

WORDS OF TRUTH

FOR THE

SAINTS OF GOD.



SECOND SERIES.

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“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.” Acts xviii. 11.

SECOND EDITION.

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P R E F A C E .

IN concluding a second series of "Words of Truth," it seems needless to do more than quote the following, by way of explanation, from the preface to the first—

"The little papers composing it, are, for the most part, the substance of lectures on truth by different brethren; several have been revised, some re-written by themselves, whilst others are published without such revision, and with the addition, where it was deemed needful, of connecting thoughts. The responsibility the Editor feels his own: his earnest desire in compiling the volume, has been so to present important points of truth in a plain and simple way, as to minister to the comfort, edification, and instruction of the saints of God.

"May He, whose alone is the ability to bless, be pleased graciously to own and use it thus, to the praise and glory of His own name."

“GOD IS LIGHT.”

1 JOHN, i. 5.

THE two passages which we meet in 1 John,—“God is Light,”—“God is Love,” are, what, I judge, we may call *parent* truths. Following the divine revelation from beginning to end, they will be found to form the whole of it—the two lines by which the texture of the divine counsels has been woven. To effect the results of combined “light” and “love,” that is of *perfect purity* and *perfect goodness*, is the secret that quickens and fills the scene throughout. All is light and love, for all is serving the display of God Himself, and “God is light,” and “God is love”—perfect in purity and perfect in goodness.

I would now, for a little, trace the expressions of the truth, "GOD IS LIGHT," as they shew themselves along the current of the divine revelations, desiring to have the soul humbled, and yet, also, raised and gladdened by such meditations.

At the beginning we get the strongest expression of the holiness and righteousness of God—"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely *die*." Here the Lord attaches to the first commission of evil nothing less than complete separation from Himself; for He is the *living* God. As such He had just shewn Himself, He had just become the source of all that in that moment was surrounding Him in earth, air, and seas; He was the living and life-giving God, and, therefore, a state of death was a state of separation from Him. And this state is announced to be the sure and immediate doom of the creature on the moment of his commission of evil. What a strong assertion;

thus, at the very outset, of the purity of God, of the great truth that "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all;" the creature that becomes a child of evil, a child of darkness, must at once be an exile from Him—"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Thus does the blessed One at once display Himself. And every thing afterwards is but a brightening of this; a sealing afresh of the first impression, that "God is light." We may see also, and fully grant it, that "love" will have its way—that is true and necessary also—but "light" will not give way. In all revealed counsels, in all places and dispensations, it asserts its equal place.

When sin enters, we see this. We read it as distinctly in the *promise* made for man in guilt, as we read it before in the *threat* made to man in innocence. Whatever shape the word takes from the altered condition of its

object, still it clearly comes forth from Him, who is equally, and perfectly, both "light" and "love." "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel," is now said by the Lord God to the serpent about the woman's seed. That is, God will provide a way whereby He can be "*just*" and yet the "*justifier*" of sinners. All the claims of "light" or righteousness shall be honoured, and all the desires of "love" shall be gratified. Such is the interpretation of this first promise of God after sin had entered. Clearly indeed does it announce, in a way of excellent wisdom, which surely passes all thought, that He is both "light" and "love," and that each must be glorified! *Man shall be redeemed or the serpent's head shall be bruised, because "God is love;" but the penalty of sin shall be endured, or the heel of the woman's seed shall be bruised, because "God is light."*

This is surely a full and blessed

expression of God ! And just for the same reason (because " God is light,") from henceforth we see Him a stranger in the place which sin or death has entered. Man's habitation has become defiled. The ground is cursed because of sin, and God cannot be at home here ; He becomes a stranger in His own creation. He visits the earth for the comfort and guidance of His elect, because He is " love," but, otherwise, He is not here—" the Lord went His way as soon as He had left communing with 'Abraham'" (Gen. xviii.) Quite according to this sanctity of the divine feet, which could not rest on a soiled footstool, we find, in process of time (or rather in the progress of His dispensations), when He is about to assume Canaan for His dwelling-place, that the land has to go through a full and complete purifying. The sword of Joshua, the servant of God, Who is " light," rids it of its old corrupters. Cities are made a curse to

the Lord. The fruit of cattle, fields, and trees, are all circumcised, as it were, or purified by various ordinances. Israel themselves baptized, coming into their inheritance as a risen people. All, after its manner, is thus cleansed, ere the Lord can dwell there : for the voice still is, “ what communion has light with darkness ” — “ God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”

So, when all is settled in the land it is sanctity that is marked still — “ holiness to the Lord ” is read everywhere. Approach to God is by a path most jealously consecrated. He is Himself withdrawn into that place which is called “ the holiest of all,” and the whole way into that sanctuary is marked by testimonies to the jealous unmitigated holiness of the Lord. All tells of “ love,” in providing a way at all — but the character of the way equally tells us of “ light.” The banished ones can return, but they learn that iniquity cannot enter with them.

The least stain must be removed; the touch of a grave, or even a bone (symptoms of death, and therefore of sin), though by accident, had to send the worshippers to the purifying water ere they could approach the Lord (Numb. xix.) “Love,” *provided* this water, but “light” *required* that it should be used. And so, the place, the ordinances that furnished and animated it, the worshipper who used it—all still told with one consent, and that, too, clear, full, and unbroken, that “God is light.”

I speak not more particularly, here, of all this temple service in Israel of old—it is well known to bear this witness. I would now observe that the law or covenant, which was established at the same time, bore the like testimony. For, if man, in the confidence of his heart, will approach God by the law, and not by “the shadows of good things to come,” or the witnesses of grace, he must still learn that “God is

light;" and, therefore, "cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The Lord is perfect in righteousness and holiness, and cannot abate one ray of His glory to accomodate it to man's injured and abated capacities. If man will stand before Him in himself, as on Mount Sinai, and not at the door of the sanctuary, he must bring with him that "light" of righteousness and holiness which alone is worthy of the divine presence; he must *continue* in *all* things written in that law which was "holy, just, and good." Nothing less could answer the requisition of Him, who is "light."

This is the strong witness of the law to that great truth we are following through the Scriptures, as, before, we listened to the same from the temple services which accompanied the law. The voice of the words from the top of Sinai, and the voice of the

sanctuary at the foot of it, equally, though differently, uttered this truth—"God is light." And still, we shall find, that as the blessed One advances in dispensing the knowledge of Himself and of His counsels, whether by His hand or by His Spirit, that is, whether by His providence, or by His word, it is all the same.

Israel's captivity becomes the witness in its day. The people had not continued in the "all things" of the law. They had not reflected the "light," as they had bound themselves to do, and they were, therefore, removed from the divine presence. The dispersion of the tribes tells us that "God is light," as the exile of Adam from Eden had told it before. "Where is the bill of your mother's divorce-ment, whom I have put away," says Jehovah to Israel, "or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your trans-

gressions is your mother put away.” “What communion has light with darkness?” we may again ask. Iniquity and transgressions must estrange from God. If Israel walk in the darkness of corrupted nature, they must walk outside the presence of God.

Such is the testimony of the divine hand in the scattering of Israel. Such was the testimony of all the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord against a disobedient people. And such, again, the witness of the Baptist, in due time, after this captivity and scattering. All is harmony. The ministry of the Baptist addresses Israel with this truth, that “God is light,” for it finds them in evil, and summons them to repent, or never to count on taking the place of “children unto Abraham,” that is, of the people of God.

All this testimony is complete. Whatever witness speaks, it is still to the same purpose,—it tells that “God is light.” The threat in Eden

—the promise after sin—the ordinances—the law—the settlement at first, and then the dispersion of Israel—the ministry of the prophets, and of the Baptist, all tell this, and with equal clearness, though, of course, in different style.

But we now reach the testimony of another witness (the most affecting of all), the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All He did was a reflection of God; and all, too, was “light” and “love.” They were mingling their beams, and forming that perfect element in which He lived and moved on this earth of our’s. He was “God manifest in the flesh.” The divine glory shone in His face. Here dwelt “the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” and all that emanated was either “light” or “love.” The Son of God acted on the principles of the first promise, which I have already considered. He consented to be bruised in His own

heel, because of *righteousness*, because "God is light;" but He undertook to bruise the enemy's head, because of *grace*, because "God is love." This was declared in His death more particularly; but generally, too, in all His previous life. All told of "light" and of "love," or reflected "righteousness and peace," "mercy and truth" in mingled rays. He vindicated light, and dispensed love. In all that He did this was traced; and His death was the eminent and meritorious assertion of it. For need I say how gloriously the cross of Christ publishes the truth, that "God is light," and that "God is love." It was, indeed, the precious, wondrous witness of this. To *understand* the cross is, in other words, to understand that it does bear this witness to us as sinners. But in His teaching the Lord bore the same testimony. If we look at His life, or His ministry, whether we listen to the voice of His ways, or His words, we

may say, as the Apostle does say of it all, "this then is the message which we have heard of Him—that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

Such was the life and the doctrine of the Son. And when His witness to "light" and "love" was over, the Holy Ghost held up exactly the same, though in a different form. His teachings by the Apostles in their epistles unfold new mysteries, but all assert these truths. "Love" is dispensed, but "light" is still vindicated also. The thought of "the doctrine of Christ" admitting any darkness or evil was a stranger to the mind of the Spirit; the Apostle, who spake as from Him, stands amazed at the conception of it. "Know ye not," says he, "that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus, Christ were baptized into His *death*—that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of

life" (Rom. vi.) And in another place, the same Apostle assumes that if any have "learnt Christ," if any have "heard Him," and "been taught by Him they must have learnt to put off the former conversation corrupted by lusts (Eph. iv.) So, also, he interprets the grace that brings salvation, as that which teaches the *denial* of ungodliness and worldly lusts and the living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Titus ii.) And thus, though it be now grace or salvation, and not law, that is published, it is with equal sureness and distinction, a witness that "God is light."

The Apostles teach us that our "Saviour" is, also, our "Lord"—a doctrine which secures the honour of the same indestructible truth. The hand which has *rescued*, is ever *asserting its dominion over us*, and we know that it is a *clean and a holy hand*.

But we must not multiply testimonies to this most plain fact, from the

words of the Spirit in the Apostles. I would only add, that the epistle from whence we take the words "God is light" and "God is love," makes it its business, as it were, to weave those two truths together. All the thoughts of the Holy Ghost seem to pass and repass between them. They are the great *tests* of saintly standing and character—as, the chewing of the cud and the cleaving of the hoof, were the notes of cleanness in animals under the law. Consequently, it is there written, "Whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." And Why so? Because "God is light," and "God is love"—therefore, he, who doeth not righteousness, cannot be of Him, who is "light," neither can he, who loveth not his brother, be of Him who is "love." So it is, also, there, written. These are the constant thoughts of the Spirit in this epistle That "God is light," and that "God

is love," quickens, and fills the pen of the ready writer throughout.

Such, then, is the teaching of the Holy Ghost. He sustains unbroken the testimony that "God is light." But as the Son, not only by His teaching, but in His life and person, as we were observing, bore witness to this truth, so does the Holy Ghost in the same two-fold way. His *teaching* through the Apostles does this, as we have now seen, and so does His *indwelling* in the saints. The saints are His temples now. But He dwells in those temples as a "*Holy Spirit, grieved by any contradiction, any practical contradiction, of the truth—that "God is light" (Eph. iv. 30).*

How perfect all this is. The Son, and the Holy Ghost, each in the day of His manifestation, maintains the same blessed testimony, both by deed, and word. And we have only to add, that the glory, by and bye, will keep up the same. The glory which is to close

and crown all, will tell the same most precious and excellent truth—that “God is light,” and that “God is love,” striking that note with such a hand, as shall cause it to vibrate for ever. The sabbath, or the rest itself of all poor sinners who have trusted in Jesus, will tell, that “God is love:” the entrance into that rest, and the element that surrounds it, that “God is light.” For the earth, which will be the footstool in the age of the glory, must be purged of its corrupters ere the glory can return and dwell there; as we saw of old, that Canaan and all that belonged to it was cleansed ere the Lord of the tribes would make it His inheritance. And when it is thus purged it will be kept clean. “I will early destroy all the wicked of the land,” says the Lord of the earth in the days of its glory, “that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.” And so as to the upper house, or the throne, or heavenly glory

nothing can be allowed even to approach that can in any way defile. "They shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it." "*Without* are dogs," &c. Beyond the sphere which the glory fills, must recede all that is unclean, all that is the contradiction of "light." For the darkness will then be *outer* darkness.

Thus, indeed, from the garden of Eden up to the glory, we get the constant witness, in all the ways of His hand, and in all the revelations of His mind, that "GOD IS LIGHT, and in Him there is no darkness at all."

“GOD IS LOVE.”

1 John iv. 8, 16.

I HAVE already considered St. John's words, “God is light.” I have called that a *parent* truth, and been looking at its fruit or results. “GOD IS LOVE,” is, in like manner, a parent truth; and I would now also trace its path through the Scripture, according to my small measure. But who is sufficient for such a theme? I would, however, with desire pursue it a little, though this has been somewhat anticipated in the previous meditations. May the Spirit direct and control!

At creation God was shewn to be “love,”—the garden told that by the testimony of all that was there, so that I speak not particularly of it. But so was it afterwards, when that garden of delights was forfeited.

We read in 2 Cor. iii. that the law was a dispensation that was to be “done away;” and in Heb. viii. that it was not “faultless.” These passages strikingly tell us, that the law was not altogether according to God’s mind, that He could not *rest* in it. Not that it was faulty in itself; we know that it was “holy, just, and good”—as fully answerable to *its purpose*, as the gospel; but still found fault with, because not, altogether, according to God. And this can be at once understood, for “God is love.” There the secret appears. The law could not possibly meet Him—for it gave no occasion to His shewing Himself, or to His acting agreeably with his nature. It must, therefore, be “done away.” It could not abide before God. It was not God’s own thing. The promise was such. As the garden and all the condition of things at creation told what God was, so to tell the same, as soon as sin entered, it was the *promise* that was

revealed, and not the law (Gen. iii.) The law came in afterwards to serve, it is true, great purposes; but *the promise was God's own thing*. And we may just observe, accordingly, that in Deut. xxxi. and in Gal. iii. (not to mention other Scriptures) God keeps Himself in company with the "song," and with "the promise," while "Moses" and "the law" are linked together in both those Scriptures.

But this, rather, by the way. The law was clearly not God's own thing; and the reason of this, we see, derives itself out of His nature—blessed be His name! But having thus set God with the promise, or having thus learnt that "God is love," we can track His wondrous and excellent path onward. Thus—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "God is love." He looked out upon it *according to Himself*, and its ruins

drew from Him the remedy. He loved a ruined and defiled world, however, in the only way that He could love it, in the only way that He could exercise Himself towards such an object, that is, with the love of *pity*, and He gave His Son for its relief and rescue.

Here, then, was the beginning of His way, for "God is love." The stream must be according to the spring. The parent truth determines the produce. We learn *the way* from the *character*. And as we follow the stream, it is still the same water. Let dispensations roll on and disclose themselves to us, God is seen in each, according to Himself. Great unfoldings both of persons and ministries there may be, but all are One. It may be the Father, it may be the Son, it may be the Holy Ghost that is manifested, but still it is but the unfoldings of God, and "God is love."

Thus the Son looking back on *past* dispensations, says, "my Father

worketh hitherto ;” and then reflecting on the *then present* one, He adds, “and I work.” Similar works, whether in the ministry of “the Father,” or “the Son.” And those works are works of grace, works of pity to poor sinners, Bethesda healings (John v.) And so the Son, looking forward to *still coming* dispensations, says, speaking of the Holy Ghost, “He will abide with you for ever”—“He will take of mine and shew it unto you”—“He will guide you into all truth.” He will indeed be the servant of your need and joy. Herein is love still. All this is God unfolded (to speak after the manner of man), God seen in the persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but all is “love.”

We might notice the trial and the proof of this, and we shall see, as to divine love, its unconquerable *patience*. For the Father, when He worked, had His grace slighted or misunderstood, by generation after generation, from

Adam to Christ, but still He worked "hitherto." The Son, when He worked in like grace, was refused, and had all indignities and evil to endure, but He loved, and laboured, to the end, till He was cast out and crucified. The "Holy Ghost," now working, is grieved of the saints, and yet unfailing, unwearied, abides still the "Comforter," the "Spirit of truth," in them. And thus is it love, and love of the same quality. "Love never faileth." The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost minister in equal love, tried variously, but alike unfailing in each, and patient in all.

It is not, however, simply thus in *pity*, and in *patience*—in pity towards the world or sinners, and in patient forbearing towards believers—that divine love shews, and exercises itself. God has sought another way in which to be among us—in the love of *complacency*. He has to set His saints before Him, so put them in Christ, so

taken counsels, about them, and multiplied thoughts about them, as gives Him to look on them without blame or spot, that He may delight in the sight of them, and rest in His love. St. John teaches us to look at this form of love—"my Father will love him." "I will love him," says Jesus of His saint—"We will come unto him and make our abode with him." This is all the love of complacency, the love of delight, such love as *refreshes* the mind of God.

These exercises of God, it is indeed happy to look at; we being the objects of them all. And they still keep in memory the great first truth, "God is love;" they still tell us whence they flow, and are only the narrower or richer current of the one great divine source. It is love in *pity*, in *patience*, in *complacency*; but it is LOVE, and only love, happy and fruitful in its constant, though varied exercise.

And what other exercise can it

have? If it could, it would. But in this complacency, it abides for ever. "God will rest in His love." Glory, by and bye, will be the gift of this love of complacency, as salvation is the gift of His pity now, and the upholding of His saint the fruit of His patience. But beyond this complacency love knows, and can know, no form more excellent. It will be the element of the divine presence, through endless ages of glory. In it the saints will live, and move, and have their being for ever, after the love that once *pitied* them in their sins, and was *patient* with them in their shortcomings, and "*perfected*" itself towards them in giving them boldness in the very day of judgment, has done its wondrous work.

Love, in every *trial* of it, will have exercised and displayed itself, and, then, will get its eternal *refreshment*, in the delight and complacency with which it will rest in its object for ever.

Love has thus determined the character of God's own way. But we may also see that it equally determines the person and actings of His children—that “God is love,” is still the great *parent* truth.

For the saints, or children of God, “love” is the divine nature—as it is written, “Every one that loveth is born of God.” And again—“He that loveth not knoweth not God.” There is no fruit of His energy or spirit, no communion in knowledge with Him, but through love. “If any man love God, the same is known of Him.

And this being so, it appears from the further teaching of the Spirit of God, that two things are sought for, and expected from us, as His children. I mean “confidence” and “imitation,”—“God is love;” and, therefore, in our actings towards Himself, He cannot possibly be happy in any thing less than *confidence*. It is the answer love is entitled to—the only answer

which, from its nature, it can (shall I say) put up with. Nothing will gratify, or satisfy love, but love. And in the Gospel, God is to get it from us. The Apostle, therefore, states this (though we might derive it out of the great parent truth)—“We *love* Him *because He first loved us*.” We do not *fear* Him, we do not *mistrust* Him, but we *love* Him—*because* He has already loved us. “There is no fear in love—perfect love casteth out fear.” Love leaves no room for fear. It cannot dwell in the same house with it. The elements are destructive one of another. If we know that love, perfect love, is dealing with us, we cease to fear. Confidence only is the due answer, as it is the necessary demand of love.

But so in our actings towards others, God cannot be happy in any thing less than *imitation*. And this all the Apostles tell us. It might, again I would say, be derived out of the great

parent truth. But the Spirit is pleased to state it largely to us. "If God have so loved us, we ought also to love one another"—"if we shut up our bowels of compassion, how dwelleth the love of God in us." "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

In its actings, thus, whether upward towards God, or out towards others, love will be found, in us, this principle of confidence and of imitation. And the Spirit teaches us, that to judge ourselves to be "lovers of God" without this confidence and this imitation, is practicing a deceit on ourselves. For I read these two sentences—"we love Him because he first loved us,"—"he that loveth God must love his brother also." The first of these holy sentences tell us this—that we can only love God as knowing that He first loved us—that is we love Him, because we have confidence in His love

to us. Were it otherwise, it would be an assumption that our love is greater than God's—if we assert that we have affection towards Him more surely than we are confident He has towards us, it is saying that we are better than God. Therefore the only true, spiritual, evangelical love of God springs from confidence in His love towards us. So, the second of them tells us, that to assume that we can love God, without loving one another, is a reflection on God. For how can we think that He will accept the affection of one who has it not for his brother? This would be another way of making ourselves better than God; we would reject such affection ourselves.

How simple, then, those two holy sentences, or judgments, of the Spirit of God are, how necessarily true, when we consider the great parent truth, so to call it again, that “*GOD IS LOVE.*” We must, therefore, *confide in His love* ere we can love Him, or have

affection towards Him, ourselves,—we must also *love others*, as well as Him—our brethren, as well as God.

Thus, we get the personal acts of the children, as well as God's own ways, out of this *parent* truth. We pass into God's place, in this way of love. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." By love we know that we are in God's place, in fellowship with Him. This assures the heart. "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him." The very character of the place—the very element that fills it—the commandment or voice that is heard there, is this—"that we believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another." That is, that we assure ourselves of God's love to us, and exercise love among ourselves from one to the other. This is the commandment, the ordinance,

the character, the element of God's place. And he that keepeth this commandment—the soul that breathes this element—dwelleth in God, and God in him.

This is the region we inhabit. These are the present realms of the saints—“translated into the kingdom *of the dear Son.*” It will be a region of glory, by and bye—“His eternal kingdom and glory.” But the elements will dwell together, and fill the whole place. Love is (as I believe another has said) but hidden glory—glory will be manifested love. Love will be for ever quickening the hidden springs and streams of affection that are known and exercised, and glory will gild the whole scene where these affections flow, and have their happy course for ever and for ever.

Precious and glorious indeed is thus the constant testimony, that “*GOD IS LOVE:*” and he that dwelleth in *love, dwelleth* in God, and God in him.

THE FAILURE OF THE SONS OF AARON.

LEV. X.

ONE of the blessed places in which we are set, as children of God, is that of being made "*priests*" unto Him. But whilst we are apt, and justly so, to consider this a position of highest privilege, we too often forget, practically, that it is one of constant *service*. Set in blessed nearness unto God, yet (and by that very nearness), the priests in Israel became mere *servants* of all the people. Jesus, though "made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (a priest and king), is now a "*minister of the sanctuary*," after the pattern of the priestly service of Aaron ; and we, "priests and kings unto God, &c.," are set in the place of *service*, as the "sons of Aaron."*

* We find in this part of Scripture the

God is "content." And here is our comfort under the sense of it all.

Peace is heard again. But if it is so, the sense of that should not make us think lightly about the sins of our brethren.

Thou, Lamb of God ! didst shed thy blood,

Thou didst our load of misery bear ;

And hast exalted us to share

The rank of kings and priests to God.

To thee we'd render evermore

The honour, glory, praise that's due :

Might, power, and obedience, too—

And in our hearts we Thee adore :

Amen ! Amen !

O Lord, Amen !

“TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH.”

REV. ii.

THE failure of man, of the Church even, does not touch the source of divine grace—the goodness of God. From Adam downwards every thing placed in the hands of man has failed; but this very failure and evil of man has been made the opportunity by God of showing out more and richer grace. He judges the failure, and then presents an object of hope. When Adam sinned, “the seed of the woman” was promised. When the law was broken, and Israel failed, prophetic testimony came in, and all the promises of the Messiah. *Promise* is that on which faith can rest, when everything else fails.

Times of declension and unfaithfulness in the *body* give occasion for brighter manifestations of grace in *individuals*, who under such circumstan-

yourselves, and see whether you are ready for the battle, or whether Satan would not find that in you, the flesh—so alive—which would serve as a handle he might use. But whilst thus judging yourselves remember that your souls, in the midst of whatever failure and humiliation, are to rest on the joy of Christ's perfect righteousness, though to have *overcome* will add to our joy in the day of His appearing, and bring more glory to Him now.

The Lord enable us so to walk in the Spirit, that we may discover and know more and more the grace and suitableness which is in Him for our every necessity, and understand in our own souls the fitness and power of His promises.

JESUS FORGIVING SINS.

MATT. ix. 6. MARK ii. 9.
LUKE v. 24.

GOD was shewing his rich and various mercy in the old time; but this was done after a peculiar manner. *He forgave sin—He healed disease—He fed His people.* But all this was done in a peculiar manner. There was a certain distance and reserve,—as it were, a remaining still in his own sanctuary, still in the heavens, though he was thus gracious. He met the need of a sinner, but he was in the temple, withdrawn to the holiest place, and the sinner had to come through a consecrated path to get the virtue of the mercy-seat. He met the need of his camp in the desert, but it was by remaining still in heaven, and sending from thence the angels' food, the mighty's meat, and giving them water,

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

Jesus, I rest in thee,
In thee myself I hide;
Laden with guilt and misery,
Where can I rest beside?
'Tis on thy meek and lowly breast,
My weary soul alone can rest.

Thou holy one of God!
The Father rests in thee,
And in the Saviour of that blood,
Which speaks to him for me:
The curse is gone—through thee I'm blest
God rests in thee—in thee I rest.

“LEANING ON THE BELOVED.”

Cant. viii. 5—7.

THESE verses contain one of the most blessed parts of the instruction of this book. We have given to us in the previous chapters of the “song” many and varied traits in the experience of the Church,—sometimes those of failure, sometimes those of blessing and joy; but here we get her *last* experience. She is seen after having learnt the sorrows of the wilderness, coming up out of it in ease, “*leaning upon her Beloved.*”

And it was just so in the case of David: his “last words” give us a very parallel experience—“Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire.” We see that all his past ex-

perience of God, and of the service which he had sought, to render, did not remove the necessity of saying, "my house is not so with God." But he was able to look into the condition of his house, and though he found things in it that were very different to what his soul desired;—Adonijah, for instance, in rebellion,—yet this cast him the more entirely on God, on the strength of God—not merely the love of God, but also the strength of God. For there are seasons in our experience when we are brought to feel that nothing but the *almighty* strength of *God* can meet our case.

The Church had previously been speaking of her desire to share with Christ many blessings in closest intimacy, saying, "O that thou wert as my brother," &c. *v. i.* seeking to have an equality of joy with him; but there was a deeper lesson to be learned by her. There is a time coming when we shall be with Christ, and know him

as a brother, having the same results of joy with himself; but the Church is *now* to know the personal love and care of him whose strength she needs, as it is expressed, *v. 5*. Christ says to her, "I raised thee up under the apple tree," &c.—'I found thee, not in thy *mother's house*, but, born under the apple tree, in wild and unsuitable circumstances—*there I met thee*, needing the almighty care of Him who acts towards thee as God.' It is as God, that the Lord Jesus speaks of himself here—not merely as the One with whom the Church was to share blessing, but as He who possesses the restoring, recovering power, the almighty care of God,—that which is wanted to meet the circumstances of need and weakness belonging to the "wilderness."

These, beloved, are *our* circumstances, and they will be found to be so, by all of us, sooner or later. One of the reasons for the discipline and

the many sorrowful lessons of one sort or another, which we may each day be called upon to pass through, is this, that we may learn to know what is the love and strength of Him, who found us at first in our state of degradation and wretchedness, who said unto us, "live;" and who will continue to sustain us until at length we shall leave "the wilderness" for ever, leaning upon Him.

Now this is blessed experience. It does not say here *how* she leans. It may be as a weak and fainting one, —that which is altogether a burden; or there may be communion and the power of thankfulness towards him on whom she leans. Power of circumstances may hinder the latter, and the leaning will then be almost like that of a dead thing on the arm of the "Beloved." The expression in ver. 5, includes all this—the resting in joy and confidence or the very faintliest leaning that our souls may know.

These things are very different. But in either case it is leaning on the arm of love, "coming up out of the wilderness," where the weakness and the need have been known.

Now I do say, that this proving the depths of "the wilderness," but the depths also of the faithful love and power of God, is perhaps, almost the deepest experience of blessing that the soul can know. Learning suffering, and learning "the wilderness" as the children of God learn it, are different things. If our souls had never known "the wilderness," they never would have known the blessedness of thus leaning on the arm of the "Beloved." Our joy whilst we are in the present earthly circumstances will be just in proportion as we are leaning upon him. Will not this be our joy when we are leaving "the wilderness," when we go up out of it? Will any other thought than that we are leaning upon God, then sustain us? No, our being

dependant on the kindness and power of God, will be all our sustainment at that hour. So also *now*, in order that we may overcome in the smallest circumstance, we must lean upon the love and power of God.

There would be no blessing to the Church even in the *power* of God, if that power had not proceeded in its workings towards us from love. And that is the reason, I believe, for what is said in the next verse, which seems to come in almost abruptly,—“Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm, for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave, the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement smell.

Beloved friends, this is the voice of the soul, which, conscious of need, is leaning upon the arm of strength, and knows the blessedness, the marvellous and unspeakable blessedness of the love which permits it to be there. For when we have tasted a little of the

preciousness of that love, what is the voice of our souls? This verse describes it. We feel that, if it were not *faithful* love with which we had to do, "the wilderness" must overcome us. We see our need so much of this love, we see its preciousness so, we see its value so, that our only sorrowful thought is—will it last—will it endure—will it continue to the end. The thought of losing it is a sting. If we expect that it will diminish or go away, then the very preciousness of the love becomes "as coals of fire," and produces in us a feeling "cruel as the grave." Therefore the cry of the Church here, "Set me as a *seal* upon thine *heart*"—the place of affection, "as a *seal* upon thine *arm*"—the place of strength. In other words, 'let thy love unto me be a true and faithful love; let me never have any suspicion; otherwise this very love of thine would become a torment.'

How blessed is it to be able to take

the sweetness of such words as these (and they would not have been put here unless they were sure to be heard and answered)—how blessed to be cast on love so faithful and so perfect!—to know the unchangeableness of *divine love*! Christ was well aware of the anxiety that would arise,—the torture and sorrow suspicion would create in the hearts of his saints; and therefore he met this feeling, by assuring us of the faithfulness of his love—that it *will* continue unto the very end. He says, “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.” So our souls may be comforted.

In order to have full blessing, we must have to do with *perfect* love, and this is the very character of the love of God; it is *perfect* love. There may be many obstacles to come against it—many hindrances in the way (our daily experience as saints proves this), but, whatever there may be, we must remember that we have to do with Him,

whose love is a full and perfect love. Yes, it is something that never can be quenched, and it is something that never can be purchased—"though a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned."

Do you ask, "can I render any thing unto God (even as a saint), so as *to make* his love more perfect?" or, when, through his grace, you may have been able to walk a little in those ways that are well pleasing in his sight, and have felt the joy of his presence with your souls, does the thought arise 'Oh that I could ever walk thus pleasingly unto him, and then I should be more *deserving* of his love?' Such thoughts are contrary to grace—to the love of God. We must not rest the perfectness of that love on any thing whatever that *we can do*. It is quite a right feeling to desire to walk worthy of the Lord; but if the thought of 'how shall I attract this love,' or,

‘how make myself more worthy of it,’ were to come in and mix itself up with it, this would altogether mar the blessedness and destroy the comfort of the love itself.

Nothing can *purchase* the love of Jesus, it must flow to us *freely* from his own heart. If I did not see this, if I did not see that the love with which we have to do came from God without there being any reason whatever in us to draw it forth, I could not have any comfort in thinking about it, I should soon become suspicious of it, and therefore sad and sorrowful. But it is *divine* love; it is free, and knows no change.

If we are learning any thing, beloved friends, at the present time, it is our need of the personal love and care of the Lord Jesus; we become increasingly conscious of it day by day—the personal grace, and wisdom, and love of Jesus. When taking any steps for God in “the wilderness,” we *must*

find this to be the case, we shall dread to meet any circumstances of danger, or to know any sorrow, except as having him present with us in it.

Here then is the character of the love of the Lord Jesus? May it become as honey that enlightens our eyes, may it cause us to lean more and more on him as our "Beloved," to give up ourselves unto him entirely, seeking to be guided through "the wilderness" by the skilfulness of his hands.

O HOLY Saviour, friend unseen,
 Since on thy arm thou bid'st us lean,
 Help us throughout life's changing scene
 By faith to cling to thee!

Blest with this fellowship divine,
 Take what thou wilt we'll ne'er repine,
 E'en as the branches to the vine
 We'd only cling to thee!

Without a murmur we dismiss
 Our former dreams of earthly bliss,
 Our joy, our consolation this
 Each hour to cling to thee.

What though the world deceitful prove,
 And earthly friends and hopes remove ;
 With patient uncomplaining love
 Still would we cling to thee.

Oft when we seem to tread alone
 Some barren waste with thorns o'ergrown,
 Thy voice of love in gentlest tone
 Whispers, " Still cling to me."

Though faith and hope may oft be tried.
 We ask not, need not aught beside,
 So safe, so calm, so satisfied,
 The souls that cling to thee !

Blest is our lot whate'er befall,
 Who can affright or who appal—
 Since on thy strength, our rock, our all—
 Jesus ! we cling to thee.

"THE COUNSEL OF PEACE."ZECH. vi. 13.

THIS chapter, written after the return of the Jews from Babylon; and when they were seeking to rebuild the temple, was intended to encourage them in that work. It speaks therefore of Joshua, Huldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah (those which had come from Babylon) by name. But "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation," and although some event previously to take place may occupy the chief part of it, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is looked forward to as the ultimate point, the true consummation. So here, after an allusion to the history of God's providence in the four great monarchies, and to the judgment of Babylon, the prophet comforts the hearts of those who were returned thence with a direct prophecy of Christ.

seek to add a single thing, we are adding, or rather taking away something from the perfectness of "the counsel of peace."

Who or *what* shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? shall tribulation or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, these things shall, as means for mortifying the flesh, only minister to Christ's glory. Shall death? it will only bring us into his presence; shall life? it is that by which we enjoy his favour. "Nothing shall separate!" He is "*on the throne*" as the eternal witness of peace accomplished, and thence he ministers it to us.

The Lord give us grace to look at him alone!

“HOPE TO THE END.”

1 PET. i.

How blessed is it, beloved, to dwell on that “abundant mercy,” that eternal love of our God, which has “called us unto His kingdom and glory,” giving us 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 us.” How blessed, too, to consider our security, our eternal security—“*kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time!*” The word “kept” is in the original a very strong word, and implies most clearly the situation of the Church as engarrisoned,—enclosed,—guarded,—protected *by the power of God* against all the powers of darkness.—“The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

But while many would take advantage of this precious truth—while many say they will be “kept” any how, and therefore they may live as they please,—we would reply, “nay, we are kept *through faith*.” It is only as we are living by *faith*, realising the power of *faith*—faith which “overcometh the world,”—that we *realise* what is that power of God by which we are “kept.”

Beloved, we want to have that power *manifested*! we want to *show it forth*, as well as to be “kept” by it! We would that the world should *see* what we are, as well as that we should *know* what we shall be! “*Now are we the sons of God!*” Oh! let us consider what the relationship is, and what we ought to be as “*sons of God*”—as “*obedient children*.”

Where ought we to be living? *with God! in God!*—not “in the world.” What ought we to be doing? loving and keeping the words of Jesus,—

not "fashioning ourselves according to the former lusts in our ignorance;" then would he come, and the Father would come, and make their abode with us. "*Ye are the light of the world.* A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are within the house. *Let your light so shine before men,* that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

But, beloved, what is the Church doing? Is it living in heaven, as it ought to be? Is it dazzling the world with the glorious manifestation of the holiness and power of God? Is it reflecting the brightness of His image, and thus being "*the light of the world?*" No! believers are grovelling as in the mud—disgusting the world itself with their *religion*. Oh! believe me, it is better not to be professors at all—*such* religion makes infidels.

Alas ! alas ! how has the Church lost her strength, her power, her comfort ! how has she lost the mind of God ! thrown herself out of her right position ! Instead of bearing testimony against evil ; instead of believers being as Christ upon earth, what have they done ? Why, joined with the evil ! joined with the world ! encumbered themselves with wordly trammels ! bound their feet with manacles ! Instead of *waiting* for that which is here spoken of as “ ready to be revealed in the last time,” in eager expectation for the coming of their Lord (as they ought to be, and would have been, if faithful), what are they doing ? Most of them wishing to delay his coming ! willing, yea, gladly willing, to put it off, if they could, another eighteen hundred years !

Does not this show, beloved, that we are living upon something *here* ? that we have, or are desiring to have, a portion *here* ? I believe there is

nothing so calculated to *unearth* us as the realization of the coming of Christ. We see the effect of it in the Church eighteen centuries ago; they did not calculate the probable number of years that might elapse ere their Lord's return; they were expecting, they were desiring that it might be in their time. *That* will be the day of "salvation" to the Church—*that* will be the time of the Church's glory; we shall see our Lord "face to face!"—"we shall be like him!" Those who have gone before are happy, unspeakably happy—"with Christ;" but they are not yet as happy as they will be, not yet "like" Jesus, not yet "conformed unto his image." They are still waiting the coming of the Lord (1 Thess. iv. 18). And this, beloved, is what we should all be looking for; for this should we be found ready, as those who have their loins girt about and their lamps burning.

Oh ! let us, then, imitate the example of those who ran in an earthly race, and for an earthly prize ; *they* looked well to their feet that nothing might impede their course ; *they* kept their eye fixed on the laurel ;—and shall *we, we* who are running for an incorruptible crown, for an unfading inheritance,—shall *we*, ought *we* to loiter by the way ! turning aside for every, the veriest bauble that we meet with on the road ! When we have *such* glory before us, shall we be attracted by the tinsel of Satan's glory ! setting our affections on dust and ashes,—that which will be food for the flames at the coming of Christ ! Sad truth for the worldling, that all he has gloried in, all he has been heaping together for himself, he is only laying up in store against the day of the wrath of God.

Beloved, it is impossible for us to grasp at things “before” and “behind” too ; were we “pressing forward towards the mark for the prize of

the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" were we "reaching forth unto those things which are before," we must be forgetting those behind; were we looking up, gazing with the eye of faith on our portion above, could we be groping in the dirt of this world for what we might find there. Faith is an anticipating grace. Faith is a substantial reliance on the verities of God.

We cannot now *comprehend* what it is to be "heirs of God."—" *Heirs of God!*" oh, what a thought! the utmost expansion of faith cannot attain unto it. Like the Queen of Sheba, who, much as she had heard of the glory of Solomon, when she came, declared that the half had not been told her, so dazzled was she with all that she beheld;—so will it be with us, when we shall "see the King in his beauty," when we shall "behold the land which is very far off." Oh! gladly would my soul now bask in the beams, in the full efful-

gence of eternal glory—that glory which shall as far exceed all other glories as the brightness of the meridian sun surpasses every lesser light. Oh, beloved, how shall we be *then* amazed at the recollection of things which *now* have power to draw off our attention and distract our thoughts!

Beloved, let us give heed to this word “*now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*” When the Edomite asked reproachfully, “Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night?”—the watchman said, “The morning cometh;” so, beloved, when in these “last days” we find “scoffers walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?” we may joyfully reply, “*the morning cometh!*” “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us, *therefore*, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” Let us not be satisfied with putting off a little evil

here, and a little evil there; but let us obey the command of God the Lord, when he says, "Come out, come out, and be separate from it all;" let us not suffer a hair's breadth of evil to stand in our way! let us deliver ourselves from that worldly burden that weighs down the heads of believers, and prevents them from looking up, and seeing that their redemption draweth nigh! "Seeing that all *these things* shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, *looking for and hasting the coming of the day of God*, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat? nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.*" Let

us show to the world that “our conversation is in heaven, *from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*, who shall change our vile bodies and fashion them like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself—“*let us stand fast in the Lord !*”

Language fails us, it is utter *beggary*, when we attempt to describe the future glory of the saints, or what it will be to be “like Jesus;” we cannot get further than the apostle did when he said, “beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear 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*”—yet all the revelation of that future glory is intended by our God to have its *present* practical influence on our souls, just as John adds, “*and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*”

Oh that the power of God may be more manifest in us ! Oh that we may rise out of the dust ! rise in all our proper glory and show the world what are our *hopes and expectations*, show that eternity is written upon then ! shew that eternity is written too upon our *actions*, beloved, as well as upon our hopes !

When every thing that the world is now rejoicing and glorying in shall become the object of God's wrath and fiery judgment, when they shall call on the rocks and hills to fall on them and hide them in vain ; the saints shall prove that their crowns are *incorruptible*, and their inheritance that which *fadeth not away*.

“ Wherefore gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you *at the revelation of Jesus Christ*, as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance : but as

he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation ; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.”

“ WATCH ! ”

THE *flesh* in the saints is as bad, or worse, than any flesh, therefore watch, continue in prayer, be clothed with humility.

Live no more by *memory* than by *sense* ; but live by *faith* ; “ forgetting the things which are behind,” and pressing forwards. It was not when Paul was in communion with the glory, that he was in danger of being puffed up, but when he came down in the memory of it. *Memory* has its own work, and so has *sense*, but *conscious present communion with God* is the power and glory of the saint and his

especial privilege. Here he gets every thing, for here he has God ; and here he has every thing *safely*, for he has every thing in God—with God.

The most attractive gift or grace, abstract from Christ, and not in Christ (Christ himself not supplying or being the grace) will only be an occasion to the flesh. Therefore watch, and continue in prayer, that your soul lose not the *joy*, and God the *glory* in you.

Be *happy in the Lord* ; I charge you be *holy*, too,—be *mighty in Jesus*.

Welcome thy gentle scourge ! thou precious Lord ;

Small are the cords thy love hath interwin'd
And light the stroke. I own the just award
Of strife, when in thy temple thou dost find
Unmeet intruders,—traffickers abhorr'd,
That grieve thy loving spirit's gentle mind,

Making the holy place, where thou shouldst
reign

Alone, a den of earthliness again.

Thou wilt destroy this temple, for within
A fretting leprosy is on the walls ;
Nor can this plague-spot of indwelling sin
Be purified until the fabric falls ;
And though, at times, to feel thy work begin
Dismays the shrinking flesh, yet faith recalls
The blessed hope, that as thy word is true,
Thou wilt return and build it up anew.

Yes, Lord ! a body glorious as thine own
Shall upward from the dusty ruin spring ;
And the unsightly grain, in weakness sown,
Shall rise in pow'r, a holy, heav'nly thing ;
When thou shalt come to sit on David's
throne,
And rule in righteousness as Zion's king,
With all thy risen saints. Oh, soon again
Lord Jesus, come ! Take thy great pow'r
and reign !

DO I LACK REST ?

“Come unto me, and I will give you rest.”

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.....
and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”—MATT. xi

FAITH knows the Lord Jesus, exalted to the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, as the One in whom all fullness dwells, unto whom all power is given in heaven and earth, seated on the throne, the Orderer of, and Ruler over, all. There is He blessed, and blessed for ever. But it is altogether another place in which we see Him in this chapter—despised and rejected of those unto whom He had presented Himself in the name of Jehovah. There, too, is He blessed, and blessed for us.

John the Baptist—“Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another ?” *v.* 3—even he seems doubting.

Israel—“Whereunto shall I liken

this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced : we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented"—*v.* 16. 19, displeased equally with John and with Jesus, content with neither law nor grace. Men do not like righteousness, that is too strict for them ; neither like they grace, that is too free : they would have part one and part the other.

Again. If we look at " the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done,"—" Woe unto thee, Chorasin ! woe unto thee, Bethsaida ! for if the mighty works, which have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for you," *v.* 21 24,—we find them worse than any other.

It is a solemn thought that we are “*unto God* a sweet savour of Christ in them that perish,” as well as “in them that are saved.” His testimony rejected, the soul of Jesus finds its rest in God. He had done God’s will; the name of God had been glorified—there was all the full consciousness of this, and, therefore, what blessed repose! Nowhere do we find the Lord Jesus rising above the power of circumstances, rejoicing in spirit, more than here. His soul, in the midst of this weary world, finds rest in *submitting* to the will of God.

“*At that time*”—after and amidst all the rejection, Jesus “answered and said, *I thank thee*, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. *Even so Father : for so it seemed good in Thy sight !*” v. 25, 26. He bowed to the righteous sovereignty of God.

Now, I believe, this would ever be the position of soul in the saint when walking in communion with God. Assuredly it is the right spirit, because it is the recognition of God's "ordering all things after the counsel of His own will." But, then, how different from the petulance of many of us!

If we witness our testimony rejected; our wishes disappointed; our motives misunderstood; trial coming whence we least expected it, from Christians, from our own family, from those whom we have sought to serve; *then* is the time to bow to the righteous sovereignty of God, and to say, "*I thank Thee, O Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight.*" O, dear friends! if our souls knew a little more of the marvellous mercy vouchsafed in God's having revealed Jesus, quickened us when dead in trespasses and sins, put forth the arm of His power on our behalf, we should not be wasting our time, as now too

frequently, in vain murmurings and regrets; but should be enabled to say, "*I thank thee, O Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight.*"

This is most blessed. There is in it the recognition of the "good and acceptable and perfect will of God." There is no reasoning here. In Jeremiah we find complaint, cursing the day in which he was born; in Habbakuk, argument; in Job, self-vindication; but here, there is nothing of the sort, it is simple subjection to the "will of God," as being the *best* thing possible. "*Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.*" What "seemed good" in the Father's sight, was *good* in the sight of Jesus. It was ever so.—"Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." Now this is resignation. It is *not* resignation, merely to bow to that which we cannot escape; true resignation recognizes a thing to be good and fitting, *because the will of God*, however, try-

ing, however painful, to ourselves.—
“ I thank Thee.”

Another blessed truth,—when Jesus felt Himself to be thus rejected by all about Him, what was it rested upon His soul ? *“ All things are delivered unto me of my Father.”*—In utter rejection by man ; “ all things ” are given unto Him of God.

Beloved, did you never find, when your own wills have been thwarted, when there has been self-denial, and the bowing of the will to God, something opened up to the soul in blessing ? It is habitually and practically true, that “ he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

As to matter of fact, Jesus is here the rejected One—rejected of the world, but the exalted One of the Father. And now He can tell forth, *“ No man knoweth the Son but the Father,”* v. 27. Although the world knew Him not, the *Father* knew him,—although the world delighted not in Him, the *Father* de-

lighted in Him,—although He was not precious to the world, He was precious to the *Father*.

Again :—“ Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.” I find the Lord Jesus Christ, with the knowledge of the Father in His own soul, supported all through His rejection, and now He stands forth to “re-veal” the Father’s name to others. The Father is only known by the revelation of the Son.—“ O righteous Father, *the world hath not known Thee* : but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me. And I have *declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it* ; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

If you are of the world, you will not want to know that name which Jesus came to manifest. If the world is your portion, you will not want to know that name which was the por-

tion of Jesus when the world had rejected Him. "Love not the *world*, neither the things that are in the *world*. If any man love the *world*, the love of *the Father* is not in him. For all that is in the *world*, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of *the Father*, but is of the *world*."

I would speak a little on the last verses of this chapter.

There is a marked distinction between what is said of *Jesus giving* rest, and *our finding* rest, a distinction of much importance. He does not tell me *to do* any thing, in order that *He might give* me rest; it is simply. "Come unto me," v. 28. But in order to *my finding* rest, He says, "Take *my* yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart," v. 29; practical obedience is made necessary.

It is of great moment, to see the connection these things have one with the other; the saints often lose the

present, practical enjoyment of the rest which Jesus has *given* them, because of not taking heed to it.

In the consciousness of the possession of "all things,"—all things being delivered unto Him of the Father, all power given unto Him in heaven and earth, all judgment committed unto Him, every thing His (for there is not one single thing which the Father has not given into the hands of Jesus), He says, *Come unto me.*

He does not say, *Come unto me*, as the despised and rejected One merely; no, "*Come unto me*," as the One, "despised and rejected," indeed of men, yet as having in Himself all that men so eagerly seek after, all that they count estimable, everything that is an object of human ambition. He is "worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, blessing." There is in Him, whom the world has rejected, not only everything that is suited to our need as sin-

ners, but that, also, which can satisfy the utmost desire of our hearts, therefore is it, "*Come.*" This is most blessed ; it shows forth the grace of the heart of Jesus. When we find Him, as the "rejected" One, turning round and saying, *Come unto me ! Come unto me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, *and I will give you rest*, we learn grace indeed ?

Coming unto Him, believing on His name, is all the great secret of the rest He offers. The self-righteous multitude, the Scribes, the Pharisees, the lawyers, had rejected Him ; but Jesus knew that there were some standing around, weary, heavy laden ones, trying to get rid of their burden of guilt in vain. The law could never give them relief ; the law could never take away their sins ;—to these He turns, "*Come unto me*, and *I will give you rest.*" Again : there were those who had had the experience of trying to find rest in society, in friends, in the

world, and to them He says, "Come unto *me*." Rest, true rest is received in simply coming to Jesus, What is it that my soul wants? "Come unto *me*," is the invitation,—all that it needs is in the hands of Jesus—pardon of sin, eternal life, rest, whatever it may desire—all provided for it, there.

I will here notice the order in which these things are presented. The Lord Jesus does not tell us to *find* rest, until He *has* first *given* us rest. I believe many have inverted this order, and have sought to take the yoke, before they were bidden. He knows exactly what the sinner needs (as also did the Father who has delivered all things into His hands)—needs simply as a gift, not to be *earned*, not to be *deserved*, but to meet Him at once—a *free gift*. I do press this—until there is simple rest to the soul by *coming unto Jesus*, not in any way to act as a christian, whether it be in worship or in service. We must be set at rest

about ourselves, before we can think of acting for God. I must have rest in my soul, as a sinner, before I can act as a saint, before I can take upon me “the yoke” of Christ. Ere I can bear *His* “burden,” I must have got rid of *my own*, have left it with Him.

When not coming to Jesus, to receive, at His hands, rest—a free gift, I come to Him as a task-master; and thus, only get a double burden, instead of finding that blessed sabbath for my soul, wherein I, a poor sinner, can rest and delight, and God, a holy God can delight also. How many, alas! only come to Christ thus, and make their burden practically a great deal worse.

Jesus is the true sabbath, wherein God hath infinite delight. And He is the soul’s most blessed sabbath, also. He has been the *obedient One*—“*obedient* unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore, God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a

name which is above every name : that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." *Man* has crucified Jesus, but *God* has raised Him from the dead ; and now God publishes His name, as the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved. He has done God's will, *therefore* all things are delivered unto Him of the Father ; and He says, "*Come unto me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will *give you rest*." Beloved friends, I again repeat it, Jesus does not ask us to *take* His "yoke," or His "burden," upon us, until we have *laid aside* our own. Until I am *free* in spirit, through the knowledge of the work of Jesus on the Cross, I am not able to *serve* aright.

Whatever we may be in our own

estimation, or in the estimation of others, though despised and rejected of all around, still as having come to Jesus, "all things are ours," not one thing withholden from us. For Jesus is the great gift of God; and in Him is treasured up every other gift—righteousness, life, peace, everything.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls: for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."—Jesus had borne the "burden." Jesus had borne the "yoke" Himself. Therefore, He could say, *"Learn of me."* I am not speaking about the burden of our sins, the Lord Jesus came also to "learn obedience by the things that He suffered." Jesus was the One, who had found out all the bitterness of rejection and scorn, and yet could say, *"Even so Father,"*—therefore, it is, *"Learn of me."* In Isaiah l. we read, "who is among you that feareth

the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light ? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Jesus was guided amidst all the darkness here ; He had never a will of His own, He was the obedient One, " He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear, to hear as the learner," therefore, has He " the tongue of the learned, that He should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." He can tell us how He has borne the yoke Himself, going lower and lower, and He can say, " *My* yoke is easy, and *my* burden light."

Beloved, if Christ Jesus found the yoke to be *easy*, and the burden *light* ; if He could say, I have overcome ; how was it ? *By bowing to the yoke.* And how do we overcome ? Always by enduring ; never by endeavouring to alter circumstances ; never by seeking rest here. Man naturally thinks to over-

come circumstances of trial, by altering them, but this is not the way with the *disciple* of Jesus. When the soul of the saint complains of being ill at ease, and he is seeking practical peace and rest, by endeavouring to alter the circumstances in which he is placed, he is not having that peace in Jesus, which Jesus has promised—"In the world ye shall have tribulation; but *in Me* peace." We often speak very foolishly one to another, and seem to think that change of circumstances will afford peace. Change of circumstances merely, does not affect the peace of the soul at all. Let us listen to that word—"Learn of me." Jesus did not alter circumstances; the cup did not *pass from* Him—No! He bowed, and said, "*Not my will but Thine be done.*"

There are but two ways in which to act; we *must* either fight our way through the world, or endure. Now I read, "God will render to every man

according to his deeds—unto them that are *contentious*, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish ;” and on the contrary, “ to them who, by *patient continuance in well doing*, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life.” Here I learn that *patient continuance in well doing—endurance*, is the great characteristic of the *saint*. That is the path of glory and virtue, That is the path that Jesus trod, that is the “yoke” He bore ; He endured, and He found it most blessed so to do. Jesus overcame by patient continuance in well doing ; and He says “ Learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall *find rest* unto your souls”—not the fretful, impatient rest of the saint who is always trying to alter circumstances around, but the rest of Jesus—“ *Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight.*”

I come to Jesus, as a heavy laden

sinner ; He *gives* me *rest*, and He does not take away that which He has given ; *rest* is my everlasting portion. But then I find myself here still in the midst of a trying world, exposed to the temptations and wiles of the devil, and having an evil heart of unbelief myself. Now, we would desire that all in us and about us were already as it will be by and bye, when Satan is chained ; but it is not so. We may fret, and be angry and disappointed, because it is not ; but, if God does not choose to alter the character of either the flesh, the devil, or the world, it is of no use to fret. “ Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, least ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” Faith says, ‘ This is the path *God* has chosen for me to tread.’ Rest is *found* in the denial of my own will, in the taking up of my cross daily, in following Jesus ;—not in seeking to alter circumstances, but in bowing the head and saying,

“Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight.” The Lord Jesus Himself proved this second character of rest, in becoming *obedient unto* the “yoke,” in *bearing* the “yoke” put upon Him, and here, as One who had had the experience of it, I see Him saying—“*Learn of me*, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall *find rest unto your souls*.”

This “*rest*” has its contrast in the *restlessness* which characterises the walk of some saints; and wherefore? There is, perhaps from a desire for prominence, the going out into a *public* path of service, instead of living in that of *home duties*, where God would have them to adorn the doctrine they profess; hence this constant restlessness. They get uneasy, disappointed, discouraged, not settled here, was settled there, ever disquiet.

A christian should go on, unaffected by circumstances, *in the path of practical obedience to the will of God*.

There, and therein alone, is practical rest *found* (for it is practical, experimental rest of which I am now speaking) ; when I am trying to have my own will, and to go my own way, I do not find this rest.

The two things act and react one upon the other. A saint has lost peace of soul—the blessed joy he had in knowing his sins put away for ever by the blood of Jesus, and in the possession of eternal life, what is the cause ? In many cases, a not bearing the burden of Christ, but a walking in a path of fleshly activity and restlessness. Peace has thus become disturbed, and he may be even tempted to doubt whether or not, he be a child of God. They do act and react in a manner, and to a degree, of which we are little aware. It is very wretched for a saint of God to be always questioning whether he be a saint, instead of walking on in the path of healthy service.

There is still another thing, that I would desire to notice briefly, and that is, the great basis of christian humility. I mean that humility, which a saint has, because he is a *saint*, and not because he is a *sinner*. A sinner saved by grace ought indeed to be humble; but the humility which a saint has, because he is a saint and an heir of glory, is of a much deeper kind, than that which is occasioned by the discovery of sin. There is nothing will bring so low, and make so willing to serve in the meanest of service. Mark the Lord Jesus Christ: He stands forth, in conscious possession of all things; "All things are delivered unto me of my Father," yet He says "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Can you put these two together? I believe you can; the soul of the really instructed saint discerns their needful connection. The Lord Jesus, in conscious possession of all things, *could afford* to humble Him-

self. “ Which thing is true in Him and in you.” Nothing enables us to go and wash the saints’ feet, to lay ourselves down to be trampled on, but the knowledge of our real greatness : we can then afford to be humble ; we can then afford to come down, and minister unto others, instead of wanting others to minister unto us. A child of God needs not anything to add to his dignity, because of the dignity which is given him of God ; he has all dignity, “ all things ” in Christ. This is the real power of humbling ourselves to serve others. That which will enable us to put ourselves lower than any thing, is the consciousness that “ all things are ours for we are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.”

Well, I believe, we shall find this real and abiding peace and rest to our souls in taking the “ yoke ” of Christ, in not “ minding high things, but condescending to men of low estate,” in willingness to serve all saints—“ If

any man will be great among you, let him become *the servant* of all."—
"Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

It is one of the happiest of things, to be thus a learner in the school of Christ.

The Holy Ghost, whose office and delight it is, to bring before the soul the Lord Jesus as our example, never does so without grounding us first in the faith of the work that He has done for us on the Cross. But if, there be a place of real blessing for the servant, it is that of being put in the place of his master. He is what He is, in Himself ; we are what we are *in Him*.

Beloved, if there is restlessness instead of *rest*, is not something of our will, our own will, at work, and not the "*Even so Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight ?*"

“ WE have a wonderful advertisement of a physician from the Spirit of Truth —“ *Who healeth all thy diseases.*” Can He heal hearts, wounded with guilt and care? wounded with rebellious murmuring at His dispensations, coveting what He has withheld, delighting in broken cisterns, as though they were the fountain of living waters? Can He heal the bruises of our falls, the dislocations of our backslidings, wounds corrupt through foolishness? *It is written, “Who healeth all thy diseases.”* Then let us come in the simplicity of sickness, in the helplessness of want. He waits to apply all the virtues of heaven’s dispensary *to our case, whatever it be*; *He is master of that disease*, we have all His promise, all His skill, all His power, all His love; His skill is infinite, His compassion boundless. He gives us all His attention, as if there were none else to think of on earth. He requires but one thing, *to take all He has prescribed*, BITTER as well as SWEET.

THE FATHER'S LOVE.

WHAT I want to press on you, my brethren, is the distinct *present* blessing, which it is our privilege to enjoy, resulting from the knowledge of the love wherewith the Father loves the Son. Well might it make the soul stagger, to hear that the love wherewith the saints are loved of God, is according to that with which He loves Jesus — “*as Thou hast loved me.*” Our companionship with the Lord in glory, will be the *manifestation* of this; *then*, even the world shall know it; but, without waiting for that day of manifestation, Jesus speaks here, of ministering to *us*, by the Spirit, the *present* joy and comfort of it.

How is the love of the *Father* towards us shown, my brethren? In giving *His Son* to be “the propitiation for our sins,” — who amongst us does not know this? But it is quite true,

that we can go on further, and speak of the *Spirit's* enabling us to believe on and prize the Son. Who is there would set so little value on the power of believing in the Son, as to say that it could arise from the human heart? It is not in the capacity that at all belongs to "the spirit of a man" to appreciate that best and blessed gift of God—"the Son." We little prize as we ought the *grace* which has led us to believe. But let us go on further still. All of us know that this was not of human origin, that it came from whence Jesus came, it followed the gift; but are we not accustomed to stop there? I would speak to you of that love of the *Father* to the Son, in which *we* partake *through union with the Son*. My brethren, let us recollect that the grace which led us to receive the Son, has only put us on ground, where we have to learn more of the fulness and depth of love. The special love of the *Father is ours*. I am not

speaking now of Christ being ours, but of that which is *Christ's* being *ours*.

Observe John xvii. 25, 26. Is there not here a love spoken of as resting upon us *because* we have believed on, and love, Jesus? We all acknowledge of course, that we could not love the Lord Jesus but by the Spirit; but when we have met Him as our Saviour, when we see that beauty in Him, in which the *Father* can rest with delight and favour—the heart that rests thus on Jesus meets the full love of the *Father*. My brethren, have you thought of this?—that resting on the Lord Jesus, you are to *expect* a fuller *manifestation* of the *Father's* love.

We read (John xvi.) “I say not that I will pray the FATHER for you, for the FATHER himself loveth you because ye have loved me, and believed that I came out from God.” What is the meaning of this? Is it to

take from us the comfort of the intercession of Jesus on our behalf? No; but it is intended to remove from the heart the feeling that the Lord Jesus is the originating cause of the *Father's* love. He has only given liberty to that love, made the way for it to flow out. It is a most mistaken, a most mischievous notion, that the standing of the Lord Jesus towards us, is that of averting the judgment of an angry God. The love of God could not, it is true, flow out fully till the work of the Son was perfected; but the gift of the Son originated in the love of God.

Again—"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my FATHER will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him."—Here we see *communion* with the Father and the Son connected with *obedience*; a further joy of the *Father's* love, consequent upon obedience. Obedience itself must be the result of love,

but, then, it introduces us into a fuller sense of the *Father's* love.—Now was not this the particular kind of love in which Jesus Himself dwelt, when here?—as He says, “*I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love.*” What is this, but the plainest announcement that we likewise, by virtue of union with Him, may so walk, as to enjoy this full *manifestation* of the *Father's* love? But then the question might naturally arise in the mind, What amount of disobedience will hinder? and I would say, that, I believe, this *manifestation* of the Father and the Son unto our souls will be just in proportion to our obedience. The *realisation* of our union with Jesus at the right hand of God, will work obedience in us. Then, every step that we take,—every act of love,—every expression of love in intercession for others, makes way for this further *manifestation* of the *Father's* love. The soul urged forward

by love to Him who has loved it with such a love, is introduced into a further enjoyment of love. It is one act of God's grace to *urge forward* the soul to obedience, another act of the same grace to *meet*, and *bless* it, in obedience.

We see that the whole burden of the commandments of Jesus, is that we should love one another. What then is the character of that love which we are now to manifest towards one another?—that of the love of Jesus,—self-denial,—self-sacrifice,—becoming poor to enrich others,—forsaking things, not merely that are criminal, but, it may be, even in themselves most innocent. The happy, holy course of a christian, is to forsake any thing and every thing, if, by the denial of it to himself, he can minister life, or strength, or obedience, or blessing, to another;—this is the course in which alone he can expect that which met *Jesus* (the manifested love of the

Father) to meet *him*. You will not mistake me when I say, that it was here, that the blessed Son of God learned, what He never could have learned so fully elsewhere, the love of the *Father*. It was here, in circumstances of weakness, and trial, and suffering, He learned it so, as He never could have done at the right hand of the throne of God. And it is here, too, in the midst of the storm and trial, that *we* are called upon to learn the peculiar character of the *Father's* love. Do you think that a man that is standing alone, who judges the course of the saint to be one, merely, of uprightness, and blamelessness, and not of self-sacrifice, do you think he will be learning the love of the *Father*? No! it was in the death, the sorrow of heart, the self-sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, that He learned this peculiar love of the *Father*; and, it is only as we, through grace, are led along in His path, that the soul can understand,

and know experimentally, the peculiarity of the love which rested upon Him. It is just so long as we forget ourselves, speak not of ourselves, are willing to be weak that others may be strong, to die for others, to be despised for others, that the way to the deeper understanding of the *Father's* love opens to us.

But how is it possible that our souls can be happy in trial, if not along with Christ in the trial? And do not our trials, beloved, often arise from the lack of that which should result from communion with Christ? If so, they are not those in which we shall be enabled to look up and expect the *Father's* approval of love.

My brethren, the amount of the joy which our souls should crave, is nothing short of the full shining of the *Father's* love which rested upon Christ.

“JESUS, THE SON OF GOD.”

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”—Heb. i. 1—4.

WE find our thoughts, in reading this chapter, almost exclusively fixed on the *person* of the Lord Jesus; other thoughts are for the most part set aside, the glory of His *person* is that which is presented. And I believe it is a great thing for the saints who feel themselves to be in the midst of so much sorrow, to watch their souls, lest while looking at the blessed results of

the work of Christ, they forget the glory of His person. We are very liable to do so. It is in that mysterious person (as it is said, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory") that all can satisfy the need of the heart is to be found, that all the life, the love, the strength, the blessing centres.

The heart requires to be abstracted from itself and its own wants, and to be fixed upon what God is, if it would find rest. And what God is, is displayed in its fulness in the person of the SON. *Fulness* has been brought to us in Him who, after having first descended into the lower parts of the earth, ascended up, far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.

But then this is not at all, generally, received and known by the saints as it is revealed to us in the Scrip-

tures. The sum of human history, and that not of the evil and worst part of it only, is, that man is found limiting God—limiting, thwarting, and hindering blessings given to him liberally from the hand of God. This is much marked in the history of the Church. So, too, in our own individual experience. At the close of the day, though we may be able to think of God as having given, and of ourselves as having received, many blessings, yet, in general, the predominant thought resting upon our souls, is, not how we have improved these blessings, but how we have warped and thwarted and hindered them.

Now when we come to trace what is written of the SON, the first way, I believe, in which we find Him spoken of is, as “*with God*,” “in the beginning,” before the foundation of the world, and yet who “*was God*,” the SON in the bosom of the Father, one with the Father in honour and glory.

This we cannot understand. Before any thing was, He was—from everlasting and to everlasting, “even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.” We can only say, “it is past finding out.” Yet still it is most true. He who was with God in the beginning, as eternal as God, being God Himself, was also the SON of God. Eternal in His nature, the “I Am,” yet the SON of God. Here is a mystery. Nothing of reason must be admitted. God has revealed it. He has called Him, “the only-begotten SON,” and *faith* must bow. Faith does not attempt to understand mysteries; all it seeks to know about certain things is, that they are *revealed of God*—then it *believes*, though it may not *understand*. When the time comes for us to “know even as we are known,” these things shall be made plain; but till then, thoughts too deep for us, thoughts past finding out, may often be presented to faith. God allows many things to remain

mysteries, partly, I believe, that He may in this way test the obedience of our minds, for He requires obedience of mind from us, as much as He does obedience in action. He looks to see whether any proud reasoning rises in us that desires to dive into these things, and whether, when it does so rise, we say to it, "be still." Now this is a part of holiness, this subjection of the mind to God, and it is something which the Holy Spirit alone can give. He alone is able to calm and humble those inward powers of mind which rise against, and venture to judge the things of God, refusing to receive what cannot be understood—a disobedience and pride which has no parallel, except in the disobedience and pride of Satan. May we watch our spirits, beloved friends, in this: it is very needful that we should; for it becomes us, not only when we see that God has revealed things to us incomprehensible, humbly to bow to His reve-

lation, but also to know that we have often things presented to our faith, both as it refers to ourselves and God, even far more than incomprehensible, apparently contradictory. But faith receives them: faith bows, and has to see that these things bring blessing to a heart that needs grace and love.

Now in this great mystery of the existence of the SON in the bosom of the Father, and yet the strict equality of the SON with the Father, I find the first word about *love*, as it is said, "thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." "*In the bosom of the Father*" is a strong word to express the secret fulness of the love: it describes, as it were, the hiding-place of love. There is scarcely a thought respecting glory here; it is connected simply and only with love, inexpressible love, that which is far beyond glory—for glory may be revealed, this cannot. God, I believe, would thus, first of all, fix our thoughts

and affections (not merely inform our understandings) in this foundation of love. The Father and the SON are equally God, equally blessed ; but there is between them the perfect existence of love. God reveals Himself to me in the only-begotten SON, in Him who “is in the bosom of the Father.”

The object of God from the beginning was to *reveal* Himself ; but at the time of which I have been speaking, He was *unrevealed, undeclared* ; for there was nothing to which He could be revealed or declared. No angels, no principalities, or powers ; not any thing in heaven or in earth existed, for “He (Christ) was before all things, and by him all things consist.” Not one single thing existed when there was this perfect love between the SON and the Father, whom the SON was about to reveal ; and, therefore, the first thing we know of the manifestation of the power of the SON of God, is in creation,—“By whom also he made the worlds”

—He became the Creator. There is not a star in the heavens above, not a plant that grows on the earth beneath, not a single thing existing, that has not been made by the distinct act of the SON of God, who created all things.

Here was the manifestation of *almighty* power. It was the Son who said, "Let there be light, and there was light." Here, I say, we begin to learn the actings of *almighty* power; for there is no greater power than creative power—power to make all things out of nothing. "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." Nothing existed, but "*through faith we understand* that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things that do appear." They were made out of nothing. In no shape whatever did they previously exist: they had no being, even in their very elements: yet by the word of His mouth were they created. "We un-

derstand" not this, as man seeks to understand: we are surrounded by difficulties; but God has revealed it, and *therefore* we *believe*.

He created angels. But what they are we little know: they existed before the world was; and to them, as able to receive and enjoy it, there was an exhibition of the power of the Son in creation, as it is said, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." We are told of many varieties, angels, archangels, principalities, and powers; yet these angelic hosts are almost as much above our comprehension as God Himself. We hear, "who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire," but we little understand that word "fire" as applied to a being capable of worshipping God, and of ministering to others, as it is said:—"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Then comes God's connection with this lower creation, in all its many forms of beauty; and with man, created in His own image. This, too, was carried on through the SON. Throughout the Old Testament we get continual manifestations of the SON of God. Wherever the glory of God was seen, it was the glory of the SON, for God Himself can be visible to none:—"No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten SON, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

Now in all this we see happy, peaceful, blessed exaltation,—the exaltation of Him who made all things, and who causes all things to consist.

But suddenly the scene changes, and the next thing we read of is, not the SON as known of angels—the only manifestation of the glory of God; but "the babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger"—outside the inn! a poor weak infant, and no

room for him in the inn! A sign, indeed, this of deepest humiliation, but one designed to teach *us* a lesson as to the real condition of the world, how the foundations of every thing are out of course.

And here, in thinking of Jesus, as *the Word made flesh*, we have to remember the character of the flesh as it had been proved throughout Old Testament history, that it was full of evil and iniquity. And yet it was the nature of those to whom the flesh belonged, that the SON of God “took on Him,”—into everlasting union with Himself. Now in His person sin could not be; and therefore the moment the SON of God “took on Him” our nature, it became holy in Him—holy human nature. Begotten of the Holy Ghost, he was the virgin’s son. See the annunciation by the angel Gabriel to Mary:—“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: *therefore* also

that *holy thing* which shall be born of thee, shall be called the SON of God." Then it was that it might be said, "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth" (Jer. xxxi.)

In "Emmanuel" (Is. vii; Matt. i.) I find "a new thing," One who was perfectly and truly man, and yet Jehovah from heaven. So that, although He was, as "in the flesh," subject to and able to suffer all the sorrow and weakness of humanity, exposed to temptation and darkness, knowing what it was for the iron to enter into His soul, to have all those things presented to Him, which, when we are at all sensitive to what evil is, make our hearts quiver, yet was He the SON of God still, Jehovah from heaven, upholding all things by the word of His power! Though in appearance but a weak babe (and I suppose there is nothing more weak, or that more manifests the effects of what sin has done, than a new-born babe), yet was this weak thing, Jehovah from heaven!

On what then, beloved friends, does faith rest, when thinking of Jesus? Is it on the suffering, the endurance, the weakness? Yes, on this, but on much more! on His power as the living God. Now we know what weakness is, but we are little cognizant with the thought of the fulness of God coming into that weakness. It was His perfectness, His excellency, and His glory, that faith had to see through His weakness; to look through it all, and see, Jehovah from heaven.

And it was that, too, to which God ever delighted to testify in the midst of all the depth of His humiliation. Whenever that humiliation was deepest, whether in the manger,—the wilderness,—Gethsemane, or on the cross,—God always gave some testimony to Him as the SON.

In the manger—though so entirely despised by man, angels sang His praises, and God sent the star to guide the wise men from the east, who wor-

shipped Him, presenting their gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and precious spices.

In the wilderness—where he had been tempted of Satan, angels came and ministered unto Him.

In Gethsemane—there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.

And on the cross—amidst all its shame and degradation, the rocks rent, the earth shook, the sun was darkened, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; so that the centurion and others were constrained to say, “*Truly this was the Son of God.*”

God ever took occasion in the times of deepest humiliation to show that this weak and despised One was “the SON,” that word including all the glory of which I have previously spoken.

We find, then, in Him, One who ceased not to be the only-begotten Son

in the bosom of the Father even when He stooped so low. And in Him we find (and what a service was that which He undertook for us) that which we most want—perfectness from man towards God. We feel our need of this, for God has put into our consciences the thought, that there must be *perfectness* towards Him; and the enquiry, “How should man be just with God” is one that ought to be seriously made. In Jesus we get the answer. He perfectly fulfilled all God’s will. In the midst of weakness and sorrow, we find Him, though having in Himself a perfect will, never using that will, except in perfect and entire subjection to God.

Beloved friends, is there any believer who has tried for a single day, or even for a single hour, to have his own will entirely subdued to God, to be subject to the will of God in everything? If so, then he can understand a little what the path of Christ was here

below, what *His* service, who, in *everything*, and at *all times*, did not His own will, but the will of the Father who had sent Him. He was led to temptation and to suffering; He gave His back to the smiters, and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair; He hid not His face from shame and spitting—and why? These things His own will would never have chosen: He submitted to it all in obedience to the Father's will,—“it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, He hath put Him to grief.” There was a subjection of will not only in the thing done, but in the mode, and time, and way in which He did it; all was in perfect obedience; and yet His will was a right will, altogether a perfect will. All that He was in heaven, in “the bosom of the Father,” where He neither knew trial nor temptation, *that* He continued to be in the midst of the circumstances of sorrow, and trial, and temptation here. when hanging on the cross, forsaken,

we still find Him saying, "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."

This was the character of the service of Christ, and at the close He was able to say, "I have glorified thee on the earth." He had glorified the Father *above* in creating all things; and now on the earth, the eyes of angels, of Satan, of men, and above all, of God, had marked His path, had watched Him throughout the whole of it; and they could find no fault: He was able to say with firmness and with truth, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

Now let there be any apprehension of what it is to meet the holiness of God; of the need of being an unspotted man, of having a heart as white as the purest snow if we would stand before Him, and then we may understand something, we may have some idea, of that perfectness of Jesus as a man which

enabled Him to say, I have glorified thee on the earth."

But how does this affect *us*? Is it intended to shut us out from God? No: it is intended indeed to test us; the contrast between ourselves and the Lord should deeply humble; but still it is all, through the grace of God, *for us*. Jesus having glorified God on the earth, God is able to give everlasting righteousness and everlasting glory to every one who believeth on Jesus. 'Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Here we find the fruits of His righteousness *for us*. He is made of God *unto us*. So that we see the rays of love shining upon us who are naturally as in darkness of the shadow of death. The same wonderful power which could find a scope for its exercise in creating angels, and every thing that has been created, could find a scope also for its exercise in working

out a righteousness for those who will have to bless Him for their righteousness for ever and ever.

In every thing he was perfect, whether we look at Him in the detail of His life, or in His obedience unto death. And this perfectness is not to be speculated on; but to be received and joyed in by faith as all belonging to us. I say this, because I know that in the professing Church there is often a morbid speaking about the ways of Jesus, and the example of Jesus, and the beauties of the character of Jesus, which only serves to keep at a distance from Him; a device of Satan to keep the saints from the knowledge that this perfectness is theirs, from the comfort of saying, "*all this is mine.*"

Now it was because God saw all this perfectness in Him, that Jesus could lay down His life for others, as it is said here—"when He had by Himself purged our sins." The great character marked on the shedding of blood,

was that it was the giving of life as an atonement for sin. Jesus went down under the weight of the wrath of God; He endured it all, and then the course of God was altered. The righteousness was finished. The grave had received Him, and now God takes another course.—He begins to act towards Him as in this chapter—to place Him in the position of glory,—to pour blessing upon Him,—to anoint Him,—to speak to Him thus. No longer is it man approaching God, man acting toward God, but God pouring all the tide of blessing upon man, upon One whom He declares His fellow. The Lord Jesus was in the grave, and God declares before men and angels, that He is His fellow. So that, when He raised Him from the dead, we find man in circumstances to receive honour and blessing—God looking down and seeing One whom He is able to glorify with His own glory; as it is said, “thou crownedst Him with glory and

honour, and didst set Him over the works of thine hands : thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet.”

And do we lose our union with Jesus here? No ; as it is true of Jesus, so is it true of every believer, of all saints. And therefore God sends blessing upon them, and ministers unto them as “heirs of salvation.” He deals with all the redeemed family according to the measure of his love to Jesus ; they are “rooted and grounded in love.” And the cause of this you will find to be, in that He who “by Himself purged our sins,” is the only-begotten of the Father,—the SON who is in the bosom of the Father.

And where is Jesus now? He has “sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.” All power is given unto Him in heaven and earth. As *yct* He *secretly* sustains

every thing, but His power is *soon* to be a *manifested* power. This world, which has been the scene of His humiliation; this world, where He was scorned, despised, and rejected, is soon to be the sphere of His *manifested* glory. "All things" (according to the 8th Psalm) shall then be set in *manifest* subjection under Him as the Son of Man. God has purposes of grace towards creation itself, but these have not yet been displayed; for neither the incarnation of Jesus, nor the life of Jesus, nor the death of Jesus, nor even the resurrection of Jesus—neither did *all this* alter the condition of things at all. There will be no change till Jesus comes again. And therefore, I would ask, why all the carnal joy in commemorating the birth of Christ.

It is of this yet future time that the Apostle speaks here, "When He bringeth *again* the first-begotten into the world, [literally the inhabited earth] He saith, and let all the angels of God worship Him."

Such is the manner of His coming again ; all the angels of God worshipping Him, all things put in subjection under His feet, whilst the saints will be taken to be with Him, and to share His glory. And see how this links us with God ! Are you willing, then, dear brethren, for a season to be lowly and of no esteem. If the Holy Spirit leads you into the apprehension of this *coming* glory of Jesus as your own, it will, I doubt not, lead you into a corresponding place here. The soul which is thus instructed must soon see that it cannot take *now* the glory of the world. It has in possession something far better, as sure and certain as Christ's possession of it, though to be *waited* for.

If God, beloved, has really given us the portion of which I speak, and if the value of our portion is only to be measured by the value which He sets upon Christ, how great is our blessing ! The measure of a saint's

preciousness unto God, is according to the measure of the preciousness of Christ!—this gives the soul true confidence and peace. And then, if there are joys,—if the soul desires to know love,—to have fellowship with the mind of God,—to have fellowship with all knowledge, though it may not find that which it desires fully now, yet let it but wait—all is treasured up for it in Christ hidden. And knowing this, it may well be content to take the lowly place for a season.

Look then around, and see what man is doing; we have indeed, in a sense, deeper cause for knowing the evil than even Jesus had when here, for we have seen His blood rejected; and not only this, but have known its power acknowledged, and yet used against God; so that the professing Church is now like those in the wilderness, who “sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” It is not that, in being kept from the present

movements of those around you, you will steel your hearts against them, and stand apart in hardness of spirit; no—you will rather pity them and love them. You will see the sorrow and the evil, and *hence* the *pity*;—you will know the grace of God, and *hence* the *love*.

May there be more simplicity of faith in us as to these things. God is honoured by simplicity of faith concerning the person of His SON; and thus, too, shall we be enabled increasingly to say, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”

Heb. xii. 1—3.

When along life's thorny road,
Faints the soul beneath its load,
By its cares and sins opprest,
Finds on earth no peace or rest;
When the wily tempter's near,
Filling us with doubts and fear;
Jesus—to Thy feet we flee,
Jesus—we will look to Thee.

Thou, our Saviour, from the throne,
List'nest to Thy people's moan;
Thou, the living Head, dost share
Every pang the members bear:
Full of tenderness Thou art,
Thou wilt heal the broken heart;
Full of power, Thine arm shall quell
All the rage and might of hell.

Thou, O Jesus, Thou hast borne
Satan's rage—the worldling's scorn ?
Thou hast known the bitter hour,
Of the wily tempter's power ;
Lo, Thy bloody sweat we see,
In the dark Gethsemane !
Hark ! that piercing awful cry,
From the mount of Calvary.

By that *Love* which brought Thee down
From Thy high eternal throne,
Veiled the Lord of earth and skies,
In an infant's lowly guise ;
By that *Love* which healed the maim,
Cured the sick, restored the lame,
Bade the darken'd eye to see,
Jesus we will look to thee !

By Thy tears o'er Lazarus shed,
By Thy power to raise the dead,
By Thy meekness under scorn,
By Thy stripes and crown of thorn ;

By that rich and precious blood,
That hath made our peace with God ;
Jesus—to Thy feet we flee,
Jesus—we will cling to Thee.

Mighty to redeem and save,
Thou hast overcome the grave ;
Thou the bars of death hast riv'n,
Open'd wide the gates of heav'n ;
Soon in glory Thou shalt come,
Taking Thy poor pilgrims home ;
Jesus, then we all shall be,
Ever—ever—Lord, with Thee,

GOD'S OWN JOY IN LOVE, AND MAN'S MURMURINGS AGAINST IT.

"Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, 'This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.'" Luke xv.

It is a wonderfully blessed thing to have One, (the thoughts, and words, and ways of One down here, in his actings amongst men), who could so well manifest God, as the Lord Jesus.

We may look at the sin of man, as a question to be judged of in the light of righteousness before God, and most important it is as such ; still, in one sense, God moves above all the evil, and asserts his right to show out *what he is*. Blessed is it for us that God will be God, in spite of sin ! "*God is love*," and if he will be God, he must be love ; and that, notwith-

standing all the reasonings and murmurings of the heart of man against him. God acts, so to speak, upon the feelings of *his* heart, and makes them find their way into the hearts of men. And that is just the reason there is such a freshness in the word—God never fails; the moment he speaks and reveals himself, we have always the full blessedness of what he is. It is *himself* who has come forth, and that with power to our hearts, as the blessed God. He will take no character from man. If he has to deal with sin, to show what it is, how he has put it away, and the like, still, above and through all, he manifests *himself*. And here it is our hearts get rest. We have the privilege to have done with ourselves, in the blessedness of the house and bosom of God.

In a certain sense, (for man could not have borne the manifestation of God in the brightness of glory), God hid himself. He clothed himself in flesh.

But what was the effect of the wicked and heartless reasonings of man's corrupt judgment, for man was ever rejecting, finding fault, and carping at certain things with which he could not agree, in the ways of Christ? to force Christ back, pressing out from him what he really was, as God. The soul becomes arrested in reading chapters which exhibit this, it finds itself with unhesitating certainty in the presence of God, in the presence of Love. And there we get rest and peace.

Here, (Luke xv.), Jesus is forced to tell out all the truth. God will be God. If there is that which makes God "glad," he will have his own joy, spite of the objections of man. It is *God's own joy* to act in love. And this is just what man objects to. Man does not object to God's being *righteous*; he does not deny that God is going to *judge* (I speak not of the professed infidel): no,—as a general principle, man does not object to the one,

or deny the other; but the moment God comes to have his *own full joy*, and to bring out that which is the *joy of heaven*, man objects, and says, "It must not be *all grace!*"—"God must not deal with *publicans and sinners* thus!" And why not? Because, what then becomes of man's righteousness? God dealing in grace makes nothing of man's righteousness—"there is no difference;" "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii.) Christ manifesting light proved this; Pharisee and publican were alike detected; and man hated it. Grace deals with all men upon one common ground, that of being sinners; it *levels* their moral condition, and comes only to those who have *need* of it (Luke v. 31, 32). *This*, man cannot bear; what he is always seeking to do, is, to make a difference between righteousness and unrighteousness in man, so that himself may have a certain character before others. Slight-

ing God's righteousness, and magnifying our own, always go together.

In John viii. we find one brought by the Scribes and Pharisees before Jesus, who, judged according to the law, was worthy of death, one undeniably guilty; that Jesus might be obliged to deny either mercy or righteousness. This was their motive. They thought to place him in an inextricable difficulty. If he let her sin pass unnoticed, he would break the law of Moses; and, again, should he say, "let her be stoned," it would be no more than Moses had done. How does he act? He lets law and righteousness have all their course, but tells her accusers at the same time, "he that is *without sin* among you, let him *first* cast a stone at her." Conscience begins to act, (not rightly, it is true, for their character was what they cared about), and they get out of the presence of light, because light makes manifest, and proves them *sinner*s.

“Beginning at the eldest even to the youngest,” all went out, (he that had the longest reputation glad to be the first from before that eye which could penetrate and detect what there was within), “and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.” He will not execute the law.—No—“neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.” That which is produced is only Love. Whenever one stood before him, or had anything to do with him as a detected and confessed sinner, it was always grace, and all grace. The more the discovered sin, the more grace was revealed, free, and unqualified.

In all the parables of this chapter, put forth by Jesus because grace had been objected to, in his dealings with “publicans and sinners,” we get this one great and blessed thought—God manifested.

“I will suppose,” he says, “a man reduced to the worst, the vilest possi-

ble condition, as bad as you please; but, then, there is something still behind all this that I am going to bring out—something, too, which even your own natural hearts ought to recognise—the father's delight in receiving back his child. Would not a father's heart justify itself in its own feelings of kindness, let the condition of the child be what it may?"

After the Lord Jesus himself had gone through this world, and found no place where a really broken heart could rest, he could find proud morality enough, but no place where a poor weary, broken heart could find sympathy and rest; he comes to tell us that what was not to be found for man elsewhere, could be found in God. And this is so blessed! So blessed, that, after all, a poor wearied heart, wearied with itself, with its own ways, with the world, with every thing, *can* find rest in the bosom of the Father. What it could do in no other

place, it *can* do there—tell itself out, and that in truthfulness. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile” (Ps. xxxii.) So long as I am afraid of being blamed for what may be discovered, there will be guile in the heart, but the moment I know it forgiven, that nothing but love is drawn out by it, I can go and tell all to God. The only thing that produces “truth in the inward parts,” is the grace that imputes nothing. *That* is the secret of God’s power in setting hearts right with himself—“there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.” There is all the difference possible between a man’s flying from God by reason of his conscience, and his finding, in God, the One who says, “neither do I condemn thee.”

The first parable is that of the shepherd who *sought* the *lost* sheep.

The second, that of the woman who *sought* the *lost* piece of money.

The third, the father's *reception* of the returning *prodigal*.

The last is not a question of *seeking* at all, but of the manner of the father's *receiving* the son when he *had* come back. And this of much importance. Our souls need to understand it aright, as well as to know the great cardinal truth, that God *seeks the lost*. One principle runs through all the parables—God is acting upon his own character. No doubt it is joy to the sinner to be received, but it is the joy of God to receive him.—“It is meet that *we* should make merry and be glad,” not merely meet that the child should be glad to be back again in the house—the father is the happy one.

The return of the prodigal is joy to heaven, whatever men, whatever Pharisees may think about it.

It is something wonderfully lovely to be let into heaven in this way—and

that, too, by One who knew heaven so well. The chord which God strikes, heaven responds to and re-echoes, and so must every heart down here that is tuned by grace. What discord is there in self-righteousness! Jesus tells forth the joy and grace of God, the joy of heaven, but puts all this in contrast with the feelings of the elder brother—those of any self-righteous person.

It is this note, sounded from heaven in love, that we read in the heart and ways of Jesus down here. “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” And oh how sweet a note! on earth astonishing; in heaven, natural. *Here, on earth*, amongst *us*, God has *manifested* what he is, “which things the angels desire to look into” (1 Pet. i.)

I. The first thing the Lord Jesus does, is to justify God in being good to sinners. He appeals at once to the natural heart of man.—“*What man of you*, having an hundred sheep,

&c.?" (4.) "The shepherd puts *his* sheep upon his shoulder, and brings it home rejoicing; have I not a right to seek the '*lost*'?"—is it not right for God to come amongst "publicans and sinners?" This may not suit a moral man, but it suits God; it is his privilege to come amongst sin, near to the sinner, because he can deliver. The shepherd puts his sheep upon his shoulder, he goes out to seek it,—charges himself with it,—takes the whole toil of it, (it is his interest to do so, because he values the sheep), and he brings it home again rejoicing. Thus, he presents the shepherd here. And thus is it with the "great Shepherd of the sheep." It is his interest to "seek and to save that which was lost" (he ever makes it his interest, in the sense of love), the sheep is *his own*, and he brings it home rejoicing, bidding others to rejoice with him,—*"rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost."* "I say unto

you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one *sinner* that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

But how does he set about it? We tell people, sometimes, to seek Christ, and rightly so in one sense; it is quite true, "he that seeketh findeth;" but Jesus did not say, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," until he had first come himself to "seek and to save." Because the sinner could not go to heaven to seek Christ, Christ came to earth to seek the sinner. He did not say to the poor leper, "Come up to heaven, and be thou clean;" but came down to the leper in all his need to make him clean. Had any other laid his hand upon the leper, he would have become unclean. Christ alone could touch the power of evil, and have no contamination. "Come unto *me*; rest is not to be found here, any more than it was by Noah's dove amidst the

deluge; I have tried the world all through, and it is a sea of evil without a shore."

II. We see another thing in this second parable (8—10);—the painstaking of the love, eager diligence with the determination to succeed in *seeking the sinner*. Every thing is done to get the money; the woman lights the candle,—sweeps the house,—nor stops in her task of love—diligent, active love, until the piece is *found*. It was her interest to do this, because the money was *her's*. Then, again there is the joy in the recovered possession, her own joy and the tone given to others, who are called in to have communion with her. And this, too, is the way of the Lord in his dealings with "*that which is lost*." There is the patient activity of love, in the use of means, by the Holy Spirit, until the effect is produced. And, "Likewise," Jesus adds, "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of

God over one *sinner* that repenteth."

In both parables we get the absolute actings of grace, without any reference to the effect in the heart of the sinner; and, in both, this great principle (common, as noticed before, to the three), God's *own* joy in love. Thus the result of man's pharisaic objection to grace, was but the bringing out of the declaration by Jesus, of the energetic power and activities of Divine love, as well as the good-will. The piece of money, as the sheep, could do nothing; it was *their* joy, who had lost, to get them back again, because they value them. Worth nothing, in a certain sense, to God's love, the sinner is immensely valuable.

At the same time, there is a most important work, an effect, produced in the heart of the one, who, having gone astray, is brought back. On this account we have a third parable, which shows us the feelings of the wanderer, and, further, the manner of his recep-

tion. The father's heart and the prodigal's are both laid open. Not only are the inward workings of the former told out, but we have in addition, the manifestation of the latter. In a word, it is not the *estimate* formed by the prodigal about the love of the father's heart, that gives the answer to all his thoughts; but the *manifestation* of his own heart by the father. This one simple fact, *the father is on his neck kissing him*, tells the prodigal what that heart is.

III. In this, the last of the three parables, the Lord pursues the *sinner* to his utmost degradation—eating husks with the swine, (and we should remember here what swine were in the estimate of those to whom he spoke)—there, too, of his own choice. Why was the picture drawn thus? To show that nothing could put the *sinner* beyond the reach of grace. Trace it as far as you please, God will act *as God* at the end of the story.

“Where sin abounded grace has much more abounded.”

Let us look a little at the case in detail. A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, *and took his journey into a far country*” (11—13). This is just our history, as men. Whether living in vice, or not, we have all turned our back on God. The son here was happier far, as a man, when going from home, than when returning; he was *doing his own will*. This is the secret of all sin. The prodigal was as completely a *sinner* when he stepped, rich, across his father’s threshold, as when feeding with swine in the “far country.” He had chosen to act *independently*. The fruit of this, it is true, were reaped afterwards, but that is not the question.—Nay, in one

sense, the very consequences of his sin were mercies, because through them he was brought to find out his sin (18). When he first left the house, he shewed where his *heart* was—alienated, revolted, gone,—his back was turned upon his father and his father's house, and his face was towards the "far country." He went forth to *do his own will*. A parent's heart will understand that. Our children sin against *us*, and we feel it—but we sin against *God*, and feel it not. We are all of us in that sense, children that "have turned every one to *his own way*."

"*And there,*" (having reached the far country), he went on gaily in his *own will* as long as he could, he "*spent his substance in riotous living*" (13). The sinner, if he thinks himself quite happy, does so, because he has got at a distance from God, where he has no restraint upon his *will*. But, then, after all, he is in the devil's country, and enslaved to him.

Liberty of will is just slavery to the devil.

“*And when he had spent all,*” (any one who lives beyond his means looks rich for a time), “there arose a mighty famine in that land, and *he began* to be in want,” (14). He “began to be in want,” but his *will* was not touched yet, as we shall see directly. There is many a heart not easy in the world; but it is never the effect of that merely, to bring back to God. Very few have arrived at a certain time of life who have not “began to be in want;” but then they go and seek in pleasure or in vice, in one thing or another, it matters not what—last of all, in God, something to satisfy them. A man of the world says, you must have every thing that is in the world, in order to know that the world can never satisfy you; but the knowledge that all the world cannot *satisfy* would never turn a man to God. He must know more, even that he is *perishing*; not merely not satisfied, but ruined.

Being "*in want*" the prodigal next "*joined himself to a citizen of that country,*" and was sent by him into the fields to "*feed swine:*" he was reduced to all this degradation—manifestly a servant of the devil; "and he *would fain* have filled his belly with the *husks* which the swine did eat: *but no man gave unto him*" (15, 16). There is no giving in the "far country," not even of "husks," you must buy every thing. The world's principle is, "nothing for nothing," "every thing must bring its price." Your gratifications there must be purchased at the sacrifice of reputation and soul.

After a time, we find this young man "*came to himself*" (17). He awoke to the consciousness, "*I perish with hunger;*" and *then it was* he thought of the "father's house," the very place that he had been so anxious to get away from at first. He did not yet understand how he would be re-

ceived there, but he did understand there was love in that house, that the very "hired servants" had "enough and to spare;" and he did understand, also, that he was not only hungry, but "perishing with hunger." He *wanted* the goodness of that house; his was no mere abstract delighting in it. Wisdom and philosophy never found out God; he makes himself known to us through our need—necessity finds him out. Who is it that really discovers the value of bread?—the chemist? No, a hungry man. The sinner's heart—yes, and the saint's heart too, is put in its right place in this way. I doubt much if we have ever learnt any thing solidly, except we have learnt it thus.

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am *no more worthy to be called thy son*" (18, 19). He knew that there was goodness *there*, and that it was all over with him *where he was*;

the need of his condition, everything, told him he must get back ; but he did not yet know the extent of that goodness. We see the same thing in Peter (Luke v.) ; he goes and falls at the feet of Jesus, and says, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord !" What an inconsistency ! at the knees of Jesus, and yet telling him to go away ! And there is often this apparent inconsistency when there is a work on the conscience and the affections. God becomes necessary to us, and yet conscience says, "you are too sinful." Peter felt his own worthlessness ; he thought Jesus was too holy, too righteous, to be with such an one as he, and yet he *could not help* going to him.

The prodigal did go back, glad to be in the house, but not having a true estimate of the father's heart. No more worthy to be called a "*son*," his thought was to get into the place of a "*hired servant*" (19). And this

is just the state of a multitude of hearts around, they are lowering down the standard of what the Father must do, in the sense of what they have been, and are. I am not speaking of positive self-righteousness, but of hearts which have still the remains of legalism, and would take the place of *servants*, in the house. Now God can *only* receive us in grace, because we have spent all, ruined ourselves, and forfeited every claim upon him. Look at the history before us. This "*make me as one of thy hired servants*" would not do for the father, though it might have done for the son. What constant misery and wretchedness to that father's heart would it have been, as well as degradation to the son, to receive and treat him thus!—his very condition in the house a constant memorial of his sin. And thus is it with us. Our Father cannot have *sons* in his house as *servants*: if boundless grace brings them in, he must show

the manner of their reception to be worthy of a Father's love.

The prodigal was not yet brought to feel it must be *grace* or *nothing*; but the father did not give him time to say, "make me as one of thy hired servants;" he let him tell out the confession of his sin, but no more;—"he was on his neck kissing him!" How could he say, make me an "hired servant," when his father was on his neck, producing the consciousness that he was still a son? The prodigal's judgment about the father's heart was drawn from what the father was *actually* to him, and not from any *abstract* reasonings about it. And that is the true way of receiving the "gospel of the grace of God." It is not the working up of my mind, to think of what I am before God, but the revelation by the Holy Ghost of what the Father is to me.—*He* is a Father, *I* am a son.

Look, again, at the *manner* of the reception the prodigal had. He

determined in his own mind what he would do, and what he would say, and the conditions of his reception,—“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him,” &c. (18, 19); but before he had time to reach the father’s house, and say all this, “*while yet a great way off*,” the father “saw him,” —“had compassion on him” (the son was lost in the father), “ran to meet him,” —“fell on his neck and kissed him” (20). There was nothing in the son but confession of unworthiness. We are left, as it were, to discover the nature of his thoughts and feelings by the knowledge of the father’s. And so, entirely, is it in the estimate of our salvation. We are left to discover what we are, in the revelation of the love of the Father.

Why did the father fall on his neck and kiss him? Was it for anything in the son? No; it was because of the love that was in his own heart. The rags of the “far country” were

still upon him, the father did not stop to ask him anything,—he knew that he had acted wrongly. It would have been of no good or use, to say, “he has disgraced you, dishonoured your name:” he could see that very well. It was no question of fitness or worthiness in the son (the father’s heart did not reason in that way), he was acting *from* himself, and *for* himself—*worthily of a father*. He was on his neck, because *the father* loved to be there. It is the love that is in God, not any loveliness in the sinner, that accounts for the extravagant liberality of his reception, through Christ. If I know that my sins are forgiven, that the father is on my neck kissing me, the more I know of my sins—thus knowing the Father’s love, the happier I am (Luke vii. 47). Suppose a merchant having liabilities which he is unable to meet, but ignorant of the exact amount; he might be afraid to look fairly through his books. But sup-

pose, on the other hand, that the debt had been discharged, and that he had the certainty of an immense fund of riches, when all was paid (some friend having done it), he would no longer hesitate to look at them; the discovery of his obligation would serve to enhance his friend's love. Grace has put *all* away; therefore the whole effect of the discovery of sin, when we know its forgiveness, is to enhance the love. If the father is kissing me, the very consciousness that he is doing it, when I am in my rags, proves *what* a forgiveness it is. There is not another in the whole world that would not have thought about my rags, *before* he was on my neck.

But look again at the prodigal. The servants are now called out to introduce him *into the house* fittingly. "The father said to the servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted

calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (22—24). God clothes us with Christ, and brings us into the house, where the servants are, with nothing less than *all the honour he can put upon us*—as he would have us be *there*, and with *his* mind expressed about the value of a "son." The best robe, the ring, the shoes, the fatted calf, the feast of joy that welcomed the returning prodigal,—the father's mind was, that *a son of his* was worth it all, and that it was worthy of *him* to give it.

How little worthy would it have been of a father, acting in grace, to keep him as a servant in the house. It may be, that some who read these pages, are thinking it humility to desire the servant's place. But it is not humility, it is only ignorance of the Father's mind. "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he

loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii.) If we begin at this end, would it have been *worthy of him*, to put us in the house with a constant memorial of the sin and shame of our former degradation upon us? No! If there were any sense of shame, the veriest trace of the "far country," would it have been *worthy of the Father*? The "worshipper *once* purged" has "*no more conscience* of sin." All that is in God's house must be worthy of God.

But, perhaps, our wretched, unbelieving hearts may whisper, "Ah, that will be quite true when there, when really in the Father's house." Let me ask what *faith* is. Faith judges as

God judges. I see sin in the light of God's holiness, and learn grace in the heart of my Father. He that believes "sets to his seal that God is true." Faith is the *only* thing that gives certainty. Reasoning may be all quite well for the things of this world; but if God speaks, faith believes. Faith "sets to its seal," not that *it* may be, perhaps; but, that "God *is* true." "Abraham believed *God*;" (not *in* God, though that is also true); he believed that what God *said* was *true*. What, then, does God tell me, if I am a believer in his Son? That my sins and iniquities he "remembers no more." I believe it. That I have "eternal life."—I believe that, too. It were sin to doubt it; not to believe that of which he assures me, is to wrong God. If a son, I am in his presence without a spot of sin through the blood of the Lamb. Faith believes this: God has said it. Were it my own righteousness in which I stood there, it must be

torn to shreds; but it is a question about God's estimate of the value of the blood. What has it done?—cleansed half my sins? No! it “cleanses from *all* sin.” Again, I read, “who his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree”—is this some of our sins? It is “*our sins*.” And then if my soul knows, on the one hand, the value to God of the blood of the Lamb, I know, on the other, that it all results from the love of the Father.

When I see the character Christ gives here of what God is towards me *as* a sinner (and he was forced to do this by the self-righteousness of the Pharisees—of man), the doubts of my heart are silenced before such grace.

Is there one who, after having read this little book, says that Divine grace sanctions sin?—one in the spirit of the elder brother? (28) I would reply “therefore came his father out, and ‘entreated him.’” We see the pati-

ence of love towards this wretched man—not, merely, towards the poor prodigal, but towards this one who shared not in the general joy. The servants were glad; they could say, “*thy brother* is come,” &c.—all caught the tone of joy save one.—And who was he? The man who thought of self and self-righteousness, who said, “Lo these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment.” Take care lest your heart be turning to sourness the love and grace that God shows to a fellow sinner. “He would not go in”—the father reasoned with him, said, “It is (not my son, but) *thy brother* come back,” &c. (love is high enough up for anything)—but in vain. He could not enter into the spirit which actuated all in the house, from the father down to the lowest menial: “he remained without,” and had none of the happiness and none of the joy. There was in him manifested opposition of heart

to the riches of the father's grace,—and this is *man*.

How can I know God's heart? is it by looking to my own heart? No; but by learning it in the gift of his Son. The God we have to say to, is the God who has given his Son for *sinner*s; and if we do not know this, we do not know him at all.—“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.”

Do not be saying to God, “make me as one of thine hired servants;” all true service must result from the knowledge of *himself*. Do not be putting the estimate of your own hearts on God's goodness. Our wretched hearts have such a tendency to turn back to legalism, and call it humbleness. The only real humbleness, and strength, and blessing, is to forget self in the presence and blessedness of God.

CHRIST, OR ANTICHRIST.

 JOHN v. 17—47.

THERE are three very important characters in which the Lord Jesus is presented to us in these verses:—

1st, as THE SUBJECT OF TESTIMONY;

2nd, as THE GIVER OF LIFE;

3rd, as THE EXECUTOR OF JUDGMENT. .

Now he stands in relation to all men in one or other of these positions.

First, he presents himself as the SUBJECT OF TESTIMONY, but it is nevertheless as coming in the Father's name. "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true," v. 31, 32.

and through grace walk in fellowship with God, will be preserved from all attempts at creature holiness. They say, We want nothing before God. but only to glorify him in our bodies. They are Christ before God, and they know it. Nothing else is wanted; nay, God would repudiate any thing else. It would be to call in question the sufficiency of Christ. Faith rests where God rests. What we have to do, is to glorify him by our life down here. But our walk down here, is, nevertheless, not our standing before God, in righteousness, though it be a testimony in man's sight to it.

Reader, have you rested where God rests? What does God think about Christ? Does your soul say, that is sufficient? God rests in him as having made peace through the blood of the cross. Is that peace consciously yours?

Salvation is the guard set up of God against the deceits of Satan.

ABIGAIL, THE WIFE OF NABAL
THE CARMELITE.

1 SAM. XXV.

IN order to have practical communion with the mind of God, through the Scriptures, whilst the conflict still remains between the flesh and the Spirit, it is needful that the soul be established in grace. / Now Satan seeks to hide the simplicity of this grace; but it is simple grace towards those who were dead in trespasses and sins, that has met us. As the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, so was Jesus on the cross, and he is presented to us by God as the object of our faith. When we look to him God says, "Live." The next thing that Satan seeks to hide from us, is God's preserving grace; and this he does by bringing in many inventions

of his own. God preserves us by something hidden in heaven. We may be looking at our experience,—to outward observances,—to an outward priesthood, and the like; but if it is not that which is hidden in heaven, connected with the precious blood of Jesus and *His* priesthood, to which we are looking, it must come from him who is the “father of lies.” All those things which tend at all to promise the soul preservation, apart from this, lead astray.

There is, then, to all believers, sure and everlasting acceptance, because of the precious blood of Jesus which has been shed for them. “Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves; but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption,”

Heb. ix. 11, 12. This secures their blessing and peace for ever. Nothing can shake or alter the peace that subsists between the Father and the Son, nothing that crosses our path here, none of the circumstances of earth, can alter the peace of the sanctuary. It is established, for ever, between the Father and Jesus. So that, whenever a believer seeks it, whatever the condition of soul in which he may turn towards God, the peace of the sanctuary is there—unchanged. How precious the assurance of this! The soul that has learned any thing of God, and of His holiness, knows how every hour many a thing crosses the path likely to effect this peace—that soul must prize the *unchanged* peace of the sanctuary.

But we know other blessings also. God would have the saints understand and love Him and His ways *here*—His actings in the midst of an unholy earth, where Satan's seat is. He (God)

desires that we should have communion with Himself in His thoughts about all around. By and bye the Church will participate with the Lord in the exercise of power towards the earth—we shall share His glory, for we are “joint-heirs with Christ.” But besides this, there is the place of present association, in service. And this must be in humiliation. Jesus served God, in the midst of circumstances of evil, and the “contradiction of sinners.”

We read of the Apostle Paul saying, “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.” Now very often (our thoughts are apt to dwell so much and so exclusively on acceptance) this passage, “by the grace of God I am what I am,” is looked at as only having to do with acceptance; but the

Lord desires that we should abundantly serve Him in the midst of Satan's world—having, it may be, to conflict not only with evil in ourselves, but with evil in others; and nothing but *His grace* can enable us to do this. It is as much the “grace of God” that has given us to serve, and the “grace of God” that strengthens for service, as it was the “grace of God” that saved us at the beginning.

When “Christ ascended up on high,” He “gave gifts unto men; some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for (or, in order to) the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” Eph. iv. You will perceive how the grace of God leads that way—viz. to strengthen and qualify for service. Thus, if any teach you, they do it, not merely that you may be blessed, but *so* blessed as to become *servants to others*—life

in you ministering to life in them, and strengthening that which needs to be strengthened. Now, suppose this be not understood, that I do not see it to be my privilege, I may be very thankful to have one to teach me, but my faith will be weak, and my prayers hindered, I shall not have the right object before me. Teaching amongst the saints is not intended simply to open up truth unto them, to tell them what salvation is, or to give them comfort; but, also, to open out, and direct the soul to, those things which God desires should be the objects of service in faith, as it is said, "your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." I need not say, beloved friends, how often we stop short of this, and rest in our own personal blessing. When the soul once recognizes it to be the intention God has in view, in strengthening us, that

we should serve him in serving others, it gets quite a new motive for which to live—something worth living for.

Now, I know nothing more important or more blessed, than the being able to *discern the true servant of Christ* in the world. Nothing more marks the difference between a soul taught of the Spirit, and one untaught of Him, than this. It was a blessed thing—the great test of faith, when the Lord Jesus was here, to be able to discern and confess him, as what he really was—the Son, and Sent One of God. And so, at the present moment, the leading of the Holy Ghost is always towards the distinct recognition of that which is of God in the world. Till Jesus comes again, this will be found in the lowly place, that which the flesh likes not to own, but which the Holy Spirit loves to recognize. He leads the enlightened soul to say, ‘There, will I cast in my lot, for, there, blessing is.’

Such parts of Scripture as that on which we are now meditating, bring us into communion with the servants of God—the family of faith, in past ages. They show us, that, in principle, their trials were like our trials; their conflicts, like our conflicts; and, thus knit our hearts to them, in a way which nothing else can.

David had gained the place in which we find him here, because he was of faith, and because Saul was one who was not of faith. He represents the person with whom the truth and the calling of God is. As a simple stripling, David had been taught to trust in God—the God of Israel. When the lion and the bear came, he had faith to meet the lion and the bear, and to overcome them. This was a matter between David and God in *secret*. But very soon after, David's faith enabled him to come forward, not for his own deliverance, but for that of God's Israel. Faith led

him to take up the current of the counsels of God. As a christian goes onward in his career, though the trials he has to encounter may be greater, he goes on in the current of the counsels of God; and thus, as Paul says, he is led about in triumph in Christ. Greater things may be done, yet, in one sense, they are felt to be easier, because he becomes more acquainted with the strength of God. But this path must begin in *secret*, and then shall we be led onward of God.

To return to the scene before us. God had anointed David king. Saul was still in power, having offices, &c. which none but one who was of faith ought to have had. David did not lift his hand in vengeance against Saul—he *left* all that was connected with the place of the flesh, and took his place as an outcast, simply and singly in the *wilderness*. There he was glad of any countenance, of any support. Just so is it at the present hour with

the servants of Christ who seek to walk in the truth—those, in a spiritual sense, of the lineage of David. The more they walk in it, the more sensitive will they become to any thing of kindness and love which comes in their way, for their hearts will be often worn and weary. I suppose there is nothing more gladdening to the soul that desires the good of others and the glory of God, than to see any uniting with itself *for the truth's sake*. The “cup of cold water”—any little act of kindness connects such with the *truth of God*. In this there is distinct and precious service—“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto ME.” God only sees the heart; but where there is one who says, ‘I receive, and countenance, and desire to cast in my lot with persons who are walking in the truth, suffering for righteousness sake’—there blessing will be.

David was in need,—here was another not in need. Rich in the earth, surrounded by this world's goods, living in abundance,—such was the character of Nabal, *v.* 2. David grudged him not his prosperity (nay, doubtless, he felt that he would not have exchanged his place for Nabal's); it was no hard message that he sent—‘I do not ask thee,’ he says, ‘to leave thy riches and follow me; I say, peace both to thee, and peace to thy house, and peace unto all that thou hast; only wilt thou show kindness unto me; wilt thou give me that which I need?’ *v.* 6—8. The heart of David was large enough to have rejoiced in any thing that would have identified Nabal's place with his. And so ever, when the heart of a saint is in a gracious state, there will not be the grudging of those around, nor yet the disposition to say, ‘see what I am, and what you are not.’ No, that heart

will rather seek to bind the connecting link between another and itself.

God deals in grace. He knew what the end of Nabal would be, yet this was the gracious test which he put to him. And if there had been a spark of grace in Nabal's heart, of any thing according to God, it must have answered to the test. But there was not. His eye was fixed upon outward circumstances; his rough, outward thought about David's position was this, "Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants that break away now-a-days, every man from his master," *v.* 10. Now we must remember, dear friends, that we have all of us, naturally, this Nabal feeling (there is no heart without it, as well as other evil; and about this, even as believers, we have to watch and judge ourselves. I ask you, whether, because you desire to serve God, there is ready willingness,

in full freedom of heart, to give all that countenance and fellowship which you are able, to others who may stand in need of it. This may be done in the way of support, or comfort, or sympathy, either in temporal or spiritual things. Love will find out many a way.

In the present day, there are not a few, who, it may be, seem to some of us, to shrink from and shun the circumstances in which they find themselves placed. But about this we may misjudge them, and be saying, in principle, the same thing that Nabal said, little aware of the deep inward struggle and anxiety there has been. David had given up much; many a tie had been broken, many a struggle gone through; ere he took this position. So that, though it was true, in one sense, that he had "run away from his master," *how different was the act in the eyes of God and of man.* That which is outward soon

attracts the eye, when perhaps it requires patient, diligent investigation to find out the truth. If the soul desire fellowship with God in His thoughts and ways, there must be this diligence, otherwise we shall never know what to encourage and what not. Depend upon it, all truth, the more it is known and acted on, the more will it lead into the isolated place.

But we may learn a deep and practical lesson from what is shown out here of David's heart—

David was still in the flesh, and (as many of us are often found, when any thing comes upon us unexpectedly) he was unprepared to meet, in *steadfastness of grace*, that which God allowed to be in his path.

No doubt he considered the slight and dishonour put upon him by Nabal, "most uncalled for," "most unjust," "rather too much to bear." But he was wrongly roused. And how often is this the case with the saints

of God. They dwell on circumstances, instead of turning from circumstances to God and then acting amidst them according to Him. They say, perhaps, 'How unkind! How unjust! do I deserve this treatment? Is it not quite right to be angry?' Thus the place of *grace* is lost. Day by day, a thousand things act on our spirits, in one way or another, which are calculated to produce trying and painful effects. Now, if these be met in fellowship with God, they afford an occasion for bringing forth blessed fruit; but if not, we ourselves become contaminated, and have to confess sin. So that, instead of (as the hymn says) Satan trembling and fleeing from us in every conflict, he often thus gains advantage over us. It is a blessed thing to be able to praise God for having enabled us *practically* to triumph and overcome. And this we should seek to attain. The Apostle Paul could say, "I have fought a good fight,

I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," and, "none of these things move me," &c. We can always praise God for what He is in Himself, and for what He has made us in Christ, but we might also praise Him for our own practical victory over Satan and over the world.

"Mid mightiest foes—most feeble are we—
Yet trembling in ev'ry conflict they flee;
The Lord is our banner, the battle is His—
The weakest of saints more than conqueror
is."

Very often, beloved friends, the state in which we are, would forbid our thus praising God. I mention this, not at all to discourage, but rather that we may be able to separate between what we are *in Christ*, and our own *practical* condition as overcomers. Look again at David. He was in danger, not only of not overcoming, but of being overcome and falling into deep sin. How did he act?—as the *servant of God*, bearing

meekly Nabal's taunts and cutting reproach?—did he take it up *in the name of God*? No, it was in the spirit of *his own wounded pride*.

There was one, however, in the house of Nabal, and bound to him, too, by a tie which none but God could break, of altogether a different character to Nabal; one who belonged to the Lord—a woman of faith. Abigail was able to discern in David (outcast and needy wanderer, though he was), the anointed one of the God of Israel,—him whom God was surely about to bring to greatness, as the chosen head of His people.—“*The Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord.*” Abigail was able to follow the path of David, with the eye of faith, and to put herself on to the hour of his glory. Now this shows that her soul was deeply taught of God. But then the very circumstance of her being thus taught

of God, must have made her situation in Nabal's house most painful, and her connexion with him a yoke. Harassed every day,—finding hindrances from, but having no communion with him to whom she was bound,—able to see the folly of Nabal's position, and to contrast it with that of the man of faith; she might have felt this to be a strange dealing of the Lord towards her. But her heart was being prepared for a service which before she knew not. She might have said, 'why is thus with me? were I in other and different circumstances, what blessing, what happiness should I feel in serving the servants of God; but here I am hindered.' Many a soul is thus brought (not by self-chosen paths) into a very trying and painful position, distinctly from the desire to serve God. *Now no real desire to serve God will ever be in vain.* God may make some way for its being answered, even now, and the time will

come when this will be fully the case. Meanwhile there is great profit and discipline of heart in having our neck bowed to the yoke, in being brought to submit to God. Moses was not bound to Pharaoh's house, and therefore in faithfulness he quitted it for the Lord's sake. So with Abraham and his father's house. But there may be circumstances, as those of Abigail, which must be endured, where the soul is called to bear the yoke and to wait upon God. Yet these will be full of abundant blessing. There is in them a secret breaking of the will, and bruising of the flesh, which will be found most profitable in after service to God.

Abigail, in her place of quiet retirement, stood much more in the place of communion with the truth than David, in the circumstances of this chapter, did. She was able to check the wrong feeling of even the man of faith. Whilst David was lost,

as it were, in the mist of his own thoughts, Abigail brought in the clear light of the truth to bear on his actions. And David owned, and thanked God for her counsel. "*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand,*" v. 32, 33. These were the words of David, when alive to the sin in which his pride had set him.

Now, beloved friends, who would have thought that Abigail would ever have been the counsellor of David,—one, suffering so much for, so beloved of God, so distinctly his servant, high in grace and in faith—one far beyond Abigail, as she would have thought. And yet she was tried, and kept where she was alone, until the time came for her to be the effectual monitor of David, and intercessor for Nabal.

Observe the teaching of God. She took the blessed place of intercession. David, in his wrath, was just about to give the blow, to avenge himself with his own hand, instead of leaving the case in the hand of God. Now this would have taken away one of the most blessed features in the character of David—the leaving all things to God. In Abigail's words we see the strong power of faith. She said, "The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. And it shall come to pass, *when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel*, that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself:

but *when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord*, then remember thine handmaid," v. 29—31.

If David had placed himself forward thus to the time of his glory, he would never have thought of raising his hand to give the blow, or of shedding causeless blood; whereas, we know that his hands were nearly imbrued in that of the very young men who spoke so kindly of him to Abigail, v. 14—17. Had he thought, 'How, in the hour of my glory, will this action appear to me?' he would have been checked.

The place of faith is always to look beyond present circumstances, on to the time of the end; then we begin to see and judge of things according to God. Thus it was with Abigail. And when we realise our association with God, and the appointed end of glory, we shall act as she did. In the most trying things which happen to us, if we can by faith associate

ourselves with God, if we can see Him with us as our friend, the One who hath said, "*Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord:*" we shall never feel disposed to avenge ourselves, or think of any thing, save intercession, as it regards those who may have grieved and wronged us. The present actings of God are in grace and mercy. We should rather seek to bring down, and subdue, and melt. "*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*" There is nothing so suitable, *now*, as taking the place of grace, and desiring to bring under its power whatever meets us individually.

How highly honoured was this poor tried, and solitary witness for God in Nabal's house.

The hour will come when the hand of God will give the final blow. Nabal was spared by David, but God was about to deal with him in his own way. He cared for none of these things that

were transpiring around him. He understood them not. Intercession had been made for him, he was careless about it; the recipient of mercy, he passed that by. "*He held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king, and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken, v. 36.* But, when that was over, his wife simply told him what had happened.—a tale of mercy and of grace. Yet though told in the simplicity of truth, it was as words of death to Nabal, it withered his heart, and "he became as a stone," v. 37, 38. The hand of God was against him.

Now this is intended to throw a very solemn shade over the chapter. Such is the end of all that is not of faith. The very things that are truly blessed turned into the power of withering. This will be felt to the full by and bye, when persons are able to look back at mercies received, but see themselves entirely separated from all

blessings, and from the God that gave them. This is remorse. There is nothing so painful as remorse, the sense of circumstances of mercy which have eternally passed away, and the person who has received them for ever separated from God.

Nabal's way was "folly," and his end was that of "the fool." But thus will it be with every thing around that disowns communion with the ways, and with the lowly place, of David. He said, "Shall I take *my* bread, and *my* water, and *my* flesh that I have killed for *my* shearers, and give them unto men, *whom I know not whence they be,*" v. 2. Abigail knew whence they were, and she thought lightly of all these things, compared to the service of God. Now, although we may not be like Nabal, yet still we have each of us this Nabal propensity to watch against—the habit of soul which would incline us to say, '*my* bread,'—'*my* goods,'—'*my* reputation,'—'*my* stand-

ing, &c. wherever the word "MY" comes across the blessed privilege of being identified with Christ in the lowly place. No heart can be more miserable than one having the Spirit condemning its ways, and, if there be this seeking of our own things, and not of the things which be Christ's, the Spirit of God must condemn and be against it. Very often, you will find in saints who have sought to serve God, that when they come to die they have not the same joy as those who have been just converted. Look at the thief, who believed in Christ after he hung upon the cross, and at one who has served God, it may be, for twenty years. Though both are equally accepted and made complete in Christ, yet the latter ought to be able to say, in addition to that which the poor thief said, "*I have kept the faith.*" It is a thing of deep importance even to the practical peace and joy of the saints to be in circumstances

where the desires of the Spirit are met. This is not said to hinder or take away the joy of the feeblest saint. If there be need for humiliation, let it be. But whether we be led to prayer, or praise, or humiliation, let it have the character of *truthfulness before God*.

We see, then, the end of Nabal. Nevertheless, awful as that end was, it freed Abigail from her painful situation, and she became associated with him, upon whom she knew the blessing of God to rest, *v.* 39—42. She gave up her house, her riches, all, it would seem, to cast in her lot with him who was as yet a wanderer, hunted for his life “as a partridge in the mountains.”

But soon the scene is changed;—Abigail is taken captive, and apparently about to be separated for ever from David. (*chap.* xxx.) How strange after a little moment of blessing, to be placed in circumstances more terrible than before! But this only opened a

further occasion for *faith*. Supposing there had been any undue feeling of elation, any unsubdued thought in Abigail's mind, how must this trial have been felt by her as chastening from the hand of God. Otherwise she may have acted in very distinct and holy faith, receiving the blessing as directly from God. Blessings must be received in one or other of these ways. If exalted, and walking in the flesh, she must have felt the blow as chastisement, and been taught by it to humble herself, to judge her ways, and consider the difference between resting in the creature and in God. But, suppose, she had received and sustained her situation, in the power of faith, this trial would only strengthen her faith, and thus God would be glorified, whilst she was taught a lesson of the weakness of nature, and of the danger of resting in the creature instead of in God. Sooner or later, the time must come, when we are brought to feel the

nakedness of the creature. When flesh and heart fail, none but God can be our strength.

It is for us to consider, which of the places brought before us in this chapter is ours. We may not be able to take the forward place of David, but then there is that place of Abigail—at least, we can look at that which is suffering for the sake of Jesus, and give it all, or a portion of that we have. It is not the measure or amount, the question is, whether there be the link between us and them? I trust, through the Lord's mercy, all are able to see distinctly what was the place of Nabal, and to turn from it, as Abigail did. We should be conscious of the trials and difficulties of others, and never think lightly of them, or of any evil in Satan's world.

I know of nothing that will so open the Scriptures, and guide our thoughts as to passing events, and as to those with whom we should seek

to become identified, as acquaintance with these things. Seek, then, to have your souls deepened in the knowledge of them,—to judge of present circumstances as placing yourselves on, by faith, to *the time of the end*. David will then have to see standing before him, Uriah ; and Paul, Stephen ; to whose death he was accessory. It is a marvellous thought,—but will Paul's or David's joy be less on this account ? No : there will be a power of blessing, such as none but God can give, that will take away every such bitter sting. I say this, believe me, not to make light of sin ; but *to associate your minds with that hour*. Past sins cannot be undone—seek not to have those things or persons about you now, that you might not be able to think of with joy. If you bring in the thought of that day on your ways, you will soon be able to discern the nature of all around. There never is a soul that seeks to bring in God's

judgments on its ways, that does not glorify God. Faith, though feeble, must lead to the glory of God. There may be faith about trivial things, about things that we could not speak of to another; and here we find the nearness of God to us. So, whether you are threatened by coming danger, or tried by past, or present circumstances, seek to bring in the power of *faith*,—*let God be your counselor*. The character of the enemies of God, is that of “children in whom is no faith.” May your refuge, and strength, be distinctly in God. This alone can sustain the soul. “If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have received the reconciliation.”

It is our privilege to know, not only that we have peace with God,

but that He also watches over us, and leads us in the paths of service. May we be able to learn this, as being under His hand. Would we desire to be brought into *practical* fellowship with Him in His ways, let us seek it by prayer and supplication.

H Y M N.

Do you love Christ?—I ask not if you feel
 The warm excitement of that party zeal
 Which follows on, while others lead the way,
 And makes His cause the fashion of the day:
 But do you love Him when His garb is mean,
 Nor shrink to let your fellowship be seen?
 Do you love Jesus, blind, and halt, and
 maimed?
 In prison succour Him?—nor feel ashamed
 To own Him,—though His injured name
 may be
 A mark for some dark slander's obloquy?
 Say not, "when saw we Him?"—each mem-
 ber dear,
 Poor, and afflicted, wears His image here.

GOD'S REST, THE SAINT'S REST.

 HEB. IV.

It is a blessed thing, though in one sense a terrible one, (terrible ever to the flesh), to know that *we* "*have to do*" with *God*, v. 13. Yet there is nothing that we so easily forget, or so often lose sight of. The natural tendency of our hearts is to get out of, and then (as the disobedient child that of the parent whose eye he fears to meet), to dislike and dread God's presence. Always, every moment, under every circumstance, it is *God* with whom we "*have to do.*"

People who are ever looking at second causes, are led into practical infidelity; and so is it in measure with the saint of God,—if he be resting in circumstances, he loses the sense of "*having to do*" with *God*.

But whether it be for blessing, or

"THE END OF THE LORD."

HEB. XII. 1—11.

THERE is no possibility of fellowship with God on any other ground than that of *grace*,—no matter when, or where. There never was. True there have been many dealings of God to prove this; but there never could be communion between God and man, except in *grace*. No dealing of God with sinners could have been any thing but rejection, except he met them on the simple ground of *grace*. This principle runs through every thing—God's providential dealings, and the like—it is stamped upon all. Our hearts are never right with God, unless we are standing on this ground of *grace*. Even in chastening us, it is the patience of God's *grace* that is manifested, in taking all possible pains with his children. If I, as a parent,

meet only with that which is pleasant in my child, it is easy for me to act in the way of love and blessing towards it; but to go on, patiently, dealing with a disobedient and rebellious child, is the proof of a great deal more love. If in chastisement, in our desires after holiness, or in any thing else, we do not realise our standing in *grace*, we get off the only ground of fellowship with God.

It may be difficult, at first sight, to see how God can deal in *grace* with a sinner, but in his dealings with Adam at the outset, this is brought out. There was no symptom of repentance in Adam; he was charging the falt on God and on the woman—‘The woman, whom *Thou* gavest to be with me, *she* tempted me, and I did eat.’ God immediately comes in on the ground of *grace*, saying, ‘The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.’ When no promise could be made to man, *as man* (for no

promise could be made to the flesh), *grace* comes in, and sets us in fellowship with the "seed of the woman."

Just as it is said of our blessed Lord, that he "grew in wisdom and in stature," so is the Christian expected to grow in *grace*, and in the *experience of God*. Now the old man, that in us which Satan addresses, seeks to hinder us here, and therefore the dealings of the Lord apply themselves to it. Through the evil of our own nature, circumstances without come to be connected with that which is within, and thus produce conflict—then comes the secret working of God. Thus that which may be the exercises of our hearts in struggling against Satan, may become identified with the chastening of God.

Our blessed Lord himself learned obedience by the things which he suffered. But then he began quite at a different end from ourselves. Because we are disobedient, we have to learn

this lesson;—in suffering, temptation, and trial (patience having in him its perfect work), he practically learned obedience in a way, in which he never could, had he not humbled himself, and taken upon him the form of a servant. Of him it may be truly said, that he brought forth fruit with patience.

What we want to know more of, is, that faith which, having made proof of the Lord's care, can fully confide in him for all things, as the apostle says, '*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*' There is all the difference between knowing this as a *principle*, in the beginning of our course, and the being able to say, "*I have learned*, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound, &c." Now, dear friends, we know experimentally that we have not all "*learned*" this, though as an abstract truth we may know it. I

repeat, there is all the difference in the world between a young Christian saying, ‘I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me,’ and such an one as, “Paul the aged,” saying, ‘*I have learned.*’ He could say it in practical fellowship with Christ; he had passed through all these trials, and had proved the sufficiency of the Lord’s *grace* in them.

How comes ‘it that Paul could say this experimentally, more than a young believer?—because he had learned more to have done with *self*, and knew more of the unfailing faithfulness of Christ. He “had to do” with *God*, no matter who was in the trial as the instrument.’ He saw the Lord himself in it, and knew that he only chastens, that we may be partakers of *his holiness*.

What hinders the developement and manifestation of holiness in the saints?—the old nature remaining unmortified. Well, then, through chas-

tening and discipline, God brings us practically into fellowship with "his holiness." He deals with our hearts, causing us, by the very conflict which he puts us into, to own, in the full consciousness of our own evil, that one is good, even God.

What was the effect of the striving against sin that these Hebrew Christians were called to? That of drawing out the evil of the flesh. The world called them to walk as the world. Satan found them as rebels in his kingdom—their temptation was to be frightened at his terrors. The Lord suffered all these trials and exercises to come upon them, that the evil nature of their hearts might be discerned in its *tendencies*, and that they might be matured into separation from evil, as well as matured into fellowship with God. What was it that produced this "striving against sin?"—conflict with *Satan* and *man*; but it tended to the discovery of that which was *within themselves*.

The effect of presenting temptation to Jesus was to shew that he was perfect in every thing. In us it is the discovery of that in ourselves which would blunt the edge of our spiritual service, and hinder our maturity in holiness. A person may walk a good while in the fulness of fellowship with God, and evil may have no actual power, or there may be the discovery of sin, and it may be struggled against; but where there are things indulged, because we do not discern what their real tendency is, there comes in the Father's chastening. We may look at it as the contradiction of sinners, or as the power of Satan (and so it may be), but after all, it is the *constant exercise of the Father's love*, in order that we may be partakers of his holiness.

Let patience then, dear friends, have its perfect work. There is not one of our souls that does not need this. If trouble or conflict exercise us, let us see if it is not because our *own wills* have been crossed. We

have to be patient with circumstances, doubtless, but to be patient with God's perfect work. Elihu's reproach to Job was, that he had chosen iniquity rather than affliction; God had his own *end* in his dealings with Job—he is *very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*”

It is said, “humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time, &c.” If man exalts himself, he will be humbled; when God exalts a man, there is no danger of this. Christ humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, in drinking the bitter cup which was given him to drink, therefore God also hath highly exalted him. If we would deliver ourselves, and get out of this path of trial, it must be by some bye path, and we shall lose blessing. We must remember it is added, that *in due time, God will exalt us*—not a minute after the time. When he has wrought the whole purpose of his love, *then* he will exalt us.

HYMN.

Rise my soul, thy God directs thee,
Stranger hands no more impede;
Pass thou on, his hand protects thee,
Strength that has the captive freed.
Is the wilderness before thee,
Desert lands where drought abides?
Heavenly springs shall there restore thee,
Fresh from God's exhaustless tides.
Light divine surrounds thy going,
God himself shall mark thy way;
Secret blessing richly flowing,
Lead to everlasting day.
In the desert God will teach thee,
What the God that thou hast found,
Patient, gracious, powerful, holy,
All his grace shall there abound.
On to Canaan's rest still wending,
E'en thy wants and woes shall bring,
Suited grace from high descending,
Thou shalt taste of mercy's spring.
When to Canaan's long-loved dwelling,
Love divine thy foot shall bring,
There with shouts of triumph swelling,
Zion's songs in rest to sing.
There, no stranger, God shall meet thee,
Stranger thou in courts above,
He who to his rest shall greet thee,
Greet thee with a well known love.

Rev. v.

The countless multitude on high,
Who tune their songs to Jesu's name,
All merit of their own deny,
And Jesu's worth alone proclaim.

Firm on the ground of sov'reign grace,
They stand before Jehovah's throne;
The only song in that blest place,
Is—"Thou art worthy! thou alone!"

With spotless robes of purest white,
And branches of triumphal palm,
They shout, with transports of delight,
Heaven's ceaseless universal psalm.

Salvation's glory all be paid
To Him who sits upon the throne;
And to the Lamb, whose blood was shed,
"Thou! Thou art worthy! Thou alone!"

For Thou wast slain, and in thy blood
These robes were wash'd so spotless pure;
Thou mad'st us kings and priests to God,
For ever let Thy praise endure.

While thus the ransom'd myriads shout,
"Amen," the holy angels cry;
Amen, Amen, resounds throughout
The boundless regions of the sky.

Let us with joy adopt the strain
We hope to sing for ever there;
"Worthy's the Lamb for sinners slain,
Worthy alone the crown to wear."

Without one thought that's good to plead,
O what could shield us from despair
But this, *though we are vile indeed,*
The Lord our righteousness is there.

ABSENT FROM THE BODY, PRESENT WITH THE LORD.

2 COR. V. 5—7. PHIL. I. 23.

“For I am persuaded, that neither *death*, nor *life*, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom. viii. 38, 39.

“Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or *life*, or *death*, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.

It is on such occasions as these,* beloved friends,—occasions in which we truly find fellowship in sorrow and trial,—that we prove the wisdom and

* This little paper contains the substance of some remarks made at the interment of

blessed care of Him who has been pleased to give us, *first of all*, fellowship in life in His presence. Therefore it is that He has been pleased to unite us, even all who believe in Jesus, in a manner in which we never, otherwise, should have been united. We never should have had sympathy one with another, in very many of the sorrows we have had together, unless we had *first* been united by Him in the Lord Jesus Christ risen—unless He had given us life in Him, made Him to be “our life,” and brought us into the presence of Himself in Him, who is at His own right hand, far above all heavens. As it is said, “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

There is a power in *this* fellowship—a joy, which gives power, even in the presence of death our greatest one who had “fallen asleep,” and is published, with slight alteration, from notes taken at the time.

sorrow, and the great witness of sin; that which we never see without many bitter remembrances of the past. We all know what it is to look back with a degree of sorrow over the past—what it is to have felt the power of one's own evil interfering with many things that might otherwise have been most blessed. There can never be separation from those whom we have loved, and who have “fallen asleep,” without some thoughts of this kind. But still, our sure privilege, as believers in Jesus, is, to leave these things behind—to see them behind, in the grave, and to remember what is beyond it.

And what is beyond to our sister now? She now knows the reality of those words, that “neither *death*, nor *life*, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, *shall be able to separate from the love of God, which*

is in Christ Jesus our Lord." All that which is so holy, so pure, above, that from which we naturally shrink—neither death, nor any thing else, has hindered her from knowing. The full power of His love He has shown, in bringing her into blessing in His presence. So that we can say of her—yes, without one wavering thought, we can say, that to her has been given blessing eternal.

And now, beloved friends, it must be our effort (which may He strengthen us in by His Spirit), to think of her—*as she is*.

It is our duty, our privilege, our blessing, to have our thoughts identified with her's—*her present* thoughts. It might be a snare as it often is to those who sorrow after departed saints, to think of what she *did feel*—what she *did wish*—what she *did say*—let it be rather for us to consider what our beloved sister *now* desires, what she *now* feels, and what she would say

were she *now* speaking to us. I much desire that this may be the thought on which our souls are set, even all of us present; because if she could speak, she surely would have some message to us all.

It is a kind of duty to ask you to think of *what* she would say to *you*—for she would speak to each according to the condition in which the soul may be.

She knows the character of the world more fully now, she knows what the sin of the human heart is, the sin of the heart of every one of us—not individually perhaps; but the nature of it and its defiling power—in contrast with the purity, and light, and blessedness above.

Would she not then have a message to every one whose heart may not be at peace in the Lord Jesus,—nay, would she not have a message to *such*, especially? She would speak to such of their vileness, even as she has

spoken of her own ; but, she would also speak to them of the love of God, and of the power of the blood of Jesus.

Are there not two things which she would desire to fix on your thoughts—first of all, what that blood does whenever it is believed in, that it really, entirely, and for ever, purges from all sin? Would she not tell you that she had found peace in death, the sting taken away from death, and fear from the grave, through that blood. Now she *would* tell you this; and if you were to ask whether *you* might also believe and be saved, she would say, ‘The love of God preaches peace *through the blood of Jesus*’—Jesus lifted up on the cross, as the serpent of brass was lifted up, (Numb. xxi.) that the poor dying Israelite might look on it and live,—“as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that *whosoever* believeth in Him

should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God," John iii. 14—18.

I beseech you, dear friends, to think of her in this way; because it will be for blessing and for thanksgiving, if even this stroke, painful as it is, (for deeply so, I believe, we all feel it to be), if *it* be made, in the hands of God, the means of bringing life, comfort, and peace, to any soul.

And now;—think of her *as expecting the glory*. She *expects* to be a king and a priest before God, made

such, as it is said, by the blood of Jesus. She *will* reign in life in His presence. She *will* fully know what it is to be united to Him who is the Son of the Father, the Son of the living God. *Her spirit waits for this.* Her perfect glory is not yet come—she is *waiting* for it. It is “yet but a little while,” she knows, how little! “and he that shall come will come and will not tarry,”—“the end of all things is at hand.”—It is but “a little season;” and this is for *her* comfort as it is for *ours*. Till then, beloved friends, she has the vision of the glory. Doubtless her spirit is immediately in communion with the Lord Jesus, and that he reveals blessed things to her. He makes her soul as well as her spirit—her new spirit, to have communion with Him in His love and glory and peace in such a manner as we cannot at all, as yet, conceive. So that she feels that “to be with Christ” is indeed, “far better.” She

wishes not to lose those scenes—they are far more blessed than all that she has ever known here. Freed from the sorrow of earth, she has the joy of heaven; and she would not wish to come back to us, although she might wish that we should be with her.

So that we “sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”

Now these things we firmly believe. They are not cunningly devised fables; they are true, if God is true, and if He has written them in His word.

We have no other evidence than God’s word for this glory, but we *feel* that all that God has been pleased to tell us respecting the suffering and the sorrow that we have had through the first Adam is *true*, even to the very letter—we have *proved* its bitterness and sorrow. We *believe*, likewise, that that is *true* which God has told us respecting things which are unseen. We have not any of us *experienced* these things, but we *believe them*,

because God has told us of them. We rest in *God*, even as the poor sinner's soul that believes in Jesus. A poor sinner's soul may rest in God—that God has promised to take care of the soul that trusts in the blood of Jesus. And so we rest in God when He tells us of things unseen. And this is always for our comfort, for the strengthening and sustainment of the soul.

But, beloved friends, even all that would be insufficient, in itself, to comfort us at such a season as this; and therefore we have in addition, the *living and present sympathy of the Lord Jesus*. And we must not despise it; because, after all, we must feel. It is said in Scripture, that there is such a thing as persons being “both dear in the flesh, and in the Lord”—there is such a thing as the heart feeling; and when there are those thus dear taken from us, it cannot be without pain—God never intended that it

should. He meant that there should be pain, in order that we might trust in Him, and have the “comfort wherewith He comforteth us in all our tribulation.” And we shall have it.

He has most distinctly said, that we may not only “rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” but, that we may “glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us,” Rom. v. 3—5. Now I believe, dear friends, this we shall do,—we shall prove His grace in this; and it will work to our more abundant comfort.

But that is not all—He sympathises with us! How could it be otherwise? if He counts the hairs of our heads, how could He *not* have sympathy with us in bitter sorrow? So we may take this also for our comfort.

And then there is His strength and power. He is able to "strengthen us according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness," Col. i. 12. Now we are not able to do this ourselves. We may bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ; we may sympathise one with another in trial; we may pray one for another; but we cannot strengthen one another according to God! Who does not know what a world of motives and of feelings—a "multitude of thoughts within," crowd upon the soul at such an hour? But our confidence as to this is in God, that He will minister strength—not only sympathise with, but "strengthen us;" and this "according to His glorious power"—the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places—the same power which has brought our sister into the paradise of God—the same

power which shall yet be put forth to quicken her mortal body, that she, with all "they that are Christ's at his coming" may be for ever with the Lord—even that same "*glorious power.*"

Now this, beloved friends, is a subject for *prayer* to God, (Col. i. 9); we cannot pray for His sympathy, because we *have* it; we cannot pray for our sister's blessing, for she *has* blessing; we cannot pray for these things which God has already given; but we may pray for strength whilst the "little while," remains.

So that, I would desire that we might thus be able, all of us, to rise above these sorrowful things.

The grave is sorrowful, we cannot help feeling that it is so, but it is only the grave. And it is only the mortal tabernacle of our sister—it is not *she*, not really *she*—only her body, that we commit to the grave. So that we must govern our feelings when we look at

the grave. It is the thing that meets our natural eye; but, with the eye of faith, we look a little beyond the grave, and see, through death, only blessing, life, and glory.

Now I trust that we may be strengthened in faith with regard to these things, according to the will of God, this day, and that the desire of our sister may be answered. She desired that His name might be glorified—that *that* might be the end of the sorrow. Let us commend ourselves, then, to Him with much conscious feeling indeed of our own weakness and of cause for deep humiliation, and yet in the assurance of that love that has said, *nothing shall separate* from it, “neither *death*, nor *life*, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,”—even “*the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

Why do you weep?
I am falling asleep,
And Jesus my Shepherd
Is watching His sheep.

His arm is beneath me,
His eye is above;
His Spirit within me
Says, 'Rest in my love'—

With blood I have bought thee,
And washed thee from sin;
With care I have brought thee,
My fold to be in.

Refreshed by still waters,
In green pastures fed,
Thy day has gone by—
I am making thy bed!

There calmly repose,
While the shades gather round,
I lay as thou liest,
And hallowed the ground:

And fear not confiding
Thy spirit to me ;—
Sweet peace in my presence
Its portion shall be.

Nor long shalt thou wait
For the sound of my voice,
'To rouse thee from slumber,
And bid thee rejoice :

The dawn of that morning
Unclouded is near,
When rob'd in His glory
Thy Lord shall appear!

Then thou shalt arise,
In *His image* to shine,
And fill'd with his fulness,
Say, " all things are mine !"

Great captain of salvation,
 We bless Thy glorious name ;
 Of death and hell the victor,
 With all their pow'r and shame :
 Weak, helpless, poor, and trembling,
 As in ourselves we stand,
 We triumph, more than conqu'rors,
 Through Thine Almighty hand.

Our Sister's fight is over,
 Her arduous race is run,
 'Twas by Thy grace and power,
 The prize of life she won ;
 She now is sweetly sleeping,
 Her spirit rests with Thee,
 And tho' thy saints are weeping,
 Our song is " Victory !"

Soon Thou wilt come in glory,
 With all Thy Church to shine,
 Our bodies rais'd in honor
 And beauty, Lord, like Thine:

Then, then, we'll shout still louder
The song which now we sing,
" O Grave, where is thy victory ?
O Death, where is thy sting ?"

O Son of God we thank Thee,
We bless Thy holy name,
Thy love once made Thee willing
To bear our sin and shame ;
And now Thy love is waiting
Thy Church, like Thee, to raise ;
First-born of many brethren,
Thine—Thine, be all the praise !
