan. iii. 16-18.)

This is fine in its generation, truly; but finer still from its connections. For combination constitutes excellency of character. We are "to quit ourselves like men"; and yet "let all our things be done in charity." (1 Cor. xvi. 13, 14.) In Him, whose was all moral glory, there was, as we have heard from others, "nothing salient"; all was so perfectly combined. And in Mordecai we see this. We see "goodness," and, with that, "righteousness." He was gracious and tender-hearted, bringing up his orphan cousin as though she had been his own daughter. But now he is faithful and unbending. He will quit himself like *a man* now, if then he did all his things "in charity." He will not bow and do reverence at the command of the king, though his life may be the penalty.

iv., v. The various exercises of the soul in these chapters, as we see in Esther and Mordecai, are a matter of great interest. The hand and the Spirit of God work together so wondrously in the story of Israel, as we get it in the Psalms and in the Prophets; the *hand* forming their circumstances; the *Spirit*, their mind; and these two things occupy a very large portion of the prophetic word. And we get living, personal illustrations of this here, in the exercises of heart through which these two distinguished saints of God are seen to pass, and the marvellous circumstances through which they are brought.

On the issue of the fatal decree Mordecai fasts and mourns in sackcloth. But all the while he counts upon deliverance. Such a combination is full of moral glory.

Elijah gave a sample of it in his day, for he knew the rain was at hand; but he casts himself down on the earth, and puts his face between his knees, as one in "effectual fervent prayer." (1 Kings xviii. ; James v. 16-18.)

The Lord Himself gives another sample of this. He knows and testifies that He is about to raise Lazarus from sleep, the sleep of death; but He weeps as He approaches the grave. (John xi. 33.)

So here with Mordecai. He will not put off his mourning. He refuses to be comforted, while the decree is out against his people, though he reckons, surely reckons, upon their deliverance some way or another. This is another of those combinations which are necessary to character or moral glory; a sample of which I have already noticed in this true Israelite, this "Israelite indeed." (John i. 47.)

And Esther is as beautiful in her generation as a weaker vessel. She may have to be *strengthened* by Mordecai, but she is tenderly, deeply, in sympathy with the burdens of her nation. She sees difficulty, and feels danger; and she speaks, for a time, from her circumstances. Nothing wrong in this. She tells Mordecai of the hazard she would run if she went into the royal presence unbidden. Nothing wrong, again I say, in thus speaking as from her circumstances, though there may be weakness.

But Mordecai counsels her, as a stronger vessel; and he appears as one above both circumstances and affections, in the cause of God and His people.

He sends a peremptory message to Esther, though he so loved her; and he is calm and of a firm heart in the midst of these dangers. He sits above water floods in this way; in the might of Him who has trod all waves for us. There is neither leaven nor honey, as I may say, in the offering he is making. He confers not with flesh and blood, nor does he look at the waters swelling. His faith is in victory.

And the weaker vessel is strengthened through him. Esther decides on going in to the king. If she perish, she perishes; but she is emboldened to hazard all for her people. And yet, while she thus does not "faint" under the trial, neither will she "despise" it; for she will have Mordecai and her brethren wait in a humbled, dependent spirit, so that she may receive mercy, and her way to the king's presence be prospered. (Heb. xii. 5.)

Accordingly, at the end of the fast, which they agreed on for three days, she takes her life in her hand, and stands in the inner court of the king's house, while the king was sitting on his royal throne. But kings' hearts are in the hand of the Lord; and so it proves to be here. (Prov. xxi. 1.) Esther obtains favour in the sight of Ahasuerus, and he holds out the golden sceptre to her.

This was everything. This told of the issue of the whole matter. All hung upon the motion of the golden sceptre. It was the Spirit of God, the counsel and good pleasure, the sovereignty and grace of God, that ordered all this. The nation was already saved. The sceptre had decided every thing in the favour of the Jews, and to the confusion of their adversaries, be they as high and mighty, as many and as subtle, as they may. God had taken the matter into His own hand; and if

He be for us, who shall be against us? (Rom. viii. 31.) "Thou shalt be far from oppression," the Lord was now saying to His Israel, "for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come nigh thee. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." (Isa. liv. 14-17.)

Esther drew near, and touched the sceptre. She used the grace that had visited her; but used it reverently; and the sceptre was true to itself. It awakened no hope that it was not now ready to realize. It had already spoken peace to her; and peace, and far more than peace, shall be made good to her.

"What wilt thou, queen Esther?" says Ahasuerus to her; "and what is thy request? It shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom," (v. 3.)

Very blessed this is. The sceptre, again let me say, was true to itself. What a truth is conveyed in this! The promise of God, the work of the Lord Jesus, is as this sceptre. These have gone before, pledges under the hand and from the mouth of our God, and eternity shall be true to them; and endless ages of glory, witnessing salvation, shall make them good. Nothing is too great for the redeeming of such pledges as here; the half of the king's dominions are laid at the feet and disposal of Esther.

## The Writings of the Apostle John.

### III.

**I**N the Third Epistle we see the same spirit as in the former epistle: "The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I *love* in the *truth*." (v. 1.)

He desires that Gaius may prosper as well as be in health; for Gaius was distinguished, like some beloved ones now-a-days, in all offices of Christian hospitality, as we read of him in Romans xvi. John might then desire all health and prosperity to him; for his prosperity was thus the servant of the saints. (v. 2.) And he was now about to draw on this well-known grace of the beloved Gaius, in behalf of some who had gone forth to the service of the gospel in a very blessed, self-devoting spirit. And happy is it to get these notices of such sweet grace in the one, and such devoted zeal in the others, at a time when ecclesiastically things were bad.

And it must have been very sweet to John to be able to say, "I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth." (v. 3.) This kept John's heart so much at ease; this told him of his peculiar joy. The apostle Paul's joy, too, was in seeing the Church walking in order. That order might now be gone; but here John says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth."

We may be troubled at seeing the candlestick ruined; but there is a deeper joy, that of seeing the children "walking in the truth," and when brethren come, to get a good report of them. It is sad to one's soul to look abroad and see what

ought to have characterised the dispensation, and then the present fruitlessness.

But where does the Spirit lead us? To this un-failing joy, "to see the children walking in the truth."

Let us pray the Lord to give us more sympathy. We want to have the Spirit leading us to this.

It is only here that the word "church" occurs in the writings of the apostle John. And we find that he had honoured the church in the place that belonged to her, by commending Demetrius, and his companions in the ministry of the gospel, to the hospitality and fellowship of the church. But now he finds he can trust the church no longer, and he gets his relief in the personal, individual grace of this "beloved Gaius." He had honoured the church at a distance; but he was disappointed. "Diotrephes, who loved to have the pre-eminence," had got in, and John has to fall back upon that which can never fail, upon "truth and love" in the "beloved Gaius." (v. 9.)

As he leads us to "the elect lady" in the former epistle, so here he leads us to the "beloved Gaius"; and from that day forth the question has become one of individual, personal concern.

If the "candlestick" has failed, we are to cultivate "truth and love" in our own souls, and among brethren. Thus the Spirit of God now teaches us to find relief and rest. Amidst the wreck and ruin of every thing around, may He knit our souls together in "truth and love"; may He keep our souls in the doctrine of the Father and the Son. (2 John 3.)

Do we not thus happily see that, when the church failed, there was a turning to the individual grace and brotherly love that was still in

the saints? And as this is an irregular and disorderly state of ecclesiastical things, John shows that personal grace still survived, and was the relief, when the soul might thus be wearied by all things around.

These two epistles thus gently breathe one spirit. The "lady" was cautioned against receiving certain ones; "Gaius" was exhorted to receive certain others. Both, in their several grace, were used by the apostle or elder of JESUS. And both epistles, as I have already observed upon the second, close with the expression of a hope that these lovers of each other "in the truth" would soon see each other "face to face," till which time, much that might be added shall therefore be deferred.

And so with JESUS. All has not been told out. Having reached *John*, nothing is to be added with "pen and ink." The spirit of revelation, as it were, has ascended back to heaven. The volume of written inspiration is closed. The paper and the ink is filled up and exhausted. John was the last to use it. But, as we know, that which is now "seen through a glass darkly" shall be seen "face to face," that which is now in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall come. (1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.)

And may we, beloved, always be ready, ready in the spirit of our minds to meet Him, longing with the desire of our hearts to see Him "face to face." Then shall we learn many further precious unfoldings of His heart, and "our joy shall be full."

And till then may we ever come together as "elect ladies," and as "beloved Gaiuses," each heart full, and kindling the love one in another.



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# WORDS OF TRUTH

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

Confidence, Inspired, Maintained, and Rewarded.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews trains the soul
for confidence in God through Christ.

It tells us, at the very outset, that the
One who is now seated at the right hand of the
Heavenly Majesty went there as having purged
our sins (i. 3); and I ask, May not that inspire
confidence?

It tells us also that it "became" God, that it
was for the divine glory, to give us a "perfect"
Saviour (ii. 10); and again I ask, Does not that
give confidence?

It teaches us that Christ was "faithful" as a
Son over His house (iii. 1.) It teaches us that
He did "perfect" Himself as the Author of salva-
tion to us sinners; and that, according to this,
God has put Him into such a priesthood as enables

Him and entitles Him to confer righteousness and peace on us with all royal authority, and to save us to the uttermost. (v. 9, vii.) Surely I may again ask, Is not all this fitted to inspire the believing soul with confidence?

But still further. God is so satisfied with Christ's perfection for us, that He has seated Him with an oath in a sanctuary pitched by Himself, and in the highest place of dignity in the heavens. (viii. 1, 2.) And this assuredly is of the same character, inspiring confidence.

Then, too, the Holy Ghost witnesses, in the language of the New Covenant, the same perfection in Christ to remit our sins. (x. 15.) And of this I say, as of the rest, What thorough, what entire confidence may all this secure to our souls!

This perfection in Christ for us being proved, we are challenged to honour it; and this honour is to be rendered in several ways. (x. 22-25.)

1. We must draw near with full assurance of faith, and with a purged conscience; in other words, with a heart true to Christ's perfection or sufficiency for us as sinners (v. 22.)

2. We must be exercised in hope (v. 23.) (For "faith" in this verse read "hope.")

3. We must exhort each other to the fruits of faith, in love and service, assembling ourselves together (in the hope of a coming day of glory) for the common edification (vv. 24, 25.)

By each of these things the perfection of our salvation in Christ is *honoured*. Because each of these things (this boldness of faith, this exercise of hope, this cultivation of fruit in love, or character of assembling together), implies or assures that a sacrifice for the purging of sins has been accomplished. None of these things would be

enjoined upon us if the peace of the soul or the cleansing of the conscience had not been provided for and secured. (i. 3, vi. 19, ix. 14.)

This is all blessed truth, for may I not say this? If the perfection of Christ's work for us sinners be honoured in the sanctuary in heaven (as it is by His being seated in the highest place of dignity there), surely it is but little to say that the same work ought to be honoured in the assembly of the saints on earth. If the Lord, Christ Himself, honours that perfection of His own work for us sinners, as He does by thinking not of it, but of that fruit in victory and glory which depends upon it (x. 13), surely it is but little to say that we in our hearts ought to honour it.

This confidence being established in our souls on this perfection in Christ for us, the apostle goes on to warn us to *hold* it fast, because it has "great recompence of reward," or *great power attending it*. (x. 35.)

Different Characters of Peace.

1. "PEACE *with* God" is that which the sinner possesses and enjoys in believing. (Rom. v. 1.) He is justified by God on the ground of the blood-shedding of Christ. Faith lays hold of and believes in an already completed work, which has answered for the believing sinner, and has satisfied the claims of God; and thus he has peace—cloudless, never-ending, unalterable peace, a peace which does not depend upon the enjoyment of its possessor; but upon the work of Christ, who made peace by the blood of His cross. (Col. i. 20.)

A "God of judgment" (Isa. xxx. 18; Mal. ii. 17) went into the entire question of sin to its very depths, with Christ on the cross. A "God of peace" it was who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. (Heb. xiii. 20.) A risen Christ is our peace in the presence of God. (Eph. ii. 14.)

All this is true for the believer, without his feelings or his enjoyment of it entering into the matter at all. Apart from all these things, he possesses this unalterable "peace with God." It depends, not on his enjoyment of it, but on its reality before God. It was the parting gift of Christ to His people. "Peace I leave with you." "Peace be unto you." (John xiv. 27; xx. 19.) He had made peace by His blood. The "God of peace" had brought Him again from the dead, and He had nothing but peace to leave them.

2. "The peace of God" means something which God Himself dwells in. It is God's own peace, in which He dwells; the peace of that God whom nothing can change, who knows the end from the beginning, and Who has ordained everything from the beginning to the end. Though man may strive to hinder His purposes for a while, they will all eventually be brought to pass. Can we not for a moment contemplate the perfect, unruffled, conscious peace in which God dwells? And yet this peace is promised; that it shall keep the believer's heart and mind who has committed *all* his anxieties, *all* his cares, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to God. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. iv.

6.) And what is promised? “And *the peace of God*, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” God’s own peace, in which He dwells, keeps guard over the heart, and the heart rests in the midst of every trial and every difficulty; and the mind is not on the rack of anxiety, but is filled with God’s peace, when all has been laid out before Him, and committed to Him.

3. “The peace of Christ” is another thing. (Col. iii. 15, read “Christ.”) To be sure, Christ is God, but still God’s peace and Christ’s peace are not the same. Hence the difference in John xiv. 27 between “Peace I leave with you,” and “My peace I give unto you.” Christ did not need peace WITH God, as we do as sinners. He “knew no sin.” (2 Cor. v. 21.) He gives us this peace through His precious blood. This He did not need for Himself. The spotless Lamb of God “did no sin.” (1 Pet. ii. 22.) Was “separate from sinners” while amongst them. “In Him is no sin.” (Heb. vii. 26; 1 John iii. 5.) We receive the changeless portion of “peace with God” through His precious blood. But as a Son with His Father, He passed through the world in the conscious communion of perfect peace (“My peace”) in every step of His way. His was a life of sorrow here below, but during His whole pathway there never was a cloud between Him and His Father. It was a life of perfect unity of thought and object, as He lived by His Father. “I live by the Father.” (John vi. 57.) There indeed was one solemn moment when the three hours’ darkness and sin-bearing and judgment on the cross shut this out, when He was atoning for our sins. It was but for that moment,

for all the rest was unvarying peace, "My peace." This, then, is the peace of Christ.

The first (peace with God) is the portion of the sinner who believes; his unalterable portion.

The second (God's peace), that which the Christian has when he has unburdened his heart of every care, and committed every thought to Him who knows the end from the beginning.

The third (Christ's peace), is what we enjoy when living by Him, even as He enjoyed when living by the Father. "I live *by the Father*; so he that eateth me, even he shall live *by me*." (John vi. 57.) It is known by communion with Him, and with the Father, who has been revealed in the Son. And more; when we are thus enjoying Christ's peace, we have the *enjoyment*, too, of that "peace *with* God," which, as saved sinners, we *possess* through His work on the cross.

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xv. 13.)

The Book of Esther.

II.

BUT her dealing with the opportunity thus put into her possession is one of the most excellent and wondrous fruits of the light and energy of the Spirit that we see in the midst of the many wonders of this book in all this workmanship of God's great hand.

Instead of asking for the half of the kingdom, instead of desiring at once the head of the great Amalekite, she requests that the king and Haman

may come to a banquet of wine which she had prepared for them.

Strange, indeed ! Who could have counted on such an acceptance of such an unlimited pledge and promise ? It brings to mind the answer of the divine Master, of Him who is "the wisdom of God," to the Samaritan woman. She asked for the "living water," and He told her to go and call her husband ! (John iv. 15, 16.) Strange, it would appear, beyond all explanation. But, as we know, it was a ray of the purest light breaking forth from the Fountain of Light.

And so here. This answer of Esther was strange indeed. But it will be found to have been nothing less than the witness of the perfect wisdom of the Spirit that was now illuminating and leading her. It was the way of conducting the great adversary onward to the full ripening of his apostasy, to his attaining that mighty elevation in pride and self-satisfaction from which the hand of God had prepared from the beginning to cast him down. Esther, under the Spirit, was dealing with Haman, as the hand of God had once dealt with Pharaoh in Egypt. (Exod. ix. 15.) The vessel of wrath had again fitted itself for judgment ; and God was again about to make His power known upon it. Haman was the Pharaoh of this day, "the man of the earth" now, "king of all the children of pride" (Job xli. 34) ; and he must fall from a pinnacle up to which his own lusts and the god of this world are urging his steps. Esther is the instrument in God's hand for giving him occasion thus to fill out the full form of his apostasy. Esther shows herself wonderfully in the secret of all this. She bids Haman and the king, the second day, as well as the first ; only these two together ;

and when this was done, the giddy height was reached from which the apostate is destined to fall.

He cannot stand all this. It is too much for him. His heart is overcharged; gratified pride has satiated it. He cannot contain himself; but *corruption* drives him in the way of *nature*; a sad verdict against nature. But so it is. It was natural that he should expose all his glories to his wife and his friends. Flesh and blood can appreciate it; and pride must have as many courtiers and votaries as it can. And it must have its victims likewise. Mordecai still refuses to bow; and a gallows, fifty cubits high, is raised that he may be hanged thereon.

vi., vii. Every secret thing must reach its day of manifestation. The word which Mordecai told the king about Teresh and Bigthana, the chamberlains, though hitherto forgotten or neglected, must now be remembered. The tears and the kisses, and the spikenard of the loving sinner in Luke vii., and the corresponding slights of the Pharisee, are passed in silence *for a moment*; but they are all brought to light before the scene closes. For there is nothing hid that shall not come abroad. (Mark iv, 22.) God lets nothing pass. Mordecai's act shall not always be forgotten. It shall be recognized, and that too in the very face of his great adversary; as the loving sinner's acts were all rehearsed in the hearing of her accuser. (Luke vii. 36-50.)

The night after Queen Esther's first banquet was a sleepless one to Ahasuerus. For, as God gives His beloved sleep, so does He at times hold

the eyes waking to them, by thoughts of the head upon the bed. By sending instruction through meditations in the night-season, He deals with the hearts of the children of men. (Ps. cxxvii. 2; Job xxxiii. 14-17.) So here with the Persian. The sleepless king calls for the records of the kingdom, the depository of the act of Mordecai, and there reads about that act which had happened some years before. And as it is true of man, that all that he has he will give for his life, so now the king, on the sudden, unexpected discovery of the act of Mordecai, by which his life had been preserved, deems nothing too high or honourable to be done for him.

Here, however, we may pause for a moment, and consider the wonderful interweaving of circumstances which we get in this history. There is plot and underplot, wheel within wheel, as the expression is, circumstance hanging upon circumstance; and each and all formed together to work out the wonderful works of God.

There is in this story the marvellous re-appearance of both the *Jew* and the *Amalekite*. Strange phenomena indeed! Who would have thought it, as I have said before? The Jew and the Amalekite reproduced in the distant realms of Persia, and in divers places of favour and authority round the throne there! Then there is Vashti's temper and Esther's beauty meeting at the same moment. There is the fact of Mordecai being the one to overhear the plot against the life of the king. There is the lot deciding on a day for the slaughter of Israel, eleven months distant, so that there may be time for counsels to ripen, and changes to take place. There is the heart of the king moved to hold out the golden sceptre to Esther. And now

we see the king's sleeplessness, and his thoughts guided to the records of the chronicles. And now, again, we see Haman entering the court of the palace at this peculiar juncture.

• What threading together of warp and woof in all this! What intertwining of circumstances, and the production of a curious texture of many colours! And yet, as we have seen and said already, God all the while unseen, unnamed!

Very blessed! Pleased with the work of His own hand, and in the counsels of His own mind, the Lord can be hid for a time, unpublished, uncelebrated. And we are called, in our way, to that which is like this. We are to prove our own work, to have rejoicing in ourselves alone, and not in another, without uttering our secrets, or gathering the regards of our fellows. And truly great this is, to work unseen, to serve unnoticed. Deep counsels of this wisdom which knows the end from the beginning, and wondrous working of that hand which can turn even the hearts of kings as it pleases.

Haman falls. What a day may bring forth, we commonly say, who can tell? (Prov. xxvii. 1). We see it to be so in his history. Zeresh and his friends have to receive, before the second day's banquet begins, a different Haman from him whom they had greeted after the close of the first. Haman falls, and falls indeed.

But over this we must tarry for a little, that we may take knowledge of the character of this great fact, so important is it in setting forth the judgment of God.

1. Haman's greatness was allowed so to flourish and ripen, that he might fall in the hour of highest pride and daring.

This is very instructive, for this has been God's way, and is so still. The builders of the Tower of Babel were allowed to go on with their work till they made it a wonder. Nebuchadnezzar was given time to finish his great city. The Beast of the Book of Revelation will prosper till the whole world wonder after him. (Rev. xiii. 3). So here, Haman is borne with till he sits on the pinnacle. Then, in the moment of proudest elevation, the judgment of God visits all these. Herod, as another such, was smitten of God, and died, as the people were listening to him, and saying, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." (Acts xii. 22; Ps. xxxvii. 35, 36.)

2. He is caught in his own trap. The honour is given to Mordecai which he had prepared for himself; and the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai, he hangs thereon himself.

This still instructs us; for this has been God's way and will be so still. Daniel's accusers are cast into the den which they had prepared for him; and the flame of the fire slew those men who took up the children of the captivity to cast them into the furnace. And so is it foretold of the adversaries and apostates of the last days in this world's history. "Their own iniquity shall be brought upon them." (Ps. vii., ix., x., xxxv., lvii., cxli., etc.) Satan himself, who has the power of death, is destroyed through death. (Heb. ii. 14.)

3. He falls suddenly.

So with the last great enemy. The judgment of God is to be like a thief in the night, like the lightning that cometh out of the east and shineth to the west. "In one hour," it is said of the Apocalyptic Babylon, "is she made desolate." (Rev. xviii. 19.) The judgments on the world be-

fore the Flood, and on the cities of the plain, were such also; "like figures," with this fall of the Agagite, of a judgment still to be executed.

4. He falls completely, utterly destroyed.

So with the great enemy, and the course of this present world with him.

The children of Judas cut off (Ps. cix.), the little ones of Edom dashed against the stones (Ps. cxxxvii.), Haman's sons, all hanged after himself, these illustrate for our learning the utter downfall and annihilation of all that now offends; the clearing out of all by the besom of divine judgment. The "millstone" of Rev. xviii. tells us this, and prophecy upon prophecy has long ago announced it.

Full of typical significancy, in all the features that signalize it, is this fall of the great Amalekite. For we live in such an hour of the world's history as renders it specially significant and instructive to us. We are day by day seeing the Lord allowing the purposes of the world to ripen themselves, gradually to unfold their marvellous and varied attractions, and its whole system to make progress, till it again, like the Tower of Babel of old, draw down the penal visitation of heaven; and that, too, in a moment, suddenly, to do its work of judgment completely, when (blessed to tell it!) not a trace of man's world shall remain, his pride and wantonness, with all their fruit, shall be withered and gone, and such a world as is fit for the presence of the Lord of Glory shall shine in unprecedented splendour.

viii.-x. We close this Book with the deliverance of the Jews in the very moment when destruction was awaiting them, and with their exaltation in the kingdom, and the celebration of their joy.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

77

Mysterious workmanship of the hand of God ! The Amalekite, the great adversary, cast down in the moment of his proudest elevation, and utterly cut off ; the Jew, his purposed and expected victim, when there was but a step between him and death, delivered, then favoured and honoured, and seated next to the throne in rank and authority !

What a marvellous history ! True in every circumstance of it ; typical in every circumstance of it also ; significant of those last days in the history of the Jew and of the earth, of which prophets have spoken again and again, the downfall of the man of the earth, and the exaltation of God's people in His own kingdom ! (Matt. xiii. 41-43.)

Mordecai, instead of any longer being at the king's gate, now comes before the king, and takes his ring, the seal of office and of authority, from his finger. Thus is the Jew translated at the end. All Scripture prepares us for this ; and here it is illustrated. Here the historic Scriptures of the Old Testament end, and here, as in a type, the history of the earth ends. (1 Cor. xv. 24-28.)

I may say that the leading, principal characteristics in the story of Israel are these, as we read it in the prophets :—

1. The present casting off of that nation, and the hiding of the divine countenance from them ; and yet their providential preservation in the midst of the Gentiles.

2. The present election of a *remnant* among them, and that repentance at the last, which leads them, *nationally*, to the kingdom.

3. The judgment of their adversaries and oppressors, with the especial downfall of their great *infidel enemy*.

4. Their deliverance, exaltation; and blessing in kingdom-days, with their headship of the nations.

These are among the great things of the prophets; and these things are found in this little Book of Esther. So that again I may say, This last Old Testament historic notice of the people of Israel pledges and typifies their present preservation all through this age of Gentile supremacy, and their glory in the last days, when the judgment of their enemies shall be accomplished.

Certain detached features of the coming millennial kingdom are likewise exhibited here. The fear of the Jews falls on their enemies, on those that were round about them; and they are restrained from all attempts to do them harm. Such had been seen in the palmy days of the nation, and such is promised by the prophets to be their portion again. Shushan, the capital of the Gentile world in that day, rejoices in the exaltation of the Jew; as all Scripture tells us the whole world will rejoice under the shadow of the throne of Israel in the time of the coming kingdom. Many of the people of the land became Jews; as we read the like thing in the prophets again and again; as, for instance, "Many people shall go, and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isa. ii. 3.) The throne that had exalted the Jew, and put down his oppressor, exercises universal dominion, laying a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea; as we know that by and by the king in Zion "shall have dominion from sea

to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." (Ps. lxxii. 8.)

And here let me add that Ahasuerus represents *power*, royal authority in the earth. He then filled the throne that was 'supreme among the nations. He was "the power," and represents, mystically or in a shadow, the power that will be in a divine head in the day of the kingdom. It is so, I grant, that power in the hand of this Persian is first exercised in evil; serving, as he did, the wicked designs of Haman, though now he is exalting the righteous. Still, he represents *power*, royal authority in the earth. Just like Solomon in Jerusalem, he did evil personally. He may have repented; but still his personal ways were evil as well as good. Nevertheless, in a general typical way, he represented power, and was the shadow of Christ on the throne of glory, that throne that is to rule the world in righteousness.

Full of mysterious beauty and meaning all this is. Those days of Ahasuerus and of Mordecai were days of Solomon and of prophecy, coming millennial days, days of the kingdom of God in the earth, and among the nations. They were as the days of Joseph in Egypt. Mordecai in Persia was as Joseph in Egypt; the first historic book and the last, in the Old Testament, giving us these varied but kindred notices of the kingdom that will come in upon the close and judgment of the kingdoms of the Gentiles.

The days of Purim celebrate all this. They constitute the triumph after the victory, the *joy* of the kingdom upon the *establishment* of the kingdom. The Jews took on them, according to the word of Mordecai and Esther, to make the

fourteenth and the fifteenth days of the twelfth month, the month Adar, days of feasting and joy, because therein they rested from their enemies, and their mourning was turned to gladness and light and honour. They were a kind of Passover, celebrating deliverance from the land of Persia, as that feast did from the land of Egypt; or, if we would rather have it so, Purim was another song on the Red Sea, or another song of Deborah and Barak on the fall of the Canaanite. And it rehearses the song yet to be sung on the sea of glass in Revelation xv.; or again I say, if we would rather have it so, the joy of Israel in coming kingdom-days, when they shall draw water out of the wells of salvation. (Isa. xii.) Indeed Psalms cxxiv. and cxxxvi., prepared as they are for future days of Israel's glory and joy, breathe the very spirit that must have animated Israel in the day of Mordecai and Esther.

It is beautiful to trace all this, to see these rehearsals again and again, as we go on the way, waiting for the full chorus of eternal harmonies in the presence of glory by and by. The infant church in Acts iv., in this spirit, breathes and utters the second Psalm, prepared, as that Psalm is, for the day when God's King sits upon the hill of Zion, after the enemy has perished, and the kings of the earth have learned to bow before Him. The blessed God is pleased with His own works: "For Thy pleasure they are and were created." (Rev. iv. 11.) He therefore preserves the works of His hands as their Creator.

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WORDS OF TRUTH

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

## Fellowship with the Lord.

**W**E ought ever to remember that communion with the Lord is at once our joy and our security, the life of all service, and the power of all knowledge.

Whatever knowledge we have that does not connect us in spirit with the Lord is a vanity of the mind, even though it may even have the *form* of the truth, and be fully *orthodox*, as it is termed.

How often do we gather sorrow and shame in the end of our doings and ways, when we might have reaped joy and assurance, because we did not walk in the Spirit, or in fellowship with the Lord, through the circumstances, as we should have done!

This is frequently illustrated in Scripture. As, for instance, in the striking and varied histories of Lot and Abraham. The former walked in the light of his own eyes, and he reaped shame and

loss and sore disappointment. The latter walked by faith, and was brought to power and high estate, and great *favour* with God. And yet they were both in the main righteous.

I have been just meditating on a scene in the Gospel of Mark which illustrates this. (vi. 30.)

You will observe on the return of the disciples to their Master, wearied and somewhat faint in their labour, He in tender consideration for them draws them aside to take rest and refreshment. In this He acted in the Spirit, as ever entering into their necessities. You can find Him moved with pity towards the scattered and unpitied flock of Israel; and, again regardless of Himself, He turns to minister to them, and began to teach them many things. Here also He was not pleasing Himself but others, to their good to edification. (Rom. xv. 2.)

But here we find the disciples ceasing to sympathize with their Master. His heart was set on the urgent necessities of their spiritual wants, and He began to teach them. But towards evening the disciples seem to interrupt His work, and present to His attention their temporal wants, and would fain have them dismissed, that they might go into the villages and buy themselves victuals.

Now in this they were not walking in the Spirit; they were not of one mind in the circumstances with Him. However, He does not rebuke them *there*; the rebuke was to come afterwards, as we shall see in the fruit of their ways. He, still as the minister of the need of poor necessitous man, sets Himself to meet the occasion, and He supplies the multitude with bread. When He had thus done, He sends His disciples off in the ship, while He remains behind with the people.

Now I believe that He resumes His teaching of them, for by the words, "He sent away the people," I understand that He dismissed them in a solemn manner, giving them godly admonition, and testifying further of the Father to them. But you observe the disciples forfeited all title to take part with Him in this service, and therefore He previously constrained them to go away in the ship. They had forfeited this honour, inasmuch as they had not been one with Him in His compassion for the multitude, as I before observed; for you know we cannot suitably *instruct* others, or take part in ministering to their souls, till we feel for them.

We then find Jesus, having sent the multitude away, in the mountain, at prayer. There you see Him still in spirit, fervently labouring in secret with God, walking in the light in full fellowship with the Father.

The disciples meanwhile began to gather the bitter fruit of departing in spirit from the Lord. While He was in prayer, they were toiling in rowing against contrary winds. He, in the fullness of power, and as the Lord who is mightier than the noise of many waters, who spreads out the heavens and walks upon the waves of the sea, having finished His course of ministry, and come down from the mountain, that had witnessed the fervency of His spirit, gathers glory, the reward of His ways; He appeared treading on all that was the occasion of His people's travail and trial, and they were amazed and confounded in the presence of His glory.

They did not understand it. They cried out, and were troubled, and all this because the heart was hardened. Had their hearts been tender, had

they continued in full sympathy and communion with their Lord through the previous circumstances they would now have stood in the presence of His glorious power, not abashed and confounded but in assurance and joy. And so with us.

Let us now, in this time of His absence, seek communion in spirit with Him, and then when He appears we shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

I do not speak of loss of the *glory*, as in this scene you find the disciples *with* their Lord safe over the storm and *together* on the other side of the lake. His blessed grace and power reserve the glory for us; but I speak of the presence of that glory not putting us to *shame*, as it surely must if we now walk in fellowship *with that which is not of its own character*.

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## The Book of Esther.

### III.

**G**OD is pleased with the counsels of His grace and wisdom. He has therefore preserved to this day the nation or people of the Jews, and will preserve them till the fruit of His counsel displays itself in His Kingdom. And His kingdom thus will rise on the ruins and judgment of the nations; and Christ's world, "the world to come" (Heb. ii. 5, vi. 5), shine in brightness and purity and blessing, after the folding up and passing away of "this present evil world." (Gal. i. 4.)

This coming kingdom, this millennial world, is spoken of in all forms of speech by the prophets;

but it has also been set forth in all forms of samples, and parcels, and specimens of it, in broken pieces of history from the beginning; as here we have seen it showing itself at the end of the Book of Esther. Ordinances, prophecies, and histories, in their several ways, have been doing this service.

Before the antediluvian saints pass away, the spirit of prophecy speaks through Lamech, and addresses, as to them, a word of promise touching the earth; that therein, in due season, there should be *comfort* instead of *curse*. (Gen. v.)

In Noah, as in the new world, we see an *illustration* of this prophecy of Lamech's; for after the judgment of the Deluge, the earth rises again as in new or resurrection-form; and a pledge, a foreshadowing, of millennial days, is before us. (Gen. viii.)

The land of Egypt, under the government of Joseph, is a "like figure." Under the law, we have a shadow of the same millennial rest in the weekly Sabbath, in the annual Feast of Tabernacles, in the Jubilee every fiftieth year (Lev. xxiii., xxv.)

For a moment, in the day of Joshua, when the Tribes of Israel had entered the land, kept the Passover as a circumcised people, and then ate unleavened cakes of the corn of the land, we see, in another form, the same happy mystery witnessed to us. (Josh. v.)

After this, the palmy reign of Solomon in a more extended form, in a full and rich manner, tells us the like secret. (2 Chron. ix.)

As indeed I might have noticed the meeting of Jethro with the ransomed Israel on the mount of God, in wilderness-days, was (though in a differ-

ent form) the foreshadowing of the same coming day of glory. (Exod. xviii.)

And so now, in dispersion-days, as I may speak, we have the same; as we see at the close of this Book of Esther.

Prophecies upon prophecies accompany these ordinances and these histories; so that in the mouth not only of many, but of various witnesses, the kingdom that is still to be set up, and the glory that is still to be revealed, are verified to us. (Rev. xx. 6.) These are rehearsals of the great, the magnificent, issue of the counsels of God, of that purpose which shall be manifested in "the dispensation of the fulness of times." (Eph. i. 10.)

The New Testament gives us like illustrations and promises. The Transfiguration tells us of it. The Regeneration or *Palingenesia* tells us of it. (Matt. xix. 28.) The action in the Apocalypse first makes way for it; and then, at the end, it shines in our sight, when the holy city descends from heaven bearing the glory of God with it, and when the nations walk in the light of it. (Rev. xxi. 24.)

Thus the close of the Book of Esther finds itself in company with things from the very beginning to the very end, and all through the volume, all through the actings and sayings of God in the progress of this world's history. It is wonderful. What a witness to the divine inspiration of the writings that are to be found in Scripture! What a proof of the breathing of the same Spirit in all the parts of it! How it tells us, that "known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world"! (Acts xv. 18.)

We, too, fill our own place, and occupy our own moment, in this great plan.

## **Christ Gone and the Comforter Come.**

### **NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.**

READ JOHN xvi.

**T**HE Gospel of John brings out specially that which refers to the person of Christ in contrast to all that is Jewish.

At the beginning of it we see Him presenting Himself in divine right and power to "His own," while "His own received Him not"; and towards the close we see Him leaving those who had thus rejected Him, and the Comforter coming to take His place, to take of the things of Christ, and testify of Him to the world, and to be the guide and support of those whom He was leaving behind (i. 11, xiv. 16.)

In this sixteenth chapter we see the twofold character of the work of the Holy Ghost: (1) His way with the world, and (2) His way towards the saints.

The first thing the Lord shows the disciples here is that they are to have the same position as their Master: opposition and rejection. The opposition of the world often comes from entire blindness. "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." (v. 2.) Such is the blinding power of unbelief! It was so with Saul. He thought he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." (Acts xxvi. 9.)

Man walks in darkness, because he is darkness, his conscience is darkness, and in consequence of false instruction his mind is blinded too. What a man does conscientiously, he always does with earnestness, though he may be acting wrongly

with a blinded conscience. A person may be very conscientious in resisting the truth. What is called conscientious acting is often nothing in the sight of God but the conduct of one who is thoroughly blinded by Satan.

“ These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.” (v. 3.) God had given them every evidence of who Christ was, but, in spite of all that God could give, they rejected Him. “ This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness. . . ” (iii. 19.)

All ignorance is the fruit of sin ; but here it is wilful blindness. They “ loved darkness rather than light.” Notice here the sin of rejecting light. No general acceptance of truth will do, if it does not enter the soul as of God. The way in which God was proving men now was whether they would own His Son. He presents Jesus as an object, in order to put men’s hearts to the test ; and, if Christ is not received, all general acknowledgment of other truth goes for nothing.

There is such a thing as a man screening himself from the charge of rejecting truth by just taking a little, as much as will satisfy his conscience ; but the great test to the heart is whether he receives that special testimony which is not accredited in the world. If Christ, the Son of God, is rejected, this is everything for condemnation in the sight of God.

By rejecting Christ, men proved they did not know the Father. If Christ had come saying that God was not Jehovah, they would have been right in not receiving Him ; but He always identifies Himself with the Father, and so men were proved the very enemies of both.



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“And these things will they do unto you.” Very often, when we have received truth from God, we must be content without being able to satisfy others that it is truth. And if others cannot understand, so neither can we explain. We must go on patiently, though we have to act in a way unintelligible to many. We must expect to be despised. The Lord set His face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem; and it was the very thing that brought out man’s opposition. (Luke ix. 51.) The path of faith can never be understood [by the natural man] though communications of truth may be.

“None of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?” (v. 5.) We are constantly acting in unbelief in this way. The Lord often tries our hearts. The disciples were thus tried in the prospect of the Lord’s being taken from them. What comfort they had had in His blessed presence! And now sorrow filled their hearts. (v. 6.)

The sorrow was legitimate, but they were filled with themselves, their own grief, instead of seeing how God was working, and what were His purposes. The real truth was that the Son was going back to the Father. We may lose God’s purpose of blessing to our own souls, by not seeing His mind in that which grieves us. The disciples were shut up in their own sorrows and thoughts, instead of inquiring where the Lord was going. But He would comfort them, in spite of this weakness of faith, and gives them the promise of the Comforter. (v. 7.)

What a wonderful blessing the presence of the Holy Spirit must be, when it needed that the Lord Jesus Christ should go away in order that He might come! It is well for us to ask ourselves

whether we do really believe in the personal presence of the Holy Spirit down here. A soul might say, "Ah, if I had the Lord here to direct me, how well should I do and bear!" But if we know redemption-deliverance through the death and resurrection of Christ, we have Him still with us, and in the best and nearest way. For the Holy Spirit dwells in us to unfold Him to our souls, to teach us the glory of Him who has loved us, and shed His blood for us; who has all power; Head over the Jews; Head of the Gentiles; Lord over everything.

Nor is it only the glory of His person, but our union we learn. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. (John xiv. 20.) We have the Holy Spirit, too, as the guide; and the Lord would have us guided not ignorantly but in intelligence. The presence of the Holy Spirit pre-supposes judgment having passed upon the flesh, which naturally resists guidance, and the flesh must not be allowed place in the Christian, if he would be guided of the Spirit.

In chapter xiv. 26 Christ says, "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name"; but in chapter xvi. 7 the Lords speaks of sending Him by virtue of His own personal title. Going up to glory as Son of man and as Son of God, He, in virtue of His own official glory, sends the Comforter.

Then we see the work of the Holy Spirit. The world He will convince of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. His office again is to guide the saints into all truth. (*vv.* 8-15.)

"He will convince the world of sin, . . . because they believe not on me." (*v.* 8.) It is not here as

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Messiah to the Jews that the Lord speaks of Himself, but as the Son of God to the world, as such. It was "sin" not to know the Father nor Him. The charge here is not that of having killed the prophets or broken the law; but "they believe not on me."

God had sent His Son into the world, and He had been cast out. (He says this in view of its accomplishment.) The very presence of the Holy Spirit stamps the world with this sin. He could not be sent here unless Jesus had been rejected, unless God's own Son had been cast out. He had *wrought* always: this is His *personal* mission and presence on earth.

God said, "I will send My beloved Son; it may be they will reverence Him." (Luke xx. 13.) It was His last trial of a world lying in the wicked one, full of all kinds of corruption. (1 John v. 19.) He was reconciling the world unto Himself, and saying, as it were, Receive my Son, and I will not impute your sin. (2 Cor. v. 19.) But they cast Him out, and slew Him, and thus proved that wilful sin was in man. There was the perfect light of God in love and grace, in the person of His Son, coming down to earth, and men loved darkness better. This was their condemnation. It is not God coming in the terrors of the law to frighten men, but in grace to attract; and they will not have Him. There is no reason why the Son of God was rejected, but the utter wickedness of man's heart. (John xv. 24.)

It is a moral thing, this unbelief. It is a demonstration of what the heart is by nature. The Lord cannot now with wicked hands be crucified and slain; but the moral guilt is just the same; for the natural man will not receive Christ; he does not

want Him. To those who do receive Him, God says, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Heb. x. 17.) But of the world it is said, "The world seeth me [Christ] no more." (John xiv. 19.)

This rejection of Christ is the one great sin that the Holy Ghost deals with the world about. Why do people prefer vanity, everything, anything, to God's Son? Because they are perfectly opposite to God, and that is sin. It is the plant and pith and sap of that which is in my heart by nature. And if the world is convinced of sin, there is an end of righteousness. The only righteous One who ever came into it was rejected, and allowed to suffer before God. On the cross God leaves the righteous One to be utterly rejected.

But righteousness came in by this way; and it was proved when He, who had been obedient unto death, went back to the Father.

What an answer to all that He had done was there in this acceptance! He had accomplished all that gave Him a title to be at the right hand of God; He had proved Himself fit for God's throne.

When the Holy Ghost thus convinces the world of righteousness, it is not a testimony of man's fall from God, or of man's corruption, or of man's failure under law, but of man's rejection of the One who is accepted at the right hand of God. It is His righteousness and God's righteousness thus vindicated.

"The world seeth me no more." All was ended as regards the world. When God's Son was rejected, there was to be no more connection with the world, as the world, till the vindication of His

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title in judgment. "Now is the judgment of this world." (John xii. 31.)

Then I come to see that I, in heart, have thus rejected Christ. I saw no beauty in Him; not one affection was set upon Him. (Isa. liii. 2.) Education may have led me to own Him after a certain way, and there is mercy in that; for knowledge of scriptural truth may be used by God; just as when a fire is laid, you have only to put the light to kindle it. But we have all been either despising Him, or in active will rejecting Him. (Rom. v. 10; Eph. ii. 1-3.)

The world is given up to judgment, while God is still dealing with it in blessed patient grace. We see no sign of judgment yet, though the saints may be rejected now as Christ was. But it is our place to walk as "strangers and pilgrims" here below. (Heb. xi. 13; I Pet. ii. 11.) All that is of the world, and the prince of this world, is judged by the presence of the Holy Ghost.

Let me fix your attention on the perfect, divine righteousness accomplished by Christ. What the Holy Ghost tells our souls is this, that it is such a righteousness as is fit for God's own throne. There is where I rest as my title to glory. Fruits will follow, of course; but my title to heaven is in the divine righteousness of Him who is there for me.

"He will guide you into all truth." (v. 13.) This has nothing to do with the world, *as* the world; but as when the Lord said, "All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." (John xv. 15.) "All truth" is the whole truth of the glory and person of the Lord Jesus Christ; all ours. We know but little of it, it is true; but the Holy Ghost is down here

to unfold it to us. He brings down to us the things from heaven, the glories of the Father and the Son, fellowship with the Father and the Son. All the counsels of God in Christ are ours, in the power of the Holy Ghost.

What a wondrous field of spiritual thought is this new world to which we are introduced! It is filled by Christ for our own use. Our portion is to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is not speaking to us of miracles, but taking the heart of the saint into all that God has to say about His Son. What a blessed place the saints are in; the Holy Ghost to reveal to them all that God delights in as regards the Lord Jesus, His person, His work; all that the Father has given Him; all His coming glory!

We may not say, "These things are too high for me." The question is, not that we have not been far from Him, but if He is near to us. Suppose my father is the great judge of the country, I ought to be outside the arm of the law, but I am interested because it is my father's work. How the little words "my"—"our"—come home to the heart! And all things are ours. (I Cor. iii. 21-23.)

While the Holy Ghost shows us all the fulness of the Father's house in the glory of Jesus, our hearts are attracted by Christ Himself. When He gives the capacity to understand the glory, He says, I have given it all to you; you shall share it with me. And, beloved friends, we shall see Him again in all His glory.

The secret of our joy now is, that He gets Himself His right place in our hearts. (Eph. iii. 17.) It is the perfection of His grace that He should draw them to Himself. There must be

this work in the heart, as well as the arrow in the conscience to show us what we are ; or else it will be as the morning cloud and the early dew. Remember too, we are not of this world. He has separated us to Himself, and we are to walk with Him as His people.

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## Indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

**W**HEN can anyone say, " I am not in the flesh " ? Answer : When he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. A man may be converted, and yet still be in the condition described in Romans vii. ; as, for example, the prodigal son before he met his father. ( Luke xv. ) He was converted, and in the right way ; yet he only wished to be a hired servant of his father. But as soon as he had met his father we hear nothing more of it, but only what his father was and what he did for him.

Deliverance comes through the personal knowledge of what the Father is, known in Jesus Christ, through the knowledge of redemption. And this is only found in a soul in which the Holy Spirit dwells. A converted man, as such, is only in the Christian standing when he has been anointed. ( 2 Cor. i. 21-22. )

The conscience and heart of the prodigal son were reached by grace, and rightly directed, when he was on the way to his father's house ; but he was not yet clad in the best robe, and did not yet know the Father's heart. But he entered into the Christian standing when he reached his father ; and from this moment we hear no more of him,

but only of his Father. Previously his condition was not fit for the house.

In Romans viii. 10 we see the other side of the Christian position. At the beginning of the chapter it says, "Which are *in Christ Jesus*"; and here, "*If Christ be in you.*" Thus, on the one hand, the Christian is in Christ; and on the other, Christ is in him.. (Col. i. 27.) We are *in Christ*, according to all His perfection before God; *Christ in us* is the ground and measure of our responsibility, while He is the source of our strength, and that according to what has been said in the beginning of the chapter.

A Christian is a man who is not only born again (which is absolutely necessary), but who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He directs the eye of the believer to the work of Christ, and teaches him to appreciate its worth, giving him the consciousness that he is in Christ, and Christ in him (John xiv.), and filling his heart with the hope of glory, with the certainty that he will be like Christ, and with Christ for ever and ever. A converted man is delivered when he knows that his sins are forgiven; when he can cry, "Abba, Father"; when he has the knowledge that for him there is no more condemnation; he is in liberty before God, and is freed from the law of sin and death. But he is not a perfect Christian until he comprehends by the Holy Spirit that he occupies the position of Christ; that God is His Father and God in the same manner as He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; until he understands that he has passed out of the standing of Adam into the standing of Christ, that he has died with Christ; and thus he lives no more, but Christ lives in him. (Gal. ii. 20.)



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# WORDS OF TRUTH

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

The Captives of Judah.

THE Books of Ezra and Nehemiah give us the story of the *returned* captives of Judah, and the Book of Esther the story of the *dispersed* captives; and we would now meditate on them together for a few moments.

They refer, as we see, to two distinct companies of captives, or two sections of the Jews. They illustrate different parts of the divine counsel and wisdom touching that people; and teach us lessons very important for our souls thoroughly to learn.

In each of these scenes, in the midst of each of these sections of the people of God, we have, so to speak, a separate platform erected for the exhibition of several or separate portions of God's ways and dealings with them.

1.—THE RETURNED CAPTIVES.

The returned captives are brought home, and left in the land, in order that they may be *tested*

again ; for to test His people, though in different ways, had been God's way from the beginning. Israel had already been tested by the gift of *power*. They had received a fat and good land, and been led on as from strength to strength, till they had flourished into a kingdom ; a kingdom which had drawn the eyes of the kings of the earth, and was the admiration of the world.

But they had been untrue to this stewardship. They had abused the power entrusted to them, and been rebellious against the supreme rights of Him who had thus set them up, and ordained them as chief and metropolitan in the earth. And accordingly, or consequently, power, supremacy in the earth, or principal authority among the nations, was taken from them, and given to the Gentiles.

Now, however, they are at home again. The captivity to which their unfaithfulness had led is over, and there is a section of the people at home in the land of their fathers again. For it is the divine purpose to test them by another test. God is about to send Messiah to them. His mission and ministry is to be in healing mercy, a proposal of the grace that brings salvation, that it may be known whether they have an answer to *the appeals of love*, since they have already proved that they had no fidelity to Him who had *entrusted them with power*.

This is what we read in the fact of Israel's (or Judah's) return from Babylon. They are Jews again in their own land. Accordingly, as soon as they get home again, they behave themselves as Jews. They keep the ordinances ; they raise the national altar ; they rebuild the Temple ; they keep themselves apart from the heathens ; they

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read the Scriptures; they observe the way of the God of Israel, as far as subjection to power in the hand of the Gentile will admit it. And the God of Israel owns them. He blesses them. He shelters them. He may exercise them in faith and patience, but still He is with them. As of old, He gives them leaders and deliverers and teachers; sends to them His prophets; and grants them days of revival, days of the new moon in the seventh month.

We know all this, indeed. This was, it is true, a kind of Reformation in their religious history. No idolatry is practised by them after this; but other corruptions rapidly set in, and worked; as not only the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah themselves show us, but more particularly the prophecy of Malachi. And the opening of the New Testament Scriptures confirms this; for the Gospel by Matthew lets us see clearly and fully, that the returned captives were deeply unbelieving; as untrue to the doctrines and proposals of goodness, as their fathers had been to the stewardship of power. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."* (John i. 11.)

This is so, indeed. And as, when they had been untrue to *power*, power was given over to the Gentiles, so now, since they are untrue to *grace*, grace is gone over to the whole world; for the gospel is preached, and "the salvation of God"

* Here let me suggest, what I believe to be so, but would not teach it with authority, that among the witnesses of goodness which God left among the returned captives, and which were so many harbingers or pledges of a Messiah coming in grace, the Pool of Bethesda takes its place. It was, indeed, an extraordinary witness of "God the Healer." (John v.)

is held up in the eyes of the ends of the earth. (Acts xxviii. 28.)

And strikingly consistent and beautiful this progress in the ways of divine wisdom, or of God's dispensations. All testing ends in failure, and God must act *for* us and not *with* us. This fresh trial, by the ministry of Messiah, only proves, as by the mouth of another witness, that man is incorrigible and incurable. Every effort to make something of him, or to do something with him, leads him out to another exposure of himself; till he is left-naked to his shame. The kingdom is not entered by a tested creature, even though grace test him. Judgment as of "reprobate silver" is the result of the process. "The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain." (Jer. vi. 29, 30.)

Yes, indeed, he must be *saved* by grace, and not merely *tested* by it. The first advent of Messiah, or the proposal of salvation, did not lead Israel into the kingdom; it has left them a judged people, scattered and peeled, unsaved and unblest, only condemned upon a fuller conviction than ever.

2.—THE DISPERSED CAPTIVES.

We turn, however, to another scene. We are to consider another section of the people, the dispersed, and not the returned; for in them is erected another platform, as I may still speak, for the illustration of God's way. We shall see them as the pledges and witnesses, not of a tested, but of a saved people, saved through sovereign grace, and led into the kingdom.

This people had not availed themselves of the opportunity they had of returning home. This is a standing witness against them. They remained among the uncircumcised. They acted the part

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of the Raven from Noah's ark. They seem to take up with the unclean world. They are as Gentiles, we may say; we see no feasts or ordinances, or word of God among them. But I grant they are Jews still. And grace abounds towards them. In the midst of the Gentiles they are still kept alive; another unconsumed burning bush. (Exod. iii. 2.) Jehovah is not seen to be acknowledging them, as He was acknowledging their brethren who had returned to Jerusalem. Still He has His eye upon them, and they are kept alive; and that, too, till the due time comes for His rising up to deal with them in a way of which all His prophets have spoken.

All this we see in Esther, that wondrous book which closes the historic volume of the Old Testament.

A Remnant is seen there. God deals with them marvellously both by His hand and Spirit; but He is unmanifested. We have seen this, when meditating on Esther. And we further traced God's way with Israel in all those eras of their history, when they were in an informal, anomalous state. As instanced in the marriage of Joseph with an Egyptian, of Moses with a daughter of Midian, and the like, and of Esther's marriage with Ahasuerus the Persian. For this was as the way of God Himself with them; when they were untrue to Him, He went over to others. Power first, as we have seen, and now grace and salvation, have gone over to others, since Israel was disobedient and unwilling.

How consistent all this is! What constancy and perfection and unity in the ways of His holy wisdom! His brethren were untrue to Joseph, and cast him out. He married, and became

important in Egypt. His brethren were untrue to Moses, and forced him away; he married, and became happy in Midian. His people were untrue to Jehovah; and He gave power to the Gentiles. His own were untrue to Messiah; rejecting, not receiving Him; and He now dispenses grace and salvation to the whole world. (Titus ii. 11.)

Surely the Lord knows the end from the beginning. Surely His way is before Him.

“ His wisdom ever waketh,
His sight is never dim,
He knows the way He taketh,
And I will walk with Him.”

Oh for grace to say this, and to do it! And to walk with Him, too, along the path of His wisdom, and the ways of His dispensations, as from glory to glory, to “walk in the light, as He is in the light.” (1 John i. 7.)

And fresh wonders still show themselves to us on these two platforms, or in the story of the *Returned*, and the story of the *Dispersed*.

As I have already observed, Malachi begins to intimate what will be the end of the returned or tested captives. All will fail, as all has failed. The New Testament Scriptures affirm the intimation of Malachi. The Evangelists make good the hints and notices of the Prophets. But Esther gives us to know what will become of the dispersion, or of that portion which remained among the Gentiles. They will finally be taken up in sovereign grace, carried through the “great tribulation,” and by that road into the kingdom. (Matt. xxiv. 21; Rev. vii. 14.) In that story, or on that platform, we see the nation of the Jews, brought to the eve and on the brink of utter des-

truction, rescued by the wonder-working hand of God, and then seated in the high places of honour, of influence, and of authority, by the Power that rules the earth, all their enemies either judged and taken out of the way, or seeking their favour and blessing.*

These are the secrets we are instructed in, in these books, or in these two scenes of various action. Man is tested and fails; the sinner is taken up in grace and saved. And these are the secrets we have been set down to learn from the beginning; and we are destined, blessedly destined, to celebrate them for ever. Man is exposed; God is displayed. Man is thoroughly made naked to his shame; God is exalted in the highest order of exaltation, and displayed in the brightest light of glory.

It was thus in the story of Adam at the very beginning. He was tested, and under the testing he failed, and destroyed himself; he was then taken up in grace, and saved through the death and resurrection of Christ; by faith in the bruised and bruising Seed of the woman.

It was thus again in Israel. Israel was set under law. But the shadows of good things to come accompanied the law. Under their own covenant, under the law, Israel, like Adam, was ruined. But God acts in the midst of the self-destroyed people, the self-wrought ruin, and by ordinances and prophecies and pledges of many

* The "great tribulation," the time of Jacob's trouble, of which the prophets speak, will find Jews at home in their own land, though now they are dispersed as in the day of Esther. But that is no matter. As a nation they are to pass into the kingdom through the tribulation.

kinds has ever been telling them of final grace and salvation.

And now, in like manner, the gospel thoroughly exposes us, but fully, presently, perfectly, eternally, saves us. And through the ages of glory it will be told out that we are a *washed* people, a *ransomed* people, who owe everything to grace and redemption, though glorified for ever.

So that these two platforms, the scene in the midst of the returned captives, and the scene in the midst of the dispersed captives, are in company with all the divine way from the beginning, and with that which is to be had in remembrance and celebrated for ever. Only we marvel afresh at this new witness of the way of God, His necessary, perfect way, in a world like this.

How complete all this makes the divine historic volume of the Old Testament ! That volume ends here ; and we are well satisfied to have it so.

The way of the Lord Himself in this book is specially wonderful. Apparently, He is neglectful of His people. He is " silent " towards them. He does not show Himself. There is no miracle. His name, as we have all remarked, is not once named in the whole book. His people, even in all the exercises of their hearts under the most pressing circumstances, never mention Him. Surely this is wonderful. But it is admirable as well as wonderful. It is perfect in its place and season. For during this present Gentile age, God is apart from Israel, like Joseph in Egypt, or Moses in Midian, apart from their brethren, as I have already noticed. Yea, and as many voices of the prophets have anticipated. (Ps. lxxiv. ; Isa. viii. 17 ; xlv. 15 ; xviii. 4 ; Hos. v. 15, etc.)

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at the close of His ministry, says to them, "Be-
And the Lord Jesus, speaking as the God of Israel,
hold, your house is left unto you desolate. For
I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth,
till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the
name of the Lord." (Matt. xxiii. 38, 39.)

But He cares for them. Their names are in the
palms of His hands. He revokes not the judg-
ment; but He will in due time awake for their
deliverance. It is Jesus asleep in the boat, winds
and waves tossing it. (Matt. viii. 24.) But in
the needed time He awoke, and rose for the quiet-
ing of all that which, swelling in its anguish, was
raging against them.

"Hail to the Lord's anointed!
Great David's greater Son!
When to the time appointed
The rolling years have run,
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free,
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity."

Abraham's Faith and Lot's Failure.

READ GENESIS XIII.

THE word of God is given that by it we may
judge ourselves. It is not a book of merely
abstract doctrine; but it tells us truth about
ourselves in our connection with God, coming
down to us in our every-day life. Especially
about the working of our own will we get instruc-
tion.

The Old Testament Scriptures were "written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [ages] are come." (1 Cor. x. 11.) The Israelites had the manna and the water; but *we* get instruction through that which happened to them for "examples" [types]. (v. 6.)

In the days of Abraham the world had departed from God in an open way. The family of Abraham worshipped idols, as we see in Joshua xxiv. 2. After the Flood men began to worship devils. But when idolatry was openly established, God called out one family in whom His name was to be honoured, and through whom His truth is to be preserved. God had called Abraham out to go into the land of Canaan; but he lingered till his father died, and got no further than Haran. Alas! it is natural to the heart to let human affection come between it and God. He did not get into the land till after his father's death.

He takes Lot with him. It was a kind and generous act, one might say, to a poor orphan. Abraham's general character was that of walking by faith: but we see his failure in faith. Lot was a person accompanying Abraham's faith, while he had it not. He walked in the steps of another, and not for himself. The spirit of the world was in him, and showed itself when temptation came. There was failure in Abraham, but it was the opposite of a choice of the world. The god of this world blinds the minds of those who believe not. (2 Cor. iv. 4.) Lot was a "righteous soul," but he was seduced. Abraham had not so much as to set his foot upon, while Lot chose the fair portion, and got with it vexation of soul from day to day. (2 Peter ii. 8.)

We have not open idolatry now; no worshipping

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of stocks and stones in these lands ; but the flesh is the same as it was then ; and Satan tempts to the following of the course of this world in a more subtle way. The lust in our heart is drawn out by the world ; and Satan governs all those whose hearts are not set upon Christ. Where the heart likes the thing by which Satan governs, he maintains his power.

Lot left idolatry, but fell into the spirit of the world. In him and Abraham we see the difference between failure in faith and following the course of the world. God called Abraham to leave the world, and walk with Him. Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world" [age]. (Gal. i. 4.) He says, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me." (John xvii. 25.)

Abraham came to Haran. He did not get at once into Canaan, because he took with him something which God had called him from, for God had commanded him to *leave* his kindred and his father's house. There was a reserve in his heart, and so he got only part of the blessing. He lost his home and his country for but very little, while he was only half-way toward the place where God had sent him.

Arrived in Canaan, there was a famine in the land, and he went down to Egypt. He was called to trust in the living God, but there he was not in a place to do so ; he could not have an altar in Egypt. Communion with God was lost, though God watched over him still.

Staying out of Canaan, he did not get the promise : wandering out of Canaan, he lost com-

munion with God. All the riches he had gained with God there had not turned his will.

There is nothing like simplicity in the ways of Christ. It is not a question here of salvation, but of walking in the light as God is in the light. Abraham forsook two of the three things which God had told him to leave, but not the third. Here is the failure of a godly man. Scripture never conceals the defects of those whose histories it records. But see in Hebrews xi. how God delights to recall the traits of faith in His children.

Lot was a believer, but he walked by the faith of another. "Lot went with him." He goes out and on with Abraham.

When Abraham left Egypt, he came back to the place of the altar he had built before, and there called upon the name of the Lord. If we have departed from the Lord, we never get back into communion till we get back into the place we started from. When the Lord deals with Peter, He does not reproach him with what he had done, but gets at his heart: "Lovest thou Me?" (John xxi. 17.) So in Jer. xxxi. 21: "Set thine heart towards the way, even the way thou wentest." And Jer. iv. 1: "Return unto *Me*."

Abraham was a stranger in the land as well as a stranger in the earth; and so with us. And here is where lies the difficulty of the exercise of faith. God says, "If they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned"; but "they desire a better." (Heb. xi. 15, 16.)

He does not put us actually into heaven, but leaves us here to try our affections. He puts us to the test. The Lord must have a heavenly people, as well as a heavenly place for them. He

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exercises our hearts without putting us in actual possession of the heavenly things. We are sitting there in Christ; yet here, wrestling with principalities and powers; all spiritual wickedness to hinder our holding fast our hope. (Eph. ii., v.)

Satan tries to settle us where God has made us strangers. The world has rejected Christ, and Satan wants us to be satisfied with it for our portion. The spirit of the world comes to dim the value of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Heavenly promises put the affections in another place altogether. I delight in Christ, and have possession of Him. What do I want here, then? What matter who slights me? If the soul is living in Christ, and enjoying the promises, it can count it all joy when trial comes. It is better to wait for heaven than to enjoy the world. Better for Abraham to be where the Canaanite and the Perizzite still dwelt, than to find his place where God had called him from.

This was Abraham's character of faith in the main; he gave Lot his choice of the land before them. See his quiet giving way. "Is not the whole land before thee?" He had confidence in the promises of God, so he could give up that which seemed fair. Lot's affections are now put to the test, and his faith is tested too. Providence had made the plain of Jordan beautiful; why should he not enjoy it? So with the world now, and many Christians. They like the providential mercies of God, without God Himself. No Christian would deliberately choose a portion in that which God has pronounced to be under judgment. A Christian should be determined to have heaven, and nothing else.

This righteous man was not thinking of the

wicked men of Sodom, but of the well-watered plain. It was not open rebellion. Self-deception is not hypocrisy : but it was a righteous man not delivered from the spirit and power of the world. He *chose* the place of judgment. This world is a judged world. After long patience, it rejected Jesus ; and this is its condemnation. As regards the responsibility of the world, it is all over with it.

Abraham stayed in the place of the promises. There was no harm in the well-watered plain ; but Lot preferred present comfort and enjoyment to the promises of God. He lifted up his eyes, and his eyes affected his heart.

If we have been walking by the faith of another, the time must come when it will be put to the test whether God reigns over our affections.

It was a turning-point for Abraham, as for Lot. God said to him, " All the land I will give thee." " Arise, walk through the land." When he had made the good choice, and accepted the portion from God, then God shows him far more fully all that He had given him. Abraham gets a definite knowledge of his possessions.

When our affections are set upon God, He can reveal Himself to us more fully. All the land is ours, but we have to realize it. It produces happy worship of heart, when, as strangers and pilgrims, we are seeking nothing in the world. (1 Pet. ii. 11.) Was it merely Canaan that Abraham valued? Truly, it was the glory of all lands ; but the plain of Jordan was in Canaan, too. It was because he had it as the gift of God. Gifts are precious as they put us in communion with the Giver. The love that gives is more precious than the gift.

Have we so taken the promises of God for our

portion as not to think about, or care for, the plains of Jordan? The way it comes easy to us is because Christ is in heaven, and we are in Him. He became poor for us, that we through His poverty might be rich. (2 Cor. viii. 9.) When our hearts are upon Christ, all else sinks down. (Col. iii. 2.) We are seeking a country. Communion with God strengthens our souls while passing through this wilderness on our way. He has loved us better than we can love ourselves.

Keeping the Words of Christ.

I THINK I can say I love a personal breathing after JESUS, and the consciousness of His nearness to us. If we did but ponder it duly, what a precious mystery it would be in our esteem, that before we go to His place to be with Him, He comes to our place to be with us! The Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, has come, and now dwells in us, manifesting the Father and the Son; and soon we shall go to the Lord to dwell with Him, and see Him as He is. And this is more than visiting; it is dwelling and abiding; He with us now; we with Him ere long; and both of these dwellings or abidings are declared to be "for ever." (John xiv. 16; 1 Thes. iv. 17.)

These manifestations of the Father and the Son, through the Spirit, are but poorly enjoyed by us, if one may speak for others. We want a *closer* dealing of the soul with Christ. A more real, vivid, personal communion. The enjoyment of these manifestations the Lord connects with a *keeping of His words* (John xiv. 21-23.)

And I think I have seen *that* in some souls. For there is a generation of true, fervent, simple spirits, who greatly outrun the most of us. It is not that they are so much in the *study of the Bible*. No; it is not that. But they have *His words* stored up in the memory of their hearts, and they draw them thence for varied, living, affectionate use through the day. They know Christ, and in a way far beyond what the constant mere study of the Bible would give them. Indeed, such study, if alone, is not in the divine sense a keeping of His words; and has no manifest action of Him accompanying it.

And, again, this having of the words of Christ is something beyond the *obeying of precepts*. These words or sayings (John xiv. 23, 24) may be, and more properly are, *revelations of Himself* than *enunciations of His will*; more telling us what *He is*, than what *we ought to be*.

A proof that the disciples were wanting in this comes out in the same chapter (John xiv.) The Lord had been telling them of His going away. Had they heard Him as they should, they would have kept this saying of His, and they would have rejoiced. (v. 28.) Even among ourselves, we may say, this keeping of sayings or words is the proof of love. It tells another that *he is in the memory of our hearts*.

“ I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me, out of the world : Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me ; and THEY HAVE KEPT THY WORD.” (John xvii. 6.)

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WORDS OF TRUTH

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

## Consecrated to Serve God.

READ EXODUS XXIX.

**T**HERE is a desire at all times in the people of God, whether in Jewish ignorance or in Christian life, that they should always have God dwelling with them. Thus, in Exodus xv., as soon as Moses had come out of Egypt, he said, "He is my God; I will prepare Him a habitation." So we are "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. ii. 22.)

We do look to God's dwelling amongst us; yet we have much more thought of dwelling with Him. This was not the case with Israel. *We* have boldness to enter into the holiest, Christ having passed through the heavens for us, as Aaron passed through the tabernacle for them. (Heb. x. 19.)

Israel could not enter within the veil; but Christ

has rent it, and opened a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us. (Matt. xxvii. 51; Heb. x. 20.) God having, in the cross of Christ, put sin away, we can stand in the light of His presence.

Here we find the presence of God among them. This is not redemption, the object of which is that we should be with God. We could not meet God without redemption. Christ "once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (1 Pet. iii. 18.)

We learn in this chapter how we can thus be in the presence of God constantly and abidingly. We are really, in title, made "kings and priests to God and His Father"; our provision and character being this: provision is made in Christ for us, so that we can be continually in the presence of God. (Rev. i. 6; Eph. ii. 18.) There was to be the burnt-offering continually at the door of the tabernacle, the place where the Lord met with the people. We are consecrated to God to be priests. (1 Pet. ii. 5.) Christ has not yet taken upon Him His office as King; but He has taken the priesthood, and therefore we have got, even now, our priesthood. He exercises in heaven continually a perpetual priesthood, filling up in this respect the figure of Aaron, though the *order* be of Melchizedek. (Heb. vii. 24-25.)

We see here how we are put in the place of priests. And yet Christ is personally distinguished. Aaron goes first alone, to represent Christ (vv. 5-7.) Then the sons, to represent the whole Church, the priests. (v. 8.)

In referring to the cleansing of the leper, we have the way a sinner is cleansed from the evil that is in him. (Lev. xiv. 17.) It is the same

ordinance as regards the leper and the priest; but the leper wants to get *cleansed* as a sinner, the priest that he may be *consecrated* to God. If not cleansed in every respect we could not stand before God at all. There was sprinkling of blood on the leper, on the right ear, the right hand, the right toe: his thoughts, his acts, his walk, must be all cleansed, by being brought under the "blood of sprinkling." (Heb. xii. 24.)

So in this chapter we are consecrated in the same way. In verse 4, "Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle." You do not find Aaron washed by himself, because CHRIST did not want it. They are all washed together as a figure of the Christian body. Christ as a man identifies Himself with the Church. (1 Cor. xii. 12.) Aaron was anointed. (v. 7.) The Holy Ghost descended upon Christ when He had been baptized. (Matt. iii. 16.)

The word of God applied to the heart and conscience with power by the Spirit is called washing with the word. (Eph. v. 26.) "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John xv. 3.) This is not habitation, but washing. Christ came not by water only, but by water and blood. (1 John v. 6.) The blood was for expiation, the water for washing, in order to meet God.

In anything of Christ's work it is not a question merely of atonement, but of meeting God. If I think of meeting God, it is what God requires. There must be perfect cleansing. It turns the eye on God Himself. I shall always know evil in myself; but if God is satisfied, so may I be.

It is wholesome to look within, and judge myself; but I shall not get the blessed peace that

flows from faith if I am looking into my own heart for it. When we see God is satisfied with Christ, then comes in peace, it gives the highest standard of right and wrong, but peace, because God is satisfied with Christ. (Acts x. 36 ; Eph. ii. 13.)

Moses clothes Aaron with the priest's robe, and there is no sacrifice here, because CHRIST required none. (Exod. xxix. ; and xl.) He was a perfect man in obedience and love. As man, Christ identifies Himself with His people. He comes into the same place as regards the walk of holiness. He was anointed with the Spirit and with power. All He did was in the power of the Spirit. (vv. 7, 20, 21 ; Acts x. 38.) Christ was anointed as man. When He ascended on high, there He received the promise of the Father, and sent down the Spirit to the saints, so constituting them the Church. (Acts ii. 33.)

Next we come to the sons. (vv. 8, 9.) We are going to see them introduced into the priesthood ; and now comes the sacrifice. Aaron [as a type of Christ] needed none. (vv. 10, 13, 14.) There is no sweet savour in the sin-offering or trespass-offering. It must be burnt without the camp. (Lev. iv.) Here it is a sin-offering. Sin must be totally put away before our consecration. It is the old nature judged before God. Christ is made sin for us, that we may be made priests. We have these two aspects of the value of Christ's work.

First, the sin is charged upon Him. In the Hebrew there is no difference [in word] between " sin " and " sin-offering." Here He is the sin-offering ; He who " knew no sin, made sin for us." (2 Cor. v. 21.)

Secondly, the other character was offering Himself up to God, all the devotedness of a life of obedience offered up. This was a sweet savour to God. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." (John x. 17.)

In verses 15-18 we find Aaron and his sons not merely having sin taken away, but accepted of God in all the perfection of Christ. If I am looked at as a sinner in myself, the sin is put away. But this is not all. Aaron and his sons put their hands upon the sin-offering; they also identified themselves with the burnt-offering. All the savour of everything that Christ has done, we are; in everything consumed and put to the test. Nothing failed; it is all gone up, and we are in it before God. Here we get our blessed position, previous to consecration as priests. For this, it is not a question of what I think of myself; but the measure of my acceptance is what Christ is in God's presence and estimate. (Eph. i. 6.) We cannot measure grace by anything that is fitted for us, but by what is fitted for God.

We come next to the proper character of those persons that are cleansed and accepted. (vv. 19-21.) Now it is to consecrate; and, as in cleansing the leper, the blood is put on the right ear, right hand, and right foot; the thoughts, acts, and walk. We are now consecrated to God in all these. We have to render unto the Lord our bodies as well as our spirits; for we are not our own, but bought with a price. (Rom. xii. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 19-20.) Every act that Christ did was as perfect as His sacrifice; but every step made it increasingly difficult. So we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John iii. 16.)

Christ's conduct and Christ's devotedness are the measure of our walk before God. There is not so much as to set one's foot on left for self-will. Christ did not come to do His own will. Even to death He went, the death of the cross.

So with us, if the eye is single, the whole body is full of light. If the heart is right, it makes the aim right. The apostle says, "Not that I have already attained . . . but this *one* thing I do." (Phil. iii. 13.) He exercised himself day and night "to have a conscience void of offence." (Acts xiv. 16.) Then it is real liberty. If the heart be right, it will be joy; if not, it will be terrible, because there is not the smallest liberty given to self-will.

In many things we fail; but if we feel what sin is, and the claim God has on us, it will be our *privilege to do His will*. It is not a pretence that we are set up as something wonderful. No, it is faith in the blood of Christ that has cleansed us, as to purpose and thought, according to the perfectness of Christ; and now we are consecrated to serve God. It is simple Christianity.

Verse 21 shows them consecrated by the blood put upon their persons. But not only so, for there is the anointing with the Spirit of God to give power and energy for action. It was put on the "sons' garments with him." I have got the power of Christ in heaven, and the power of the Spirit that comes down from Christ for garments; (that is, for all that I appear in before the world.) It is "with Him," a thorough, complete association by the power of the Spirit with a crucified Christ who is now in heaven. (1 Cor. xii. 12-13.) Thus we get real, thorough joy and gladness of heart. The first-fruits are with God; the results

are in what we show to men. If peace and joy are in my heart, let me go in that, and it produces joy and gladness in my ways. (Gal. v. 22.) The beginning of all practical fruits is from what we have with God, and then there is a testimony to men. What we really are with God shows itself out. It is, or should be, the effect of the consciousness of union with Christ.

This anointing of the Spirit can be put on us because the blood is on us. Aaron had no blood put on him. The Spirit is the seal. (Eph. i. 13.) The least relic of sin would prevent Him from sealing, but when the blood has cleansed from sin, then the seal is applied. The presence of the Spirit is the witness of the blood-shedding; the fruits are the witness of the Spirit.

We thus get a wonderful power, stamp, and measure of holiness. If we believe in Christ, we are so cleansed that the Spirit can come and dwell in us. The Spirit is the seal to the value of Christ's work, not to what He is going to produce. Now He can fill Aaron's hands. (*vv.* 23-24.) What is produced by the Spirit is Christ's after all. I can come with an object, now that I know God delights in it. Suppose I praise Christ's name, I know God's delight rests on it. It may be imperfectly done, but I know what the thing is to God, not the manner of my presenting it. It is the sweet savour of Christ to God. (*v.* 25.) We feed on Christ, now that He has given us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink. (*v.* 33; John vi. 57.) We gather strength, and grace, and comfort, the perfectness of Christ Himself, as our souls' food. "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." (John vi. 57.)

We come so to think of Christ, so to realize

in our hearts and spirits what He is, that we live Christ. What a man thinks is what he is, more than what he does. A man may think of sin, and love it, and desire to do it, but will not because of his character: he may be a hypocrite. If I realize Christ in my heart, I am a Christian.

Verse 42 shows a continual burnt-offering at the place where God meets the people. Christ is before God day by day continually, a sweet savour. I cannot go to God without finding the savour of Christ there, in the perfect sweetness of His offering. The reason God gave for not cursing is that He looks to Noah's sacrifice, not to the sin. (Gen. .viii. 21.) God deals with us in virtue of what the Mediator is, instead of what we are. (1 Tim. ii. 5-6.) It ought to be always in our hearts, but it is always before God. When the daily sacrifice was taken away, the Jew could not go to God; there was no savour. (*vv.* 38-42.)

In verse 42, it is, "I will meet you, to speak there unto thee." It is through Christ we gain everything. Finally God says, "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God." (*vv.* 45-46.) It is by the Spirit He does so now. The whole Church is His dwelling-place. He is not merely a Redeemer, but a constant Dweller with the people. As verse 46 shows, it was not to do an act, and then leave them.

So it is with the Church in a still more blessed way. Sin is put away first; then there is the continual savour where God meets us; and we are consecrated to His service. It supposes that the heart is right; for I cannot wish to be consecrated to God and have my own will.

The death of Christ will never find its intelligent value in our hearts if we want to escape the conse-



quences of consecration. If we are consecrated, the motive of every action should be that Christ may be glorified. You cannot be happy unless Christ be everything. We may have to condemn ourselves daily, but when we think what a savour is before God, we go on with confidence.

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WORSHIP.—The Holy Spirit is the energy, the sole living source, of all that takes place in worship, so far as it is genuine. This principle indeed is true universally; it is true of all the exercises of spiritual life. We live by the Spirit. We walk by the Spirit. We worship in spirit and in truth. It is the Spirit who contends against the flesh. It is the affection of the Spirit which is the expression of the whole of the inward Christian life. But in Christian worship, the members of Christ being united together, the Spirit acts in the body. All that which is real and blessed comes from Him. Sovereign in action, but acting according to the spiritual capacity of each, He uses this sovereign power in order to express the feelings which are suitable to the assembly before God, to nourish and strengthen them by His grace. That which takes place ought to be according to the spiritual capacity of the assembly, raising it up, however, in the tone and spirit of worship, and leading it into the sensible enjoyment of the divine presence. It is thus that the Holy Spirit acts, for He acts in man, but according to the energy and grace of God.

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## Sanctification by the Truth.

**W**HEN we look into the practical details of the inspired epistles, and the more we do so, we find constantly, invariably, that it is "the truth" which is used in the cultivation of Christian character, and as the sanction and spring of godly behaviour.

The Lord having finished the work given Him to do, committed the keeping and the sanctifying of His people to the Father. He desired that they might be kept through the name of the Father, and that they might be sanctified by His truth. (John xvii. 19.) This desire the Holy Spirit seems to act upon in the epistles; for it is "the truth" which is there always used in the sanctification of the elect, or in the formation of Christian character.

We find all the apostles who are the penmen of the Spirit in the epistles doing this; though it may be variously. We find "mercies," "promises," "hope," "the grace that bringeth salvation," "the law of liberty," and other things of like kind, all serving to this end, all of them taken up by one apostle or another, and used for the sanctification, for the moral culture, of the children of God.

And all these are parts of "the truth." They connect themselves with Christianity, which is "the truth." And so much is this the case in the Epistles to the Thessalonians that there the Lord's coming is employed as the instrument for forming or cherishing several *different* features of saintly character, as well as for the *general* cultivation of living, practical Christianity in "spirit, and soul, and body." (1 Thes. i.-v.)

In this way we see the desire of the Lord Jesus, "Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth," answered by the energy of the Spirit, when, in His day, He comes to deal with the elect, and carry on their education, as I may speak. (John xvii. 17; xvi. 13.)

There is no using of *law* to form Christian character. Could we indeed admit the thought that the Lord, having ransomed us by Himself, and made us the Father's by adoption and grace, could then after that commit us to Moses, to be kept and educated? What say our souls to such a thought? Are we prepared to admit that the Lord would do so?

Nay; it is nowhere found that the Lord Jesus does such a thing. Rather the very opposite; for having recognized His finishing of His own work for the elect, and the having manifested the name of the Father to them, He commits them to the keeping of the Father, and desires, as I have noticed already, their sanctification by "the truth."

This is all in blessed, consistent elevation of thought and will concerning His saints; and it is happy to see (but what we might surely know we should see) that the Spirit in this way effectuates the Son's desires, and works accordingly.

We see a fine, vivid sample of this in 2 Corinthians iii.-v. In the first of these chapters, the apostle contemplates the soul, as I may speak, in the presence of *the law*, and then in the presence of *the truth*. As before *the law* the man has his face veiled. He does not affect to learn one single lesson there. The law had to expose and convict, to lay the sentence of death in man as a responsible moral agent. And it has answered its end in us, by leaving us before it in the sense of our utter

hopelessness. This was its operation when it was announced at the beginning in the hearing of the camp of Israel; and this was its operation in an individual soul, as we see it drawn out before us in Romans vii. (Exod. xx. 18-20; Deut. v. 22-29.)

It is as with a *veiled face* we are to listen to the law. We do not go to it to learn its lessons. We are before it, or in the presence of it, to be convicted, to find out that in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing. A veiled face becomes us there. We do not affect to have learnt lessons there. We simply take the sentence of death to ourselves. We do not answer God's end by the law, if we do more with it than that. We are to cry out, as we stand before it, "Let not God speak to us." Or, again, "O wretched man that I am!" But if I set myself before it to learn my lesson, so that I may go away, and do my duty accordingly, and that is all, I am misusing it, and not understanding the veiled face of Moses.

On the other hand, however, we see that in that chapter (2 Cor. iii.) the apostle, with an *open, unveiled face*, sets himself before the glory of the Lord; before Jesus in "the gospel of the grace of God"; before "the truth"; and there it is he learns his lessons as a saint of God, and a witness of Jesus. He makes it his aim and business so to stand before that glory, that he may take off the image or reflection of it, and be, as he speaks, a manifestation of "the truth."

It is *there* I find him *learning* his lessons, and not before the law. It is *there* I find him no longer as with a veiled face, but with an open face. And in the following chapters (iv., v.) he lets us know what lessons he had learnt there, and how he was exercising himself in them. Hav-

ing received mercy he fainted not; neither did he walk in craftiness, but renounced the hidden things of dishonesty. The light of the glory which he had looked at had shone, and seated itself in him, and was breaking forth in many and many a way of moral strength and beauty. The image of the glory of the Lord was seen in him in many of its features. The life of Jesus was manifest in his body, and in his mortal flesh; the faith of Jesus, and the hope of Jesus.

Did the Lord live for others?

The apostle, through grace, was able to say, that he fainted not under labours, and services, if others got blessing. Death might work in him, if only life thereby worked in them.

There had been a joy set before Christ, we know, in the prospect of which He met His cross. (Heb. xii. 2.) There was the same in its way and measure in the apostle, by which he counted his afflictions light. He apprehended the truth of a future judgment-seat, where all would be manifested; and by that truth he was sanctified so as to aim at acceptability with the Lord. He knew "the terror of the Lord," and by that truth he was sanctified to be an earnest-hearted witness to his fellow-sinners, that they might "flee from the wrath to come." (2 Cor. v. 11; Matt. iii. 7; 1 Thes. i. 10.) He knew the death of Christ for sinners; and by that fact or truth he was sanctified into the condition of not living to himself, but to Him that died for him, and rose again. (2 Cor. v. 15.)

Surely here was one learning new and wondrous lessons, and exercising himself in them, as he stood, "with open face," before the glory of the Lord; or as he was learning "the truth," that

he might be "sanctified" by it, and present a "manifestation" of it.

As to the flesh, he closes by telling us he knew "no man after" it. If he knew no man "after the flesh" how could he know "the law"? How could he use the law as the former of his character? The law was addressed to man in the flesh. It was made for man as man, a sinner; man in the old creation. (1 Tim. i. 9, 10.) It had its connection with Israel, and told them of their duties as men in the flesh, in the place of moral independency and responsibility, who were to stand, if they could, before God in the title of their flesh, in the title of their own doings and righteousness.

Such a state the apostle refuses to know. "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh," he says. He was himself "a new creation," part of *the* new creation. He was in the system of redemption; and *all* things there are "of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself." This is what this man tells us, who, "with open face," was beholding "the glory of the Lord."

Could such a one take himself back to *the law*, I again ask, to be educated there, and to have his character formed? Could such a one send the saints of God back to it?

He could not, and he does not; nor do any of his fellow-apostles, the inspired penmen of the New Testament, the teachers of the Church of God, who have God's authority for doing so. They send me to "the mercies of God," to "the promises," "the exceeding great and precious promises," to "the hope" which the gospel inspires, to "the grace which bringeth salvation," to "the law of liberty," and to the prospect of "the coming of the Lord." (Romans xii.; 2 Cor.

vii. ; 2 Peter i. ; 1 John iv. ; Titus ii. ; James ii. ; 1 Thess.)

We are to learn our lessons from such masters as these, and not from Moses. We are to be sanctified by "the truth," to cultivate the "righteousness and holiness of truth," as having put on the new man ; to be "led of the Spirit," and that is to come away from being "under the law." (Gal. v. 18.)

The Holy Spirit, through the apostles, thus answers the desire of the Lord, which He uttered before the Father ere He left us : "Sanctify them through Thy truth." Having finished His work, He commits His people to the keeping and education of the Father ; to His keeping of them through His name ; to His sanctifying of them by His truth.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians we get another sample of this sanctification by "the truth." The apostle is teaching the saints their high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He does this in the first and third chapters very distinctly. Then he prays, or desires for them, that the Spirit may give them the understanding of all this, the apprehension and sense of this high calling ; that they may know the glory of the life to which it points, the might of that resurrection ; strength that is conducting them there ; the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of this glory ; and also the surpassing, infinite, immeasurable love which lies at the root or spring-head of it all, "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

This would be their sanctification. Sanctification by the truth, as one has said, is the Spirit linking the soul, in light and power, with the great things of the call of God, giving us to know them, to

accept them as ours, to have them fixed in their authority, by faith, in our hearts. Simple faith is the means; and simple faith is always best, for it lets God think for us.

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WORSHIP AND SERVICE.—In worship there is an entire equality of position. More holiness may give a nearness to God in which the worship will be more true. What we have to seek is spirituality; this is the principal thing. The priest was in a higher place than the Levite, and all the priests were one, except the high priest. This is our position as worshippers. There was another position which was very blessed, and where God, as sovereign, assigned the occupation. This was the position of the Levite. The glory of the Levite was to do that which God gave him to do. A Merarite was not to touch the vessels of the sanctuary, nor a Kohathite the different parts of the tabernacle. The Gershonites and the Merarites had a more extensive charge, more oxen and chariots; but they were not entrusted with such precious things as the Kohathites. If we are in a low state spiritually, we shall look at the outward appearance, and thus at those gifts which are more external. The Gershonites and the Merarites will have more importance in our eyes with their oxen and their chariots. Nearer to the sanctuary, we shall discern that the Kohathites, who carry the vessels on their shoulders, are as much, or even more, honoured than the others.

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# WORDS OF TRUTH

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

Self Set Aside.

I.—INTRODUCTORY.

THE apostles are the doctrinal foundation of the Church. We are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone." (Eph. ii. 20.)

While, in the mercy of God, the apostles were inspired to teach with authority the doctrines connected with and flowing from the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, they present themselves to us as disciples in the school of Christ, learning under Him, as their Master, the value and preciousness of those doctrines, to the instruction of their own souls.

This fact gives a peculiar character to apostolic teaching. It is not like a master occupied in the laborious task of teaching a pupil certain rudiments in which he takes no interest himself, but

as one finding an increasingly absorbing interest in that which he teaches others. Thus the apostle Paul, in writing to the Philippians, says, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, *to me indeed is not grievous*, but for you it is safe." (iii. 1.)

It was safe for them that the apostle should teach them "line upon line, line upon line"; but this was not irksome to him; his one subject was the Lord, and joy and confidence in Him. He was, therefore, writing from a heart filled with that in which he desired others to participate.

There are occasions in which the apostle Paul turns from a general statement to his own individual apprehension or experience of the doctrine he is propounding. Of this we have one very notable instance in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. In that chapter he is discussing the question of "law," taking up under one view the previous passing notices of law, and proving that which he had asserted.

In chapter iii. he had asserted, "By the law is the knowledge of sin." (v. 20.) How amply is this proved in chapter vii., "I had *not known* sin, but by the law"! (v. 7.)

Again, in chapter iii., "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law." (v. 31.) But *how* it is established we learn not till chapter vii., when the weighty conclusion, "The law is holy," is brought out against all man's reasonings to shift responsibility from himself, and to cast blame on the law. (v. 12.)

In chapter vi. 14 the statement is made, "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (v. 14.) How

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fully it is demonstrated in chapter vii. that one quickened by the Spirit, if he knew not redemption, and were set under law, would yet be under the dominion of sin !

But how does the apostle conduct these demonstrations?

This is the interesting point. He is not only the demonstrator, but the subject of the demonstration ; not only the teacher, but the scholar ; not only the asserter of a broad, general principle, but, in his own person, the exhibition of the power of that principle. The change from " we " to " I," in this part of his writing, from truth generally recognized, to that very truth known in power in the individual conscience, is very noticeable.

It is a great thing to bow the mind to the authoritative declarations of the word of God ; but when that same word, as " living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword " (Heb. iv. 12), enters into the conscience, and demonstrates itself as the word of God by laying us naked and bare before Him with whom we have to do ; then do we justify God in His sayings, and clear Him when He is judged.

God has been pleased to teach us what " law " necessarily is when applied to man in his actual condition (either as "in the flesh" or as quickened by the Spirit), by allowing one under the most favourable circumstances so to experimentalize on himself as to be able to hold up himself as an illustrious proof of the doctrine he teaches others. Saul, the persecuting Pharisee, by the aboundings of the grace of God over his sin, becomes Paul, the minister of the gospel of the *grace* of God, and the expounder of *law* as the strength of sin. Under the law himself, and knowing redemption through

the cross of Christ as his deliverance from under the power of a most grievous and galling yoke, he could sympathize with those who were still groaning under the same yoke. Those that were under the law he approached, as full well knowing what it was to be under the law; and that, too, in a much deeper sort, by his deliverance from it, than when he was actually under it.

II.—PAUL'S PRELIMINARY EXPERIENCE.

There is a brief but interesting period noticed in the Acts, in which, it can hardly be doubted, Saul the Pharisee went through a deep and searching process. "He was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink." (ix. 9.) A brief period; but if the Lord is the teacher; if He is taking in hand a man, even as a wild ass's colt to tame and break in; if He is showing that there must be an entire surrender to Himself, and that every effort at self-justification is a fresh "kick against the pricks" (Acts ix. 5), and only adds to our own misery, what depth of truth may not be learned in so brief a period!

Saul was arrested by the glory of Jesus, and by the voice which said to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" He asked, "Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 5, 6.)

Saul was then in a singular state for three days, blind to all external objects, and secluded from society. He knew that the despised Jesus was 'the Lord of glory' (1 Cor. ii. 8), and that he had persecuted Him; but as yet he knew not fully

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the *grace* of the Lord Jesus, and his own need of that perfect grace. The thought still pressed on him, "What wilt thou have *me to do?*"

How innate is this thought in man, the moment he begins to have to do with God! But this innate thought had, in Saul, been strengthened by his previous training under the law. Like those who were attracted to Jesus by His satisfying their hunger in the wilderness, he could understand *labour* on his part, but not *giving* on the part of the Lord. (John vi. 27, 28.) But now Saul had to see light in the light of the Lord. (Ps. xxxvi. 9.) The law itself would appear in a very different aspect, since the Lawgiver was revealed, from what it did before. Tenacious of the law, persecuting Jesus (in His disciples) in his zeal to maintain it, he had never really known what the law was. At the very time he was most self-satisfied as to his righteousness in the law, he really was "without the law." But now, having seen the Lord, the law too comes in its proper light. "The commandment came"; it flashed upon him in all its breadth and length. Instead of his having kept it, he now finds by it the knowledge of sin; and he "establishes" the law in his own righteous condemnation. He says, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." . . . "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." (Rom. vii. 9, 12.)

"What wilt thou have *me to do?*" must be given up. No one can attain to the knowledge of righteousness in that way. By the law can only be the knowledge of sin.

At the end of the three days, the Lord, even Jesus, through the ministry of His servant

Ananias, removed the scales from the eyes of Saul, and filled him with the Holy Spirit, giving him another sight, even to see that same Jesus (whose glory had overwhelmed him) in all the fulness of His grace, and as being Himself to him the righteousness of God, a righteousness far higher than that he had hoped to attain by the law. (Phil. iii. 9.)

III.—DELIVERANCE DESIRED.

Did this knowledge of righteousness put the law in a more favourable light? Or did it only tend to make it known in a deeper power of condemnation, so that death to the law and deliverance from it, by the body of Christ, became an equally apparent necessity, as death to sin, by Christ's having borne his sins in His own body on the tree?

What says Paul, with his eyes open, and filled with the Holy Ghost? "We" (namely, all quickened by the Spirit) "*know that the law is spiritual.*" (Rom. vii. 14). It is intended to reach the thoughts and intents of the heart, and those who are spiritual acquiesce in the exposition of the Lawgiver Himself as to its exceeding breadth. (Matt. v.)

The apostle, however, passes from "We" to "I." His new perception of the law gives him, at the same time, a new perception of himself. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things" (1 Cor. ii. 15;) and to judge himself is one of the main offices of this power. And now what is Saul the Pharisee as seen in this new light? "I am carnal," he says, "sold under sin." (Rom. vii. 14).

The application of the spiritual law to such a subject only tends to bring out his misery in the

strongest relief. It is now something more than "the commandment came." It is "the *holy, just, and good* commandment," making manifest "that sin dwelleth in me"; so that with my knowledge that the law is spiritual, if even now put under it, sin *would* "have dominion over me."

See my honest struggle. It shows how I consent to the goodness of the law; how entirely I acquiesce in its demands. It is no less my happiness than my duty to love God with all my heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, and my neighbour as myself. (Deut. vi. 5; Lev. xix. 18.) But the moment that I, in earnestness of purpose, make the effort to fulfil this, I am made conscious of a counteracting force in me, too strong for *me* to contend with, and I am aroused to the consciousness that "sin *dwelleth* in me." It is no accident, no habit, but an innate principle. I am forced therefore to separate myself from myself: "*It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*" (v. 17.)

Such a discovery, made under honest struggle, is very different from the reception of the doctrine that sin dwelleth in us, and the use of this as an apology for sin. There is the difference between "*we know*" and "*I know.*" The one is the knowledge of that which is true, the other the truth applied to the individual conscience by the Holy Spirit; and where He teaches, the truth is never handled lightly. "*For I know,*" says the apostle, "that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." (v. 18.) The Lord Himself had ruled that "the flesh profiteth nothing." (John vi. 63.) Brought into closest contact with the Spirit, instead of being profited thereby, it only shows its contrariety and resistance. If, says the

apostle, I not only consent to the law in my judgment, but even delight in it after the inner man, it makes me acquainted with the depth of my misery, and forces me to cry out for deliverance. (v. 24.)

With the judgment convinced of the excellence of the law, and the affections engaged to its goodness, and with an honest desire of getting the better of sin by the means of it, I find myself inexpressibly miserable, a slave to a tyrant that will not let me go, and from whom I cannot emancipate myself. It is true, I can say, "It is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me." But this does not satisfy. I want deliverance from *myself*, and am forced out of myself to find it in another, even in Christ Jesus. (v. 25.) Redemption through His finished work alone meets my deeply discovered necessity as a sinner; and I am forced out of the place of a doer, into the humble, yet happy, place of a receiver. "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." (John i. 16.)

IV.—DELIVERANCE KNOWN.

If the question be raised, Must every one quickened by the Spirit go through this painful process? The answer is that this is the necessary experience of honest legalism, even miserable bondage. But where deliverance is known, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the recognition of the doctrine, and experience of the fact, that "in my flesh *good does not dwell*," is even more deeply learned than in the honest struggle against "*sin that dwelleth in me*." The disciple of Christ learns to justify God in His wisdom in the cross of Christ. He is made increasingly conscious that nothing short of a complete redemption, in and by Christ Jesus,

meets his case. Self, in his thought, becomes identified with sin; and he loathes self, rejoices in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh. (Phil. iii. 3.) Let the eye be turned from Christ to self, darkness and misery are the necessary results. We have no power against self but by looking to Jesus. It is a deep, solemn, humbling truth, that the natural constitution of man is that he is under "the law of sin and death," and that no effort of his own can alter his constitution or extricate him from its misery; and more than this, that the good law of God, when honestly appealed to for help, only makes him sensible of the real misery of his condition. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" alone makes "free from the law of sin and death." (Rom. viii. 2.) I may analyze this constitution of man, and be thereby enabled to say, "Not I, but sin that dwelleth in me"; yet this is not deliverance, but misery. If I want deliverance, I must look to another source, even the grace of God in Christ Jesus: "I thank God through Jesus Christ." (v. 25.)

But the apostle, the great teacher of the CROSS of Christ, he who determined to know nothing among the Corinthians but Jesus Christ and HIM CRUCIFIED, presents himself also as a disciple, deeply learned in that wondrous doctrine which he is so delighted to preach.

It is no uncommon thing for even believers in the Lord Jesus Christ to get under the law. The earliest inroad on the grace of the gospel was the attempt of certain men from Judæa to teach the brethren: "Except ye be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved." (Acts xv.) The Galatian converts had been fascinated by this doctrine, which is so taking and specious

that, under some form or other, it has been found in all ages corrupting, as leaven, the pure doctrine of grace.

With the law the apostle had done; every expectation from it had been cut off; he knew it as the ministration of death and condemnation, and the power of sin. (Rom. vii. 8; 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9.) He dared not build again the things he had destroyed, and constitute himself a transgressor, by asserting the law as in force over believers, when he had shown their deliverance from it, through faith in Christ Jesus. "For I," says the apostle, "through the law, am DEAD to the law, that I might live unto God." (Gal. ii. 19.) This were an impossibility, if the law yet stood between him and God; but not only a possibility, but, as it were, a happy necessity, if, instead of the law, he saw Jesus to be the way to God, even Him who had once "suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (1 Peter ii. 18.) He then proceeds, as a scholar who had made great proficiency in the doctrine of the CROSS, and as a saved person who had learnt it as "the power and wisdom of God": "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet NOT I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 20.) Saul, the Pharisee and legalist, had come to his end judicially in the CROSS of Christ. All that Pharisaism and legalism had done or could do for him was to lead to condemnation. That condemnation had passed on him on the CROSS. When Jehovah made His sword to awake against "*the Man my (His) Fellow,*" it pierced Jesus, but it pierced Him *as the sinner's Substitute.* (Zech. xiii. 7.) It was the act of God Himself to make "Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be

made the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Cor. v. 21.)

The anticipation of the CROSS cast a deep shade on the whole ministry of Jesus. He knew wherefore He had come. He knew what baptism awaited Him, and was greatly straitened till it was accomplished. (Luke xii. 50.) He knew the holiness of God, for He was Himself God. He knew the hatefulness of sin, as that which was most opposite to God. He knew the wrath of God, as it must needs meet sin. And with such perfect knowledge He recoiled, as it were, from the CROSS.

A martyr does not recoil from the stake; but in the stake there is no wrath of God, no hour of darkness, such as passed over Jesus when He lost the sunshine of God's presence; no desertion, such as Jesus felt when He cried, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” (Matt. xxvii. 46.) It was a divine impossibility that the cup He so dreaded should pass from Him. He bowed His head submissively, and drank it up.

Now, when the apostle says, “I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST,” he “arms himself with the same mind”; and not only acquiesces in what God had done in the CROSS, but acknowledges the divine impossibility of any other way of justification before God. God Himself must be the Justifier; righteousness in any other way is an impossibility. Saul must be set aside. Christ must appear. It is a divine impossibility that flesh should glory in His presence. (1 Cor. i. 29.) Paul, then, justifies God in the CROSS; he acquiesces in the divine necessity of setting *him* aside. Saul, the Pharisee and legalist, is dead and buried out of sight; bring in the law, and you revive him in all his sin.

We shrink from the CROSS in this aspect; it bears hard upon us. But when we submit, and take it up, what peace and calmness possess the soul! It is written, "Knowing this, that our old man is CRUCIFIED WITH HIM." (Rom. vi. 6.) We receive the doctrine, and admit its authority. But are we disciples? Can we take the place with Paul, and say, "I AM CRUCIFIED with Christ"? Has the necessity which drove us to the cross, because of there being no other way of escape, changed into admiration of the doctrine, so that we pursue it with intense interest, so that the more we learn, the more admirable the doctrine appears? The CROSS of Christ is a wonderful theme; the deepest intelligence of the renewed mind cannot sound its depths. But as we go on in God's school it is the truth which, at one and the same time, exercises our conscience and engages our affections. Well may another apostle call *upon us* to "*gird up the loins of our mind,*" and intently and reverently study the sufferings of Christ, and the glories to follow; things which angels desire to look into. (1 Pet. i. 12, 13.)

V.—CONCLUSION.

Is then man, as he is in Adam, to be set aside? Are all his aspirations after greatness and wisdom not only to be disappointed but to end in his judgment?

Such is the truth proclaimed by the CROSS; such is the lesson learned in the school of the CROSS: "I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST." But is this bitter disappointment? Is there nothing to be expected from the flesh? *Nothing.* "The flesh profiteth nothing." (John vi. 63.) "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for

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he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." (1 Pet. iv. 1; 2.)

But it is *not* bitter disappointment, though it cost many a struggle to acquiesce in the wisdom of God in passing sentence on the flesh in the CROSS of Christ, and many a hard struggle too, for ourselves practically to authenticate this sentence. To learn, under the teaching of the Spirit, to say, "I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST," is the repose of the soul, and the spring of all true Christian energy.

No one can say, "I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST," without also saying, "Nevertheless I *live*." But is "the old man" again alive? Is Saul the Pharisee risen up from under the judgment of the CROSS, again to justify himself; again to seek righteousness by deeds of law; again to be in bondage to ordinances, or to live upon that which he himself can do? Not so; the old man is condemned and executed.

It is not "I," the old man, "I," the Pharisee, "I," the legalist, "I," the moralist, "I," the religionist. It is "I, NOT I." "CHRIST *liveth in me*." It is strictly a new life, not drawn from Adam or any earthly source, but from Christ risen; a life heavenly in its source and in its aspirations, such a life as the highest human aspirations cannot even "conceive." The higher those aspirations rise, they only the more distinctly show the immense gap, impossible for man to traverse, between man of the highest order in Adam, and "CHRIST *liveth in me*."

Is JESUS risen, and at the right hand of God, and equally above man in whatever rank, con-

dition, or pretensions on earth? So in this wonderful being who *thus* describes his being, "I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST, *nevertheless* I LIVE; *yet* NOT I, *but* CHRIST LIVETH IN ME," equilly above every other being; and by reason of this, his essential dignity, he can afford to take the lowest place here. This "honour cometh from God only." (John v. 44.)

"I NOT I." If "CHRIST liveth in me," then this life has its object, its food, its pursuits; it cannot be satisfied with that with which the old man sought to be satisfied; it can neither be nourished by its own works, nor by ordinances. It must have an object, and food, and pursuits congenial to it.

All these are found in Christ. "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." The life *now* lived is not in its native climate; nothing around it really ministers unto it. It is a life pre-eminently "of faith." That same Jesus, the Son of the living God, who in heaven will be the one absorbing object, is the one absorbing object to faith *now*. Would any be kept from the bondage of legalism? It must be by looking to Jesus.

It is not a speculative life; on the contrary, it is a life full of affection; for its object is Jesus, as the disciple (rather than the apostle) adds, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." The affection of Jesus to us draws forth ours to Him. The love of Jesus, when He was here, found its activities amidst all the miseries of this world; and if His love produces the like in us, he who is most living "by the faith of the Son of God" will be most active in the midst of the misery of this world, because, as the disciple of the CROSS of

Christ, he has learnt that nothing short of divine love can meet the world's miseries.

If the apostle, enabled deeply to analyze the workings of law on one quickened by the Spirit, to know it as the strength of sin, could account for the deep inward struggle by this principle, "I, NOT I": "It is no more *I* that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me"; as a disciple deeply instructed in the doctrine of the CROSS, he instinctively repudiates the thought of attributing life to Adam (the head of the family of death), and corrects himself, as it were, when he says, "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

"I, NOT I." What deep doctrine is contained in the expression! Have we, as disciples, made such proficiency in the school of the CROSS as to ascribe all evil to ourselves, all good to Christ; sin and death in us, life and righteousness in Him? "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." (Jas. i. 17.) Nothing *perfect* ascends up from man to God.

"I, NOT I." It is a great practical principle. If the apostle says, "I speak as a man," or, "Ye walk as men," he uses the expression disparagingly; it is not the high ground of one who has been *CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST*, but who *nevertheless* IS ALIVE, *one in whom CHRIST LIVES*. He has come down from divine to human motives. If he speaks about himself, he says, "I speak foolishly." (2 Cor. xi. 21.) Surely it were folly to speak of self instead of Christ, unless compelled to do so, as the apostle was. But in his labours he still remembered, "I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST," and where "I" would, almost necessarily and innocently, appear, the corrective comes in, "I, NOT I."

Had he even to vindicate his apostleship in writing to the Corinthians; as, likewise, to set before them that the gospel which he preached hinged on the resurrection of Christ, and that, touch that fact, the gospel was gone; he brings forward the witnesses to the resurrection (living witnesses), and then adds, "Last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet NOT I, *but the grace of God which was with me.*" (1 Cor. xv, 8-10.)

Deep scholar, indeed, in the grace of God; well instructed disciple in the doctrine of the CROSS! The doctrine of the CROSS was not used by this disciple to set *self* aside as to judgment only, but to set *self* aside where it would fain show itself as though the Lord needed *our* help, *our* zeal, *our* energies. It is a hard lesson to learn, not to look with complacency on our labours for Christ, and for the blessing of others, but rather looking to "the travail of His soul" (Isa. liii. 11.)

Labour in the Lord is not, cannot be, in vain. It will stand, and be made manifest in that day. Let there be all activity, and diligence, and patient painstaking; but when "I" would be prominent, "I" must meet its end in the CROSS, that CHRIST may live in me. "I" must be set aside, too, by the CROSS, even in my labours, that "the grace of God" may appear. Thus shall "no flesh" "glory in His presence"; but, as it is written, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Cor. i. 29, 31.)

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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).

Priesthood according to Scripture.

No. I.

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest,
that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son
of God, let us hold fast our profession."

HEBREWS IV. 14.

IN a day like this, when the authority of Holy
Scripture is either questioned or ignored, and
error abounds on almost every hand, it is
impossible that believers can overrate the value
of acquaintance with the truth of God's present
order of priesthood. Like many other parts of
divine teaching, it has been greatly lost sight of,
because a false order of things has usurped its
place. But the knowledge and enjoyment of
priesthood according to God greatly sustains our
hearts, as well as draws us out into the most pre-
cious exercises of communion and worship;

though, no doubt, Satan and men have sadly corrupted the truth in order to damage souls, and dishonour the Lord Jesus; and thus bring about that condition of things which we know will end in apostasy and judgment.

On turning to the eleventh verse of Jude's epistle, we perceive the three principal ways in which men and Satan are acting so as to bring about that character of false profession which will end in judgment, and in being spued out of Christ's mouth. (Jude 14, 15, and Rev. iii. 16.) We read, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core." Thus we have *Cain's way*, *Balaam's error*, and *Korah's gainsaying*, characterizing people professing Christianity.

"The way of Cain" was religiousness without the sacrifice of a life; "the error of Balaam," ministering in divine things for reward; and "the gainsaying of Core," the despising of God's order of priesthood, and setting up a false one.

Now, if you look around, you can scarcely fail to see that the three characteristics of Christianity which have been and still are being attacked by the enemy are the infinite value of the one sacrifice of Christ, the divine order of ministry by gifts bestowed by Christ in heaven, and the present divine order of priesthood sought to be supplanted by another of human appointment. This warning voice of Scripture therefore as to "the gainsaying of Core" is most solemn, and shows that a true acquaintance with God's present order of priesthood is one of the ways of escaping Satan's wiles, and of living and acting more according to God's mind. On turning to the sixteenth chapter of

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Numbers, we find that “ the gainsaying of Core ” was not an effort to set aside priesthood altogether, but to supplant God’s order by a false one ; and we know how summary and severe the judgment of God was upon them for it. May we know God’s mind about this.

It is quite true that God had an order of priesthood in the last dispensation ; but it was earthly in its character ; that is, for service on earth, and it was successional, though divine in its appointment. It consisted of Aaron and his sons, and it was a priesthood which in some respects, as we shall see, remarkably shadowed forth God’s present order of priesthood, which is divine in its appointment too, but is heavenly, and not successional. It consists of Jesus the Son of God, Who is gone into heaven itself, THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST, and those who believe in Him who are PRIESTS, an holy priesthood, and a royal priesthood (1 Peter ii. 5.) It is an inquiry into Scripture teaching on the priesthood of Jesus the Son of God which we now propose to enter upon ; and may God help us by His Spirit to approach this most glorious subject with that reverence and godly fear which it demands.

In the fourth chapter of Hebrews the priesthood of Jesus the Son of God is presented to us in connection with the piercing and powerful searchings of *the word of God*, by which the thoughts and intents of the heart are discerned. The great High Priest is therefore introduced to us there to sustain and comfort us before God as His creatures, while conscious of infirmities under the scrutinizing power of His written word. (Heb. iv. 12-16.)

In the eighth chapter of Hebrews our High

Priest is brought before us in relation to *the throne of God*, "set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." Not only does He hold the highest place, but is *seated* there, because He had perfected us for ever by His one offering. (Heb. x. 14.) Now, how could we think of approaching God's throne, unless we knew One was there who had glorified God in the accomplishment of our eternal redemption? (Heb. viii. 1.)

In the tenth chapter of the Hebrews priesthood is again set forth concerning our being in *the presence of God*, our entering into the holiest. This is therefore specially connected with communion and worship. Thus "Jesus the Son of God, who is passed into the heavens," is presented as a "High Priest," whom "we have" when exposed to the searching qualities of "*the word of God*," when thinking of the infinitely holy claims of *the throne of God*, or entering into the holiest, *the presence of God*.

But observe the greatness of this Person. He is called a GREAT High Priest, and He is declared to be Jesus the Son of God. Perfect man, made of a woman, who completely did the will of Him that sent Him; yet no less God, the essential and eternal Son, who had glory with the Father before the world was; for "in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Col. ii. 9.) What infinite glory, perfection, almightiness, and everlastingness, therefore are in Him! What a Priest! How transcendently glorious is He! How the glory of an earthly, fallible, mortal priesthood, though in a former dispensation of divine institution, fades away before the eternal excellency of our GREAT High Priest!

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Before entering further on the contemplation of this blessed Person and His precious ministry, there are some erroneous thoughts current among Christians which call for a few remarks. The common idea that Christ is now interceding in heaven for everybody is entirely without Scripture authority. No doubt He is the one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; but mediation or standing between God and men for a time to avert the blow of divine vengeance, is very different from the activity of a heart going out in deepest interest toward God for blessing on the objects of His love, who have been reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. Was Aaron a high priest for any but those who were standing in relationship with God, a people who had been delivered from judgment by the blood of the lamb? Again, did not our Lord say, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine"? (John xvii.) On this point Heb. vii. 25 is also very clear, for it plainly states for whom Jesus is now interceding. We are told it is "for them that come unto God by Him," which certainly includes all believers on Him, and excludes all others.

It is really unaccountable how Christian people have picked up the idea that Christ is a High Priest and Intercessor for all men. But how precious is the fact that Christ sends the gospel to every creature, and that His heart in heaven is ever going forth in living ministry on the behalf of those who believe. About this there can be no doubt, because such "come unto God by Him." Oh the unutterable preciousness of this truth! An honoured servant of the Lord once said, "If I heard Christ interceding for me in the next room,

how happy it would make me ! But distance makes no difference." Let us, then, dear Christian reader, lift up our hearts with joy and thanksgiving for the precious fact that the heart of the ever-living Christ on high is ever active in loving ministry on our behalf.

There are some who speak of the intercessory work of Christ in heaven as necessary to appease God's anger, lest it should break loose upon us ; and some who have received this error actually call on the Lord Jesus to pray for them. Such, however, have greatly mistaken God's mind on the matter. The truth is that the same grace that moved the heart of God to give His only begotten Son, and deliver Him up for our offences to the death of the cross, also appointed Him to the work of priesthood. We are told that " Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high priest," and also that " the Lord swears and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (Hebrews v. 5, vii. 21.)

Again, it is the thought of not a few that it is by Christ's sacrifice and priesthood put together that we are saved. If this were the case, then neither His work on the cross as sacrifice was perfect, nor His work on the throne as Priest ; but the truth is that both are perfect, as His sitting there shows. It is because His work on the cross was finished according to the Will of God that we are " perfected for ever " by that " one offering." It therefore needs nothing to be added to it. And it is because of the everlasting efficacy of the work of the cross, never needing another offering to be added to it, that He *sat down* in perpetuity on the right hand of God. This Aaron could not do. He could never sit down, because the same sacrifices

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needed constant repetition, and even then, however numerous, could not *take away* sins. The priesthood of Christ was not needed to add to the perfect efficacy of the sacrifice; for, as we have seen, "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 14.)

The fact is that the priestly office of Christ is exercised on behalf of *saved* people, those who were far off, but are now in Christ, and made nigh by His blood; for them that come unto God by Him." (Hebrews vii. 25.) Both in Aaron the typical priest, and in Christ the Anti-type, their functions were set in activity for the benefit of those who already stood in relationship with God.

Priesthood, too, is always "in things pertaining to *God*," not the Father as such, but *God*. (Heb. ii. 17.) Christ is called of *God*. He sat down on the right hand of *God*. He now appears in the presence of *God*, or before the face of God, for us. He intercedes for them that come unto *God* by Him. It is because of this that priesthood does not take up the believer's sins; for being brought to God, reconciled to God, born of God, and children of God, the question of our sins as God's children has to do with the *Father*. Hence the Father's injunction to *His children* is to "sin not;" but "if any man sin we have an Advocate with [it does not say God, but with] the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Our Advocate is the Righteous One. Priesthood then has to do with us in relation to *God*, and that not about sins; while advocacy has to do with us and *the Father*, and that too about our sins.

It is very important to be clear about this; for having been cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus on believing, and made children of God, our

path is to walk in the light, in love, in truth, in faith, and in the Spirit, according to our Father's will; in fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Any disobedience, or transgression, or failure, is unsuitable to the Father, and consequently communion is broken, and we become accountable to Him, not as sinners, as we once were, but as children. Here self-judgment and confession on our part come in, and also the advocacy of the Lord Jesus, prior to restoration to the Father's fellowship. It is a question of communion, not of justification; for "by Christ all that believe *are justified from all things*" (Acts xiii. 39); but the Father cannot give us to enjoy His fellowship while our sins and transgressions are unjudged. And, blessed be His name, "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and *to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" (1 John i. 9.)

There is also another ministry of Christ in heaven on our behalf which must not be confounded with priesthood. I refer to the Lord's washing of His disciples' feet. (John xiii.) This is not Christ as priest appearing before the face of God for us, neither is it the precious action of His advocacy with the Father about our sins; but it is a most gracious activity of our blessed Lord on our behalf to maintain us in communion *with Himself*; as He said to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast *no part with Me.*" It is the warm desire of our adorable Lord that during His absence we may know what entering into His own love, and mind, and ways, and counsels, and service are, having part with Himself. When Peter saw the Lord Jesus gird Himself with a towel, take water, pour it into a basin, and begin to

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wash the disciples' feet, he cried out, "Thou shalt never wash my feet"; which brought from the Lord's lips the gracious announcement already referred to, of the imperative necessity of this ministry in order to maintain us in communion with Himself: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." (v. 8.) And when Peter, with equal rashness, replied, "Not my feet only, but also my hands, and my head," it served to bring out from the Master's heart the true meaning of this most precious ministry. "Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." (v. 10.)

This clearly shows us that a believer in the Lord Jesus, having been completely cleansed from sins by the blood of Christ, never needs to have that process repeated; but he does need to have the defilement removed from him which he may contract in his daily walk. In other words, he that has been washed all over in a bath, needs only to have his feet washed from the defilement he may have contracted in his subsequent walk. And this charmingly illustrates one of the most blessed ministries of Christ on our behalf while He is seated on the right hand of God. It is the needed application of *His word* to our souls, to cleanse away from us the evil we gather up in our daily walk, so as to keep our hearts free and happy for communion with Himself. We read in Ephesians of "the washing of water by the word." (Eph. v. 26.)

All this too was foreshadowed by the altar of burnt-offering and laver. After the priests had been washed all over, and sprinkled with blood, it needed never to be repeated; but after this, when they had been consecrated to the service of the

sanctuary, though often handling the sacrifices, they went to the laver, and washed their hands and feet, every time they went into the tabernacle of the congregation to have to do with the things of God and the service of the sanctuary.

It is a mistake therefore to suppose that when a believer is conscious of defilement, and of having failed and dishonoured the Lord, that he needs, as some say, to take his place again *as a sinner*, and to be *sprinkled again* with the blood; that, according to the type, would be to go back to the altar of burnt-offering instead of the laver. But what we have here is the wondrous care of Christ Himself over us, so ministering His word as to wash our souls clean, and (as the wiping with the towel sets forth) making us feel so comforted in His presence as to be able to go on in happy fellowship with Himself. While defilement is on our consciences, communion with our precious and infinitely holy Lord must be hindered, but He restores our souls, washes us with the word, and gives us again to enjoy the blessedness of His own presence with us.

But there is another character of ministry on our behalf most graciously carried on by our adorable Lord at this present time. I refer to His being the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Not only overseeing everything concerning us, but also feeding, tending, leading us into varied pasture, guiding us in difficulties and dangers, bringing us out of mischief, and setting us right when wrong. Here also we see a difference as to the character of the ministry. The truth is that the same blessed Lord, who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, sustains various offices and exercises different ministries on our

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behalf. And all being conducted by the same loving heart, and the objects of all these ministries being the same persons, they must necessarily in some respects run one into another. Still their distinctness cannot be questioned, and the knowledge of all are needful in order to meet the varied need of our souls. We may say then, speaking in general terms, that the *Priesthood* of Christ has to do with us in things pertaining to *God*, and not about our sins. The *advocacy* of Christ has to do with the *Father*, and about the sins of His children. The action of *washing the feet* is to sustain our souls in conscious, happy communion with *Christ Himself*; while Christ as *Shepherd* cares for the state of our souls, so as to preserve us in spiritual health and strength, according to His own gracious will.

Having thus grouped together some of the precious offices of the Lord Jesus, in order to show that, strictly speaking, His priesthood is not the same as His advocacy, His washing of our feet, and His shepherding of our souls, the way has been cleared to enable us to pursue our inquiry as to the priesthood of Christ. We can scarcely ascribe too much importance to the subject, because it has to do with the conscious sustainment of our souls day by day in the presence of God. This and every other present ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all our blessings, are no doubt based upon His atoning work. But while the death of Christ is the foundation, the only foundation, of all our confidence and hope, yet the precious lessons of divine grace do not end here; for He is risen from among the dead; which shows that He has triumphed over death, and Satan, and the grave for us, as well as put away our sins;

that we have been quickened together with Him, thus giving us new life, resurrection-life, life in One who is on the other side of death; a subject of the deepest comfort and strongest edification.

But more than this, He has ascended, gone into the presence of God; and there too we are now, as to standing before God, complete in Him, who is our righteousness for evermore. And besides all this, as we have seen, He is our ever-living, ever-loving, ever-faithful High Priest, our Advocate, the Washer of our feet, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. What an incalculable loss to those who are in ignorance of what the finished work of Christ has accomplished for us, and what He is to us, and for us, now as risen and ascended! How lamentably defective, not to say damaging to souls, to suppose that the proper place of a Christian is, as they say, "to be always at the foot of the cross"! It is impossible that Christians in such a state can be enjoying the peace, liberty, and triumph to which the grace of God so richly entitles them. How can they be in the true place of separation from the world, delivered from self, and consciously true worshippers of the Father, enjoying communion with the Lord, or be free to live unto God, and have leisure to help the souls of others?

Happy indeed are those who can look back upon the cross of Christ, and adoringly praise Him for His finished work; who can look up to the throne and now by faith "see Jesus crowned with glory and honour," and delight in all He is to God there, and all He is to us and for us; happier still to be rejoicing in the glorious prospect of His soon coming to receive us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. (John xiv. 3).

Jesus the Sufferer.

IN Matthew we get Him as the victim; He is the lamb going to the slaughter. But in Luke we get the perfect blessedness of the Lord and His sufferings in Gethsemane more fully than anywhere else; though on the cross not one expression of sorrow; He is fulfilling Scripture. Just as in John we have the divine side, here we find Him still more distinctly brought out as a man. "Being in an agony," in deep affliction of soul, He is cast as man on His Father; "He prayed more earnestly." So great was His confidence, perfect in His agony. It is there we find "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground," and an angel from heaven strengthening Him.

So also in Luke you get Christ praying much more often than in the other Gospels, because the object is to present Him to us as Son of Man. On the cross you do not get one expression of sorrow; He had gone through it perfectly (I speak of the cup). "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" is not in Luke. The sorrow was there, it is true, but that side is not presented. We get, then, the perfectness of Jesus, who had gone through it all with His Father in the garden. And so entirely is He above it that at the close He says, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit"; and having said this He yielded up His spirit. We have the blessed Lord thus presented in these various characters.

John gives a divine person: "As soon as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground." He could have

gone away, but it was not for that He had come. "If ye seek me, let these go their way," are His words. You see divine power and the divine perfectness of love; not exercising the power, but putting Himself forward to stand in the gap that the disciples might escape. Luke gives His sorrow and suffering as man in Gethsemane, more than in the other Gospels: and on the cross above all the circumstances He commends His spirit to the Father. In Matthew He is the sheep going to the slaughter.

The more we look to follow the blessed Lord in His path here, the more our hearts are bound in right affections to Him. He stood alone, ever as a man down here perfectly alone; and there is nothing more trying. "All ye shall be offended because of me this night," He says. Again He says, "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." No one else! He looked for compassion, and found none; for some to watch with Him, and they fell asleep; to stand by Him, and they all forsook Him, and fled. He is betrayed with a kiss. He deeply felt it all: It was not an enemy, but thou, a man, my companion; yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

Follow Him all through; it puts down the pride of the heart; it sets us men very low, but it sets Him as man in a wonderful perfectness; not man in the glory, but a man going through everything that could test the heart in the purest possible way; a man tested in every possible way, bowing His head as a victim, feeling it so that His sweat

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was as it were great drops of blood, going through it all as man so that our hearts might follow Him; going through every depth, and we poor creatures only standing by to look at Him. It is well if we are not asleep too!

That is where it draws out the affections. It sifts the will. The will and affections never go together. Will is self; affections rest necessarily in another. He is the perfect object: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again."

To see Him in the meekness of His path giving Himself for us, never turning Himself aside, perfect in going through all, just as quiet with men as if nothing had happened; He suffered it so with God. We want our hearts to be set right; we want our wills to be broken down; if we go and look at Christ as thus presented to us in Gethsemane, can we seek to satisfy the will now? Thus I get what is outside myself as an object that sets my affections perfectly right, and that does not leave a possibility of my will working. Looking at One that is beyond me, I find One that does not leave the possibility of the working of my will, but that draws out the energy of the affections of my heart, and sets my will aside. He could say, "Therefore doth my Father love me"; so blessed was it, so perfect was He in it, that it gave a cause to God to love Him. Only divine perfectness could give a cause for divine love.

The heart knowing Him as He is now in glory gets filled. He is the bread that came down from heaven, that we might feed upon and abide in Him. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." We are to be like Him in this character. He humbled Himself, He went always

down till God took Him up. Are we content to follow Him? Looking at Him and seeing His perfectness, are we content to have all our affections filled with Christ, and no will at all? We are going to be with Him for ever; and we can enjoy what He is in heaven, in the measure in which His perfect blessedness is before our hearts and has been tasted by us. How far have our hearts tasted of that bread, and how far are we kept, our wills subdued, occupied with Christ? It is what God the Father delights in. There is the efficacy of His work as the foundation; but how far is Christ Himself the object of our souls' delight, dwelling on Him so that they are kept awake? There is nothing that forms the heart, breaking down the will in us, like the delight that we have in Christ in fellowship with the Father.

The Lord give us while resting in His precious blood to go and contemplate Him, to feed upon Him and live by Him—"He that eateth me, even he shall live by me"; and to see Him, the lowly blessed patient One, at God's right hand now, the One that God has given to keep our hearts right in the world of folly and pride. The Lord give us to live by Him.

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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).

Priesthood According to Scripture.

No. 2.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of
grace." HEBREWS iv. 16.

IN considering the priesthood of the Lord Jesus
we should never forget that this most gracious
office is not added as necessary to give effect
to His atoning work. On the contrary, we are
told that He for ever sat down on the right hand
of God because He had by His one offering (and
by that alone) perfected for ever them that are
sanctified. We are also told that we are sanctified
by the will of God, through the offering of the
body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews x.
10, 12, 14.)

Therefore the believer is both sanctified and per-
fected for ever by the one offering of Jesus upon
the tree; hence the people for whom He exercises

the office of priesthood are both sanctified and perfected for ever, before His priestly functions in heaven are active on their behalf. The veil having been rent from the top to the bottom (Matt. xxvii. 51) and Jesus having gone into heaven by His own blood, He, the risen, glorified man, now appears before the face of God for us; and we, by the Spirit, in virtue of His blood, and because He is there, enter into the holiest of all, and realize what it is to be there. We are not *trying* to get near, for we *are* near. *In Him* most assuredly we are, as other scriptures show; but because of the blood which speaks to us and for us, and because Jesus is there as High Priest, we simply and happily go into the presence of God. As we are told, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness or liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . and having a High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near." And observe also it is added that we thus draw near *not* to be washed and to have guilt removed, but, on the contrary, we "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." In other words, it is now our unspeakable privilege to enter into the holiest of all, in conscious nearness to God, for communion and worship, because our sins are remitted, our consciences purged, the veil rent, and Jesus, in resurrection triumph and ascension glory, gone in there by His own blood, and there engaged as a merciful and faithful High Priest continually on our behalf.

In looking now at the teaching of Scripture on the functions of Jesus as our great High Priest, it is clear that His place for its exercise is the

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heavenlies; for us, no doubt, yea, for the very feeblest believer, for the weakest in the faith, as the precious words of the Holy Ghost plainly set forth, "for all that come unto God by Him." His priesthood was not formally exercised on earth, however sweetly the loving heart of Jesus flowed out toward His own; "for if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, seeing there are priests that offer gifts according to the law. . . But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry." (Heb. viii. 4, 6.) Our High Priest then, blessed be His name, is in heaven; and among other perfections of the office, He is not a standing, but a sitting priest, "*set* on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." (Heb. viii. 1.)

He is also a High Priest "after the order of Melchisedec"; that is, not a changeable priesthood, like Aaron's, which did not continue by reason of death, but made with an oath, and set up in perpetuity; as it is written, "*The Lord swear* and will not repent, Thou art a priest *for ever* after the order of Melchisedec." (Heb. vii. 21.) He is thus engaged officially also, not as those of old, who were compassed with infirmity, but as one "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," and who did not need to offer sacrifice for Himself. Hence we read, "The law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, *which was since the law*, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore." He is, moreover, like Melchisedec, a royal Priest, both King and Priest, which Aaron was not; for in millennial times "He shall sit as a Priest upon His throne." (Zech. vi. 13.) He is also, like

Melchisedec, a blessing Priest. As Melchisedec brought forth bread and wine to Abraham after his battles were over, and blessed him (so will the Lord Jesus not only refresh and cheer our hearts by the ministry of His own grace, after all our conflicts here are ended, but will make us sweetly realize throughout all eternity that we are objects of His unchanging and everlasting blessing.

But while Jesus the Son of God will be for ever our blessing Priest, and in the day of Israel's glory will be both their King and their Priest, He now exercises on our behalf the Aaronic functions. While the High Priest's *order* is that of Melchisedec, being established by oath, perpetual and unchangeable, He is in some respects, as to His present activities, the antitype of Aaron, in appearing now in the presence of God for us. He is thus before the face of God for us, ever caring for and ministering to us.

If we turn to Exodus xxviii. we shall there see blessedly illustrated, by the types drawn by the Holy Ghost, something of the meaning of Christ's being in God's presence for us. The whole chapter is full of the deepest possible interest, and profoundly charming and instructive; but at present we can only look at a few leading points. Let us not forget that all these things were made according to the pattern which God showed to Moses in the mount, and that Bezaleel was energized by no less power than that of the Holy Ghost to fashion them. We can only take a brief glance at some of those glorious and beautiful shadows of our most blessed Lord.

“And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: six of their names on one stone, and the other six

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names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth. With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the names of the children of Israel : thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold. And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel : and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial. And thou shalt make ouches of gold ; and two chains of pure gold at the ends ; of wreathen work shalt thou make them, and fasten the wreathen chains to the ouches. And thou shalt make the breast-plate of judgment with cunning work ; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it ; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine-twined linen, shalt thou make it. Foursquare it shall be being doubled ; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof. And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones : the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle : this shall be the first row. And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper : they shall be set in gold in their inclosings. And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet ; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes. And thou shalt make upon the breast-plate chains at the ends of wreathen work of pure gold. And thou shalt make upon the breast-plate two rings of gold, and shalt put the two rings on the two

ends of the breast-plate. And thou shalt put the two wreathen chains of gold in the two rings which are on the ends of the breast-plate. And the other two ends of the two wreathen chains thou shalt fasten in the two ouches, and put them on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod before it. And thou shalt make two rings of gold, and thou shalt put them upon the two ends of the breast-plate in the border thereof, which is in the side of the ephod inward. And two other rings of gold thou shalt make, and shalt put them on the two sides of the ephod underneath, toward the forefront thereof, over against the other coupling thereof, above the curious girdle of the ephod. And they shall bind the breast-plate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breast-plate be not loosed from the ephod. And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually. And thou shalt put in the breast-plate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim : and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord : and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre ; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts ; and it shall be always upon

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his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord." (Exod. xxviii. 9-38.)

Observe, in these types, that the names of the tribes of Israel were engraved both on the onyx stones and on the breast-plate. In the former, they are looked at collectively; in the latter, individually. In one sense the Church, which is Christ's body, or the saints, looked at in their unity, must always be presented in Him who is their Head before God; while, on the other hand, as the smallest tribe in Israel, as well as the greatest, was represented by a separate jewel and distinct engraving, so each believer is now always kept before the face of God, held up, as the shoulders (the place of strength) show us, by His almighty power, as well as by His perfect love, as the breast-plate worn over the *heart* sets forth. Each precious stone being enclosed in gold seems to imply that we are thus kept before our God in Christ, who is our subsisting righteousness, "made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. v. 21.)

Observe also that the shoulder-pieces are connected, divinely connected (gold being the emblem of divine righteousness) by two golden chains of wreathen work of pure gold, to assure us that the almightiness of Jesus the Son of God, and His perfect love, both combine to preserve us in righteousness and acceptance in Himself continually before the face of God. And concerning the breast-plate, we find that it was also tied underneath with a lace of blue to the rings of the ephod, that it might never slip away from the high priest's heart; so that the type of Him, the loving One, who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," might be most carefully preserved. Hence

we read that "Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment UPON HIS HEART, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial *before the Lord* continually . . . Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel UPON HIS HEART *before the Lord* continually."

There is another point to be noticed before passing from this chapter, that is the golden plate on which was engraved "Holiness to the Lord," which Aaron wore on a lace of blue on the forefront of the mitre "always," that he might bear the iniquity of their holy things. And surely it is the sense of our shortcomings, defects in our service, and in our most solemn acts of worship, that tend to cast us down, and would even perhaps sap our confidence, did we not see that we are always presented before God in and by Him who is holiness to the Lord, and that our service is acceptable to God only through Him. As it was the priest's office to pluck away the crop and feathers of a sacrifice of burnt-offering of fowls, and burn the rest upon the altar, so our adorable Lord is able to take up our holy things, and present what is acceptable to God through Him.

With regard to the beautiful materials with which the breast-plate was made, we have, in the "gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen," the personal glories of the great High Priest typically set forth. So immediately did failure and sin come in after the introduction of priesthood, that there is no reason to believe that these garments of glory and beauty were ever worn before the Lord. But we can, I trust, easily see how all will be made good when the true Melchisedec sits as a Priest upon His throne, and

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all the twelve tribes of Israel are set in terrestrial glory in their proper lots in their land; and with what unspeakable glory all these typical blessednesses will shine forth in moral worth, and unfading excellence, in their true Messiah, when He reigns before His ancients gloriously. We can, also, happily enter into and enjoy the precious lessons these types and shadows read to us, as to the meaning of that blessed One having entered into heaven itself by His own blood, and now appearing before the face of God for us. And how touching to the feeblest believer to find that he is included among all those who are thus so wondrously blessed; for it is for "all who come unto God by Him"! This surely every believer can say, even the weakest babe in the faith, that *he comes unto God by Christ*.

1. The first practical lesson for our hearts suggested by the contemplation of this glorious High Priest in heaven for us, is that He both demands and warrants our unwavering confidence. Hence the apostle says, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession," or *let us hold fast the confession*. This does not say, "Hold fast your faith," or "Hold on in faithfulness," blessed and important as it is to continue both in faith and faithfulness; but seeing that Christ has so taken hold of us, that, whether we are thinking of Him or not, He is faithful, He changes not, that His merciful and unwearying heart is continually taken up with us, in presenting us always before the face of God, we cannot hesitate to confess Him as our life, righteousness, never-failing security and hope, in spite of all the changes within and around in this

chequered and sinful world.

Let us, then, "hold fast the confession." It is His faithfulness, His grace, His abundant goodness, which is the ground of true confidence; and especially when we see that Jesus our great High Priest is presenting us, in divine righteousness, in His own acceptance before God continually. We indeed do well thus to contemplate the moral perfections and excellences of our High Priest. When we grow cold and forgetful of Him, does He forget us? Never. Nothing can and nothing will ever cause Him for one moment to cease to bear us up before our God in the perfectness of His unchanging love, and in the almightiness of His everlasting strength. What an unspeakable basis of rest and confidence our God has given us in Christ Jesus!

2. The second point to notice in the functions of our precious Priest in heaven is His *sympathy*. For "we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of *our infirmities*." Observe, it is not sins, but infirmities; for surely that infinitely Holy One could have no sympathy with us in sin, nor could we wish Him to; besides, we know that He suffered for sins. But "infirmities" are short of sins and transgressions. He knows that often our spirits are willing, but the flesh is weak; that again and again we break down through natural weakness in our efforts to serve and glorify Him. We would praise Him with untiring voice, but soon grow weary. We are sometimes sleeping when we ought to be praying; and are overcome with fatigue in His blessed service when our inner man would delight to go on much further. But Jesus knows all about us. "He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that

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we are dust." (Ps. ciii.) He understands our frailty, feebleness, and shortcomings; and His heart is touched with deep consideration for us. He knows, too, what we are, not only as knowing all things, but as having lived here among men, and having had, as perfect man, thorough personal acquaintance with every element at work in man. And He is certainly not less mindful of His own dear ones *now* than He was *then*. If the sorrowing hearts of Mary and Martha drew forth tears of sympathy from their loving Saviour, when He knew that in a little while Lazarus would again be by their side in all the vigour of health and brotherly affection, though He has changed His place from earth to heaven, His heart cannot love less on that account. How sweet then to be able to look up to Him, when conscious of our own infirmities, and fully to count upon Him as a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother,

" Whose heart is filled with tenderness,
Whose very name is love,"

We have not then a High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but One who is

" Touched with a sympathy within,
And knows our feeble frame."

There He is in the presence of God for us,

" And, though ascended, feels afresh
What every member bears."

3. Our High Priest is also our *Succourer* in temptation. " In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." (Heb. ii. 18.) His watchful eye never taken off us, His heart ever caring for us, and thus being objects of His constant care and activity,

there is not an advance of Satan towards us that escapes His vigilance, not a snare laid, not a fiery dart hurled, not a wile projected against the feeblest of His saints, but all is open and manifest to His all-seeing eye; and, blessed be His name, He is able to succour us. He has known terrible temptation Himself. The foul breath of the great adversary must have been exquisite suffering to His holy heart; and it is true that He did suffer thus; for "He was in all points tempted like as we are," sin excepted. He is, then, able to defeat Satan, to strengthen us to resist him, to keep us from being carried away by him, to preserve our feet from being entangled in the meshes of his net, to uphold us lest we fall, to deliver us from his wiles, to strengthen our faith to quench his fiery darts, and to enable us to stand fast in Christ, stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. How comforting then is the thought, that there is a perfect One in the glory who resisted Satan in temptation, and, through death rendered null him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, who triumphed over him in resurrection from among the dead, and who assures us that "He is able to succour them that are tempted."

4 Our Lord in the glory as our great High Priest is deeply concerned about our *need*. He is constantly saving us from the ten thousand difficulties and perplexities which cross our path. In this way He saves us to the uttermost, or right on to the end. Having saved our souls, saved us from the wrath to come, He saves us day by day from the things of men, and Satan, and the world, which sometimes threaten to swallow us up. For

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this, too, He is ever living to intercede for us. His intercession then as our High Priest is not about our sins, but about our need. We are therefore enjoined to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 16.)

Oh how precious is the fact that Jesus, having saved us from the wrath to come by the blood of the cross, is now pleading for us in heaven about our present need! As the Captain of our salvation, He is leading us on our way, and, unlike other captains, has actually gone before His soldiers to break down every impediment for them, and now as our great High Priest ever intercedes for us with God. He never forsakes, never forgets us, never slumbers nor sleeps, but is always active on our behalf, ever merciful and faithful, ever living to make intercession for them that come unto God by Him. He will thus carry us through every difficulty thrown in our way by men and Satan, and bring us off more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Oh the blessedness of having such a great High Priest to sustain our hearts in happy, holy, liberty in God's presence! One, too, who can sympathize with us as to our infirmities, succour us in temptation, and daily save us through His ever-living and all-prevalent intercession! How unspeakably precious to be able to look up and see that no weakness nor failure on our part, no, not even eternity itself, can erase the graving of our names from His heart! And when we would be easily cast down with humbling views of our weakness, forgetfulness, and shortcomings, oh the unutterable blessedness of looking up and seeing that infinitely loving, faithful heart ever engaged about

us, and ever presenting us before the face of God in all the virtue and fragrance of an everlastingly anointed High Priest! And if the precious ointment, with its exquisite perfume, when poured upon the head of Aaron, ran down to the skirts of his garments, surely the precious savour of Christ must, by the Holy Ghost, rest upon every member of His body.

A Few Words on Prayer.

IN prayer we must remember that God expects us to come before Him in uprightness. "If I regard iniquity in my heart," says the psalmist, "the Lord will not hear me." (Ps. lxxvi. 18.) He must have integrity. Evil must not be cloaked. Sin must be judged, and honestly dealt with before Him. The upright soul abhors that which is evil, and cleaves to that which is good, and from such God will keep back nothing good. "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Ps. lxxxiv. 11.) This is most encouraging. David had lamentably failed, and circumstances, because of his failure, seemed all against him, but he hoped in God. "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God," and we know the great deliverance that followed. (1 Sam. xxx. 6.) The *upright* soul can turn to God with confidence, and find encouragement in Him, when there is none elsewhere.

We find also in Scripture that success in prayer is connected with obedience, and especially love to the brethren. Our Lord connected the act of praying with forgiving, "if we have ought against

any "; and so with fruit-bearing and obedience to the word of God: "I have ordained you," said Jesus, "that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, *He may give it you.*" (John xv. 16.) And so the apostle John, after presenting to us God in His nature as Light and Love, the relationship we are called into by the Father, and the conduct suited to such relationship, exhorts that brotherly love may be real, that is, "not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth"; for in this way we shall assure our hearts before Him. If, however, this brotherly kindness be wanting, our hearts will condemn us, and this God knows. But if we are walking in true brotherly love, then have we confidence toward God, and obtain answers to prayer. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment." (1 John iii. 19-23.)

Nothing, then, can be clearer, that if we would be successful in prayer we must be obedient children, and walk in true practical love with our brethren in the Lord. Perhaps the importance of this is too much overlooked in the present day. We must never forget that in prayer we are acting in the relationship of a child to a father; and we know that when we are truly loving our children, how hindered we feel in granting them their requests if they are acting disobediently, and not walking lovingly toward their brothers and sisters. Oh! to be constantly, in felt helplessness, abiding

in the Lord Jesus, finding all our resources in Him, drawing all we want by faith from Him; for He said, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John xv. 7.)

The confidence we should have as children of God is that our Father knows infinitely better than we do, and that He seeks our profit. To ask, therefore, "according to *His* will," and not according to our will, is the unselfish path in which the Spirit leads. We sometimes "ask amiss," because self, in some shape or other, is our object, and not the Lord's glory; and no marvel if such prayers are not answered. "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, *that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*" (James iv. 3.) Who would wish such prayers to be answered? And yet it is well to watch our hearts as to this. On the other hand, our relationship with God our Father forbids that anything should interfere with the freest actings of filial love. The Spirit, therefore, enjoins us to "be careful for nothing, but *in everything* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make our requests known unto God." (Phil. iv. 6.) He does not here promise that all our requests shall be answered; but this scripture does enjoin that full outpouring of heart becoming to a child before his Father.

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WORDS OF TRUTH

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

## Priesthood according to Scripture

No. 3.

"Unto Him that loveth us, and has 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.

"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: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed." 1 PETER ii. 5-8.

**T**HE fact is here plainly stated that all those who are loved by the Lord Jesus, and are washed from their sins in His own blood,

are *made priests unto God*. They are also called "a holy priesthood," and "a royal priesthood." Their life is one of entire dependence and faith, as the apostle Paul so forcibly expresses it : "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

In the typical instruction of Old Testament Scriptures we have abundant details as to the characteristics, maintenance, and occupation of priests.

We know from the Epistle to the Hebrews how remarkably the Aaronic high priest was a type of Jesus, our great High Priest; and we know also that Aaron's sons *only* were priests, and that they were chosen of God, washed, clothed, consecrated by blood, anointed with oil, and in relationship by birth with the high priest. All pretensions to priesthood apart from these realities were accounted false. When any did come forward professing to be priests, and could not trace their genealogy, they were put from the priesthood as polluted (Neh. vii. 64). And when the sons of Korah sought to set aside God's order of priesthood by setting up another of their own, He caused the earth to cleave asunder and swallow them up, and all that appertained to them (Num. xvi. 20).

The order of priests that God now has, is, as we have seen, composed of those who are washed from their sins in the blood of Jesus. Such are *made priests unto God*. They need no other qualification than God gives them. The order is divine. They are priests unto God. They are consecrated to the office, *made priests*, and in some striking particulars were remarkably set forth in

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type by the sons of Aaron. Let us consider a few of these similarities.

First, Aaron's sons were priests by the *election of God*. God chose them, and no others. They were priests to God by His gracious choice. Of all the tribes and families in Israel, no other people than the sons of Aaron could fulfil the office of Priesthood. So now it has pleased God to choose those *only* who are washed from their sins in the blood of Jesus. Such *only* are made nigh to Him, and have liberty to come into His presence to minister in holy things; for "*in Christ Jesus we who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ*" (Eph. ii. 13). Such too, according to the Father's eternal purpose and grace, were *chosen* in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. i.). We are priests therefore by God's *election*.

Secondly, Aaron's sons were priests by *birth*, priests as sons of Aaron. When a son of Aaron was born, he was necessarily at a certain age a priest. No one else in Israel could be a priest. No interest, talents, wealth, or anything besides, could procure the office. These only were priests. Such only were recognised by God. They must be Aaron's sons. So now no one is a priest who is not born of God, and every one who is born of God is a priest, and every believer is this through grace; for He is born of the Spirit; he is a child of God; he is in everlasting relationship with Jesus the great High Priest. Scripture therefore speaks of us as "*born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*" (1 Peter i. 23). We are priests then by a new and spiritual birth.

Thirdly, Aaron's sons were priests by *consecra-*

*tion, made priests unto God. They were washed.* "Moses brought Aaron and *his sons*, and washed them with water." So we are *washed* from our sins in the blood of Jesus, thoroughly cleansed by that blood which cleanseth us from all sin (1 John i. 7). They were clothed with garments provided by God. So we stand in Christ, who is our righteousness. Sins being thus remitted, and the conscience purged by the blood of Jesus, we can "draw near" to God "with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. x. 22). They were also consecrated, or set apart by God for Himself, by being *sprinkled with the blood* of the ram of consecration. "He brought Aaron's sons, and Moses put of the blood upon the tip of their right ear, and upon the thumbs of their right hands, and upon the great toes of their right feet: and Moses sprinkled the blood upon the altar round about" (Lev. viii. 6, 24). Thus they were sanctified by the blood, set apart for God and His blessed service.

The right ear was marked with blood to teach us that we are to hearken to God's voice; not to lend our ears to receive the evil and foolish communications which men would make, but amid the clatter of ten thousand conflicting voices to hearken to what God says. "A wise man will *hear*" (Prov. i. 5). The blessed Lord said, "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious" (Isaiah i. 4, 5).

There are two great avenues to the heart, the eye and the ear. By attracting the eye, Satan

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often succeeds in turning away the heart, by taking us off the true object of faith, and occupying us with something else to gratify the lust of the eye. Some of the most serious falls in Scripture have been through the lust of the eye. The other principal avenue to the heart is the ear. If Satan can get us to hearken to the voice of the flatterer or to the roar of the lion, he will often turn us away from the posture of listening to the voice of Him whose we are, and whom by grace we serve. It is then our true posture of soul to be consciously set apart for God, and for Him only, as sanctified by the blood of Jesus; and waiting upon and for Him, hearkening to His voice, we always find to be the true path of blessing. "Whoso hearkeneth to me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil" (Prov. i. 33). But we should never forget that "the flattering mouth worketh ruin," and "a whisperer separateth chief friends" (Prov. xxvi. 28, xvi. 28).

The thumb of the right hand being sprinkled with blood is no doubt to teach us that we are now to work for God, to minister according to His will; that we are set apart to be thus active in His blessed service; for we all have some service committed to us. He gave "to every man his work" (Mark xiii. 34). "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," (Eph. iv. 7). We each have ministry of some kind to carry out in faithfulness to God. We are all His children, and His servants. The hand is sprinkled with blood, sanctified, set apart for His service, and for none other. Whether therefore we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to God's glory. We are not to live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us,

and rose again. Our bodies are to be consecrated to His service. We are to present *our bodies* a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service; for we are not our own, but bought with a price; we are therefore to glorify God in *our body*.

On these accounts also the great toe of the right foot was sprinkled with blood, to show that our walk should be in obedience to Him, every step ordered by the Lord. The ear was first sprinkled to show that we must receive all our commands and instructions from God, in order then to minister for Him, and walk with Him. We thus see that another characteristic of those priests, so typical of us, was that they were wholly set apart for God, by being sprinkled with the blood of the ram of consecration, a point of the utmost practical importance, and never to be lost sight of; and if there were no other reason, this is enough to show the utter folly and complete delusion of people being made priests by human appointment, not to refer to the exceeding sinfulness of despising God's present order of a heavenly, spiritual, holy, and royal priesthood.

But this was not all. The last point to notice is this solemn business of consecration of the priests is, that they were anointed with oil, an unmistakable type of our being anointed with the Holy Ghost, as one apostle writes: "Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath *anointed* us, is God"; while another apostle writes: "The *anointing* which ye have received of Him abideth in you." (See 2 Cor. i. 21; 1 John ii. 27) This is our power for service, and this makes the character of priesthood now to be spiritual and holy, not merely human or educa-

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tional, not to say successional. The latter is but a poor caricature of the former, and not only lifeless and powerless, but, far worse than anything else, it sets aside the divine order by substituting another. Those who are God's priests now, then, are sanctified by the blood of Jesus, and anointed by the Holy Ghost.

Fourthly, Aaron's sons were in such relationship with Aaron the high priest as no others were, and were also associated with him in the service of the sanctuary. So now every believer, whether man, woman, or child, is by the new birth, and by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, brought into real relationship with Jesus our great High Priest. Being sanctified by God, and made children, "He is not ashamed to call us *brethren*." We are also united to Him by the Holy Spirit; so that "we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Thus are we in spiritual and eternal relationship with Jesus now in the heavens, He being our life and righteousness. Moreover, having liberty to enter into the holiest of all, where Jesus acts as Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man, we offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Him. As none but Aaron and his sons had access to the sanctuary for the service of priesthood (Moses being a type of Jesus, as mediator and king, being king in Jeshurun), so now all who are priests, and none else, have liberty to enter into the holiest where Jesus is.

Thus we see that, like Aaron's sons, believers *now* are priests to God, by election, by birth, by consecration, by being in relationship with the High Priest, and associated with Him in the service of the sanctuary; the distinction between

high priest and priest being always preserved. Jesus, though *King of kings*, as well as High Priest has not yet come forth to reign; and we too, though both *kings* and priests, await His time of manifested glory to reign with Him. Now we exercise our priestly office, and soon through matchless grace shall sit on thrones. Now we are both "a holy priesthood," and "a royal priesthood"; *now* we suffer with Him, *then* we shall reign with Him.

Again, because they were God's priests, He provided everything for their sustenance. He prescribed what they were to eat, and what they were to abstain from, so as to be fitted for their office. To feed on what was forbidden, or to have abstained from what God ordered, would alike have rendered them incompetent for the true work of priesthood. Here also the typical instruction set forth touching the sons of Aaron is deeply instructive. The food prescribed, too, was for priests *only*: "a stranger shall not eat thereof." The *priests* were to eat and be satisfied, and the remainder might not be eaten by a *stranger*, but it was for God; it was burnt, and offered up to God by fire. "If ought of the flesh of the consecrations, or of the bread, remain unto the morning, then thou shalt burn the remainder with fire; *it shall not be eaten*, because it is holy." (See Exodus xxix. 33, 34.)

The priests were to feed on the sacrifices in order to be fitted for their service. Observe the divine directions: "They shall eat of those things wherewith the atonement was made, *to consecrate and to sanctify them*." This is both simple and positive. We know who has made atonement, and by what sacrifice alone it has been accom-



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plished; and it is upon that blessed, spotless, perfect One, who loved us and gave Himself for us, that we have to feed for real strength and blessing.

Remark here, that the priests were *to eat*; not merely to look upon and talk about, but to handle and receive, so as to derive nourishment and strength, refreshment and comfort, from the same sacrifice by which atonement had been made; thus teaching us that it is only personal communion with the Lord Jesus which can qualify us for the activities of priestly service. The believer, already washed from his sins, having a purged conscience, accepted in Christ, is therefore to find his daily strength for priestly service in drawing blessing from Him who was the one Sacrifice which was once offered. We are to feed upon Him; to taste, enjoy, and enter into the qualities, worth, perfections, and glory of Him who redeemed us by death upon the cross, so as to be *strengthened for the faithful discharge of our priestly office.*

“ But how are we to feed upon Him? ” some may ask. We reply, The written word reveals Him, and the Holy Spirit given to us testifies of Him. Thus, pondering the Holy Scriptures in dependence on the Holy Spirit, and receiving God’s thoughts in faith, we enter into the divine testimony of Jesus the Son of God, His personal glories, His finished work, what He was and is to God, what He is to us and for us; thus our hearts are gladdened, and our inner man strengthened. In this way we shall be so attracted to Him, so taken up with His perfections, that in our measure we shall be able to say, “ We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. ” And being occupied with

Him, He will be to us the attractive, absorbing, commanding, and satisfying object of our hearts. We thus obtain strength for service. It is communion, entering into the love and power of Christ, and finding satisfaction and delight in that same object which perfectly satisfies and delights the heart of the Father. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ"; for, by the communion of the Holy Spirit, we have thoughts, feelings, joy, and rest produced in our souls in joint-participation (wondrous grace!) with those of the Father and His Son.

Does the Father delight and rest in that beloved Son, who glorified Him on the earth, and finished the work which He gave Him to do? So do we. Is He an object capable of filling and satisfying the Father's heart? Assuredly He is. He is then much more than enough for our hearts. And does that beloved Son, now in the glory, delight in all the results of His accomplished work? And do not we? Does He not take deepest interest in His present work on earth, both in evangelising and in care for His own flock? And do not we? Is He not looking forward with earnest expectation of having us with Him to behold His glory? And are not we looking and waiting for Him? And if we ponder it for a moment, we must see that the blessed Spirit, the other Comforter, who has been given by the Father to dwell in us, could not produce in us a lower order of thought, feeling, joy, and hope, than that which suits the Father and the Son, though our apprehensions may be small and poor.

Oh the blessedness of this precious fellowship! How it kindles our hearts into adoring worship and thanksgiving, attracts and sets our minds on

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things above where Christ sitteth, and draws us onward in testimony for Him who so richly loves us, and so willingly gave Himself for us ! What a mine of wealth, what untold treasure, is wrapt up in those precious words, " They shall eat of those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate and sanctify them " ! (Exod. xxix. 33).

It has always been God's way to feed His people. In the sandy desert He rained down bread from heaven day by day, and they had only to gather up and eat of His gracious and abundant provision. When they arrived in the land flowing with milk and honey, and the manna ceased, they ate of the " old corn of the land." But when Jesus came, and announced Himself to be " the bread of God," " the bread of life," He said, " The bread that I will give is *my flesh*, which I will give for the life of the world." He is now, then, " the bread of God," and " the living bread "; concerning which He added, " Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in Him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father : so he that eateth Me, shall live by Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven : not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead : he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever " (John vi. 56-58).

Enough has been quoted from Scripture to show the imperative importance of the believer's being occupied with Christ as drawing his resources from Him, so as to be strengthened and fitted for service; not only to do the will of God, but to do it in the spirit and mind of Christ. By feeding on the same sacrifice " wherewith the

atonement was made," as we have seen, we are in communion with Him, we dwell in Him, and He dwells in us. His thoughts engage our minds, His grace pervades our souls, we enter His unspeakable love, and He has a place in our hearts; thus His presence is enjoyed, and we find our place with Him in the true sanctuary inside the veil. Without this personal intercourse and communion with the Lord Jesus, we cannot possibly carry on the high and holy functions of priesthood; and though, through marvellous grace, we are objects of His untold love, washed from our sins in His blood, and have been made a royal and holy priesthood, we shall have little or no sense of it, and lose one of the highest occupations of soul, and one of the most exalted privileges that could possibly be known by us on the earth, during the absence of our precious Lord Jesus.

Blessed be God, the Scriptures testify of Christ, and the Holy Spirit guides into all truth, and takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, so that we are well furnished for the life and walk of faith through "a barren and thirsty land where no water is"; where, with all the bodily comforts and blessings we enjoy, there is nothing, absolutely nothing for our souls; but in Christ we have enough to satisfy our every need, a sufficiency for every requirement. Oh the blessedness of thus finding more than we could possibly have desired or needed in Christ, instead of complaining of the dry and disappointing character of broken cisterns, and the barrenness of the desert path!

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## A Few More Words on Prayer.

**I**T is very interesting to notice the prominence given to prayer by the Holy Spirit in the epistles. The immense importance of prayer, its simple, definite, and direct character, and the blessed results to be expected, are alike strikingly set forth.

In the first chapter of Romans, Paul not only speaks of mentioning them *always in his prayers*, but that he definitely made this request, that he might by the will of God be made a blessing and a comfort to them, and be comforted also by their faith (vv.10-12). In the fifteenth chapter he beseeches them, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, to pray also that he might come unto them by the will of God, and may with them be refreshed; and he also desires that they may be so earnest, as to strive together with him in prayer for two other things, which are most distinctly and definitely mentioned; namely, that he might be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that his service which he had for Jerusalem might be accepted by the saints (vv. 30-32).

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians little is said as to prayer, further than it should be in the Spirit, and intelligent: "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also"; the main object of the epistle being to correct the disorders of the assembly, and to give fresh instructions on the subject. It is true that saints giving themselves to prayer and fasting is enjoined to guard from the temptation of Satan, a most important principle.

In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle again shows how much he valued the help

of saints in prayer : “ Ye also *helping together by prayer for us.* ” (i. 11). He prayed for them, “ that they might do no evil ” (xiii. 7).

In Galatians there is nothing said about prayer, the object of the Holy Spirit being to rebuke in the sternest way the attempts to undermine the gospel of the grace of God by adding something to it, thus giving “ the flesh ” importance, instead of holding to its entire judgment in the cross of Christ, the crucifixion of “ the old man.” It was not the place, therefore, to expect the subject of prayer to be introduced.

Very different indeed is the Epistle to the Ephesians, for the apostle is there contemplating God in His grace, eternal counsels, and ways towards us, when dead in sins, in and through Christ Jesus. The sense of this upon his heart necessarily bowed him before the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ in prayer and thanksgiving for them. His prayer in the first chapter is that they might have the knowledge of God’s grace and power toward them, in Christ risen and ascended, as well as the hope of His calling.

In the third chapter, the contemplation of the unsearchable riches of Christ brought out in the mystery (now made known) of the body, the church, so bowed him again before the Father, that he prays that, not according to His rich mercy, but according *to the riches of His glory*, they may be strengthened by the Spirit so as to *enjoy* Christ, that He may dwell in their hearts by faith. At the close of the epistle, when he thinks how Satan opposes the saints, and tries to hinder their standing in the new place God has brought them into in heavenly places in Christ, the apostle most earnestly urges the saints to

habitual and continual dealing with God in prayer, and that not for themselves only, but for every member of the body, and for the gospel too. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me that utterance may be give unto me; that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel (vi. 18, 19).

In Philippians, where the prominent subject is devotedness, we might expect something about prayer, and so there is. In chapter i. 4 Paul assures their hearts that he makes request for them always with joy, and in every prayer; and in verse 19 he counts also upon their prayers. He tells them that he prayed definitely for two things; (1) "That their love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment"; (2) "That they may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (vv. 9-11). In the fourth chapter the saints are enjoined to pray about everything as one of the necessary ways of enjoying "the peace of God"; so free is the child of God to feel that he is to keep back nothing, but make known his requests to God. God does not say he will answer every request, but it is clearly His will that we should tell them out before Him. "In *everything* [great matters, or very small, as we call them] by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (iv. 6, 7).

In the epistle to the Colossian saints, the apostle assures them that he was praying always for them (i. 3), and details some of the points he brought

before God on their behalf. As usual, they are most definite, pointed and brief. (1) For *knowledge* of God's will being wisely and spiritually entered into, in order (2) to *walk* worthy of the Lord; (3) to be strengthened with all might according to the power of the glory; (4) that they might be *giving thanks* to the Father for having made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (i. 9-12). He exhorts them also to continue in prayer, to watch in the same with thanksgiving, and to pray also for him and others, particularly as regards the ministry of the word. Moreover, before concluding this short epistle, he refers to one who *laboured fervently in prayer* for them. "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, *always labouring fervently for you in prayers*, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (iv. 12).

In the Thessalonian epistles the apostle says that he made mention of them in his prayers, and that he continually and definitely asked, first, that God would count them worthy of this calling, and secondly, that He would fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified (1 Thess. i. 3; 2 Thess. i. 11). He enjoins them also so to cultivate the habit of prayer as to "pray without ceasing," and in both epistles asks their prayers for himself and his fellow-servants, especially that "the word of the Lord might have free course, and be glorified."

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