

A
V O I C E
TO
T H E F A I T H F U L.

“He that striveth for the mastery is temperate in
all things.”—1 Cor. ix. 25.

VOL. VII.

LONDON GOSPEL TRACT DEPOT,
WARWICK LANE,
P A T E R N O S T E R R O W.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
MATTHEW'S GOSPEL, Part xv.	97
" " Part xvi.	129
" " Part xvii.	161
" " Part xviii.	225
" " Part xix.	257
" " Part xx.	289
" " Part xxi.	321
" " Part xxii.... ..	353
THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY—	
Looking back	20
Man's moral distance from God can only be discerned in nearness to Him ...	52
The Word of Christ and His Presence ...	87
Practice expounds a Truth... ..	114
"What shall I do, Lord?"... ..	143
Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of me His prisoner	178
"Not holding the Head"	211
"Love not the world neither the things that are in the world"	245
The Glory of the Grace, and the Riches of the Grace	275
How Declension begins	307
Ministry: its Use and its Responsibility...	343
Holiness: What is it ?	368
MISCELLANEOUS—	
Fellowship in Service	1
Christ in Glory. III.—His body on earth	10
" " IV.—Gifts given to men	33

MISCELLANEOUS— <i>continued.</i>	PAGE
The Flesh Nature, and the Life of Jesus.	42
To live Christ	63
Position and Condition	65
“He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit”	77, 103
The Treasure and the Talent	137
Restoration	157
Fragment	158
A Representative Man	166, 199
“He looked that it should bring forth grapes”	190
Propitiation and Substitution... ..	193
Fragments	221, 256
Worldly Position	234
Confidence	267
The Word of God	285
“With Persecutions”	301
Paul’s word from the Prison	318
Prepared and Furnished	331
Death and Glory	358
POETRY—	
Jesus only	31
The Mercy-seat	96
Won and Satisfied	126
The Woman of Samaria... ..	159
He that seeketh findeth	188
The Wilderness	223
The Path of Life	287
Where Thou goest there will I go ...	319
The Riches of the Grace and of the Glory	378

A Voice to the Faithful.

FELLOWSHIP IN SERVICE.

SERVICE in one aspect is the expression of our membership of Christ. It is the exercise of that gift or ministry which each member of the body of Christ receives from the Head through the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. xii. 27, &c.)

It is therefore essentially individual. No one member can perform another's work, and no member can be in energy or healthy activity, apart from connection and communion with the Head. (Eph. ii. 19.)

Service is also the expression of our responsibility to Christ as Master and Lord; and here again we learn its individuality. No one servant can do another's work.

Again, service is the work and labour of love. The fruit of grace, the love of God shed abroad, and begotten in

2 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

the heart by the Spirit, and flowing out in active manifestation towards God, His saints, and the world. This also is individual in its truest sense. This cannot be done by deputy, for love cannot be bought or sold. "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." "The love of Christ constraineth us."

Until we apprehend first our individuality in service in these three relations, we shall never understand true fellowship in service one with the other; for no such fellowship is true which does not regard and preserve the servant's individuality intact. Far be it from our thought to detract in any way from the value and blessedness of fellowship in the service of God. On the contrary, we believe it to be the happiest *practical* bond of union here below. But we must each preserve our identity as members or servants, and consent to no form of association by which that may in any degree be prejudiced.

FELLOWSHIP IN SERVICE.

3

To avoid this in such a day as ours needs no little watchfulness and self-searching. It is pre-eminently a day of vicarious religion. The world, and alas, the Church, have fallen into the common snare of deputing their religious affairs, whether spiritual or temporal, to the hands of others. Whilst men desire to be religious, they shrink from personal and face-to-face dealing with God. Thus they leave the concerns of their souls in the hands of a representative priesthood or clergy, and depute their good works to a legion of religious and philanthropic associations. This is done under the common but flimsy plea, that such things must necessarily be better understood and managed by those who give themselves wholly to the work, and thus a humanly ordained ministry, and the legion of societies, are in possession of the field. Man has hewed out to himself these channels, and allows all his energies to be turned into them, without raising a question as to whether the source is pure, or whether the current and end of the stream tend

4 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

in the right direction. Individual responsibility and identity is thus obliterated, the true character of christian fellowship for worship and service is lost, and all is reduced to a level, *dead*, in every sense of the word. Born and educated in this state of things, souls when awakened and quickened become entangled in the snare. The convert's first step is to unite him or herself to one of the existing denominations, or as it is termed, "become a member of a church." The next is to yoke himself with some of the existing religious organizations for evangelical or philanthropic purposes. In these steps human judgment is often alone consulted, and things are accepted as existing, and not as acts of faith or conscience, but of necessity. In thousands and tens of thousands of cases, the awakened person only continues in the system of which, when dead in sins, he professed to be a member, and the quickened soul remains trammelled with the dead and lifeless forms which suited as well, or even better the former state. In rare

FELLOWSHIP IN SERVICE.

5

cases, comparatively, is the question raised whether all that is seen around in the religious world is according to the word and mind of God, or is the accumulated result only of the failure of man through successive ages.

It is fully allowed that there have been and are many bright exceptions to the rule. Souls full of faith and energy who even within the existing organizations express as best they may in service their sense of God's grace, and of their own responsibility. It is however the continuance of such, in connection with these systems, which to a great extent perpetuates their existence. Such persons (if one may say it) act as decoy ducks to draw to, and to detain others in, the snare. The commonest excuse of the careless professor is that the things must be right, for such and such good men find their place and service in them.

It is however not enough merely to have broken from these things, to know and manifest either individuality or fellowship in service; we may have

6 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

ceased from sectarianism in our own judgment, without having learned our place as members of His body, and servants of Christ. The confusion of Christendom both results from, and produces, the denial of the fact that God has an association of His own upon the earth; an assembly, a church, even the Church of God: one body in Christ baptized together by the Holy Ghost. In ignorance, or in the repudiation of this great truth, men form unities of their own, and thus deny the unity of the Spirit in which through God's sovereign grace all true believers are involved. This unity, which is of God, formed in Christ by the Holy Ghost, is divinely perfect. To supplement it by human rules is to destroy it. To "keep it in the bond of peace," glorifies Christ, and tends to our soul's deep blessing. The unity of the Spirit differs from every human system, in that while the unity and bond of union are perfect and absolute, the identity of every member is preserved. "For as we have many members in one body,

FELLOWSHIP IN SERVICE.

7

and all members have not the same office ; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." (Rom. xii. 4, 5.) "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body : so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body. . . . For the body is not one member, but many. . . . And if they were all one member, where were the body ? But now are they many members, yet but one body. . . . Now *ye are the body* of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Cor. xii. 12—14, 19, 20, 27.)

Whilst then we find that human arrangements swamp individuality, and substitute a vicarious and priestly system for individual and personal activity and responsibility ; the "unity of the Spirit" not only leaves every member free, but actually gives them ability for the exercise of the ministry committed. Untrammelled, and ungrieved by human rules, the "Spirit divideth to every man severally as he will."

8 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

It is in the acknowledgment of the unity of the Spirit that *true* fellowship in service is to be found; for true servants cannot clash in their Master's service, any more than members of the same body clash in performing their respective offices. All work together in perfect harmony, mutually strengthening, assisting, sustaining each other in their several duties, to the edification of the whole.

All individual service should be pursued in view of the "unity of the Spirit." Each member's separate work and service to be done in fellowship and harmony with the assembly as the manifestation of the body. For Christ has set His gifts in the Church, not for independent action, but "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Eph. iv. 12.) If it be objected "Where now is the assembly of God to be thus kept in view?" We can only say that *faith* has never yet failed in the day of the greatest failure, to find a way in which to justify God

FELLOWSHIP IN SERVICE.

9

and fulfils His purpose. "For wisdom is justified of all her children."

These then are the two points which we would press :—

To acknowledge no character of association which denies our individuality.

To maintain our individuality in service so as to confess our fellowship with Christ and His members.

The "secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;" and it is the privilege of faith to fathom it, and to unravel, in the secret of God's presence, the way of truth from the tangled mass of human failure and ecclesiastical confusion.

It is not that you have to climb up and *attain* the place; but you have to enjoy it. The place is yours, all is accomplished, and He can say, "I will rest in my love." It is all done, and if you do not enjoy it, it is because you have not health to enjoy. I am brought into a scene of unbounded joy and blessedness. As I enjoy it, I am giving testimony to the very thing that sustains me there.

10 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

CHRIST IN GLORY.

III.—HIS BODY ON EARTH.

“SAUL, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts xxii. 7,) were the words from heaven which arrested the attention of the persecutor of God’s Church. Addressed as “Saul, Saul,” he learnt that One in heavenly glory was acquainted with his name, his work, and the express purport of his journey. His companions heard Saul answer, knew that he was holding intercourse with One they could not see, but, though hearing the sound of the voice (ix. 7), understood not the communication thus made (xxii. 9); for Saul was singled out from his companions as the one to whom the words on that occasion were exclusively addressed, though all who journeyed with him fell with him to the ground, as the light above the noon-day brightness of the sun shone round about them. (Acts xxvi. 13.) The rest saw no man, but Saul beheld the Lord Jesus (ix. 17), and, prostrate before Him on his face, heard from the lips of the Nazaræan a

CHRIST IN GLORY.

11

true account of the purpose for which he was journeying in hot haste to Damascus, but expressed in terms, which must have sent a thrill of horror through his frame. "Why persecutest thou me?" Yet he had never before seen Him, and could truthfully answer he did not know Him. Replying, he expressed his astonishment, as well as his ignorance of the Person who thus abruptly accosted him. "Who art thou, Lord?" was Saul's immediate exclamation. "I am Jesus the Nazaræan, whom thou persecutest," was the instantaneous rejoinder, removing all doubt, if doubt there had been, whether he had heard the first question correctly, whilst it riveted, as it were, around his neck, without hope of extricating himself from it, the charge now made against him.

But what did these words imply? For the first time in his life Saul saw the One, who now accused him of persecuting Him. For the Lord did not say, my people, my disciples, my servants, or my friends, but *Me*. The language

12 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

was clear, but the thought thereby conveyed was new, declaring, as it did, to Saul, that the saints, against whom he had been exceedingly mad, and those against whose freedom, and persons, and perhaps life, he was at that moment intent on commencing a crusade, were in reality members of the One who then spoke to him from heaven. Jesus the Nazaræan, in glory, had a body on earth.

An assembly or church, a house or dwelling-place, connected with God, were thoughts with which every Jew was familiar. The nation of Israel was called in the wilderness the congregation of the Lord. (Numb. xxvii. 17, xxxi. 16.) God too had dwelt in their midst in the tabernacle, and subsequently owned the temple erected by Solomon, as His house. But now for the first time was this thought expressed, one peculiar to Christianity, that the closest union existed between the Lord Jesus in heaven and all His people on earth. *Me*, said the Lord, not *us*. He spoke, not of a company associated with Himself, but of a body of which He is the

CHRIST IN GLORY.

13

Head. *Us* might have told of companionship, *me* implies union. Before the cross He had told His disciples of His assembly, differing from that with which, in thought, they had long been familiar. (Matt. xvi. 18.) In His prayer to the Father He spoke of His own being one on earth (John xvii. 21), and we see in Acts ii. 44, 45, how really they felt it; but here He spake to Saul of His body. How fitting was it that He, who is its Head, should Himself reveal its existence. How precious, too, was it to speak of it thus from heaven, that saints on earth should learn from His own lips their close connection with Christ in heaven. From heaven, then, came that little word *me*, which left an indelible mark on the heart of the persecutor of God's Church. Jesus the Nazaræan, though personally cast out of the world, has a body on earth, a body over the members of which He watches, as Saul that day heard, and afterwards experimentally proved. (2 Tim. iv. 17.)

Revealed to Paul, as he was subse-

14 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

quently called, it is from his writings alone that we learn anything about it. John speaks of the assembly as the bride, but never as the body. Paul, and Paul alone, tells us what God has been pleased to make known about it. To the writings which bear his name must we then turn, if we would gather up the substance of divine teaching concerning it.

And first, Of whom is it composed? The answer discloses the manifold wisdom of God, as the mystery is unfolded before our eyes. Believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, whether once Jews or Gentiles, are now one in Christ—the new man of Ephesians ii. How this is effected 1 Corinthians xii. 13 sets forth: “By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” Formed then by the Holy Ghost baptizing believers into one body, it was in existence before the doctrine about it was revealed, but no one taught it till the Lord first declared it. For, though we

CHRIST IN GLORY.

15

have that lovely picture of oneness in Acts ii. 44, and that perhaps more remarkable exhibition of felt oneness with all believers in Acts xi. 29, none, we must believe (Eph. iii. 3), discerned the union of Christ and His people, though it really existed, till the Head in heaven announced it to the persecutor Saul near Damascus.

Next, as part of Himself it bears His name, but, as formed after He went on high, it has that which tells of His exaltation to glory. It is called the body of Christ (Eph. iv. 12), and so really is it a part of Himself that both He and it can be called by one name—"the Christ." (1 Cor. xii. 12; Eph. iii. 4.) He, the Head, and believers on Him the members, are thus looked at as making up one whole, and, marvellous to say it, this body is His fulness, or complement, who filleth all in all. (Eph. i. 23.) For, whilst as God, nothing could be added to Him, as the mystical man He is not complete without His body, the assembly or Church. This brings us then, into the closest connection with

16 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Him who is in glory. Alone was He as He walked upon earth, but now, in glory, He has a body of which every believer is a member. And so practical can this truth be to God's people, that we have it brought in, both when the duty of husbands to their wives is insisted upon (Eph. v. 30), and the need of keeping from gross immorality is set before the children of God. (1 Cor. vi. 15.)

Its practical value, however, does not end here. As the body of Christ, there can be but one. Two bodies to one head would be a monstrous formation. How far must men's thoughts then have diverged from the teaching of scripture, when they can talk of different bodies of God's people on earth. Scripture sanctions no such language, though it does treat of the body under three different aspects, local, collective, and universal.

Viewed locally, it comprehends all believers in any one place. Thus the apostle writing to the Corinthians could say, "Ye [not we] are the body of Christ." (1 Cor. xii. 27.) Viewed col-

CHRIST IN GLORY.

17

lectively, it is composed of all believers at any one time upon earth. (Eph. iv. 16.) Viewed in its universal aspect, it includes all believers from Pentecost till the Lord Jesus shall descend into the air. (Eph. i. 23.) Very different as these aspects of it are, they have one feature however in common, which is this, that the body is never less than the totality of all believers, in whichever of the three aspects above mentioned it may be at the moment regarded.

But, whilst they have this feature in common, there is a difference to be noticed. It is not a shapeless mass, an agglomeration simply of atoms. It is a body with members, but these are only mentioned when it is viewed in its local or collective aspect. (Rom. xii. 5; 1 Cor. xii.; Eph. iv. 16; Col. ii. 19.) The importance of this we shall understand as we remember that by every joint of supply the body connected together increases, and by the action of its members all service in and by it is carried on. To act in service, and with authority, the body must have its members,

18 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

and be regarded as complete, fitted with all that is needful for its increase. Now were members spoken of when the body universal was mentioned, it might be said, that, since all the members could never be on earth at any one time, ability for action must always be wanting. Again, were members only mentioned when the body collective was treated of, it might be affirmed, that action at any one place, or time, was impossible without a real œcumenical council. Were members only mentioned when the body local was the subject in hand, Congregationalism, it might have been taught, was the principle which believers were to uphold, each local assembly being independent of others around it. The wisdom and value of the word of God is however here apparent. For whilst each local assembly is empowered to act as often as it may be needed, without waiting for the assistance of others, it is not true that Congregationalism is the principle which scripture upholds. The body collective has members likewise, and

CHRIST IN GLORY.

19

therefore is empowered to act, and is responsible to do so, being really concerned with that which every local assembly may do. The concern of each local assembly is the concern of the body collective, being all parts of one great whole. What a view then have we of God's plan for His people on earth! Self-contained as a body, whether viewed locally or collectively, independence of other assemblies is a thought foreign to the word, whilst inability to act locally, as though the body local was incomplete in itself, is a virtual denial of the teaching of scripture about the body of Christ. But what, some may say, must we do, if all the body local cannot be got to act together? Shall Satan be held to have triumphed, and by dividing to have rendered action impossible? The Lord has anticipated that condition of things in Matthew xviii. 18-20, and Heaven, we learn, will ratify the acts of those who by His word are guided, as they meet in His name, for they will have Him in their midst.

20 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Formed by the Holy Ghost; called by the name of Christ; fully provided for by its Head, who can form part of this wonderful body? That voice from heaven, which Saul heard, tells us, that those only who are believers in the Lord are members of it. Saul was that day outside of it, as the words "Why persecutest thou me?" clearly implied. He lived however to be a member of it (Eph. ii.), a witness, that whosoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ becomes a member of that body which bears Christ's name, and of which He, though in heaven, is, not in name only, but in reality, its Head.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

LOOKING BACK.

ONCE that faith in God, guided by His word, became the power and light for the walk of the saint on earth, from that time every visible thing or judgment of man, when entertained, weakened and diverted him from the path of faith. It is important for us, as saints of God, to

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 21

be assured of the principle of our being. God has affixed laws to all created things; the sun and the moon obey His orders, and it becomes us to ascertain the divine law laid down for us. The great fundamental principle is faith; "without faith it is impossible to please God," and any departure from faith must entail weakness and decline.

When faith works, it is true to itself. Faith reckons on God, and acts independently of other things, looking only to Him. It is when the heart is beset by things around, and faith has lost its control, that other influences spring up and supplant it. Faith is entirely new to man, and contrary to his natural habit of judgment, however keen that may be. It is strange to him to close his eyes to the visible, and to his own feelings; and to look for a new light, a divine judgment about everything. This faith does, and while faith is acting, there is a marked energy in separating from the things which savour of man, but as soon as faith wanes or ceases to be active, then other influences rule; for the heart

22 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

of man must be governed by something, and unless a power greater than man's own mind rules his heart, he must be ruled by what springs up there, or by what acts upon him as a man. It is plain that man is either under the control of God, entirely outside and beyond the natural, or under that which is natural, and within his own reach. There is neither spring nor power in the natural mind to reach to what is of God. It must be introduced and communicated to him—and hence if there be any cessation or interruption of the new action, the things which naturally influence man must resume their force, and this is “looking back.” Now we must guard against this in a double way. On the one hand we have to keep the heart with all diligence under the action of the word; and on the other, to avoid everything which calls up the old influences because they in themselves suit the natural mind, and no one after having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new, for he saith the old is better. So when we begin in faith, and

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 23

so long as faith is active, there is a going forward, a surrendering of things for the Lord, which often after a few years are resumed. The actual truth which led to a certain profession is not denied, but the activities, which, like green leaves upon a tree, indicated real life and power, have died off. The tree remains in the same place, but it bears little or no signs of life, and there is no growth, but the older it becomes the more its branches wither, and leave it a spectacle of declining greatness.

The saint is turned aside, or looks to things behind from two causes; one, from the pressure of circumstances; and the other, because of the attractions of things here. We find these personated in Proverbs ii.: one is the man of evil which causes fear; the other, the woman of flattery. From the first the Lord mercifully restores, when the heart is awakened to repentance; from the latter, when persisted in, there is no restoration as to testimony, though salvation be not forfeited. We get an instance of the first in Abram (Gen. xii.) when, from

24 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

the pressure of famine, he went down into Egypt. Again, Jonah, fearing service, flees to Tarshish ; Peter, from fear, denies the Lord ; Paul, pressed by James (Acts xxi.), returns to Jewish things. There are several examples in scripture of the saint turning back from fear, or from the pressure of circumstances, and yet the Lord, who has compassion on us because of the weakness of our frame, restores him, and he is found again in the path of faith and obedience. If he had walked in faith, he would have been supported by God, and have risen above and beyond all that is natural to man. Pressure arises from the fear of death or its consequences ; and for a man to be superior to fear, he must know a power greater than his own ; he must be possessed of the power of God. "Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life." It requires more than natural power not to "fear them that kill the body" (Luke xii.), and, as man truly says, "Self-preservation is the first law of nature." It is sad when a saint yields to this pressure, but the Lord in

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 25

mercy restores him, having first exposed to him his own inability to stand in such circumstances, and then leads him in the very path from which he had swerved, and to endure the very thing which he had feared; as we see in the instances which I have adduced. I think many a one may look to things behind; may turn aside from fear; but if it be only fear, he will be restored to bear up again and endure much more than what at first deterred him. The Lord remembers that we are but dust, and yet He will not depart from His own line, or course, for us; and though we may turn away from it from fear, the time will come when He will lead us to stand where we had failed, and teach us, as He taught Moses, that *there* we must endure. So was it also with Peter: he succumbed through fear, but the Lord tells him "When thou art old another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not:" he should one day lay down his life for Him.

Now the other cause for a servant looking back is quite different. There

26 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

is no pressure nor fear, but there is temptation; the woman of flattery—seductive influence. When a saint gives way to this, simply for his own gratification or advantage, and if there be not repentance when chastened or warned of God, there is no restoration to testimony. Lot affords us an example of this. He does not give up the standing of being in the land; but the advantages of Sodom seduce him from the path of faith, and from the course of a stranger and a pilgrim. There was no real necessity for this step; it was prudent in man's judgment, (but there it was merely man's judgment,) and not according to the call of God, which he surrenders, for present advantages, while still in the standing in which the call had set him; and he never recovered; that is to say, he never was found again a witness of the truth of God on earth. He had been warned and saved by Abram, who to rescue him had risked his life, which he had feared to lose when the famine was in the land; but Lot persisted in his

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 27

self-indulgent course, and was never restored to the testimony which he had professed in his early days. Thus also was it with Samson after his surrender of himself to Delilah, he was never restored to the path which he had previously occupied, and in the end his eyes were put out. Divine power, as the gift of grace, flourished again, but he sank for ever under the first exertion of it. (Judges xvi. 22-30.) It was so in a measure even with David; he was never the same in public after his fall, as he was before it. He began his public career by slaying Goliath, and at the end of it we read that one of the sons of the giants being girded with a new sword, thought to have slain David. (2 Sam. xxi. 16.) That which most distinguishes the man of faith in his youth, when it is fresh and active, is often the very thing he most fails in at the end of his course. The man who starts in the power of faith, surrendering his position as a man, and forgetting his own people and his father's house, will, if he de-

28 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

parts from faith, return to the very thing which he had surrendered. All Israel, excepting a few faithful ones, allowed their hearts to go back to the leeks and onions of Egypt, in preference to the grapes of Canaan which were presented to them as the reward of faith.

The various ways in which the woman of flattery plies her arts are strangely adapted to each of us. It is all to turn us aside from the path of life. The great distinction between "wisdom" and "the strange woman," is that the former always gives bread and wine — true sustenance — but proposes separation from evil. (See Prov. ix.) The other always proposes something to be enjoyed in secret: "stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." The intrinsic character of this influence is, that one may retain the reputation of a true standing, and yet yield to the fascination, and return to the garb of the world in secret. How many, like the two tribes and a half, even help their brethren openly in the war in the land, who in their hearts

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 29

and homes have cities on this side Jordan. This is plainly the case with those who profess or preach heavenly truth, and who yet in their houses, dress, personal details, &c., are according to the fashion of the world. Where faith is fresh, it readily prescribes the true course; but when the memory becomes occupied with things surrendered—when one is mindful of the country from which one has come out—there is opportunity to return; the leaf begins to wither, even while the tree still stands. The declension will begin in a way almost imperceptible; a little bit of the world once renounced will be resumed; one can hardly say why or how, but then the leaf fades, the healthy verdure of life is gone, and there is no growth. The turning back may be very small; Lot's wife only *looked* back. The Israelites did not go back to Egypt; they only *remembered* the leeks and the onions.

There are two shades of this turning back; one is where the world in its outward evil has been renounced, yet as to the heart it is still there. This was the

30 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

case with the two tribes and a half, and in principle, with Ananias and Sapphira. Such gradually slip away, and lose all the comfort of the truth. As with Israel, the rain is stayed, and they perish off the good land; and, like the sow that was washed, wallow in the mire. The other shade is when there is a return to things once renounced, because there is not power to continue in the race. They cannot endure to be made little of by their near acquaintances; they do not resist unto blood, striving against sin; and while professedly in the true standing, they have so lost the energy of faith in it, that they drop back into old association, and find interest in the society of relations and acquaintances (resuming little items of worldliness in order that they may be on easy terms), from whom they had separated at a former time for the Lord's sake. Thus, in varied ways, the heart gets under a false influence, and there is a looking back which unfits for the kingdom of God.

The Lord keep our eye steadily set on Himself, for His name's sake.

JESUS ONLY.

IN the paradise of glory
Is the Man Divine—
There my heart, O God, is tasting
Fellowship with thine.
Called to share thy joy unmeasured
Now is heaven begun;
I rejoice with thee, O Father,
In thy glorious Son.

Where the heart of God is resting,
There my rest I find;
Christ in all His stainless glory,
His delight and mine.
There in deep unhindered fulness
Doth my joy flow free—
On through everlasting ages,
Lord, beholding thee.

Round me is creation groaning,
Death and sin and care;
But there is a rest remaining,
And my Lord is there.
There I find a blessed stillness,
Where He rests in love;
All below the strife and darkness,
Cloudless peace above.

32 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

'Tis a solitary pathway
To that fair retreat—
Where in deep and sweet communion
Sit I at His feet.
In that glorious isolation,
Loneliness how blest;
From the windy storm and tempest,
Have I found my rest.

Learning from thy lips for ever
All the Father's heart,
Thou hast, in that joy eternal,
Chosen me my part.
There, where Jesus, Jesus only,
Fills each heart and tongue,
Where Himself is all the radiance,
And His love the song.

Here who follows Him the nearest,
Needs must walk alone;
There like many seas the chorus,
Praise surrounds the throne.
Here a dark and silent pathway,
In those clouds so fair;
Countless hosts, yet each beholding
Jesus only there.

1872.

CHRIST IN GLORY.

IV.—GIFTS GIVEN TO MEN.

LITTLE, surely, are men in general conscious how widespread are the results of the Lord's ascension to heaven. The world and God's saints are affected by it, as Jesus Himself predicted. As regards the former, its sin has been demonstrated; to the latter, truth has been unfolded. (John xvi. 8, 13.) But far beyond the confines of earth the immediate effects of the ascension extended. In regions never trodden by man's foot, through tracks of space never brought within the reach of his enquiring gaze, and to beings he has never seen, the momentous consequences of the Lord's return to glory have been demonstrated. For, "when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." By the death of the Lord Jesus Christ death was annulled for God's saints (2 Tim. i. 10), as well as him who has the power of it, that is, the devil. (Heb. ii. 14.) By the cross principalities and powers have been spoiled,

84 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

and God has made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. (Col. ii. 15.) And Christ, having ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Eph. iv. 8.) What a catalogue of victories have we to record over those enemies against which fallen man in himself is powerless! Death annulled, and the devil likewise; principalities and powers spoiled, and openly triumphed over, and captivity led captive. What an idea we thus get of the powers arrayed against man, about which he thinks so little! What a thought, too, we gather of the deep interest He must take in man's welfare, who, discriminating between wicked spirits and fallen men, has achieved such mighty results, and given gifts to men! The ranks of the wicked spirits have only felt Christ's power exercised against them, men, if they will, can share in His power and goodness exerted on their behalf.

To human eyes, and uninstructed hearts, it might appear of but little importance that Christ should ascend to

CHRIST IN GLORY.

35

heaven, a matter affecting Himself, and, at the most, of interest and importance to His followers, leaving the universe in general just as it was, unconcerned about that event, which only the eleven disciples witnessed from near Bethany on the mount of Olives. We learn, however, from the word, that both the earth and the heavenlies were, and are, concerned in it. A change has thereby passed over both. On earth, the Holy Ghost dwells, the witness to the ascended Christ; in the heavenlies, the spiritual powers of wickedness have felt, and do feel, the consequences of His ascension. No creature who witnessed His triumph has recorded it; those who were thereby led captive would surely fain conceal it; but we know it on unerring testimony, for a man, an apostle, divinely taught by the Holy Ghost, has declared it, and pointed out its accordance with the prophetic word. (Ps. lxxviii. 18.)

By Paul we have the fact stated, from Daniel x. we gather its significance. Mourning, fasting, and praying for three

36 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

whole weeks, the prophet at the end of that time received an answer to his petition, and then learnt from the heavenly messenger, charged with this service on his behalf, that for all that time, since he first presented his request, he had been on the road to him, the man greatly beloved, contending with, and baffled by, a spiritual power, the prince of the kingdom of Persia, which he had not the strength to overcome, till helped by Michael, the prince of the people of Israel, who came to his assistance. (Dan. x. 12, 21.) What malice in these spirits this persistent opposition brings out! What enmity to all that interests God, and concerns His people, have we here disclosed to us as going on in a world near us, around and above us, in which contentions take place for and against man's best interests! The kings of Persia, themselves mere men, were far inferior in strength, wisdom, and activity to the angel who visited Daniel; but the prince of the kingdom of Persia, the wicked spirit which guided the ruling power on earth,

CHRIST IN GLORY.

37

to injure if possible God's ancient people, successfully opposed, for the time specified, the onward flight of the elect angel to the prophet of God. Thus we get in Daniel a glimpse of the activity and malice of the powers in the heavenlies, arrayed against God and His people, whilst we learn in Ephesians, that they can no longer interrupt, as of old, communications descending from heaven to earth. For the Lord Jesus, in ascending, led captivity captive, and thus opened out a direct way of communication between Himself on high and men upon earth. Thus man, in the person of Christ, has overcome powers greater than man, and the Conqueror bestows on men gifts in virtue, and as the witness, of His decisive victory.

Descending first into the lower parts of the earth, from thence He arose, and commenced a series of triumphs, which will not end till Satan shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone for ever and ever. Could men only know Christ as the spiritual powers of wickedness know Him, namely, as the One who has

38 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

triumphed over them, they might gaze with wonder on His acts, but must dread the exercise of His power. But He gave gifts unto men, to those over whom these spirits would tyrannize, and, if possible, deprive of everlasting blessings, indicating thereby His grace, and His desire for their temporal and everlasting welfare.

Gifts to men from the ascended victorious Christ! Then we may be sure they are of value, since He has seen fit to bestow them. To Job, God gave possessions on earth, cattle, sheep, camels, asses, servants, and children. To Solomon, He gave wisdom and wealth. To men now, the Lord has given apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Very different in character are these gifts from those which Job and Solomon received. They received what they could enjoy. On men now are bestowed what they want. How they speak of the Lord's desire for man, as they point out wherein his best blessings lie. Apostles, prophets, by these God's mind has been revealed. Evan-

CHRIST IN GLORY.

39

gelists, pastors and teachers, by these the revealed word is ministered, and souls are blessed. And mark the word evangelist. A preacher he is, but a preacher of good news to men, such as neither Noah nor Solomon could declare. Noah warned men of the flood, Solomon taught his people about the vanity of things on earth; but evangelists announce the good news of God's grace, to men who deserve God's wrath. What a word is this—gifts! Men did not ask for them, but He gave them, for the perfecting of the saints, as their primary object, which is to be effected by the work of the ministry, by the edifying of the body of Christ; "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect [or full grown] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ."

What care this evinces for the members of His body, "till we all come." None are overlooked, no saint is too insignificant to be thought of, or his full growth to be provided for. And let us

40 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

mark that which follows. "That we be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but, speaking [or holding] the truth in love, may grow up unto Him in all things, who is the head, even Christ." Growth, then, and the strengthening of the weak ones, are His object and desire, who gave these gifts. Weak in the faith some are, but they should not remain so. Young in the truth many may be, but they should grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who has provided these gifts for that purpose, as witnessed by the exhortation of Peter (2 Pet. iii. 18), and the rebuke of Paul. (Heb. v. 12.)

To use these gifts is incumbent on us, as far as opportunity is offered us. Are we then to pin our faith to any teacher or set of teachers? No. Each believer is responsible to judge of what he hears, and to prove all things (1 Thess. v. 21); and, as indwelt by the Holy Ghost, not men only, but women, and even babes

CHRIST IN GLORY.

41

in the faith, are held responsible to turn aside from error. (2 John 7—11, 1 John ii. 20, 27.) Can we then be independent of all these gifts? That is impossible. A man might be converted without the instrumentality of an evangelist, he might also be taught God's truth without the aid of a teacher, the Holy Ghost unfolding to him, direct from the word, what is therein contained; but he could never be independent of the apostles and prophets. For, though in person they do not now exist, it is from their writings alone that he can learn what God has been pleased to reveal for the welfare of souls in this day. As often then as we read the written word, or hear the teaching of it brought out, we share in the rich blessings bestowed on men by the ascended Christ, and are witnesses, however little men may think of it, of the mighty victory of the Lord Jesus, who "led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

THE FLESH NATURE, AND THE LIFE OF JESUS.

MAN was made in the image of God. There was nothing in his formation by nature which necessitated distance from God; on the contrary, God saw that man, as *made* in the flesh, was “very good.” The actual *machinery* of man in the flesh, does not debar him from pleasing God. The entrance of an independent will in man—his acting according to his own mind in opposition to God, introduced an evil principle, and this is the flesh—the carnal mind; thus they that “are in the flesh cannot please God;” man acting according to his own will, independently, or regardless of God, is the flesh. Nature is when one acts in perfect keeping with the order of being in which one has been made.

The principle of evil—the flesh—is in all; even where the instincts of nature are right. For the whole question is, whether the nature is used for the Creator, and according to His will, or whether it is used according to man’s

NATURE, AND THE LIFE OF JESUS. 43

will. An independent will, like poison, has entered man's system, and like the serpent's bite, it is deadly, and entails death, and by death only is there escape from its action and influence. Man is morally mad; that is, he reasons rightly from wrong premises. He has all his senses in activity, but he is under a delusion—an aberration of mind. In God's sight he is not in his right senses. Thus it is said of the prodigal, after grace had worked in him, "when he came to himself," &c., and again, "all we like sheep have gone astray." The body in its claims, hunger, thirst, &c., and as to form, is as a mere organic structure the same as God made it, except that sin and death have deteriorated it; but the will has entered—an evil principle rules the body, and warps the nature, diverting it from God, making its claims paramount to Him; and when nature is accepted as the guide for action, then God is not owned and the will of the flesh governs.

In an unconverted man there are two ways in which the flesh works in relation to nature; one is, where nature is

44 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

the limit and measure, and this truly is a man in nature ; and such a man is in the flesh ; because the will is there though he has never transgressed against his nature, that is, against the laws of his being. The second is where man gets so degraded, that his will carries him outside of nature ; and he is without natural affection, &c. Under the law man was, save in such exceptional cases as the Nazarite, confined to nature ; and to what suited it, but subject to God. The man who transgresses against his nature simply denies his being and impugns the design and work of Almighty God.

There is nothing wrong in the eye seeing, the ear hearing, the tongue tasting ; but it makes an immense difference as to the effects produced on the mind by the things that act on the senses. This will be according to the governing principle. If it be the flesh, the things of the flesh will please ; if the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. A man set on gratifying himself, will not be restrained by his nature ; he will do without sleep or food, or indulge in

NATURE, AND THE LIFE OF JESUS. 45

either to excess irrespective of the voice or warning of nature. The word nature is used in two ways in scripture; one, as setting forth the manner of the being—man—as God made him. This, the expression “Doth not even nature itself teach you?” intimates, and again—“contrary to nature”—“without natural affection,” &c. The meaning here is simply, that man is a being of a certain order, and that if he were true to this, he would not have acted so, and any man acting contrary to this order is unnatural. The second way in which scripture speaks of it is in contrast to the spiritual. When a man acts strictly within the limits of his nature, as a bird or a fish does, he is natural but not spiritual; for “the natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness to him.” The life that man has is not capable of comprehending what is immeasurably higher than itself.

We have seen, first, how man as unconverted must either be within nature, and then he is simply natural, or below

46 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

it, and then he is a monster ; secondly, we see him under the law, subject to God within the limits of his nature, and there man utterly failed ; because of the enmity of the will of the flesh, because he was restricted to what God claimed of man, as suited to him. Now when we look at our Lord Jesus Christ, we see one in every respect a man, but a Nazarite ; above nature and superior to it, that is, He was always the donor or contributor in every relation or position in which He was found, never seeking anything from the condition into which He had entered. He used His power always for others ; He came into man's status to glorify God in it ; and to be a ransom for the man who disowned and distrusted Him. He consulted not nature though His own was perfect, but the word of God, and whatever God prescribed, that He followed ; because as God had made the nature, it became Him to prescribe for it, just as He liked. The blessed Jesus, I need not say, had no flesh in the moral sense of that word ; that is, the evil principle which

NATURE, AND THE LIFE OF JESUS. 47

works in man, though He was in real human nature; but then He was more, He was the Son of God, and the Spirit of God dwelt in Him on earth, and, though a real man, with the spirit of a man, and understanding the things of a man, yet He comprehended everything of God, and judged of things according to God and not according to man. Thus He shewed Satan when first tempted in the wilderness, that He would not yield to the claims of nature without the word of God. The claim to satisfy hunger was a just one, but He would not let it take first place with Him. He had power, but He would not use it for Himself, without God's authority, even though needing it. Thus He had no will to guide Him but God's, for He had *no other* will. This is the life of Jesus. It was not the nature that imparted to Him, but He beyond measure imparted to it. He acted above nature as God required, He acted for Him; and as man He was all the greater for it, because without ignoring nature He was above it. He suffered hunger and weariness, it

48 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

was natural to feel them, but his power was shewn in that while feeling them fully, He was superior to them for God. Hence the life of Jesus is above and beyond nature, while we cannot fail to see how perfectly He moved about, a man among men, and how glorious was His course, when He could say, "I do always the things which please Him." The life of Jesus was ever well-pleasing to God, and yet He was this in everything while in *man's nature*. In us by nature there is the flesh, which is our will, leading us as it pleases, either without regard to God at all or merely in slavish fear. Where the life of Jesus is—where the divine nature is given, according as grace works in us, through the Spirit—there is a refusal of the will of the flesh, and nature is not accepted as a guide, but what God directs; now God directs me according to the relations in which I am; and the problem for a saint, and what the heavenly vocation insists on and imparts is, that a man should fill every relation of life here as a man;

NATURE, AND THE LIFE OF JESUS. 49

not merely because it is according to nature, but as one who has an unlimited supply of grace to draw upon. Like a spring that ever keeps flowing, he is never wearied in acting, because there is no limit to the supply; the nature or the claim being only the channel for this endless contribution of grace. In every relation of life, it is not simply all that nature could give, but all that the life of Jesus could contribute. So that a wife, however provoked, would never be insubmissive, and a husband, however disappointed, would never cease loving. The tree is the same tree as it was by nature, but its leaves become ever-green and its fruit perennial by the new sap supplied to it.

The great hindrance to many is the idea that nature is to prescribe, and that one is safe provided he adheres to nature. The parable of the great supper (Luke xiv.) plainly exposes not only the inability of nature to comprehend the supper, but that as nature is gratified, it makes a man regardless of it. The supper is the scene of delight in nearness

50 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

to Himself which God has provided for us; and we learn in that parable that according as nature was provided for and suited, so was there an indifference to the supper. This immense fact is disclosed, that exaltation in nature does not advance a man one bit nearer to God. Hence the word of the Lord, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Ver. 26.) And further, that he can neither be a fort to resist attack (ver. 28), nor an army to encounter one (ver. 31), unless he is in quite a new condition. The Lord does not mean here that a man is not to be divinely beautiful and orderly in every relation of life, but He sets forth, that nature by itself will not do, nay, that even when exalted to its highest point, it then betrays entire unwillingness for what God offers. The tree (taking it as a figure of man) remains with the same branches that God gave it, but instead of being nurtured and maintained by its own sap,

NATURE, AND THE LIFE OF JESUS. 51

which is the natural, there must be the divine sap which is the Spirit of Christ, while the cross is applied to everything in man which would resist it.

We have several instances in scripture of saints failing when guided by nature. Paul's going to Jerusalem (Acts xxi.) is a remarkable instance of how acting in the purest way in nature is below the rule of the Spirit. It was quite natural for him as a godly Jew to go to Jerusalem, and he is allowed to test nature to its utmost. In going he was not acting spiritually, for the Spirit told him he ought to desist. Barnabas, in the matter of Mark (Acts xv.), failed where saints in general fail. It was nature that influenced him in preferring his kinsman. It was quite right for him to have a kinsman's love for Mark, that was natural, and if he had it not, would have been unnatural; but while having this natural feeling for him, if he had been spiritual he would have gone higher, and have seen how he stood in the sight of God, and for God; and he would have risen above nature for what was

52 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

much higher; and eventually he would have received him back as Paul did (2 Tim. iv. 11), not only in nature but in much more—even in the love of Christ. All our relationships ought to be like branches of a tree, or as channels for the outflow of the love and grace of Christ; and thus the life of Jesus would be manifested in our mortal bodies; and we should set forth the most beautiful and wondrous spectacle to the angels, and the most beneficent to man.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY,

MAN'S MORAL DISTANCE FROM GOD
CAN ONLY BE DISCERNED IN NEAR-
NESS TO HIM.

THE fall of man is admitted by every saint, and also the need and the relief of being saved from the consequences of the fall. The gospel is, that faith in Christ saves from the consequences, but the extent of them, or the moral distance of man from God, is very variously and

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 53

inadequately understood ; what that distance is cannot be measured but in proportion as we are consciously near God, as we approach the elevation which He in His grace has assigned to us. While man moves in his level among his fellows, he can at best only detect or refuse what is contrary to man's feelings and what is offensive to man's interests and tastes. He must be raised to some higher association and taste in order to discover the imperfection or defects of his own. All education and refinement work for the end of raising man in the scale morally ; but however it may advance him, it cannot place him higher than he is, that is, a fallen creature, and instead of disclosing to him what his fall is in the sight of God, it attempts to make him satisfied with literary progress, and the cultivation of his powers and tastes in his present state. The grace of God meets a man in all his moral distance, and that distance as it is seen by God. Man may enjoy the light and work of grace many a long day before he sees in any great degree

54 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

what his fall or degraded state in the sight of God is. It is only as one is consciously raised into a new and higher order, that one can see by contrast the imperfection or distance between the old order and the new one. It is not as a man raised in the scale by cultivation sees his fellow man who has not been so raised, and discovers what he needs; but it is to see what man is, his motives, desires, tendencies, in a word all that he is—in God's mind.

Man condemns and judges of man by conduct, and his conscience winces, according as he has a sense of what God requires. It was thus that law exposed sin. Sin was there in man's heart before the law; the law only discovered it. "I had not known sin unless the law had said, Thou shalt not lust." When it is exposed, then the conscience is affected by it. But as soon as we are in the light of God's presence, we begin to see ourselves as we are in His sight, though the conduct in no way wounds the conscience. Thus it was with Job. Among men, he was perfect and upright;

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 55

one "that escheweth evil." God allowed Satan to deprive him of everything, in order that He might prove to Satan the work of grace in Job's soul. Job deprived of his property, bereaved of his family, and his health broken, is taught in the presence of God to abhor himself, to repudiate all the hard thoughts he had harboured about God, and all the way in which he had sought to vindicate his own integrity. He exclaims, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." For ever he would have gone on defending himself and complaining had he not been led by grace into the light of God's presence, and there for the first time, his estimate of himself is according to the mind of God. All the reasoning and legality of the three friends were ineffectual. The teaching of Elihu had failed. It was seeing God which alone produced this great change in him. Almost every man is ashamed of bad conduct, but where there is everything to commend

56 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

it is not possible for man to condemn himself. Hence it is overwhelming when with nothing in his conduct to find fault with, he *abhors* himself. No amount of exercise produced either by the three friends, or by Elihu, had exposed to him his true condition in the sight of God.

Thus also was it with Moses, though in a different way. He had not only seen all the works of God in Egypt, but he had been the channel of them. He had received on the mount the tables of testimony; he was there forty days and forty nights obtaining patterns for the tabernacle—the figure of the true; and yet after all these many and various displays of the power and greatness of God, not until he saw the glory of God and his face shone with it, did he discover the extent of man's moral distance from God: when he was disheartened because of the idolatry of the children of Israel and their perverseness, his cry to God was, “Shew me thy glory;” when he beheld it his face shone; and when he appeared among

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 57

the people they were afraid to look at him. The glory of God shining on Moses' face exposed the moral distance between man and God. As in Job's case, no amount of exercise of mind, though brought about in various ways, was effectual in enlightening him, as to his real state in the sight of God. So with Moses: no amount of the knowledge of the actings or ways of God, however various, or of the beauty and perfection of heaven, had disclosed to him the measure of the distance between man and God. Hence the apostle uses this incident in order to shew the difference between law and grace. Under law man could not bear to look at the glory, shining on Moses' face; but now because of the work of Christ, we can with unveiled face behold His glory and be transformed by it.

Isaiah is another example; he was a prophet highly favoured of God. Great communications had been made to him; the vision of God's purposes had been presented to him, and yet he had never measured his actual condition as a man

58 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

before God (Is. vi.), until he saw the glory of God. Thus we see that knowledge however extended, or however special, will not of itself expose man's true state before God. When Isaiah sees the glory he exclaims, "Woe is me, I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." Strange words for one so gifted and enlightened! but it needs the brightness of divine glory to throw into contrast man's moral state.

We have seen how that neither exercise of the conscience as with Job, nor the possession of the greatest power, and even a view of heaven, as with Moses, nor intelligence and gift as with Isaiah, can impart a true sense of man's moral distance, but that in every instance the light of God's presence alone discloses it. Now let us turn to Luke ix. There the Lord in Himself establishes this principle. He is transfigured on the holy mount. He enters into the greatest moral height; but when He comes down from the mount, not only is the worst manifestation of Satan's power occupying the disciples, but the crown-

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 59

ing sin of man in crucifying Him, is openly declared by Him. He says, "Let these sayings sink down into your ears, for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men." No sooner is disclosed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ the greatest exaltation ever accorded to man, than is disclosed correspondingly both the present energy of Satan, and the dreadful hostility of man in his natural state to the man thus exalted—the Lord Jesus Christ. The greatness of man's exaltation in the person of the Lord prepared for the disclosure of the extent of man's suffering from the power of evil, as well as the terrible suicidal evil in himself, that should lead him to kill the One thus exalted. We often hear saints say in reply to the warning of another, "I do not see anything wrong in it." The fact is, our motive is never seen, but as we are in nearness to God; and instead of trying to get rid of this thing or that, as reformers propose, the only real or correct way is first to see it clearly, as it

60 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

appears in the brightest light, but this cannot be until we are in the light. It is an immense gain and favour to be in the region where I am truly exposed, for in proportion as I am, the very same scene and power shelters and separates me from that which is exposed in all its hideousness. It is as we possess and enjoy the treasure (see 2 Cor. iv.) that we can carry about in our body the dying of Jesus. That which would mar and counteract it is exposed, and we, because of it, know that the excellency of the power is of God and not of us; and as we live we are delivered unto death. As the bright side is reached, the dark side is discerned. It is a great thing to see and to accept this principle; it has much practical power. The effort to see evil while one is still in evil, is vain; there is no power to expose or escape from it. One is often, I might say, tantalized in seeing good which one cannot attain to. I might long for wings for ever and be no nearer having them, but once I *have* them I can say,

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 61

“Vain is the net that is set in the sight of one on wing,” that is, one who is literally above it and who sees it. This is what grace does. God sets me in nearness to Himself in Christ, and as I learn my nearness to Him I am prepared for the exposure of my natural distance from Him, and I am, through grace, morally apart and sheltered from it, at the very moment when I discover it. The greater my height, the greater the enormity of the depth appears ; but I am safe from it, rejoicing that I am safe. As a consequence I boast in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

“Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus.” He is shewn the wondrous height to which God had raised him in Christ, but this only prepares him for the terrible disclosure as to man and evil on the earth. The council, the heads of his people and of his religion, those who sat in Moses’ seat, the great functionaries of the law, “ran upon him with one accord, and cast

62 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

him out of the city and stoned him." he hands over his spirit to Jesus, but he dies at the hands of man here. He who had just entered into and enjoyed the highest elevation with God, now suffers in death from the terrible evil of man. He, whose face was as the face of an angel, bears in his body, because of his faithful service, the effects of man's desperate distance from God, and hatred of Him. Stephen first sees and enjoys the height in glory, and then man's diabolical evil bears down on him. Paul is caught up into heaven; he does not know whether he is in the body or out of the body; he is sensible of, and intelligent as to, the greatness of the scene into which he is introduced. But when he returns to his duties on earth, he discovers the evil principle in man's nature; not as with Stephen, by the stones bearing down on him from the hand of man, but by a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, he experiences the terrible fact that there is a door for Satan through his flesh, and that he requires this disclosure, and

TO LIVE CHRIST.

63

this suffering from the power of evil, in order to check and to hinder the tendency of his flesh to be puffed up. He is more elevated than Stephen and he feels in his own flesh man's moral degradation; while Stephen sinks under it from the hands of God's earthly people.

The Lord lead us into the shelter of His holy presence that we may daily grow in the elevation to which He has raised us and consequently into moral distance from the old man, which is so entirely estranged from the light and perfection in His presence.

TO LIVE CHRIST.

To walk in His life down here; eating His flesh and drinking His blood, acting as He acted though apparently atomic, as all life is; rears up a monument for all eternity—a great coral reef. One is so often trying to do some great thing, instead of the greatest of things, which is always at hand, namely, to *live here* as Christ did; and this act endures for

64 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

all eternity, as the power of it has existed from all eternity. Were I simply set on living Christ here, it would abundantly occupy me as well as fit me for any service.

Beginning my day with Christ, storing up the manna, and finding not a moment of my time uninteresting or unoccupied, because I have still another and a fresh step to learn. The same step is not set the second time. Act the step before you this moment like Christ, and if you do, it will be recalled and revived at the judgment seat; but if not, that particular brilliant is lost, and you will never wear it. You will have plenty to do all day, and the man who lives Christ most in his daily life and ways is always the most fit and prepared for special services; for leading a forlorn hope. A slave can adorn the gospel of Christ in all things.

POSITION AND CONDITION.

As soon as the principle of grace is accepted, I am simply a recipient. The principle of law is, that I am required to do so and so, on the presumption that I am able to do it. As a lost one I have nothing, I can do nothing, it is only as a debtor to mercy that I have anything. Grace is the free gift of God to me in my ruin, and under judgment, from which I could in no wise escape. Being lost and under judgment I can prescribe no terms, suggest nothing; but as I am true and humble, I accept without hesitation or question what is granted to me; my claim on grace is that of a pauper on the union; I have nothing, and am ready to accept whatever is appointed to me. The first great point to be settled is whether it is by faith or by works, I acquire my position. If I have nothing, and can do nothing, like the thief on the cross, then everything I receive is by grace, and if I refuse or diminish any of the position which grace confers

66 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

on me, I am assuming that I am not a lost one, and I am questioning the goodness of God and His righteousness in conferring more on me than is necessary or fitting. When a man attempts to prescribe the measure of the favour to be conferred on him, he has not the deep moral sense that he is lost. If when I am helplessly drowning, a strong arm at personal cost rescues me, and lands me into a beautiful saloon, and I submit to it without question, I become conscious of the greatness and unaccountable kindness of my deliverer; but if I refuse the saloon for the deck, I am limiting his favour, and reviving myself only to circumscribe his generosity. In a word, I have life enough left to limit or hinder what undeserved kindness would do for me; I begin to act as one not lost.

The true recipient of grace is the one who says, I am nothing whatever. Divine mercy prescribes or appoints for me, and I accede to it thankfully, because being utterly lost, I have no voice. My eye through grace is

POSITION AND CONDITION.

67

turned to my Saviour, and whatever He appoints for me that only I can be. Grace reigns through righteousness, because in righteousness God is enabled to favour and bless a lost sinner. The grace of God is not simply favour to a sinless being, as it was to Adam when unfallen, but it is favour to a sinner ; and hence there must be righteousness as the ground and warrant for this favour. Any limitation of the favour or the position in which the grace sets me, must impugn, however unintentionally, the righteousness which authorizes it. In a word, if I come to God as a lost one in faith, I must accede to the position in which He is pleased to set me. My simple unaffected word is, "Be it unto me according to thy word." When I am in the reality of a lost one, and have faith in God, I carefully seek out what He in His unaccountable love has in righteousness appointed for me. The great mark of true humility is the sense that I am so entirely gone in myself, and that God is so entirely and beyond my comprehension good, that whatever He

68 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

assigns to me I accept, acknowledging my unworthiness, but bowing to His pleasure in giving, so that if I were to demur, I should contradict His counsel.

A saint may not have heard of the position in which God has set him, but if he has heard it, and hesitates in accepting it, he is not a true debtor to grace, and his own will is at work and not the Spirit of God, who at once leads him to accept the will of God. Would a tree refuse to grow the fruit appointed to it because of its sweetness? Would the polar star refuse its appointed place of prominence? Would the archangel refuse to lead the heavenly host? and is a lost sinner, whose will has been his ruin, to limit the position in which God sets him? As I am simple and humble, I accept it as His gift to me, and in the joy of faith I can say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Position is secured by faith only, for it is God's gift, but the moment I am in the position which God has given me, I

POSITION AND CONDITION.

69

am required to be in a condition suited to it. Now I never can be in the suited condition, until I am in the position. A bird could not fly until it had stepped out into the air. Its position or calling is to fly, and all its maturing has been in view of being in the condition suited to the position or calling. In order to be in its true position, it must be out of the nest and in the air, where alone its wings can act; but then it must exert its wings, or the position would be a vain thing. In a word faith sets me in my position, but it is the energy of the Spirit which gives me the condition suited to it.

In Ephesians i., the doctrine of the calling is propounded for the acceptance of faith, but the apostle immediately resorts to prayer, indicating the line of desire and purpose, which the Spirit would evoke in a servant's heart for the saints. He leads in prayer, and the spiritual would follow, not that they might accept the position, but that they might consciously comprehend and enjoy it. He asks that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may

70 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened to *know* these things, even the hope of his calling—the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of his power.” His prayer is that they may be enlightened—endowed with capacity to appreciate their position; and this prayer continues after they are in their position, because we ever need to be more fully acquainted with the purpose and counsel of God. After the doctrine of our position as to God’s side is stated, namely, our place in the heavenlies, our relationship as sons, and our inheritance with Christ, then there is prayer. The inspired prayer in the heart of the apostle, sets forth the nature of the Spirit’s energy in the one who accepts this position. It is not merely that the Spirit of God lays down the truth of the position in plain words for our faith, but He also moves the heart of the servant in prayer, that the saints might be furnished with capacity to apprehend that

POSITION AND CONDITION.

71

which has been already stated in doctrine. Many have heard the statement, the doctrine, and have received it as God's word, who have not in their own hearts received the benefit of this prayer. All the feathers are on the wings of a bird before it flies.

*"And as the bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,"*

so grace, through the word and ministry, waits on souls to lead them on in this true position.

But now, the doctrine having been fully unfolded to the close of chapter ii. as to our present position, we find in chapter iii. another prayer: "That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might

72 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

be filled with all the fulness of God." This is the true condition suited to our position ; and one which we never could reach were we not in the position that requires it, no more than a ship could float when not in the water, or a bird fly when not in the air. It is where manners are required that I must learn manners, or I shall have only book manners. It is the glory only that transforms, and to become morally like it, I must be in it.

Grace confers the position on us. It bids us come to the supper for all things ARE ready, but it also works in us capacity for apprehending it, and then it insists on our maintaining the condition that suits it. When we examine scripture, we find that many who had attained to the true position, at length lost the benefit of it because they lacked the condition suited to it. Adam and Eve were in their true position in the garden, but they lost it because they failed in the condition suited to it. Noah was in the true position after the deluge, but when he planted a vineyard, and drank

POSITION AND CONDITION.

78

of the fruit of it, and was drunk, he lost his position morally.

In Abraham we see how the grace of God leads him from country and kindred, and, when his father was dead, into his true position. The pressure of the famine ere long forces him from his position, but he was restored to it, while Lot, who was nominally in the true position, forgets the condition due to it, and sinks into Sodom. Isaac is in his true position, but he loses the condition suited to it, and the fruit of his failure is, that Jacob is sent into Syria. Jacob after twenty years of servitude returns to the land—his true position—but it is through much suffering that he attains to the condition suited to it. We see the actual working of grace as to both in Jacob. In dependence on the word of God he returns to the land; but then he has to learn the condition suited to it. First there is the wrestling; there he is crippled, made to yield to the presence of God, and then blessed with a new name. Next we find him at Shalem, where he attempts to settle down, and

D 2

74 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

seeks to sanctify a condition unsuited to his position by an altar, the name of which, El-Elohe-Israel, disclosed the real state of his heart. Here sorrow and reproach from man befall him. Thus, first, wrestled with and crippled by God—made lame for life; secondly, disgraced among men, in terror of being destroyed; after going through all this, he is told, chapter xxxv., to go to Bethel, to begin rightly, to be in a condition suited to his position; and his first work in answer to God's command is, Put away the strange gods, and be clean, &c.

Caleb sees his position and could speak well of it long before he entered on it, but when he *had* entered on it, he had to dislodge the Anakims and prove that his condition was worthy of his position. Israel entering the land of Canaan is a type of our entrance spiritually into heaven. We see in Christ's death (Jordan) ourselves dead with Him. We have to insist on the place in which God sets us. We are dead and therefore there is nothing to

POSITION AND CONDITION. 75

bar our entrance. We enter, it is God's gift to us, all accomplished for us by His Son, but this very fact requires of us a condition suited to it. Gilgal, circumcision, or the putting off of the body of the flesh, is after we have entered, and then we are in a condition for conflict. In our standing and in the condition suited to it, we can stand against the wiles of the devil, resist the power of evil, and in dependence on God maintain the testimony.

The one universal blot on all God's people is that the position they were set in was lost because of lack of condition. Israel is warned of this when about to enter Canaan. "And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods and serve them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish" (Deut. viii. 19); they would lose all the blessings of their standing.

The captives from Babylon returned to their true position, but failing to maintain the condition, the Lord's word is, "Ye looked for much, and it came to

76 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

little, and when ye brought it home I did blow upon it." (Haggai i.)

The Jews in our Lord's day were in their true position; yet they rejected the Son of God, their Messiah, and said, "This is the heir, come let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours." Hence their house is left desolate—they have lost everything and are scattered among the nations. Finally, the Church failed to retain the condition suited to her position. She lost her first love, and her candlestick is removed. The lack of condition deprived her of all the advantages and power of her position; and in any recovery now, as soon as the heart is enlightened to apprehend what God has given, then there must be condition, or the mere knowledge of the standing will be only like manna kept longer than one day, worse than useless. Position demands a suited condition, and as the condition is suited to the position so is the position appreciated.

**“HE THAT IS JOINED TO THE
LORD IS ONE SPIRIT.”
(1 Cor. vi.)**

It is of immense moment to the believer in Christ, to see in such a scripture as this, how God by the Holy Ghost has acted towards us, in making us one with the risen and ascended Lord.

This fact gets a further assurance for the soul in this chapter, by the declaration of what we once were, when in our natural state, as men in the flesh, “such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” The way out from one state into the other—this passing out of darkness into light, and from the kingdom of Satan’s power into the kingdom of the Son of God’s love—is declared to be by the work of Christ, in His death and resurrection. It is by that wondrous act of God, by which Christ was taken up out of the sepulchre, and seated at “the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens,” that we are

78 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

carried up into that new position, and made one with Him there, in life and glory. Being "joined to the Lord, and one Spirit," we are also there "in the righteousness of God," and in this way completely separated from the flesh and its corruptions (in which we once lived) to be the "temples of the Holy Ghost." The heart thus instructed and acted on in divine power, opens itself out by this grace to the love of God, who has so "joined us to the Lord." He also claims our bodies now, in this present time, as a dwelling place for Himself, through that one and the same Spirit—that so indwelt, we may glorify Him in our body and spirit which are God's! Another great fact is brought out in this scripture, that "the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." God has set apart these bodies of ours yet further, in "that having raised up the Lord, He will also raise *us* up by His own power." This puts the body in a relation to the Lord, after our resurrection and by means of it—just as truly as that it is the temple of the Holy Ghost *now*,

HE THAT IS JOINED TO THE LORD, ETC. 79

in virtue of our being “bought with a price, and not our own.” This double title and claim to the body, by God through the Holy Ghost as His temple, and “for the Lord” now, and when we are raised up in the likeness of the second Man by and by, is one way by which we are sanctified and set apart, both here and hereafter for the glory of God, and for the honour of Christ Jesus the Lord.

Independence and self-will deny that the body is for the Lord, and lead the natural man to assert his own right and title over himself, and to say, “our lips are our own,” and thus to sink himself (by following his own lusts) in the corruptions to which they lead and drown him. Though the wicked join hand in hand, “they shall not go unpunished,” are the words of the Judge of the whole earth, when He shall come forth in righteousness to execute vengeance.

In the meanwhile, those of whom it is said, “such were some of you,” have been called out by grace, and are “washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our

80 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

God." We are separated off into the blessedness of Him with whom we are joined, and though the privileges of this oneness (as to the counsels and purposes of God the Father, in Christ the Son of His love) are not here the subject of testimony to these Corinthians, yet the "one Spirit," by which we are joined to the Lord, witnesses of all His fulness to our souls. The especial object in this chapter was to reclaim the body from the degradation to which it had been subjected by the moral corruptions which were in question amongst the Corinthians, and under the guilt of which they lay. In doing this, the apostle sets up the title and claims of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the first place (by redemption) to the body—it is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. In the next place, "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," and "your bodies are the members of Christ." This oneness by the Spirit, and this membership of Christ, are both violated when we connect ourselves with anything that is contrary to the Lord. Lastly, this one Spirit, by which we are

HE THAT IS JOINED TO THE LORD, ETC. 81

joined to the Lord, is the Spirit of our God, by whom we are justified—and the Holy Ghost (which we have of God) who also claims the body as His temple. The Spirit of God is thus true to the fact of our being bought with a price, by taking possession of the body, on the part of God, in order to occupy and use the vessel for the new purpose of glorifying Him. Any other claim therefore which may be made on the body, is a challenge upon the title and rights of the Lord of it—and of God who dwells in it—and of the Spirit, by which our oneness with the Lord is practically maintained and carried out. To set up a rival claim is robbery, and to make any other use of our body, than for the glory of God, is to desecrate it. To allow the flesh in any of its claims and pretensions, must be to rob the Lord—to grieve the Spirit who dwells in us—and to connect Christ (by our members) with sin; our true liberty indeed, consists in the blessed fact that “we are not our own,” and to dispute this with the Lord is to fall back into slavery to

82 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

the flesh and its corruptions, from which He died to deliver us; and to disown the Spirit, by whom we are justified. The Lord, who affirms that ye are not your own, also founds His own rights to us upon the fact, that "we are bought with a price," and this purchase makes us *His*, for every right and precious use of the body and its members, as instruments of righteousness unto God. As "under law" in Romans vii., the body was viewed as "carnal, *sold* under sin," and its members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity. Whereas in this epistle to the Corinthians, we are "*bought* with a price," and by grace "washed and sanctified," and made the temples of the Holy Ghost.

A Christian living in communion with the Lord, and owning His claims upon the body, would not allow himself to be brought under the power of any fleshly appetite, even in eating or drinking—"meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them," much less could he sin against his own body, or misuse the members of

HE THAT IS JOINED TO THE LORD, ETC. 83

Christ by the allowance of any bodily lust, that is contrary to the Lord's holy authority and claims. As the Lord of the body, and as being the members of Christ, He has a property in us, and we are not our own, but bought with a price. In truth all the disorder and defilement which the apostle sought to correct among the gathered saints at Corinth, arose from the one fact, that they were themselves carnal, and glorying in the flesh. For instance, escaped flesh in them (escaped from under judicial *death*) gloried even in the presence of God in chapter i., and taking advantage of the gifts with which they were as a church enriched by the Lord, used them as a pedestal for self-exaltation, and not for the edification of the assembly. This opportunity was seized by Satan, and made the occasion too for the introduction of another wisdom than that "which God ordained before the world unto our glory." Nor did they scruple to bring this wood, hay and stubble into God's building; or to lay this material upon the one foundation, which

84 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

is Jesus Christ—solemn thought—the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is! So in chapter iv. they were wise in Christ, but the apostles fools for Christ, and Paul adds, “ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings, but without us.” Alas, what can escaped flesh do, but make us false to Christ and to God's building, and to real separation from the world!

Our liberty is next equally affirmed, with our responsibility. The name of the Lord Jesus, in whom we are justified—and that Lord who is for the body, and for whom the body is—becomes the standard of holiness, and the only rule as to its use, in the full acknowledgment that our members are the members of Christ, and to be employed for the glory of God, whether we eat or drink. Standing in this oneness and liberty in life as joined to the Lord, “all things are lawful unto me,” says the apostle, but I refuse to be brought under the power of any, and so lose the secret of Nazariteship and separation unto God in my body, “which is the temple of

HE THAT IS JOINED TO THE LORD, ETC. 85

the Holy Ghost." We have greatly missed the sense of the dignity and value that thus attach to the body, as originally "made in the image of God," and taken up by the Lord Himself, "a body hast thou prepared me," when He assumed human nature in His glorious incarnation, as well as afterwards, by His triumphant resurrection. This was true, even when applied to men in ruins at the flood, and stated under the Noah covenant: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the *image* of God made he man." The body is changed (so to speak) from glory to glory, as we pass it on from "the image of God" at creation, to man declared to be "the image and *glory* of God" in this epistle (chap. xi. 7), through redemption by Christ, from the fall of Adam, and then view it in connection with the Christ of God by resurrection from the dead in chapter xv., and established for evermore in the glory of God *above*, in the person of the second Man. Those that are Christ's wait for His coming, when

86 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL:

we shall be changed into His image, and be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and be for ever with Him. "The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." Joined to Him by one Spirit, there is not only the separating power of this union, in which we are delivered from all sin and uncleanness; but the "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh." This is very precious, as marking the *present* and positive use of the body for Christ's glory, and our practical blessing while on this side the rapture; but this display of the earthen vessel forms the subject of the second epistle: when it had been "cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (of which the first epistle was the subject), perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body!

(To be continued.)

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

THE WORD OF CHRIST AND HIS PRESENCE.

As man is immeasurably below God in mind and intelligence, he cannot know His will, or indeed anything about Him, but as He is pleased to reveal it. Hence, if God would make Himself known, or communicate His pleasure, His word is the first thing. By it He expresses His pleasure and counsel. There is no knowing either but by the word. At first, in the garden of Eden, the word of God defined the course of action for man which was well-pleasing to God, and Satan's successful effort was to contravene it, and to divert man from it. When man has deviated from the word of God, he must sink to the level of his own mind about everything, and is without any safeguard against Satan. The word is the revelation of God's mind. It is to me what a map is, in a country in which I am a stranger; the more it is adhered to, the more is its value known, and when I am deprived of it, I am ex-

88 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

posed to every wile. It is simple that the word is the first thing, and whatever is the most important truth communicated, that is the one which Satan most insidiously and assiduously opposes. I have no map, no guide for anything, no safeguard or power against the devil, but as I maintain the word. But besides the word, there is the presence of the Lord. The word is the revelation of His mind; without it I am in complete ignorance; but having received the word as His, and being in conscience ruled by it, there is added His presence. When Adam had disobeyed the word of God, he was afraid, and hid himself from the presence of the Lord. To be in full enjoyment of the presence of the Lord is the highest favour which He can confer on us. The acme of everything is when the father says to the prodigal, "Let us eat and be merry."

Now in the Old Testament we constantly find the words "The Lord said" so and so, that is, that He communicated His mind—uttered His word when He did not appear; but whenever He appears,

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 89

it is with marked and peculiar blessing to the saint. The first one of whom this is recorded is Abram (Gen. xii. 7), "The Lord appeared unto Abram," and it is added, "and there builded he an altar unto the Lord *who appeared unto him*;" and without question, this and other appearances of the Lord to him—that of Melchisedec, in chapter xiv., the visit of the three men, chapter xviii., &c.—made an impression on Abraham which no communication however great could do. The communication is divine light given, but the presence forms one in heart in keeping with itself. Everyone knows the difference between the counsel of his friend and his personal presence. I need not multiply examples. The appearance of the Lord in the burning bush imparts to Moses the personal presence which was to support him in his work, as the appearance of the man—the captain of the Lord's host (Josh. v.)—was to encourage and uphold Joshua. The word sets forth the line of action, but the presence assures the heart of power direct from the Lord, to sustain

90 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

one in the path prescribed by the word, so that we can understand the solicitude which Moses felt for the presence of the Lord when he said, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence."

The New Testament opens with the Word being made flesh and dwelling among us. We have the Word in personal presence. The nature and effect of it have been known on earth. The apostles knew it; while He was with them, they lacked nothing. When therefore He was leaving the world and going to the Father, He sets forth in the figure of washing their feet how He would apply the word to separate them from whatever would distance them from Himself. He would so act on them that they would be detached from the defiling influence here. But this was not all the provision He had made for them during His absence. Their hearts were not to be troubled. By faith they were to follow Him where He would prepare a place, and as they loved Him they would keep His words—all that reminded them of Him while

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 91

on earth, and besides He would come to them, He would manifest Himself to them, He would dwell in their hearts by faith. By the word He would separate them from the defilement of the world, so that they could have part with Him : there would be no break to an unreserved intimacy, but by faith they would follow Him to heaven ; and besides, He would not leave them orphans, He would come to them.

In the account of our Lord's interview with the two disciples going to Emmaus (Luke xxiv.) we get the different effects of the word and the presence. First, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself. Never was there an exposition equal to this, and no subject could be so interesting. The effect of it was that their hearts burned within them while He opened unto them the scriptures ; and saints are often content with this. He instructed them in order to prepare them for the manifestation of Himself. Now when He was known to them in breaking of bread, they rose

92 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

up at the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem; an energy was acquired which the greatest instruction had not imparted, and they were actually in the same path with Himself, for as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them. There will always be an effort of the enemy to divert us from the word; but there must be care also that the word is not rested in merely in its own most blessed light and communication; but that it carries us to its Author. This we see in Hebrews iv. 12-16. There the word is shewn to be the great agent of blessing, "quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart: for all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." The word carries us to God, but not only this; for now the presence of the Lord in sympathy is sensibly known to our hearts. (Ver. 15, 16.) We are scrutinized by the word, kept

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 98

in the true path, and then we find the Lord in company with us in it, because the path which the word enjoins on us is the one which had been observed by Himself; and as soon as we are in the path, then do we enjoy His sympathy, supporting and sustaining us in all the difficulties on either side. Where the word is only known, there may be true divine joy, the joy of intelligence, which the communication of His mind must impart, but at best it is the conscience only which is enlightened but there is no happy model before one of the manner and habits which the word would produce. One is like a mechanic who, though well instructed in pulleys and every mechanical force, has never seen any of them in use. Now this accounts for the feeble and imperfect ways of many well taught in the word. No one can have the ways or manners of one very superior to himself but by being in His company. The word or the teaching is the guide to my conscience, but it is as I learn Jesus personally, that I am really able, not

94 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

only to quiet my conscience, but to go far beyond it. It is quite a different thing to point out to a child what to do by giving him clear rules about it, and to *shew* him *how* it is to be done. There is often the rigid dictum, clear and comprehensive, but lacking the grace of life, which is conveyed by a living example.

The Lord, in John xvii., when speaking of sanctification, says, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." This is the light and counsel by which they are to be set according to God. As the washing of the feet frees us from the defilement in the world, so does sanctification lead us into the path suitable to God. The word is the light for this path, but were it only the word, there would not be a known standard of sanctification or a defined measure of it. But when He adds, "For their sakes I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified by truth, or in truth" (that is characteristically), we find that the Lord Himself, who is the living expression of the word, is the

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 95

standard and measure of sanctification, and while the word prescribes the path for me, yet it is only as I am kept in spiritual association with Him, that I have the tastes and ways of a person separated unto God, from all that is here ; and then I understand the unique and holy course I am to observe here. I am sanctified in truth, I am characterized by it. It not only guides me but I am a guide myself, because of its controlling power on me. I have not only received light, but my body is luminous. As the moon reflects the light of the absent sun, because attracted by it, and with nothing between them, so do I by association in spirit with the Lord where He is, set forth the same character of separateness unto God, as His ; so that I have not only a direction as to what I ought to be, but I have a model whose spirit and ways I imbibe as I am in association with Him.

The Lord keep our hearts more intently watching for Him until we see Him and be for ever like Him.

THE MERCY-SEAT.

How bright there above is thy mercy, O God !
And fully set forth in the Saviour's blood !
'The meek One, the lowly, the once slaughtered
Lamb,
Though the Father's own Son, and Himself the
I AM.

'Tis mercy eternal, compassion divine,
(Yea more) 'tis God's self that fills all the shrine
Where righteousness, holiness, justice complete,
Shine in Christ to shew God in His own "mercy-
seat."

Redemption, salvation, enduring for ever,
The springs all in God, whose beginning was
never :
A fragrant perfume may well float through the
place
Where God sits unveiled in such riches of grace.

God wrought for *Himself*, He wants it above ;
Love needs the outshining of all that is love :
'Tis Jesus "the Saviour Jehovah" alone,
The Son of the Father, who came to atone.

And the Spirit (who's one in the thrice-blessed
three)
Owns the Man that once died under wrath on
the tree ;
And seals the lost sinner that bows at His feet,
And proves to the soul, "God's salvation's
complete."

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

PART XV.

THE testimony of the Lord to the Jews was closed. Their house was left unto them desolate, they were not to see the Lord the rejected One till they repented, till the prophecy of Psalm cxviii. came to be fulfilled. This testimony of the Lord could be received only by faith, and that is what is available for the disciple and guides him out of the way of awaited peril. But there is another key and interpreter of prophecy, the fulfilment of judgment. What is discerned only by faith when it is matter of faith, is made plain by events in judgment. Warning prophecies are of no avail when the judgment is executed. It is too late. Thus we find in symbolical prophecies and parables that the explanation always goes beyond what it explains. At any rate, making events the proof of the truth of a revelation, while perfectly true, is not the ground of the Christian nor of faith at all.

98 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

The believer has God's word, and what concerns him in the prophecy is the warning or encouragement it affords when it is not fulfilled.

What is a direction to flee to the mountains worth when the prophecy is fulfilled? Where is the exhortation to wait for Jehovah available in the midst of tribulation and trial with the prophetic assurance that He will come, but in the tribulation when He is not come? Besides, prophecy is of no private interpretation, the whole plan and ways of God as to earthly government are unfolded. This is so in a very central and important point here, perhaps we may say, as to earth the most important of all. The throne of God had been on earth from the setting up of the tabernacle, and in a special way at Jerusalem from the dedication of the temple. This ceased at the Babylonish captivity. In the beginning of Ezekiel we see the glory on the threshold, then on the Mount of Olives, and then depart entirely. But a remnant of the two tribes were brought back to Jerusalem that

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

99

Messiah might be presented to them, and He was so presented to them.

The true temple indeed was His body, as He said to the Jews; still He owned the temple as His Father's house, though they had made it a den of thieves. Now the sad word came, "your house is left unto you desolate." The Lord now predicts present judgment, in the destruction of it; and when they took this as the end of the age, and as the same time as His coming, He unfolds all God's ways as to their testimony in Israel, and then of the power of evil, and judgment at the end when He should come to the deliverance of His servants. The Lord had merely said their house would be desolate till He came. When His disciples, still possessed with the thought of the temporal glory of Israel, boasted in what they could shew Him, the buildings of the temple, He declares that not one stone of it should be left upon another.

Then, on the disciples inquiring when the sign of His coming and of the end of the age would be, He unfolds the

100 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

whole course of events as far as concerned Jerusalem, the disciples' testimony amongst that people when He was gone, and the state the Jews would get into, and the testimony such as He then could render it in the whole world; and, finally, in a distinct portion, the last events as they concerned them or those who might believe as they did.

The disciples connect what the Lord had already said with the end of the age and the hoped-for arrival of Messiah in glory which they awaited—were obliged in such case to await, and they looked for signs. This last point He does not touch till verse 30. In verse 29 He tells of overwhelming judgments and the subversion of all things supposed to be regular and stable, but no previous sign is given. These are after the tribulation and usher in His coming when it takes place. From Luke we learn that there is anticipation of judgments, at least terror as to what is coming when they take place as far as Judæa goes.

But I continue with Matthew. The

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

101

prophecy divides at the end of verse 14, which verse goes to the end of the age. Then from verse 15 we have the special *circumstances of Jerusalem and the tribulation there, closing in verse 29–31 with the coming of Christ and the gathering of the scattered Jews.* But the Lord does not begin by satisfying their wish as a matter of curiosity natural as it was, but treats it as a solemn matter as to their own service. His absence would put them to the test. The rejection by the Jews of the true Christ exposed them to every false pretender. Many would come in His name. So it is always; the rejection of a truth throws it, as it were, into the hands of Satan who gives his version of it to deceive. This is a solemn thing, and examples are not wanting of it. But the Lord is faithful. And here many would be deceived. Such deceivers suit themselves to the flesh, perhaps religious flesh, and the deception is great; men are religiously bad and hardened in evil and deep in delusion. We have had an example of it in Irvingism as to the com-

102 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

ing of the Lord and the presence of the Holy Ghost, and a great and abiding one in the pretension (foolish as to fact, yet wise as to man), to unity in the Roman ecclesiastical body.

Further, besides the false Christs, political disturbances, restlessness, actual wars and rumours of them would attract attention and characterize the state of things on earth. But the disciples were not to be troubled; all this would come to pass, they were no signs of His coming, the end was not yet. Thus the Lord is caring for what would guide and strengthen His witnesses, keeping them calm and steady in their places. The end was not yet. He gives such instruction as would make them calm in service, not agitated with circumstances nor by false hopes, neither to say, Lo, here, or Lo, there, nor to be agitated by what agitated the world. They might still serve quietly on.

**“HE THAT IS JOINED TO THE
LORD IS ONE SPIRIT.”**

(1 Cor. vi.)

(Continued from page 86.)

IN what follows there is a remarkable contrast between the creation-order in Genesis ii. of the man and the woman in Eden—and the recommendations of Paul “that every man were even as I myself.” The key to this contrariety can only be found in the fact that sin has come in and marred the original and happy relation between the man and the woman, having brought in the evil and spoiled the good.

Since the fall, good and evil walk hand in hand, and the unmixed good in which creation and the creature stood towards God, and towards each other, is lost and forfeited. As the fruit of this, Jesus said to the Pharisees, “Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” The original order in Paradise was thus

104 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

rescued by Jesus, and put in contrast with that which Jehovah allowed by Moses, because of the human heart and sin.

Since the resurrection of Christ, and as one with Him on high, there is neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ; and in the resurrection "they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God." Immediately, by the descent of the Spirit, and as being "joined to the Lord," there exists a power in the redeemed which is above mere nature; and it was this energy of another life, which led Paul to say to the unmarried, "it is good for them if they abide even as I;" but every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner and another after that.

The difference between Moses and Paul, however, connects itself with Christ, the heavenly man; and the fact, "that the body is for the Lord," and also that we are the members of Christ. These principles are thus introduced and applied to the natural relations of

HE THAT IS JOINED TO THE LORD, ETC. 105

husband and wife, a servant and his master, and the various occupations in which a man is found when called by grace to know the Lord. The considerateness of the apostle in touching all these conditions of nature, together with the fact that the believing wife sanctifies the husband, and also that the children are holy, is another precious characteristic of Christianity, in contrast with the exactions of Judaism. According to the ceremonial law of Moses, respecting clean and unclean, holy and unholy, pollution was much more easily communicated than sanctification, as we see in Haggai ii., "If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? and the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? and the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean," &c. This scripture sanctions and explains the action of Nehemiah in

106 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

one dispensation, as respects the sending away of strange wives and children, when the Jews came up from their captivity in Babylon; and also casts its light upon the teaching of Paul in this dispensation, "that the unbelieving husband *is* sanctified by the wife, and that the children *are* holy." "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit," becomes the rule for Christianity, and not only sanctifies the believer in Christ, but gives a character of sanctification to those who are one with him, "he, and all his," or "thou and thy house," and this is the opposite to Haggai. A door is thus kept open for sovereign grace to act in the complications which would otherwise often exist in those nearest and dearest relationships, for our "God has called us to peace;" and the word to a believing husband *now* is, "let him not put her away," but in tenderness of heart consider her, for "how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt *save* thy wife?"

Again, what is circumcision to him that is joined to the Lord and one

HE THAT IS JOINED TO THE LORD, ETC. 107

Spirit? It is nothing, nor uncircumcision, they do not exist in Christ. The outward shell is gone, and the body is become the temple of the Holy Ghost, who secures the glory and holiness of God, by using our members as instruments of righteousness *He* is the only object and rule, "as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk."

The absoluteness of our oneness with the Lord, and of our slavery to Him, is the measure of our true christian liberty, and secures our deliverance from all other bondage and distraction. "He that is called being a slave is the Lord's freeman," likewise he that is called being naturally free is Christ's slave, because bought with a price—and *this* slavery is a higher liberty, than any freedom arising from the possession of civil and natural rights—still "if thou mayest be free, use it rather." Our relation to the Lord becomes the only standard of real liberty, and the Lord's completest slave is thus the freest man upon this earth. As a ser-

108 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

vant, one may have been in the employ of many a master, and have changed his situation often, but a slave cannot be hired, no, not at any price, for he is already devoted to the one lord who possesses him, so "ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men," is our Master's word to us.

"He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit," and it is in this energy of life through the Holy Ghost, that such a man as Paul is carried, through all the wrongs which are the effects of sin and the fall, in the world out of which he has been taken, and sent back again (to live and shine in), as one with the glorified Son of man, at the right hand of God in heaven. He finds the bitter waters made sweet to him, not so much by change of circumstances, as by the power and grace that lift him above their influence, whether as sources of contentment or discontent. "Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men," carries the soul to its only satisfying object, from whence it gathers the motives for glorifying God

HE THAT IS JOINED TO THE LORD, ETC. 109

in our body and spirit which are His. "Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide *with* God."

Outside these natural callings and relationships, there is the world itself, which is not to use us, but which we are to use as not our own, or not abusing it, for "the fashion of this world passeth away." Moreover, "the time is short;" and this principle when applied to all that is measured by time, whether buying or selling, rejoicing or weeping, or marrying, reduces each to the point of "possessing, as though we possessed not;" and as to wives, as though we had none. All these relations to persons and things, with all their consequences of joy or sorrow, are necessarily in connection with days and weeks and months and years, and thus become sources of care, because we know "the time is short" which breaks these links. What is formed for nature, very naturally produces a concern in our hearts to ward off the impending rupture, and so postpone this "trouble in the flesh."

"She that is married careth for the

110 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

things of the world—how she may please her husband, but the unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord that she may be holy, both in body and spirit.” Secondary influences and earthly considerations with which our relations bring us into daily contact, are pointed out likewise by Paul, and summed up on either hand; adding this, I speak for your own profit, not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

Perhaps there is no other part of the apostle's writings, where he is so much within the range of what is human and natural, so that he can distinguish between the Lord speaking by him and his own convictions, and help us to do the same. How touching in such matters, as these our most intimate relations and conditions in life, to hear him say, “I have no commandment of the Lord, yet I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.” He puts himself in grace upon the same level with ourselves, so that

HE THAT IS JOINED TO THE LORD, ETC. 111

we could almost use the same language to one another. We hear him say, as we part company with him, he to his proper gift after his manner from God, and we after ours, "nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh, but I spare you."

The Spirit from the risen Lord (who is for the body, and who purchased it at so great a price) passes amongst us in these chapters, in a very different character to the Messiah when in the midst of Israel in Matthew xix. The exacting rule of a ceremonial law of pollution by Haggai, to "put away," has given place to its opposite, and that which is holy yields a virtue to the skirt of the garment, so that what it touches is holy, "else were your children unclean." Grace likewise comes in, to make those who are one flesh to count upon grace, if so be they may be brought to know themselves one in Christ, and by the power of the Holy Ghost. Paul is guided by the Lord in all these new lessons, and his tenderness and grace, "as one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful" commend him to

112 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

our hearts, in the more attractive form of the man we wished to know as one with us, rather than as clothed with apostolic power and rule.

When the Lord spoke of marriage in Matthew xix., it is important to see that he overleaped Moses, and going back into Paradise for its true meaning, said "at the beginning (when all was according to God) he made them a male and a female," and Adam said, "she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man." It is this *perfect* symbol of union, that the Lord has taken up out of Eden, and which is revealed in "the great mystery of Christ and the church" in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians to be manifested in glorious fulfilment, when the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. In the long interval from the fall, to the day when "The Holy City will be seen coming down from God out of heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband" the crown has fallen from the head of him who was made in the image of God, and the woman deceived, and

HE THAT IS JOINED TO THE LORD, ETC. 113

found in the transgression. All the original foundations are out of course, and the first relationships violated and broken. What God proposed for the perfecting of Adam's happiness, when He formed Eve and brought her to the man, has become the fruitful source of sorrow and shame. Nothing could deliver from the guilt and condemnation under which all hearts groaned, but the coming in of the last Adam, the Son of God. No power could rescue the image man, and the image woman (in this sense) the first and perfect types of Christ and the Church, from the corruptions to which all had been desecrated through sin and Satan, but the *second coming* of the Lord out of heaven "to present His Bride to Himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." He who has recovered every lost glory for Himself and for God, that man ever had in his own keeping and forfeited, regains this paradisaical pattern, the one bright type before ever sin entered to cast its withering blight over the garden of the Lord, and con-

114 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

nects it with Himself that it may get its proper signification; and shine forth in its true glory, as "the great mystery, of God" through the everlasting ages. In the meanwhile, "marriage is honourable," and even our earthly relations are sanctified by a character of holy separation to Christ, as being "the head of every man."

Moreover, when formed in the Lord, our heavenly relations with Himself, and of His with the church, become the pattern for us as His earthly family, the husband is to love the wife and cherish her, even as Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it; and the wife is to see that she reverence her husband. How true is it, both as to our individual relation to the Lord, and our relationships with one another here below, that "he who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit."

 THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

PRACTICE EXPOUNDS A TRUTH.

THE difference between human knowledge and divine, is that the former is

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 115

merely information, the latter is formative. Human knowledge does not alter me, but developes my natural state. The word of God forms me anew. I am born again of incorruptible seed, even the word of God. It is a new existence, entirely superior to the old existence, and receiving no help or countenance from it; on the contrary, it is hindered and checked by the old, and from the very start it assumes an independent course and derives all its strength from the Spirit of God. "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby." It is only as I practically accept and live in what the word communicates, that I can know what it confers, because I have no idea of the order or nature of the new creation, but as I am consciously in it. I have natural instincts as to that which I am naturally fitted for; be it to walk, or read, or sing. There must be natural ability; human teaching cannot impart the ability though it can cultivate, increase, and develope it. But the word of God

116 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

by the Spirit forms an entirely new creature, and this is as distinct in its new order from the old one, as the butterfly is from the caterpillar. In the new creation everything is conferred according to the measure of grace ; and hence, no idea can be known but as an action is produced.

There is no convincing a person born blind of the nature of light, because the power of sight is unknown to him, and no reasoning or description can explain it to him ; but the moment he sees, all the mystery is solved, and the difficulty is at an end.

It is useless to reason with an unconverted person. All seems an impracticable theory until the light has broken in on him and he believes ; then he understands what before was wholly beyond him. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Faith not only admits the truth but it sees—there is power to produce a practical acknowledgment of it, and the faith is certified by this acknowledgment. God in grace sends the word ; the moment it

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 117

is through the Spirit accepted, there is an act, and the act of faith makes what was before incomprehensible simple and clear. When you act as one really believing, you not only confirm your faith, but you are assured of the simplicity and reality of the truth you have believed, because it is truth. The woman in Luke vii. believes the report (ver. 16, 17), and in acting on it—in following the Lord into the Pharisee's house—it becomes plain and intelligible to herself, that Jesus was her Saviour; the practice which followed the faith, explained and confirmed the truth to her. Faith without works is dead. The real cause of our lack of intelligence and power is, that there is so little acting in answer to our faith. Had this woman (Luke vii.) contented herself with believing that Jesus was her Saviour, how great would have been her loss both as to the confirmation of grace to herself, and the testimony to the fact to others. Her boldness in braving the Pharisee's taunts, not only obtained for her an interview with the

118 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Saviour in whom she believed, but ensured her confirmation of His grace from His own lips, while the devotedness of her acts established in her own heart the full confidence of faith. She was convinced of the beauty and value of the One in whom she believed.

Many in the present day believe that the blood of Christ, like the blood on the lintel in Egypt, is the only shelter from the judgment of God. But there is neither confirmation of this truth to their own souls, nor open testimony to the fact, because there is no feeding on the lamb—on Christ in secret; no outward manner and bearing, with loins girt, shoes on their feet, and staff in their hand, proclaiming that they are not only safe in the place of judgment, but that they are openly and avowedly going away from it. (Ex. xii.)

The rescued mariner, although transferred from the wreck to the life-boat, must sigh for shore, and the more so the more perilous his position has been. It is not possible to convey to a soul the blessedness of leaving the world,

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 119

until he has acted on his faith, and sought the Lord within closed doors, having openly packed up and prepared to journey away from all here. Who could explain to another what walking on the water means who had never tried to do so? and even in natural things it is so; no one can swim who will not venture into the water. Now if the loss from not acting in faith be so palpable in the very infancy of the new life, how much more must it be so in the higher truths. The real cause of dulness of apprehension of truth, and consequently of the frequent opposition to it is, that the truth presented has never been reduced to practice. Sometimes it has been listened to and discarded as impracticable, because it has not been subjected to the test of practice; and sometimes, even when the truth is accepted, the acceptance merely amounts to an acquiescence as to its being true, instead of a conviction that it is a truth which is materially to affect one's whole state; and when this last is not the result, there is an indifference to it in the heart.

120 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

It is at once fearful and surprising the amount of truth which lies inactive without budding in our hearts, and that even in what is really admitted, admired, and prized, because there has not been any attempt to shape oneself to it. This is the real cause of the weakness in the conversions in the present day. Never was there a day since the apostle's time when so much truth was in circulation, and yet never a day when conversions were of so feeble a type. When there was less truth every convert impressed his companions with at least the deep work in his soul by his retirement from worldly pleasures and his strict observance of duties ; but now with the clearer knowledge of grace there seems to be no apprehension of higher responsibilities, and the idea is, that as it is all of grace, there need be no works at all. There is the admission of being rescued from judgment without any sense of having received a new nature, to discharge higher functions and to express greater sentiments than could be known to the old one. There is the

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 121

sense of being delivered from a penal death, but no sense of the fact that an entirely new condition of life is conferred, more different from the old than that of the butterfly from that of the caterpillar. Possibly the preachers fail in pressing home the utter and deplorable ruin of the old state, and consequently do not insist in spiritual earnestness on the great, distinct, and marvellous qualities of the new. However that may be, it is evident, that though faith may accept the means of salvation, there is no real knowledge of what salvation is, but as there is taken a step or steps which confirm or corroborate the faith. And if this be the case with elementary truth, how much more must a saint be hindered by not attempting to practise the higher truths which he does not deny.

I have already noted that some escape the edge of this remark, by at once refusing the truth as impossible. In their ignorant-prudence they are like a man refusing to enter the water until he can swim. As to this class I will only add, may the Lord in His mercy open their ears to hear.

122 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

But I will suppose, for example's sake, those who have accepted the truth, that we are seated in heavenly places in Christ. Now this class I divide into four varieties. The first—which are the least enlightened—meet you with this difficulty: “I see what is presented in scripture that heaven is our present portion; but I do not feel that it imparts anything to me, I wish it did; on the contrary, while I admit the truth, I find I can enjoy the earth in many ways.” It is evident by their own shewing that those who comprise this section have never by faith entered on this new ground. Their faith is dead. They have not gone in and set their foot on the place given to them. Practice would soon clear away this difficulty, and the delight of possession would disabuse their minds of the impracticability of the heavenly truth, but there is not purpose of heart to practise, because of the attractions here. Now the second class accept the truth as orthodox, and are not diverted from it by unwillingness to give up enjoyments here. On the

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 123

contrary, they maintain, and that with great truthfulness, that all real solace must come from the Lord; but instead of taking the actual position of being dwellers in heaven, and coming *from* there to earth, they only look up to heaven for help as to their walk on earth; and their thoughts and labours are always influenced and dictated by the state and order of things on earth; and instead of pressing upon man the mind of the Lord as learned in heaven, they are occupied with the blessing of man on earth.

The difficulty of exposing this state is great, because with the acceptance of heavenly truth, there is genuine zeal and devoted service for man's blessing on earth, but only as a pilgrim going on *to* heaven, and no real practical consciousness of being as a heavenly man at home in heaven *now*. Hence the idea is avowed that there would not be the same extent of practice if the higher truth were adopted. It is true that the heavenly truth does not produce a practice as visible or as easily discerned, as the

124 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

doctrine which makes man very prominently the object; and what commends itself to the mind of man is preferred to the heavenly, and declared to be the better, and thus the "testimony of the Lord and of me, his prisoner" (Paul), is practically neglected.

The third variety are those who have seen and admired heavenly truth, but fearing the narrow path and circumscribed service and fellowship in labour to which it would reduce them, have verged away in order to be more visibly and extensively useful, and with a larger circle of companions; but they never progress, and they suffer in their souls as well as hinder the testimony.

The fourth are those who not only accept the truth and adhere to it, but study to be practically in it; and as they do, every difficulty is perfectly solved, and the path, because divine, becomes clearer every day. They go from strength to strength, empowered for still greater advance, because of the very power which has enabled them to make so much progress. I may illus-

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 125

trate these four states by four conditions of a bird's life. The first resembles a bird in the nest where its natural maturing is in order that it may be able to leave the nest, but in opposition to its own nature wishing to prolong its stay there. The second is like a bird in a cage, never exerting itself to fly except from perch to perch within the sphere of its dwelling, as if its only mission were to cheer the forlorn here with its song. The third is like a bird with a broken wing, which can only move on the earth. The fourth alone enjoys in the wide expanse the wondrous abilities with which it has been endowed, and simply because it uses the power that has been conferred on it.

Thus practice explains to oneself in one's own soul, and to others in testimony, the nature and qualities of the power of grace, otherwise inexplicable, and never comprehended until one acts as one believes; for this is the work of faith with power, and faith is thus made perfect.

WON AND SATISFIED.

1 Kings xix. 19—21 ; 2 Kings ii.

HE passed—on me His mantle threw ;
One magic touch, and I was won !
And sever'd from all else I stood,
Bound to this new, this wondrous One.

My heart, which late could beat for nought
Save earthly love and earthly care,
Now rose with one controlling thought
To follow Him—I knew not where.

He gave no word of stern command,
But drew me with a magnet's power ;
His company where'er 'twas found,
My heart's one craving from that hour.

And then I knew Him as the One
Of winning power and sheltering care,
Whose arm wrought wonders, and whose grace
Had brought me His own path to share.

But little of that path I knew,
Whither it led was vague and dim ;
His mind I reached not, though my heart
Was ever learning trust in Him.

*

*

*

*

But further on, there loom'd a change,
Beside me He would walk no more !
'This path I loved would lead thro' depths
Unknown, unentered heretofore.

WON AND SATISFIED.

127

Oh! could I follow? must I lose
 The track, or would I turn aside?
 He bade me "tarry"—let me choose,
 "I will not leave thee," I replied.

He knew I could not, for the power
 That held me fast was all His own,
 That staid my trembling heart, while on
 To Jordan's brink we passed, alone.

We stood beside the rolling flood,
 Untouch'd by it He led me through,
 And lost in Him, I scarce could feel
 How cold the wave, the path how new.

Then on the other side, unlocked
 His thoughts flowed forth, and He expressed
 My heart's unspoken language too,
 And bade me boldly make request.

What but His Spirit could I crave?
 I prayed Him nothing less to give
 Than that in twofold power which first
 With quickening touch had made me live

O hard request! but not withheld
 On one condition granted free;
 "If thou dost see me taken hence,
 [He said,] so shall it be to thee."

Enough! my purpose and resolve
 On Him alone mine eye to rest,
 To see no other sight, in fear
 Lest I should lose my great request.

I gazed; the glory closed Him round,
 I saw Him—O transcendent sight!

128 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

No longer walking by my side
But in the blaze of heavenly light.

In that unsullied light I saw
My own mean garb, once suiting well,
But now!—I rent it into shreds
And caught His mantle as it fell.

The same which first with passing touch
Had waken'd me to life and love,
Now ever mine, bequeathed by Him
Whom henceforth I should know above.

Oh blest exchange! 'Twas then I proved
How true, how faithful is His word,
While tasting what it is to be
E'en now, one spirit with the Lord.

Not sever'd from Him, but more near,
Although to mortal sense unseen,
I turn to find His footsteps here
To be where He my Lord has been.

The waters still my path may cross,
But what that mighty power can stay
Which wrought in Him, which works in me,
And in that power I go my way—

Back to the scene of curse and death
To walk, 'mid all the dearth and strife
In joy divine, with strength renewed,
Possessor of eternal life.

Link'd with that Blessed One on high
Who won me in my low estate,
And lured me on, until I found
My place in Him, so vast, so great.

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

PART XVI.

But besides these things judgments would come : the contentions of nations, famine, pestilence, earthquakes in divers places. These were the beginning of the throes of Jewish sorrows in the midst of which they were to render their testimony. It was surely the heaving of the nations, but the effect considered is on the disciples in their service among the earthly people, though that testimony would go further. But there was more. Their own immediate sorrows and trials ; they would be delivered up to be afflicted, killed, hated of all the Gentiles for Christ's sake. But this persecution from without would produce defections within ; many would be offended, would turn against those once companions and betray them and hate them, and because of abounding iniquity, many hearts not nourished directly from the flame of Christ's love would wax cold. He that went through all the difficulty and pres-

130 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

sure to the end would be saved. This gospel of the kingdom would be preached to the Gentiles, and then the end would come.

In this passage the Lord seems to me to overleap the whole period in which we live, and gives the ministry of the disciples in the testimony they then had of the near setting up of the kingdom, in the midst of the Jews when He was gone and the house left desolate; and resumed when the Jews were again there to be spoken to; but especially to have in view the testimony amongst that people at the end. The destruction of Jerusalem interrupted this formally and judicially, and it would again be resumed when the Church was gone, and be carried on in spite of opposition, till the end came. On to that end it clearly goes, and the present gospel of salvation is clearly passed over. Verse 14 comes in as an additional element by itself. In the beginning of His reply the Lord speaks of what would be applicable at any time after His departure, but soon passes essentially into what charac-

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

131

terizes the end in Judæa, and finally they are called to endure to the end. Verse 14 gives us the gospel of the kingdom preached in all the world, which additionally shews us that we are here in the last days. It is for a witness to all the Gentiles and then the end comes. But it is important to remark here that it is the gospel of the kingdom. This gospel of the kingdom was what Christ could preach then, what He had been preaching, that is, that the kingdom was just coming, and that men must repent to meet it, only that it was to go out to all the Gentiles. It was to be preached, as naturally such a gospel must, as a witness, as the word was that the kingdom was at hand, only that then it was to come in with judgment and power, the end was to come according to, though then immediately and definitely, the everlasting gospel of Revelation xiv. and Psalm xciii.—c. That was the end of the age in judgment. According to this would the judgment of chapter xxv. be carried on. Hence the brethren there, are, I doubt not, Jewish

132 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

messengers of the kingdom, such as the Lord here speaks to, and of. I do not mean personally apostles but His messengers to the nations, such as in Psalm xcvi., though that be modified by the prophetic tone. Only the end of the age is come when He sits to judge the nations. He has righteously judged and *made wars*, destroyed His adversaries, and sits on the throne of His glory; the whole state of things in the old age is judged, and Messiah come, and sitting there. It is no longer the age to come, because it is come; only before it, the gospel goes out to all nations and then the end comes. Thus the Lord has fully answered the question of the disciples, first in warnings as to their work in Judæa, available to them, then without any particular sign; save false Christs, and then more definitely what would introduce the end. There was a provisional end to service in Palestine and among the Jews as a nation, and a half-week of Daniel wholly unaccomplished;—for unbelief a whole one. This is resumed

or taken up again when the faithful have to endure to the end and be saved. Other details are given elsewhere as in Revelation xi., xiii., but that is not our object here, only we have that half-week referred to generally here in what follows verse 15, a distinct revelation as to the events of that closing period which in the Old Testament is unfolded to us in Daniel xii., as it is alluded to in other places as in Jeremiah xxx. 7. And in the word "indignation," and consumption decreed, though this last refers rather to what arrives on the close of the great tribulation, it gives the full guidance and instruction for service.

The Lord now gives the needed warning as to the power of evil which would be in the time Daniel had spoken of, when the idol that brought on the desolation should be set up in the holy place. This was not the time of their continued testimony as His witnesses in the land of Canaan, the testimony gone out among the heathen might continue, but the history of testimony is closed and the time

134 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

of tribulation begins. The covenant is broken, every claim despised, and Jerusalem trodden down. I do not mean that there is no sackcloth testimony in spite of this; we read there is, when the power of evil is most displayed, but the time is not characterized by service as their then instruction and duty. Trials and persecutions there would have been then, but this as the natural accompaniment of faithful testimony in the midst of evil. Now the power of evil was dormant and characterized the state of things. The Jews accept idolatry, that is, the great body of them have accepted Antichrist, and the power of Satan reigns for the moment unhindered, save as God holds the upper hand after all. But He has shortened the days or no flesh would be saved. And it is the time when Michael that great prince stands up for Daniel's people. But it is the time of flight for him that reads and understands as to those who dwell in Judæa. It is a peremptory sign of the great tribulation, the beginning of the last half-week of Daniel's seventy weeks. Deso-

lation is there caused by the setting up of idols. The unclean spirit with seven others worse had entered in. They were to fly from the wonted habitations of men, and frequented places, to the desolate mountains, not to descend to get anything from the house, nor return if working in the field to get the clothes they had left aside. Woe to those hindered in their flight. But God can think of His people who trust Him even at such a time, and think of everything for them. They were to pray that their flight might not be in winter, difficult for the travel and sojourn of fugitives in the mountains, nor on the sabbath when a flight measured by a sabbath-day's journey would give a bad hope of escape in times such as never were nor would be; God would think of this for them. But here we have and are meant to have a clear proof that we have to do with Jews, Jewish laws, as with Judæa for the scene, and with nothing else. Further, a little consideration shews that it is only of the last terrible time that it speaks. The Lord refers us to Daniel,

136 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

and there we find the unparalleled tribulation which cannot be repeated, and the three-years-and-a-half, with seventy-five days added for certain cleansing. There too Michael stands up and the people are delivered, every one that is in the book. Now take 1260 days or years, nothing happened at either, after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. That is spoken of in Daniel ix. and then a period of continued calamity, desolations determined; so in Luke, where no abomination is spoken of, only Jerusalem encompassed with armies. In a word it is the final and terrible tribulation of the Jews guilty of having rejected their Messiah, but whose deliverance will then take place in grace, those who are written in the book, for God has an elect people, and for their sakes the days shall be shortened. But in these last days we again find false Christs and false prophets encouraging the unbelieving with the hope of deliverance. They shall give signs and wonders so that if it were possible they would deceive the very elect. But these God will keep.

THE TREASURE AND THE TALENT. 137

The Lord warns them to believe none of them. They had His account of His coming; it would be sudden and unsuspected as a flash of lightning, where the object of judgment was there it would be, as the unseen bird of prey appears unlooked for where the carcass is. It is an allusion to Job xxxix. 30.

The shortening of the days I apprehend to be the confining them peremptorily to the 1260, whereas man's will and passions would carry them on indefinitely. But the Lord would come as a thief in the night and close it all.

THE TREASURE AND THE
TALENT.

EVERY true Christian must be looked at in a double aspect; as an object of grace or vessel of mercy, and as a saint or servant under responsibility; as one on whom not only is something conferred, but to whom something also is committed.

“Saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of

138 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

God." God who is rich in mercy, of His great love wherewith He loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ: "by grace ye are saved." Furthermore, He hath put "the treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." All this is blessedly true to the believing heart, and such words give rest to many a weary but confiding soul.

But there is the other side. If these treasures of God are put into "earthen vessels," the vessels are necessarily under responsibility to hold them. The earthen vessel is not, as though leaky, to let the treasure run out, but to contain it; it is not to conceal, but to display it; and more—by very contrast between the vessel and its contents, to shew forth the *excellency* of the treasure.

The treasure which grace has conferred upon us constitutes our blessing, but in the talent which it has committed consists our responsibility. The treasure and the talent, both, are derived from the same source, for the grace which saves is also that which teaches; but

THE TREASURE AND THE TALENT. 139

the tendency with us all is to accept the blessing without duly recognizing the responsibility. The licentious side of our heart turns to grace at the expense of responsibility, though when Christ is not known the legal side turns to responsibility at the expense of grace. But where Christ dwells in the heart by faith, the balance is preserved. The love of Christ which satisfies also constrains. There is here no room for license or legality; but responsibility is felt and exercised, as the spontaneous and natural result of grace. The talent is turned to account in the full sense of the inestimable value of the treasure which is possessed; and the fact that we have something committed to us, and that by God, greatly enhances the value of that which His grace has conferred.

To a healthy soul, to one who is in the true enjoyment of grace, who is in communion with Him, whose love has so richly blessed and furnished it with every good and perfect gift, there is earnest longing for some trust from God,

140 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

not in a legal spirit, but as the outflow of willing and loving service. Thus, "the love of Christ constraineth us." "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

There is positive enjoyment in the knowledge that God has committed somewhat on His behalf to poor things like us, in an evil world like this: has entrusted to us, not only a treasure on our own, but a talent on His account. "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful putting me into the ministry."

This is the apostle's exclamation concerning the glorious Gospel which was committed to his trust. This is, in its measure, what is true in the experience of every true Christian. It is impossible to be a recipient of grace without responsibility, or to possess the treasure without the talent; and the extent of responsibility will be commensurate with the soul's apprehension of grace. If in communion with, and

THE TREASURE AND THE TALENT. 141

in the enjoyment of, the grace conferred, we shall always be seeking to bring others to an apprehension of that to which we ourselves have attained. Where the heart is free and happy this will be natural and without effort. The soul which God has blessed cannot retain the blessing. The first impulse may be, "We do not well; this is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace." "I believed, therefore have I spoken," will follow; but, "Thanks be to God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ," will be the higher and more perfect motive and experience of the one who has faithfully followed each suggestion, and fulfilled each duty and service, dictated by the Spirit of God. The blessing of men, our fellows, is surely as true a motive (though a lower one) as the glory of God: we begin generally with the lowest, but if faith guide us we shall not end there, but shall find our highest enjoyment in being

142 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

linked, and bound up with God's glory and Christ's interests in the earth, for such is indeed the path and place of the true servant of God. The heart of such an one will be more occupied with the interests and approval of the Master whom he serves, than of those to whom he ministers on his Master's behalf; while he also knows that His Master is best pleased, when they are served well.

Our treasure then is Christ, now known by faith, once humbled here, crucified for our sins, but risen, and now glorified at the right hand of God. A treasure indeed! "A treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth." If the mind and heart be there with Him, the talent will soon be discovered on the earth. Not to be buried *in* it in a napkin, or in any other form; not tied up as a permanent investment, inaccessible if suddenly called for by the Master, but put out to interest, constantly "turned over," with both principal and interest always at hand, should

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 143

the Lord come to reckon up with His servants. That which grace has committed to us here is not "our own," but "another man's" in the truest sense; for though "all things are ours," yet "we are Christ's; and Christ is God's." He has said, "Occupy till I come," and He has left His people here, during the darkness of the night of this world, to learn Him and to serve Him, and in charge on His behalf of all that is dear to Him on earth:—His own and His Father's name; His truth, His word, His church. The souls and bodies too of poor sinful men. What a trust to have and to hold from God! The Lord deepen in every believing heart the sense of what His grace has both conferred upon us and committed to us, our treasure and our talent.

 THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

"WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?"

THE effect of the revelation of Christ in glory to the heart of Saul of Tarsus was to awaken in him, and draw from him

144 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

the question, "What shall I do, Lord?" When one is truly convinced of the folly and evil of one's course hitherto, there arises necessarily in the heart and conscience this inquiry, "What am I to do?—How shall I act?" and the nature, or the measure of the effect of the revelation of Christ to my heart, is declared by the earnestness and simplicity in which I seek to know from Him what He would have me to do. When He absolutely fills the heart—conscious of its insubjection heretofore, and seeking now to yield itself altogether to Him—it utters the anxious question, "What wilt thou have me to do?"

Now, my doing anything for the Lord depends, as to its intent and scope, on the measure of my knowledge of what He has done for me. If there be any defect in my reception of the fulness of His work for me, there will be a corresponding and distinct trace of this flaw in my work for Him. Love always has an act expressive of itself, and in, or rather by, this act, it, in a peculiar way, betrays itself. "We

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 145

love him because he first loved us." His acts demonstrate the nature and quality of His love; and ours, of our love; and the order and quality of our love to Him will be according to the idea we have formed, and the measure in which we have apprehended His love to us. With Saul of Tarsus everything was so assured to him; a Saviour in glory was so distinctly revealed to him, that self was set aside, and the Lord's pleasure entirely and absolutely swayed him. It is plain that if there be any limitation in my heart of what Christ is for me, it must impart a bias to my response to Him. Paul declares, that at his conversion, it pleased God to reveal His Son in him. When Christ obtains the absolute place in the heart, it has no object but Christ, and therefore it implicitly defers to Him about everything.

It is important to see that the first cause of unspiritual and unapproved real service can be traced to the weakness of the soul's apprehension of Christ's service to it. Every true observer must admit that there is a vast amount of zeal

146 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

without knowledge, resulting in unsuited work, in the present day. Works are entered on because the necessities of the hour seem to suggest or require them, and not in simple obedience to Christ. No one can truly serve the Lord but as he knows the Lord's pleasure with respect to the service. He must be inwardly and outwardly fitted for it. The Lord does not employ unfitted servants for His work. He prepares them for it—imparts His own grace, so that by the grace of God I am what I am.

Thus true service depends on two things—first on the measure of my heart's apprehension of Christ for myself, and secondly on my fitness for the service committed to me, a really subject one. If I am defective in either of these, there will be a defect in every service undertaken, however useful and laborious it may be. Moses had purpose of heart to serve the Lord, (Ex. ii.) “he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” But he had to be fitted for it in this

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 147

double way ; he was not only to lose his self-confidence, but to have his own soul established with God, and to learn what it was to act for God—to come to man from God. The want of this is really the great lack in servants. They are not fully brought to God away and apart from all the influences of man, and therefore do not come back to man with only God's mind and without any other prepossession. If they have never been so near God that every human influence was in abeyance, they could not possibly act independently of it in their intercourse with man. Moses learns to distrust his own power ; but better still, he is taught in the presence of God, the mind of God and *His* power (Ex. iii.) and when he had really entered on God's service, and because he had, he is exposed to judgment from the Lord, for having neglected to circumcise his son (Ex. iv. 24)—the ministry must not be blamed. There must be suitability in the servant, and this suitability is twofold ; on the one hand it is separation from the order and influence of things here, and

148 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

on the other, conformity to Christ which is only acquired in His presence.

In order to serve truly we must be first assured of our acceptance in the glory of God. This is the first thing, because until the soul has reached this point there has never been a *locus standi* apart from man, and it is from there the servant comes forth to do his Master's will. Secondly, he must seek his Lord's mind, and that unmixed and unleavened by anything of man. He is like the admiral at sea: before he reads his sealed orders, he has no predilections, no preconceived ideas of his own as to his course; until the sealed orders are opened and read, he knows nothing as to the destination of his fleet.

Moses, like many of us, learnt the unprofitableness of himself first, and then he found what it was to be in a new order of things near God, where he could learn His mind; and thus he was fitted to be a servant.

Peter in Luke v. is an instance of how the service is always characterized by the soul's apprehension of Christ. At

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 149

first he lends his ship to the Lord for teaching the people, when called on to do so, and lets down his net for a draught at the word of Christ; but when, convicted of being a "sinful man," he learns that Jesus can take away fear from his heart in the presence of God; he leaves all and follows Him. There is great advance in the order of service, between these two actions. But after the resurrection (John xxi.) there is still more. After the Lord had taught him that he must be entirely cast on Him; after He had probed his heart as to the self-confidence which had led to his denying Him, he says to him, "Follow me," and then foretells the death he should die in the service which should result from following Him. Now the advance in each of these services was in correspondence to the advance in Peter's knowledge of divine grace. In proportion to the perfection of his knowledge of grace was the perfection of his service as to its character; and we see each of these forms of service up to this hour.

150 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

What really gives power to a servant is having a true sense of what it is to be in a sphere where he is independent of every influence but his Master's. He is by nature connected with a sphere where the influences, even of the air, are against his Lord, therefore to be independent of all influence or support around, is his first great lesson in service. Joseph's first lesson in this school was that his father, who had hitherto countenanced and upheld him, did not understand him, but rebuked him when he told him what God had revealed to him in a dream. (Gen. xxxvii. 10.) Thus from the first he was cast entirely on God, and then in the pit, in bondage, and in prison he was prepared for service.

We see in the case of Jonah, of Ezekiel, of Daniel, &c., how necessary and important it is for the servant to have his base, as I may say, with God, and while that is kept up he can never fail. When the heart is assured of this base, then it can say, like Isaiah (vi.) when the Lord asks, "Whom shall I send?"

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 151

“Send me.” He is not afraid or unwilling to face anything among men, because he knows his base is with God; and being accepted and at rest there, he can come forth and act for God here, happy in the consciousness of his place with God from whom and for whom he comes. It was thus with our blessed Lord in perfection, who, amidst all the opposition and evil of man, could say in rest of heart, “I thank thee, O Father,” &c.

The happy and the really useful servant is the one who pleases his Lord. Unless this is the spring and motive of service there will be failure; and in order to please Him, I must study Him. I shall never know what pleases the Lord but as I am constantly near Him, not by resorting to Him in prayer now and again, but rather by abiding in His company long enough to get the impression of it, like Moses on the mount, until I am coloured by His mind. If I do not sit at His feet and hear His word, I shall fall into one or another of the many mistakes as to service rife

152 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

enough at this hour. I must not only hear His word, I must be in His company. Everything depends on this. There is no real comprehension of the word but in His presence; at least the moral range or claim of it cannot be apprehended anywhere else. If, as I have already endeavoured to shew, this moral sense or claim be unknown, even though the purpose be true as with Moses, or the heart ready as with Martha, the service will be ineffectual and unapproved by the Master. Studying the Lord and His mind alone prepares for true and effectual service, and servants of this class refer all to His judgment; content to be unseen, and unrecognized, provided that they are pleasing Him. To please the Master is the one satisfaction to their hearts. The two other classes who, while attempting service, lose sight of it in its highest sense, are firstly, those who seek to carry out a right purpose in a wrong way, using any means for this purpose; and secondly, those who with a really loving heart determine what would please the

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 153

Lord from their own idea of what is fitting in the circumstances. Moses when he slew the Egyptian is a type of the first. Peter when he cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. John when he asked the Lord to call down fire from heaven. All these were true men, but were seeking to arrive at a right end by unspiritual means. The truest servant may be tempted to resort to means of this kind, like David who actually tried on Saul's armour before he had wisdom to refuse it. The secret desire is to produce an effect by visible means, and then faith and the invisible acting of God's Spirit are superseded and ignored, often most unintentionally. This class of servants, when not checked by the light of God's word, have not hesitated to use fire and sword, or any engine to bring about a desired end. They suffer often, too, in a most exemplary way, but they really, and it is with this we have to do, had not truly inquired of the Lord, "What wilt thou have me to do?" nor had they obtained instructions from Him, as to

154 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

the mode and manner of carrying out His mind. To produce a desired effect by any lawful means is the grand principle of this class; and I need hardly say that though answered, according to their faith, they are not "friends" of Christ; they do not know what their Lord doeth.

Now Martha is a type of the second of these two last classes. She really loved the Lord, but she judged as to what would please Him by her own feelings instead of His. Thus she thought that the service which would be most acceptable to Him at the moment would be providing food; and she intrudes this service on Him as superior to that which was really meeting His mind. Hers was a kind useful work, but she acquired the idea of it from her own mind, and not from the Lord; and here she failed, and here it is that all that I may call *officious* serving in the present day fails. Nothing perhaps so effectively, because so insidiously, diverts the heart from Christ personally as the service which stands under the head of

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 155

usefulness. Singing a hymn or reading a chapter in a meeting might come under this head. You never see a person who is occupied with mere usefulness near the Lord. This may seem a hard censure, but the fact is that where the mind is taken up with usefulness, it is taking note of the state of things around—man's want, the soul's need, &c., all right if regarded as secondary, but all diverting from the true centre when looked at primarily. To one who makes them primary there is no check. Need being the thing before his mind, there may be as much need in one place as another, and such a one would as soon go to Bithynia as to Philippi. (See Acts xvi. 7, 12.) Thus women with true hearts go out of their place in teaching and preaching; thinking that the word warrants their officiousness; as if pleasing the Lord were not the highest and best service as it ought to be the one most attractive to the heart. All this line of service is based on the pre-supposition that the Lord's pleasure is not to be consulted nor known, and in pursuing it, the

156 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

heart is really diverted from Him to something very visibly useful as in the case of Ephesus (Rev. ii.) where there was great zeal for the circumstantial need and plenty of good works, but the first love had vanished from the heart.

Thus on the one hand, we have to guard against seeking to accomplish right things by unspiritual means, and on the other, not to allow our own minds to dictate to us what we are to do, or even man's need merely, because in either case we have declined from that nearness to the Lord, where His pleasure would have communicated to us, and where His power would have supported us in keeping with His mind, and preserved us from the use of undue means and from being influenced by visible things. Finally, I would repeat that the only way for a servant to avoid these two snares, or indeed to enter on service which is pleasing to the Lord, is, first that the heart should be assured of its *base* with God, and secondly, that the great question, "What shall I do,

RESTORATION.

157

Lord?" should be resolved by the study of the Master's mind in His presence and apart from all human influences.

RESTORATION.

REAL restoration is a great thing. It places one morally higher than ever, though personally lower. God in grace is better known, and one's own nature more exposed and distrusted. Dependence on God is increased while there is a deeper sense of the ruin and worthlessness of oneself. God has gained His true place in the soul, and man has sunk to his true depth. A *really* restored soul is one most helpful and interesting as to progress, for God is everything with it, and there is a clear and full turning away from man. Hence, I have remarked that where the restoration is deep and full, there is a reaching up to the top, as the only secure resting-place, because nearest to God and furthest from man.

FRAGMENT.

. “ Let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds,” &c. People often pray about what is pressing on the heart, without getting satisfied and at rest as to it; but when it is so, the fault is in oneself and not in the Lord, and the reason is that one has not *simply made it known unto Him*. You may ask me how you should make it known? I reply, Any way, but make it known you must, in order to have peace of heart as to it. You might make it known without leaving your chair, or you might be for days before you had the consciousness that you had made it known. A petitioner might be at court several days and yet he might not have got an audience from her Majesty, and until he had the audience he could not make known the substance of his petition. The thing that delays one's peace of heart is that I have not had an audience, that is, I have not the consciousness that I have made known

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA. 159

my request. But if I have made it known, I rest, because I know that *He knows* it. It is not because He is omniscient, but because I *have told it to Him*. The simple question is, *Have you told it to Him?* You might be praying for hours, without the consciousness of having really committed it to Him; as a man might be at court for days without seeing the Queen. It depends on the reality of my speaking to Him. In 1 John v. 14, 15, it depends on *Him*, on His hearing me, but here (Phil. iv.), in matters of request, and in order to have the peace of God in the heart as to what presses on it, the great point is that I make it known unto Him.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

What thoughts the poor woman of Samaria must have had, if in after times she ever read John iv. and her own history in it!

ALONE with God! and God alone with me!
 Oh wondrous hour! which God alone could make,
 And made—that I might truly conscious be
 That He could save, as well as once create.

160 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Himself I knew not, in His lowly guise
 Nor *who* it was a drink that ask'd of me,
 Nor yet the *gift* of God, nor that best prize,
 Fountain of water for eternity.

Nor my hypocrisy, with sin so foul,
 Quite blind till He did ope my mental eye:
 Then flowed a stream of light into my soul,
 Warm with the life of His eternity.

He'd sought and found me, but I knew Him not,
 Nor knew myself, yet shewed myself to Him
 Just as I was: He knew my every blot,
 Aloud He read it, yet would not condemn.

I saw what He was after, and fell in,
 Scarce conscious of it, to His blessed wake:
 To me it seemed He loved me spite of sin,
 So I His service could my object make.

"Come see a man who told me all (said I)
 That ere I did. It must th' Anointed be!"
 They come, and "Saviour of the world" (they
 cry)

A glory that surpassed what I did see.

Lord of my heart! whate'er Thou art, I'm Thine,
 Thy glories far surpass my powers of thought;
 But I am Thine! and Thou, my Lord, art mine,
 'Tis Thou didst find me whom I never sought.

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

PART XVII.

VERSE 28 closes that part which is warning for the disciples as to the dangers of every kind at the time of the great tribulation. Verse 29 is God's intervention in judgment. Immediately after the tribulation of those days there is a complete subversion of governmental order. All that held a place in the ordinances that ruled the earth would be shaken and subverted, and then Christ would appear, for the sign of the Son of man in heaven is His appearing. It is not signs of a coming kingdom and then a Messiah on earth, but the Son of man, heir of all things who appears in heaven. There may be indistinctness of glory before He is personally seen, but it is the Son of man Himself who comes and is seen. It is Himself appearing, no premonitory sign, but Himself, and Himself from heaven who had gone up there, not a Jewish expected Messiah, Son of David on earth. This shall be mourn-

162 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

ing to all the tribes of the earth or rather land — hopes disappointed, judgment come. All the earth will be dismayed surely, but here it is rather of the land, nor is it I conceive the mourning of Zechariah xii. 10–14. There it is grace on the remnant, “the families that remain.” They mourn for Christ. Here it is seeing Him come in power and all the tribes mourn. But the Lord not only deals then with those in the land, the elect of Israel will be gathered from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. This closes the direct revelation as to His ways with Israel. What follows is exhortation and warning testimony as to the character of His coming and moral details. From verse 45 we have the estimate of conduct while He is away, both in principle, state, and service, all in reference to His coming. The Lord directs them to that by which those forewarned would know it was at the doors. To the disciples, such things as the idol in the holy place and the false Christs would tell it was just there. The Lord’s warnings had given

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL. 163

them the key. To Christians as we now are with the Holy Ghost, such do not apply. A man who sets up to be Christ can have no deceiving power, for we know He is come, and when He yet comes, will come in glory, even if we have not scriptural intelligence to know we shall appear with Him. The whole scene is Jewish. No mountains in Judea are my deliverance. I am going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The sabbath days' journey and all the circumstances point to a Jewish scene. To the Jew who expected deliverance a false Christ would be a great snare. With this warning no doubt all is plain, but in itself, what the Lord warns against would be a great snare. Even to the Christians before the destruction of Jerusalem, profoundly Jewish as they were, it would not have been without danger, false as it was. At the end to which this latter part applies, it becomes in the highest degree applicable.

We have then the well-known word ;
 "this generation shall not pass till

164 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

all these things be fulfilled." If we return to Deuteronomy xxxii. the expression becomes quite clear (see vers. 5, 20); the last is just what is spoken of here. I attach great importance to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, because consequent on the rejection of the Lord, the throne of God on the earth was finally set aside, but it is not the subject here, though there is analogy. Indeed it was more than an ordinary generation of men after the Lord's crucifixion, though perhaps not sufficiently so to use it as a proof that it does not apply. Nor has that unbelieving generation passed away, we have it amongst us to this day unmingled with the nations. The word of the Lord abides, heaven and earth will pass, Christ's word will not. A solemn assertion of divine testimony. The word of the Lord abides for ever. The "word of our God" says Isaiah. Precious and solemn truth—we have a testimony, God's word, essential truth that changes not must be always true. Things change, heaven and earth pass away, all

is rolled up like a garment, but truth is always truth, and God's word is truth, has revealed the truth blessedly adapted to us and the state we are in ; but God's own truth, what reveals Him and His ways, what is heavenly and divine is suited, as Jesus Himself, to what is human and weak down here. We have what never passes away, and faith possesses it, the believer is sanctified by it, and Christ is the fulness of it. Grace and truth came by Him. But of the day and hour of His coming knows no man or angel. It is not a thing revealed. It is kept in the secret of the Father's counsels, the divine mind, and is not in anywise a subject of revelation ; does not come to expression out of the secret of that.

When the abomination is set up, then indeed the short remaining time is known at any rate in general, and one taught of God knows by the warnings we have been reading if the end is nigh, but when that is, who can say. So Noe once warned knew the judgment was then fast coming, but none else. Judg-

166 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

ment came as a thief in the night. But this judgment, sudden and unexpected as it may be, will be sure and discriminative. The eye of God will discern those that are His though in identical circumstances with those who are not. Two men may be in the same field, two women at the same mill, judgment will leave the one unscathed, and take the other. To the heart that was really watching and waiting for Him He would come as a deliverer from all the power of evil. The disciples were to watch, they knew not at what hour their Lord would come.

A REPRESENTATIVE MAN.

THERE is a point of great practical value in the Epistle of John, beside the blessed doctrine of "the life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us" (though growing out of it) namely, this same life exhibited in a saint, and characterizing Him too, by both light and love.

It is but divinely natural that such a

product, or pattern-man, should be manifested on the earth, whether in "the disciple whom Jesus loved," or in those to whom the Apostle John wrote, as being partakers with himself in the life of the ascended and glorified Lord and Head. On what other ground could he possibly write to us, and say, "~~that~~ which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ?"

It may be further stated in passing, it is not peculiar to John, that his Epistle should present us as it does, with "fathers, and young men, and little children" in their characteristic differences, as the true and lovely fruit of this eternal life. James in his Epistle, and according to his unction, is desirous that patience and faith should have their "perfect work," and says to us if any man offend not in word the same is a *perfect* man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Peter, who styles himself "a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that

168 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

shall be revealed," leads forward the saints into sufferings and "reproaches for the name of Christ," as the only path of present happiness, and in which the "Spirit of glory and of God can rest upon them." Paul arrested by the Lord in heaven, when persecuting one of His members on earth, was afterwards caught up into paradise, and made the appointed vessel to receive the "abundance of the revelations"—of which he became the vigilant guardian and witness, as the great apostle of the Gentiles, and teacher of the unity of the body of Christ, by the baptism of the One Spirit. So, in all his other Epistles to the churches, "travailing in birth again for some, till Christ be formed in them" and having "great conflict for others, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God," whilst he himself rejoiced to "fill up in his flesh, that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake," warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom—that he might "present every man *perfect* in Christ Jesus." The object and work of the Holy Ghost

A REPRESENTATIVE MAN. 169

by each apostle, and in all their Epistles, is to produce thus in the church of God, representative thus of the doctrine they taught, who being called either with "a heavenly calling," take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance—or else forgetting those things which are behind "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

So also, as to "the vocation wherewith *we* are called," the word of counsel to us is, "walk worthy of it in all lowliness," or if as "imitators of God," it is "as dear children, who walk in love even as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us." Thus, the relationship existing with the Father; or the vocation with which we are called; or the heavenly places in which by grace we are set with Christ; gives to us the opportunity, and supplies to us the power of present conformity to Him as He is, and where He is; and for not being of the world, even as He was not of the world.

170 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Again, as to our great Epistle of worship, we are only in it, as being inside the veil in the holiest where God is, accepted in the sweet savour of Christ, and go outside the camp to Jesus bearing His reproach. As led by Peter into "a spiritual house, we are an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," and then as a royal priesthood, "to shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into marvellous light."

The church of the living God, "which is the pillar and ground of the truth," gathered to its head upon the confession of the great mystery of godliness (1 Tim. iii. 16), is composed of men, who under the ministration of the Spirit of the living God (written on the fleshy tables of the heart) are manifestly declared to be the Epistle of Christ, known and read of all men. Indeed this is but the proper relation and right effect of the new positions into which we are brought with God the Father, through Jesus Christ the Son of His own love, by the indwelling power of the Holy Ghost, which

A REPRESENTATIVE MAN. 171

worketh in us to this end ; so that Christ may be magnified in our body, whether by life or by death. The Epistle of John is not only similar in its object with the writings of Peter and James and Paul (for the mind of the Spirit is one and the same), but may be further looked into, as supplying in some detail, the way by which this end is reached in life, through the exercise of conscience and faith, in communion with God in the light.

The characteristic of all divine teaching is, that it is by the Holy Ghost, and to those who are new creatures in Christ, born of the Spirit. That which "was from the beginning, the word of life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us," is the one great subject of John, whether in his Gospel, or in his Epistles. This was declared, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and these things write we unto you that your joy may be full. How could this knowledge of the Word of life, or this

172 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

communion with the Father and the Son, be understood and enjoyed on our part, except as we are born again, born of God, and under the unction and anointing of the Holy Ghost! and these are some of the main features of John's Epistle. How else, we may further ask, could the apostle deliver his message or we hear it—a message which he says we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, “that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all?” He is not now coming forth as the Creator—God, to command a light to shine out of darkness that may give light to His creatures in the earth beneath, in which He originally placed them, and which was suited to what they were, and where they lived. No, far otherwise—for man in the person of the raised and glorified Son, has gone up in eternal life and divine righteousness, to the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, and is the light where God dwells. *This* is the order of the new creation, and we are in Him that is there, even in the Father and the Son, and under our feet so to

A REPRESENTATIVE MAN. 173

speaking, we behold the sovereign grace (that paved work of sapphire-stones) on which we stand, through the eternal redemption in the precious blood of Christ, by which we have been brought to God.

Our present consistency is to dwell in this new abode of light, with Him who lives there, and is the light—nor is there any intermediate place (how can there be?) for God and the Lamb are *there*. “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have our fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” No longer one with Adam in sin and death, or part of the fallen creation which groaneth under the bondage of corruption—we take our places with the second Man, in divine life and righteousness, as children of the Father and heirs of God, yea joint heirs with Jesus Christ. This is our inalienable birth-right, fruit of the death and resurrection of Christ, witnessed by the Spirit of adoption sent down from above, the seal and earnest of whose we are, and what we inherit—

174 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

for "as Christ is, so are we in this world," and this is the standard of our faith, and the undeviating rule of God's action towards us, as in the beloved One.

It is thus as belonging to the Father, and at home in the light where God dwells, and one with the Son in the Father's love, that we can alone know ourselves as new creatures in Christ. We are born into this family—begotten of God, and thus our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ; we must therefore begin from above, and come forth as partakers of this eternal life, to walk as lights in the world, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, this too is John's Epistle, which knows nothing else than the Word of life. The Jesus whom they had heard, and seen with their eyes and looked upon, and their hands had handled, set aside all else, and drew them out to Himself. The light in which this life was manifested, became exclusive of the darkness and dispelled it; nor could the love, in which

A REPRESENTATIVE MAN. 175

the Word of life had walked on earth, be a shelter for that which the light condemned. If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness we lie and do not the truth. What God is in light, and what the Father is in love, was what the Lord came to declare in a world that knew Him not—the Only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father He hath revealed Him. This is the nature and character of our fellowship with the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, nor is there any other for those who are born of God, and made partakers of this eternal life in Christ, as the rejected One by the world.

There is a great difficulty sometimes in the soul, on account of the absolute way in which John speaks of life and death, darkness and light, love and hatred—but these things must of necessity be as opposite in *their* nature, as God and Satan, Christ and Belial, or he that believeth and an infidel. On examination, this difficulty will be found to arise mainly from the fact, that we readily accept the contrariety between

176 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

persons and things which are so diverse as we have cited, as long as they are outside ourselves—but when love and light are applied to our own state, and brought into connection with our own experiences, we suppose they may, or *must* on that account change their essential character, and take that which we find in ourselves—instead of seeing that they are unchangeable, and give their own character to *us*, as being divinely and eternally true in Christ, and in us. In fact, it is only the other side of the difficulty which the same persons have encountered probably, in learning the death of the old man, or how a believer in Christ gets free from the body of sin and death, in Romans vi.; only in this case, it is how we get rid of the bad thing, whereas John is insisting that we are in the good thing. Paul's teaching is that we are free from the old man, by the death of Christ, and that nothing contradictory which we find in ourselves, can affect the character of this truth, but only make us reckon it the steadier, and hold it the firmer—whereas John's

A REPRESENTATIVE MAN. 177

teaching is "that whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." These are but parts of one grand whole, as regards a believer in Christ, and it is nothing less than this whole, as to the death of the old man at the cross of Christ, and our being born of God, and one with the risen Lord in life and righteousness, at the right hand of God the Father, that completes our real liberty, "we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." It is in this way, and by such means, that we are called out in grace to learn death and life in the second Adam, and to know they are ours—we are free by the crucifixion of the old man, and are able to reckon it dead, even when not realized as such, and fitted to take our place on the other side of sin, and the flesh, with the Son of God's love, and not commit or practise sin.

(To be continued.)

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

BE NOT ASHAMED OF THE TESTIMONY
OF OUR LORD NOR OF ME HIS PRI-
SONER.

FROM the beginning, there was some special truth revealed, to which alone for the time, the testimony of the Lord was attached. The truth was committed to some chosen vessel, and if it was accepted, the servant through whom it came, was well received; but according as the truth was rejected, so was he refused. The treatment of the servant to whom the truth is committed, is the index of the value which man attaches to the truth. If there has always been a truth which bore this great mark—the testimony of the Lord: how much more must it be so now, when the word or the counsel of God is fulfilled. (See Col. i. 25.) To the Apostle Paul the final testimony of the Lord was committed; and when the saints were ashamed of that testimony, they were ashamed of the servant—His prisoner. “All they which are in Asia be turned

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 179

away from me," writes the apostle. (2 Tim. i. 15.)

Thus they proved their disregard for the Lord's testimony in the way in which they disregarded His servant, who was the apostle of it. It is important to see first that there was always a special truth with which the testimony of the Lord was connected; and, secondly, that the effort of the enemy is to divert the people of God from it, and to hinder them from strictly and fully maintaining it; while on the other hand wherever there was faith in any, even in the darkest moment, there was always distinct succour from God to enable them to do so. Faith in God only could surmount the opposition which the people of God had to encounter in maintaining the testimony at any given time.

The testimony being of God, nothing but the power of God can enable one to maintain it. A portion of truth has always been held by the people of God. But to hinder the testimony being maintained in its fulness, is Satan's

180 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

great aim, and nothing but divine power can enable us to resist him.

Now, the truth which most distinctly vindicates God with regard to man, because it was revealed consequent on the break-down of man, is the one necessarily most outside of man. God revealed Himself gradually, but as each successive trial made of man, proved, more than the preceding one, that man is irrecoverable and unable to maintain the testimony of the Lord, He at last sent His Son, and consequent on His death and rejection, He called out Saul of Tarsus to maintain the present testimony. This new testimony is not connected with the trial of man, but was given subsequent to it.

The trial of man was closed on the cross. Every previous dispensation had placed him under trial, and the testimony of the Lord at that time, if it had been maintained, would have given man some place as man; it conferred distinction on man according as he maintained it. Had Adam maintained the testimony given to him in Eden, he

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. . 181

would have added distinction to himself. Had Noah maintained the testimony committed to him, he would have distinguished himself. Had the fathers—had Israel done so, they would have risen in the scale, and secured a name for man, in the flesh, as subject to God. But in each and all, man failed; and finally, proved his entire ruin in his inability to comprehend the excellence of every divine and human beauty in the person of the Son of God manifested in flesh.

If man was found incompetent to maintain the testimony of the Lord when the maintenance of it would have exalted himself, how evident it is, that he can get no place in that testimony which is subsequent to the cross, where the history of man under trial closes. We must bear in mind that our blessed Lord was refused both as a man on earth, and as a man in heaven—"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." They said, "This is the heir, come let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. So they

182 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

cast Him out and killed Him. The perfect Man, the Son of the Father, is disallowed of men, but God raised Him from the dead; He having given His life a ransom for many. Secondly, in the refusal of His servant Stephen, whom they stoned to death, they refused the testimony of the Holy Ghost concerning Him as risen, and avowed "we will not have this man to reign over us." Hence, the testimony of the Lord, brought out now, must be characterized by that which will express the effect through grace, of this double rejection. Therefore, it does not now subject man to any fresh trial.

The trial of man was over on the cross—in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth as a propitiation for our sins, that He might be Just and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. The testimony is of the Lord Jesus Christ—the one Man who has entirely met the mind of God in everything, and who also has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It altogether ignores man

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 183

as he was under trial, before the cross ; there is no offer to him to recover himself, and the maintaining of the testimony now, would in nowise add distinction to him, but the reverse ; because the testimony now is of the One who died for him, and who, when refused and disallowed of men, was called by God to His own right hand.

Before the death of Christ, while man was under trial, although the maintenance of the testimony always required divine power, yet, as it was maintained, whether by Noah, Abraham, or Moses, it gave distinction and place to each—as men in the flesh. But the cross sets man aside in a double way. In it there is atonement for man's sin, which of itself is evidence that there was nothing in man through which he could live before God ; and that there was no other way but the death of Christ to reconstitute him according to the mind of God, or to plant him in the likeness of Christ. Therefore, if man in the flesh be allowed a place now, there must be at the start an incapacity to maintain the testimony

184 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

of the Lord as committed to, and preached by, Paul—the prisoner of the Lord. The testimony is, that there is one Man in heaven, who has answered in every way to the mind of God on earth, and who then died for our sins, glorifying God while bearing the judgment which lay upon us ;—that He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and has sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high : that this one Man in heaven is not only our Saviour, but He is our Head, and we, the members of His body on the earth, draw our strength from Him and find our life in Him, through the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in each of us, uniting us to Him and to one another. This is the testimony which was committed to Paul, and from this all in Asia had turned away. Hence, the apostle warns Timothy (the servant of the hour) not to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, or of himself—His prisoner.

Now the failure “of all that are in Asia,” is that to which every saint in the present day has a tendency, or is in dan-

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 185

ger of, even though he may have suffered on account of it; for those who turned away from it in the apostle's day, had been personally taught and led by himself. It is not that the truth of Christianity as a whole is relinquished, but there is a return to a previous testimony in order to escape the peculiar and exacting nature of this, the greatest of testimonies. Hence, for nearly 1800 years, this great testimony has been in abeyance, and now that through unspeakable mercy it has been revived, we are not one whit more secure against the adversary, than were those in Asia. The danger of those who have learned the testimony, is, that while owning the truth as the Colossians did, they should reduce it to a theory—for instance holding the doctrine of the unity of the body merely as a doctrine, instead of as the known result of union with the Head. Hence the apostle had great agony for them that they might realize and enjoy the unprecedented blessedness of association with Christ. This was the paramount energy of the Spirit of God,

186 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

and if it was so in that day before the universal demoralization had set in, how much more now in our day when through unaccountable favour the truth has been partially recovered.

Whatever God is most set upon, that Satan most opposes. "Be anything, or do anything" is in fact the language of the great adversary, so that you do not aim at being what God desires you to be. Do any good work you like; be earnest preachers; be anything, except maintainers of the testimony of the Lord. For hundreds of years Satan has succeeded in keeping the most faithful servants of the Lord in the dark as to this great truth, and if he can succeed now by any means, be it even by withdrawing opposition to the spread of the Gospel or any good work, he will do so I am persuaded. Surely to any godly and enlightened soul, it is the gravest question whether he answers to the apostle's appeal—"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of me his prisoner."

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 187

I have no hesitation in stating that the greatest duty that now devolves on any servant, and the one attended with most honour from the Father (see John xii. 26) is the maintenance of this testimony. It over-rides all gifts and services. It is, like the colours of the soldier, the first and unmistakeable expression of every true servant. He owes the Lord a higher duty than anyone. It is true that gifts and services are for men, and to be used for their benefit. But the servant of this hour is mistaken when he places even the benefits of the Gospel above the colours under which he serves, as if the former were superior to the latter. The servant who through mercy has been taught the testimony, and who has emerged from the general demoralization, cannot but feel that he has one duty paramount to all others, and that is, that he is not ashamed of the testimony of the Lord or of His prisoner; but he glories in the Lord's wondrous favour to him in calling him to the front of the battle, and in order to please Him who has chosen him, he

188 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

wears His uniform, and in everything he is a marked man in maintaining what is due to his Lord ; all his ways declare that the man here is superseded, and that all that is of the blessed One in heaven is to be fostered and contended for.

HE THAT SEEKETH FINDETH.

She came from that far distant land,
Across the burning desert sand,
With gold of Sheba in her hand,
Because she heard the wondrous fame
Of one who bore a world-wide fame.

She saw him seated on his throne,
Unmatched on earth, she could but own,
Such glory she had never known,
She proved his wisdom, for he solved
Hard questions she had ne'er resolved.

All that she craved for heart or mind,
In Solomon she now could find,
She cared no more for things behind ;
She told him all, her heart was free,
His beauty now her eyes could see.

All that upon her spirit pressed
She left with him in perfect rest,
Assured in wisdom he knew best,
Her own concerns no more a care,
She now was free in his to share.

HE THAT SEEKETH FINDETH. 189

And think you that to him 'twas nought,
 To find his presence loved and sought,
 To be the object of her thought?
 His joy the meaning to unfold,
 Of all her eyes could there behold.

All that before had charmed her sight,
 Grew dim beside this glory bright,
 He gilded all the scene with light;
 She gazed on what his hand had wrought,
 But *he* exceeded all her thought.

She thought not of her earthly store,
 How rich so e'er, it now seemed poor,
 For Solomon engaged her more.
 To stand before him, was (*she thought*)
 The highest honour to be sought.

* * * * *

Oh, well for those whose hearts have been
 Detained by Christ in that bright scene,
 Beholding Him, like Sheba's queen.
 All other light for ever dim,
 No spirit left for aught but Him.

Things that they once had counted dear,
 No more attract and seem less near,
 For Christ surpasses brightness here;
 His presence in the glory there
 Has drawn their hearts from earthly cheer.

They seek not now for fame on earth,
 Nor glory in their name or birth,
 For Christ exceeds it all in worth,
 There's nothing *here* they could attain
 When Christ in glory is their gain.

190 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Each earthborn vision fades and dies,
And in the heavens their upturned eyes
Behold a far more glorious Prize—
That matchless One has fixed their gaze,
And fills the glory with His rays.

“HE LOOKED THAT IT SHOULD BRING FORTH GRAPES.”

WE are told to “remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no.” (Deut. iii.) It is a wonderful history, the history of a saint. Every act and every thought either contribute to our blessing or hinder it. Just as air and food affect our health, so do acts and thoughts promote or hinder spiritual life. No one with the finest sensibility of body can feel or judge of the effect of air and food, in any measure, as the Spirit of God in us feels and judges of our acts and thoughts; not unkindly or severely as we often may do with re-

gard to one another, but His purpose is to separate the precious from the vile ; to remove the shell from the grain ; as little birds do before swallowing it. There is a great deal of mixture in all our acts and thoughts ; and it is of amazing interest and comfort to us to know that the Spirit of God is ever desiring to promote and maintain the good ; that He does not hesitate to sift out the chaff and the shell, while He carefully preserves the grain for the judgment-seat of Christ. There is often a good intention in an ill devised act. We suffer from the act as we would from eating bad food, but the good intention is laid up in store, and another time it will be better expressed.

The great thing for us is to have the abiding sense that we are under the perpetual scrutiny of the Spirit of God. He is always watching for the good ; our fellows are most ready to see the evil. He not only watches for the good, but He is ever seeking to impart it, and He is grieved when He is forgotten or overlooked as the great guest in our bodies.

192 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

I have seen a picture of diamond-sorters. The diamonds and rubbish and mud are all spread out on a table. Then the sorters search through the mud and rubbish, turning over and over for everything that looks like a diamond. Diamonds they want, and diamonds they seek for. Thus I believe the Spirit of God detaches what is really divine from my acts, and lays them up in store for the day of Christ's session; and every true intention which has not ripened into act, He fosters and encourages. What a comfort to be under so great and loving a Guardian, and as we trace His love and care, our hearts warm in consciousness of the marvellous nature of it, and we find ourselves gradually submitting everything to His scrutiny as one would to a microscope which always took the truest and most favourable view of everything. It is well known that the more man's works are magnified by being submitted to a magnifying glass, the coarser they appear; whereas the more the works of God are magnified, the more beautiful and perfect they appear.

PROPITIATION AND SUBSTITUTION.

My intercourse with saints, and especially with those who preach, has led me to discover that a good deal of obscurity in their manner of putting the Gospel, and I may add a good deal of Arminian and Calvinistic controversy, arises from not distinguishing propitiation and substitution. I am not anxious about the words, but about the practical distinction, which is very simple and I think of moment. I say the words, because in propitiation, in a certain sense, Christ stood in our stead. Still there is a very real difference in scripture.

This difference is clearly marked in the offerings of the great day of atonement. Aaron slew the bullock, and the goat which was called the Lord's lot, and sprinkled the blood on and before the mercy-seat and on the altar. The blood was presented to God whose holy presence had been dishonoured and offended by sin. So Christ has perfectly glori-

194 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

fied God in the place of sin, by His perfect obedience and love to His Father in His being made sin who knew no sin. God's majesty, righteousness, love, truth, all that He is, was glorified in the work wrought by Christ, and of this the blood was witness in the holy place itself. Our sins gave occasion to it, but God Himself was glorified in it. Hence the testimony can go out to all the world that God is more than satisfied, glorified, and whoever comes by that blood is freely, fully, received of God and to God. But there was no confession of sins on the head of this goat; it was about sin by reason of Israel's sinfulness, but it was simply blood offered to God; sin had been dealt with in judgment according to God's glory, yea, to the full glorifying of God, for never was His majesty, love, and hatred of sin so seen. God could shine out in favour to the returning sinner according to what He was; yea, in the infiniteness of His love beseech men to return.

But besides this there was personal guilt, positive personal sins for which

PROPITIATION AND SUBSTITUTION. 195

Israel was responsible, and men are responsible, according to what is righteously required from each. On the great day of atonement, the high priest confessed the people's sins on the scape goat, laying both his hands on its head; the personal sins were transferred to the goat by one who represented all the people, and they were gone for ever, never found again.

Now this is another thing. Christ is both high priest and victim, and has confessed all the sins of His people as His own, borne our sins in His own body on the tree. The two goats are but one Christ, but there is the double aspect of His sacrifice, Godward, and bearing our sins. The blood is the witness of the accomplishment of all, and He is entered in not without blood. He is the propitiation for our sins. But in this aspect the world comes in too. He is a propitiation for the whole world. All has been done that is needed. His blood is available for the vilest whoever he may be. Hence the gospel to the world says, "Whosoever will, let him

196 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

come." In this aspect we may say Christ died for all, gave Himself a ransom for all—an ἀντίλυτρον περὶ πάντων, an adequate and available sacrifice for sin, for whoever would come—tasted death for every man.

But when I come to bearing sins the language is uniformly different. He bore our sins, He bore the sins of many. "All" is carefully abstained from. I say carefully, because in Romans v. 18, 19 the difference is carefully made. The first, our sins, is the language of faith, left open indeed to anyone who can use it, but used and to be used only by faith. The believing remnant of Israel may use it, including the blessing of the nations, for He died for that nation; Christians use it in faith, for all that have faith to use it. The second "many" restricts it from "all," but generally has the force of "the many," the οἱ πολλοί as contrasted with a head or leaders, the mass in connection with them. Adam's οἱ πολλοί were in result all, but all as in connection with him. Christ's οἱ πολλοί those connected with Him. But

PROPITIATION AND SUBSTITUTION. 197

it will never be found in scripture that Christ bore the sins of all. Had He done so they never could be mentioned again, nor men judged according to their works. That Christ died for all is, as we have seen, often said. Hence I go, with His death, to the world as their ground and only ground of approach, with the love shewn in it. When a man believes I can say, Now I have more to tell you, Christ has borne every one of your sins, they never can be mentioned again. If we look at the difference of Arminian and Calvinistic preaching we shall see the bearing of this at once; the Arminians take up Christ's dying for all, and generally they connect the bearing of sins with it, and all is confusion as to the efficacy and effectualness of Christ's bearing our sins, and they deny any special work for His people. They say if God loved all He cannot love some particularly; and an uncertain salvation is the result, and man often exalted. Thus the scape-goat is practically set aside.

The Calvinist holds Christ's bearing

198 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

the sins of His people so that they are effectually saved, but he sees nothing else. He will say, if Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, there can be no real love for anything else, and denies Christ's dying for all, and the distinctive character of propitiation, and the blood on the mercy-seat. He sees nothing but substitution.

The truth is, Christ is said to love the church, never the world, that is a love of special relationship. God is never said to love the church, but the world. That is divine goodness, what is in the nature of God (not His purpose), and His glory is the real end of all. But I do not dwell on this, I only point out the confusion of propitiation and substitution as necessarily making confusion in the gospel, enfeebling the address to the world or weakening the security of the believer, and in every respect giving uncertainty to the announcement of the truth. I believe earnestness, after souls, and preaching Christ with love to Him will be blessed where there is little clearness, and is

A REPRESENTATIVE MAN. 199

more important than great exactitude of statement. Still it is a comfort to the preacher to have it clear, even if not thinking about it at the moment; and when building up afterwards, the solidness of the foundation is of the greatest moment.

A REPRESENTATIVE MAN.

(Continued from page 177.)

BUT to return, John's Epistle makes no provision *for* sinning, how could it? but he says on the contrary, "these things I write unto you, that you sin *not*," yet "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One." Here again we may remark, that Paul and John are alike in their modes of reckoning, only their subjects are different—the first teaches us that we are not in the flesh, though the flesh be in us—the latter teaches there can be no excuse for sinning, though if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. A believer in Christ can-

200 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

not be described as in the flesh, for it *was* his state and standing in nature, when alive in the flesh—nor can a believer be described as committing sin, seeing it *was* his natural condition before he was born of God. What characterizes him *now* (as to these two points) is that he is not in the flesh, and that he does not practise sin. We therefore “confess our sins” (they being inconsistent with ourselves, as born again) and God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

This eternal life therefore, which was with the Father and was manifested to us, and which we have received, refuses all our old associations (when we were men in the flesh, and in sin) and breaks with them—moreover this eternal life in us is true to its proper characteristics of light and love, and is our ability through the Holy Ghost to enjoy that fellowship with the Father and the Son, in which by grace we are established. After the first ten or twelve verses of this Epistle, we get these principles applied (on

A REPRESENTATIVE MAN. 201

which our communion is based) to existing things around us, in all the contrariety in which the world and the devil present them. Like our Lord's temptation in the wilderness, so with us—the first things to which these principles of life and light and love lend their influence, are obedience and dependence, “hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments—he that saith I know him and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” So again “whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.” Our fellowship with the Father and the Son, and the completeness of our joy therein, is then made the practical test by which we judge what the great world outside us is—“love not the world, nor the things that are in the world—if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” It has in enmity emptied itself of the Son of God's love, and this rejected Son is with the Father where our fellowship *is*—how then can we love the world,

202 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

without being false to the Father and the Son? "for all that is in the world, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world"—but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever.

Our fellowship with the Father and the Son in the light and in the truth, under the guardianship of the unction and the anointing, was threatened too, in a religious form by Satan, who knows how to transform himself into an angel of light. If God has His Christ in heaven, crowned with honour and glory, the devil has his counterfeit upon the earth, to whom he will yet give his seat and authority. "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? he is Antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son"—but ye have an unction from the Holy One and know all things, is our security, in order that we may abide in Him, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. This is the end proposed, and corresponds practically on earth, with the character of our communion above.

A REPRESENTATIVE MAN. 203

This fellowship with the Father and the Son in which we are set by grace, is thus maintained in living communion, and in the denial of the world and all that is in it; as well as in the contradiction of the flesh, with its corruptions and lusts. In truth, whatever is not of the Father, but is of the wicked one, is the measure of actual separation; in the reality and power of the anointing which we have received, and is true and no lie, that we may continue in the Son and in the Father. There were and will be many antichrists, but if the word which ye have heard from the beginning shall abide in you, ye shall abide in Him. False prophets are also gone out into the world, but those who are in this fellowship with the Father and the Son are competent to try the spirits, whether they are of God—ye are of God little children, and have overcome them, because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world—and this is equally our confidence and security against *all* the corruptions, which characterize the last times.

204 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

But besides the antichrists, and the false prophets, and wicked spirits, and all the power of the enemy externally—there were other dangers equally serious which are personal, and spring from within us and threaten this fellowship with the Father and the Son in some one or other of its constituent parts, owing to sin that dwelleth in us. For example, the heart may condemn, or not condemn us—“beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God, and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” Blessed as this place of obedience is, and all that flows forth to us in answer to prayer, in the true confession of dependence upon God in this unbroken fellowship, there is besides this the Father’s own unfailing love and delight in us, to keep the heart bright and happy in the hope of the day of Christ’s glory—“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God, therefore the

A REPRESENTATIVE MAN. 205

world knoweth us not because it knew him not." A people, who are in the world's midst for a moment, and yet not of it, or dependent upon it for anything—we do not know it, nor on the other hand does it know us—a people, whose sources of life and joy and fellowship are totally outside it, and above it, in the Father and the Son. "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—and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure." Fellowship with God in the light, is our present portion, in a known communion with the Father and the Son in love, "that our joy may be full"—till the day of Christ's glory comes, when the love that has already made us sons, will make it manifest that we are such, and we shall be for ever with Him.

In the meanwhile this is the hope of our hearts at home in this unclouded communion, and without a single thing

206 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

overlooked, that the vigilance of a Father's eye discerned as needful, either on His part in holiness, or on ours in weakness and dependence, till the day of glory come. Our supplies are from the fulness of God and of Christ, ministered from life to life as being born again, under the unction of the Holy One by whom we know all things—dwelling in God, and He dwelling in us, the characteristics of this eternal life must be in the light and love, as well as in the truth and righteousness, in which they were all manifested in absolute perfection in Christ, when on earth. Failing and faulty in this, as alas we are, “if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Further, in the light as we are, and everything viewed in the light as all is, and sin discovered and confessed, “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” What wisdom and grace are thus displayed and apprehended by us, even when such needs as these are in question—and how we learn

afresh that a Father's love can turn all round to His own glory, and for the display of the Person and offices and work of His own Son, so that our communion when disturbed or interrupted, may be unbroken. All that God is, and that Christ is, are thus for us; and being qualified and competent as born of God, and under the anointing and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, for the true expression of what was seen and known in Christ, we repel the world and the flesh and the wicked one. We judge all that is false around us, by the knowledge of the true God, and by this 'Jesus Christ come in the flesh. In the confidence that we are thus of God, we can say, "they are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." Nor need we shrink from the alternative "we are of God, he that heareth God heareth us, he that is not of God heareth not us, hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error;" it must be one or the other.

We shall do well to observe that God is the source of life to us, this eternal

208 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

life, and that God is also light; moreover that God is love, and love is of God, nor is love anywhere else, except as received from God because born of Him, who is also our life and light. This love which was manifested to us in Christ and by Christ, led Him to lay down His life for us, nor is there any other pattern for us, "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren," or else we gainsay the life and its perfection in Christ; so true is it, that as Christ is so are we in this world. The object of our faith He surely is, and the satisfying portion of our souls. He is also the example and pattern of the life we have received from Him. The standard of our conformity is likewise Christ, and He is the test by which we are put to the proof; how can it be otherwise, upon all these points? for there is none other than He between ourselves and God. Tested by him "the same thing is true in Him and in you" as to nature and character, however different in measure, for "whosoever abideth in him sinneth not, whosoever sinneth hath not seen

him, neither known him." We have thus traced in this first Epistle the way in which our communion with the Father and the Son is maintained in unbroken fellowship, through the abounding grace of Christ, and the supply of the Spirit, so that John addresses us as representative men who correspond practically in this life and walk and ways below with the fellowship above in which by grace and calling we have been set. The closing verses for instance beautifully correspond in practice with the abstract truths by which the Epistle opened out this fellowship; "we know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." This is the product or pattern man which, as we said at first, is found in this Epistle as well as in the various writings of Peter, James, and Paul. What can the wicked one say to any who thus are kept, and who keep themselves in this wondrous fellowship? On the contrary, "that wicked one toucheth him not," and it gives us power over him, for we

210 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness, "and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ."

The only real and proper object, Jesus the Son of God, being thus brought into prominence and made the centre, necessarily excludes every other as a counterfeit and an abomination. John concludes his Epistle by the assurance that "this is the true God and eternal life—little children, keep yourselves from idols;" for to Him and to us, every person, and name, and thing, outside this fellowship with the Father and the Son in life and light and love can only be an idol, and those must be idolaters who own and acknowledge this lie of the wicked one. Be it observed this lie is two-fold, consisting in the partial or total denial of this fellowship to which we are called with the Father and the Son—and likewise in the confession of the world or something that is in it, led captive by the lust of the eye or the pride of life

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 211

by which the devil seduces and destroys those who love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

“NOT HOLDING THE HEAD.”

MANY saints are conscious of deficiency and want of power, who cannot tell the cause of it. No one can prescribe a remedy until he discover the need, but many, after they have become acquainted with the need of the church, or of individual saints, cannot tell what is the true remedy. They, like unskilled physicans, try many remedies, but though actual collapse be prevented, by the exercise of heart which there is, in trying the remedies; yet the same spiritual need as to its type and nature still continues. Surely almost every conscientious saint can see the great need spiritually of individual souls, and of the church in general; but as a rule, they fail in relieving or removing it,

212 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

because they have not discovered the true remedy. In scripture there is but the one remedy for any particular defect, and unless one is taught of the Lord to use the spiritual specific, there is no true remedy, and this accounts for so much time being expended in seeking and in doing what in the end proves to be profitless.

Unless I am true to God, and in keeping with His mind at any given time, I cannot be supported by the Holy Ghost. Every true saint from Adam down, had to learn that his strength and power to be for God was in proportion as he was in keeping with the mind and purpose of God at the time; otherwise he was not in the current of divine power. There might be holy desires in his heart, but in order to partake of the power and support of God, I must go in His way. Now, however truthful or laborious in service any saint may be, there is immense loss, and glaring defect, where there is lack in holding the Head. Holding the Head is the cardinal truth for the church, and it

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 213

is the vital point as to power and walk. I do not deny that there is some power, and some attempt to walk with God where this great truth is unknown or overlooked, but I hope to shew in this paper, that there can be no real christian energy or practice, but in proportion as this cardinal truth is held and enjoyed.

It is a truth entirely belonging to the time of Christ's rejection, it was never revealed until Paul's conversion. Many and various were the energies of divine grace in souls in great power and zeal before this truth, and the virtues it confers, were made known; but those energies, though great and excellent, never did rise up to, or participate in, union with Christ, which holding the Head implies; and which therefore confers a greater privilege and order of power than could have been known by any saint previous to the ascension of Christ. If saints would admit and maintain that holding the Head is the main point, the heart and seat of life for all personal and relative action in the church of God, there would be a given

214 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

centre for all saints ; and according as it was insisted on, and preserved with integrity, the refusal and extirpation of everything contrary to it would be simple and easy. I am very far from making little of the faith or zeal of any of the saints of God before the resurrection of the Lord, but I do say that no saint before that great event could know the privilege and virtue of being united to Him who is the Son of God. But unless souls see the magnitude of this grace, they cannot be exercised as to the gain of accepting it, or the loss of overlooking it. Almost every kind of divine virtue was displayed in the line of witnesses from Abel downwards, but in none of them, I need hardly say, was there perfection. This perfection was in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Now a saint might be equal to Abel, or Enoch, or Abram, or Moses, or Samuel, or David, or Elijah, as to his particular grace and faithfulness ; yet he is called to a higher grace and walk than any of them, because united to the perfect One, the Son of the Father in

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 215

heaven. The witnesses who went before do indeed provoke us by their faith and zeal ; but great and wonderful as was their course, none of them is our example, or model : our example is the Author and Finisher of faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. And even if I acted as well as or better in any given thing than one of the former witnesses in that in which he was most distinguished, yet if *that* were all, I should be below my calling ; because I am called, not to do it as he did it, but as Christ did, and I should do so, were I holding the Head. Let this be admitted, and then the gravity of our responsibility, and the greatness of our privilege will be evident enough. Many a saint is like a branch of a tree which you try to keep alive by placing it in water ; there is life in it, but being detached from the root of the parent tree, it soon fails to give any evidence of it.

Saints present to themselves a lower

216 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

standard than Christ. They seek one that their power will be able to reach up to ; and many have no sense of acceptance higher or fuller than Abel's, and do not aim at any higher walk than Enoch's. Our acceptance *is in the Beloved*, and we have no lower standard than to walk even as He walked. The contrast is immense between an individual saint, even the greatest, in whom the Spirit of God merely acted, and one in whom the Spirit of God dwells, uniting him to the Head in heaven. The saints in the former dispensation were individual ; their power was not derivative from the Lord in heaven, though it was conferred by Him. The Spirit of God acted in them but not in concert one with another. Each stood alone. *Now*, it is immensely different. There is one Head, the Lord in heaven, and each saint, holding Him, derives from Him, "from whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and united together, increaseth with the increase of God."

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 217

If the Head be not held there must be a degenerating to the order of saintship previous, and inferior to the present calling and order. Nothing could be higher than the present, nor could there be one which ensured greater gain. If it be a question of acceptance it is "in the Beloved," "as he is so are we in this world." If it be walk, "we are to walk even as he walked." If it be a witness, it is "looking unto Jesus." If it be a servant, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." If it be as to place, "We are raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ." If it be glory, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them." If it be love, it is "that the love wherewith thou lovest me, may be in them, and I in them." Now if the Head be not held, there will always be a degenerate apprehension of every one of these virtues or privileges.

It is most important to see that at no former period could the same manner or measure of grace be imparted to a saint

218 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

as there is now to every one true to his calling. When the disciples accompanied our Lord on the earth they were undoubtedly made familiar *par excellence* with what was most blessed. But though they were with Him and enjoyed the charm and blessing of His presence, yet they were not in moral company with Him. He was alone. To have enjoyed His company as a man, and to have participated in the wondrous shelter and love which His wing afforded them, was indeed their unique privilege, but they were in no wise like Him; they were at home with Him, but they were not united to Him. He was not their known Head, though He was their support, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. But now we are united to Him above, and we feed on Him as He was here on the earth; the life of Jesus is manifested in the body. Again, on the holy mount though some of them saw Him transfigured, and heard the voice from the excellent glory and were eye witnesses of His majesty, yet they were only spectators; they

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 219

were not partaking of what He was partaking of, as joined to Him; and therefore one Spirit with Him. Every one holding the Head, now beholds with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, and is transformed into the same likeness, but this did not in any degree happen to Peter, James, and John.

Again, when the Lord was risen from the dead, and when He shewed Himself to His disciples in this new and transcendent way, they were quite conscious of His wondrous state. They had the peculiar and unspeakable gladness of seeing Him triumphant over all the ruin brought in by man, but though they were in a degree conscious of the new and bright day now inaugurated for them through Him, they really did not partake of it, as in it with Him, because the Holy Ghost had not as yet descended to unite them to Him the Head. They saw the Head, they heard what He would confer on them, but not yet were they one spirit with the Lord, nor could they enjoy resurrection as He enjoyed it, though they could rejoice in the risen

220 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Lord. Thus neither in His walk, nor in His transfiguration, nor after His resurrection, were His disciples, though most highly favoured, made acquainted similarly in any degree with His state at the time ; because they were not united to Him. And therefore the weakest saint united to Him now tastes, as to degree, a greater thing than any of the disciples in any period of His life on earth.

When holding the Head is actually known, there is always a "seeking the things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." Stephen declares the efficacy of union when he "looked up stedfastly into heaven," Paul, when he says, "not I but Christ liveth in me." But it is not merely individual as all grace had been hitherto, in every dispensation ; but now, as one member is honoured all the members rejoice with it. And this is the only true way of learning or understanding the unity of the body. In a variety of ways of late years, the unity of the body has been accepted as a doctrine without any

FRAGMENTS.

221

power flowing from it; and simply because it is with the *effect* of union with the Head Christians are occupied, and not with that which produces the effect. They speak and dwell on the unity of the body, without insisting on holding the Head, as the only way to arrive at or secure this unity. The consequence is, that one will regard the unity of the body as a club of Christians, and another will contend that a congregation which takes the place and form of worshippers is the body of Christ. All and every shade of inaccuracy on the subject is simply traceable to not holding the Head, this greatest and most wondrous of privileges and benefits.

FRAGMENTS.

THE bud, or blossom, or fruit most fragrant to the heart of Christ is often the one which nobody but Himself knew what it cost me, and where no one had hardly noticed it.

Look at self through the glass of Christ; God will never cease dealing with you till you do.

222 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

There is a great difference between having a good conscience, and a perfect conscience. If I have the former, my own conscience is the standard, and I walk uprightly without reproach from it; but if I have the latter, I walk in the light; I judge of everything according to God, and Christ is my standard.

Earthly blessings bind you to earth, but every heavenly drop draws your heart up to heaven from whence it has come; thus you will always be able to distinguish between earthly streams and heavenly streams. Each water leads to its own country.

Tryings and testings are for faith, but it is where faith requires to be established. When a trial occurs, that is only a telegram to intimate to you that the enemy is in force in that quarter, and that a reinforcement is at once required.

The great secret when we cannot think with others in the church of God, is to think for them. Love—divine love—will adapt itself because it is above all the evil; its patience is never weary, though it cannot go on with what is wrong.

THE WILDERNESS.

For Him the wilderness did not sing,
Nor the desolate place rejoice—
Nor as the rose did the desert bloom,
Nor the wastes lift up their voice.

The glory of Lebanon was not there,
Nor the shittah nor myrtle sweet,
Nor was the place of His sojourning fair,
Nor glorious the place of His feet.

Through the great and terrible waste He trod
Where water-springs were none—
In the weary desert alone with God,
And His heritage God alone.

No way in the desert prepared for Him,
Nor the mountains and hills made low—
Nor the crooked straight, nor the rough ways
plain,
Where His pilgrim feet must go.

O Father, thy care is not to make
The desert a waste no more,
But to keep our feet lest we lose the track
Where *His* feet went before—

Thou carest not that the rose should bloom,
Nor the myrtle where *we* must tread,
Nor to make the fir and the cedar tree
A shadow above our head.

224 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

But thou carest that through the golden street
We walk in the light above,
That we sit in His shadow with great delight,
And feed on the fruit of His love.

Thou carest that in the pastures green,
Where the life eternal flows
In the midst of the paradise of our God,
We should find our deep repose.

Thou carest not to give desert songs,
Where through the wilds we roam,
But a golden psalm hast thou put in our
mouths,
To sing in our Father's home.

Whilst yet we walk through the weary land,
Where we bear the outcast name,
Where the foxes have holes and the birds have
nests,
And our Lord the cross of shame.

Apart from all in the joy we dwell,
Which the eye hath never seen—
'Tis a dry and a thirsty land below,
But there the fields are green.

When He is no more the outcast Man,
But the Lamb whom all adore ;
There is now the place of our joy and song,
And shall be for evermore.

1873.

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

PART XVIII.

At the time of the end, when the Lord judges as a whole the unfaithful servant, the kingdom of heaven shall take, as to individual responsibility of those who make positive profession, the form or likeness of ten virgins who went forth to meet the Bridegroom, and servants to whom their Lord entrusted talents for service: the former referring to spiritual state, the latter to service.

The character attached to the saints at the beginning in the first parable is that they went out to meet the Bridegroom, as it is expressed doctrinally in 1 Thessalonians i., they were converted to wait for God's Son from heaven. This is all important as the living characteristic of the Christian. "And ye like unto men who wait for their Lord when he shall return from the wedding:" their loins girded about, their lights burning—a clear and manifest confession of Christ, and all in order in the heart, and as men ready to open whenever the

226 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Master knocked. Not a mere notion or theological idea, but the actual waiting for Christ, and the heart in a state ready to receive Him.

It is well before we go further to remark that we have not the bride here. The church is not viewed as such. If we will make out a bride here, it is Jerusalem on the earth, and that according to the whole tenor of the Gospel; not Jerusalem above. Christians are viewed as virgins accompanying the bridegroom in to the wedding.

The Lord had warned the disciples in the parable of the servant, chapter xxiv., of the church's losing the present sense of His coming; that if the evil servant said in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming, he would begin to persecute and fall in with the world, as it has happened. This looks at the professed assembly as a whole. Here we find that in fact the Bridegroom tarried. The effect upon all was that all slumbered and slept. True Christians forgot it, lost their character of being gone out to meet Him, as much as

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

227

false professors. They had gone in, moreover, into worldly religion in spirit and principle whence they came out, though maintaining their profession, however dimly it shone; for the cry had to be resumed, "Go ye out to meet him." This is very solemn; the whole church, the brightest and the best, had forgotten their true place and character; their original calling was forgotten and lost, but the true saints had not of course ceased to be such. There was a general waking up of all who made profession. The foolish were like the others formally and had their lamps.* But the cry came at an unlooked for, as men would say, an unseasonable hour, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." They were to go out again to meet Him, to take their original calling. They all arose and trimmed their lamps; but with the five, oil was wanting, there was no living grace, and hence nothing could last. What really shewed a right state, inward thoughtfulness of what they went

* It seems these were rather torches, and they had oil in their vessels to feed them with.

228 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

out for, the effect subjectively in what was not displayed of that which was objectively before them ; that was all that was wanting. They were with, like, the others ; had their lamp or profession like them. What was to feed it, living grace within, was wholly wanting ; the profession soon began to fail. It was not the time to get what was wanting for it. They were not ready. This was the great essential point. All had been asleep, the whole church, pious and all, had forgotten the Lord's coming. All that made any profession were awoke, the foolish as the wise, by the midnight cry. Any can be aroused to activity when the Lord sends forth the cry. They are not rejectors or infidels, quite the contrary, but there is no oil—the inward life and grace is wanting. Time is allowed after the awakening cry to test the reality of profession. It was soon going out. The Lord came and they had no part in the blessing—the Lord did not know them. A solemn testimony for those who may make a positive profession of Christianity. The

midnight cry, the Lord is coming, is what wakes up the sleeping professors. Till then the whole church had lost the expectation of His coming—were asleep to it; but only those who had the Spirit of Christ, real living grace within, were ready to meet Him.

The points of the parable are these: The church was called to go out to meet Christ; the Bridegroom tarries, all go to sleep and cease to expect Him. What wakes them up is the cry of His coming; they are called back to their original calling; but only those who had the Spirit of Christ, living grace, were found ready to meet Him and went in to the marriage. The *state* of souls professing Christianity is in question.

In the following parable their service is in question. The Lord on His going away leaves talents with His own servants. It is not here, remark, natural gifts, however responsible we may be for the use of them, it is what Christ gave to His own servants when He went away. The Lord gave spiritual gifts on His departing. What were the talents given,

230 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

and given to servants for? To serve with. Those who understood their Master's mind, because they had confidence in their Master's goodness, entered in heart into His interests, which is the way of love—traded with them; one did not, he waited to be authorized, and why? He did not know nor estimate his Master. Confidence in Him was wanting, and so confidence in acting grace was not there known in the heart. The Lord is not here unfolding dogmas or explaining how this happens, but presenting phenomena. The servant who did not really know his Master did not serve Him; feared to do so. He was in the place, had competency to act from the Lord, but did not feel interest enough in what concerned Him to act for Him while away; he had not heart enough to do it because he did not know the Lord's heart.

The Lord does not treat the question whether there may be gift without grace; from other scriptures we know there may, as 1 Corinthians xiii., but it is not the question here, for there they

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

231

might use them where there was grace, for vanity. It is what renders one in the place of a servant an unprofitable one. Gifts of power are wholly distinct from grace. One in the place of a servant with capacity to serve (and every disciple of Jesus thus stood in that place when He was gone), who did not serve through distrust of his Master, proved he did not know Him, and was cast into outer darkness. Note here that the gift is distinct from natural capacity. This last is recognized here. The vessel was fitted and prepared, and the gift put into it. So Paul was a chosen vessel, and was then gifted for service.

In Luke the responsibility of man is more fully brought forward, and direct proportionate reward. Every one receives one pound, and he who gains ten gets ten cities. Here all the faithful ones enter alike into the joy of their Lord. They had known their Lord's character and acted on it, and had the blessing of it as associated with Him, were partakers of His joy, though also to be made ruler over many things. Here

232 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

it is blessedness, there reward. Nor is the wicked person there cast into outer darkness; he loses even what he had—the subject is reward. If he had had thoughts of his Master, he should have acted on it legally, if he could not according to grace. But now under grace, the want of the knowledge of grace takes away the sense of responsibility. The man does nothing; under law it is not so. A man really under it will toil and labour through fear. The whole parable shews the spirit in which Christ's servant labours according to grace, and its result, not in the kingdom, but together in the Lord's joy, which is according to grace, in our enjoyment of it. If this be wanting all is gone.

Remark another thing here, which is always so. The Lord puts His coming so as not to allow a thought beyond a living man's life. The virgins who fell asleep are the virgins who awoke, the servants who got the talent are the same that are judged. Christ was always to be looked for; and “which are alive

and remain'' is the right word for faith. Both parables refer entirely to the responsibility of the saints; but there is this difference: the first shews to us the universal way in which, even with true Christians, the original calling of the church was wholly forgotten. The Lord was not waited for. Only grace woke them up in time when He was coming, so that those that had grace were ready, went in with Him: only there was sufficient interval between the cry and the coming to test personal grace. In the second it is individual all through, and the effect of individual grace in that knowledge of the Lord Himself, which made them serve with the confidence of love, without as to that referring to the Lord's return. They laboured while He was away, but not here in direct reference to His return. The *state* of the saints of God, as a whole, depended on that; but many have served devotedly, knowing Christ, without knowing aught really of His coming as a present expectation, though knowing He would return and

234 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

take account, and their service was accepted with the blessed word, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

I would further remark that any application of these parables to the Jewish remnant is a mere mistake ; God's dealings with and by this remnant, as far as treated in this part of scripture, are unfolded in chapter xxiv. to the end of verse 31, and this connects itself as to historical events on earth directly with verse 31 of chapter xxv.

WORLDLY POSITION.

WHEN the Lord Jesus said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God," He stated a hard but indisputable fact. "With what difficulty," was His reasoning, and looked at from the human side, He shews that it is simply impossible. "For," He adds, "it is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," In reply, however, to the wondering inquiry of His disciples, "Who then can

be saved?" He turns to the divine side, and utters these gracious words—"The things that are impossible with men, are possible with God." The same God who "raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes," can bring down the rich man's pride, and lower his high thoughts, till he becomes as one of the little children of whom is the kingdom of God.

The possibilities of divine grace are most blessed, in contrast with the impossibilities of human effort. But divine grace brings all to a common level; before it the rich and the poor meet together, and all are brought to what one has called the "no-difference platform," for whether as sinners, or as saints, there is before God no difference; in the one case, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and in the other "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

While therefore the Lord has said that riches and worldly position are not with God impossibilities which He can-

236 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

not overcome, and those who possess them are not thereby excluded from the kingdom of God, yet it is as well to face the real difficulties which these things present, and understand how they bear on the soul's salvation and prosperity.

It will be admitted as a general principle, that whatever makes life in this world desirable, must tend to link the affections here below, and to depreciate the value of a life to come. He that *has* a bird in the hand esteems it better than two in the bush. "Soul," says the rich man to himself, "thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

While it is not denied that the poor man's heart may be as much linked with the world as the rich man's, yet so far as his outward circumstances are concerned, they are not in the same manner against him. There is nothing in them necessarily inconsistent with his being a recipient of divine grace. Indeed, says James, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised

WORLDLY POSITION.

287

to them that love him?" The poor man need not lay aside any of the things which simply pertain to his poor estate. The poor man need not lay aside his poverty, nor the needy man his need; the sorrowful man his sorrow, or the hungry man his hunger. While not one of these things, or all of them together, can in themselves save a man, or bring him one hair's breadth nearer to God, from whom sin, and sin alone has separated him, yet are they not inconsistent, but rather consistent with a gospel which offers not a present but a future possession, and which through faith deals with and satisfies the spiritual only in this world, leaving sight and sense to be satisfied in the life to come. (Ps. xvii. 15, 1 John iii. 2.)

But it is not thus with the man who is in any sense rich in this world. All that he has here below in connection with his position, is positive hindrance. Family, social rank, wealth, reputation, all tend to attach him to the life that now is. He loves and necessarily loves his life in this world. True he finds in

238 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

it much disappointment, and no full satisfaction ; true he sows to the flesh and reaps corruption ; true he has to learn that as he “ brought nothing into the world so it is certain that he can carry nothing out ; ” but for all that, he is, apart from divine grace, bound to the scene in which he fills so large a place, and thus as it is written, “ not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called.” Why ? Because of the insufficiency of divine power and grace ? No ! by no means ; but because of the insuperable difficulties which the world presents to the salvation, or devotedness of its followers. If the rich man, the worldly man, is to be saved, it is notwithstanding and at the cost of all he has and is here below. If he is to be devoted, he must forget that he has a worldly position to maintain ; he must “ deny *himself*.” So Nehemiah iii. 5. When the Tekoites repaired, “ their nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord.”

But as a matter of fact, and of grace, God does save the rich even as the poor,

WORLDLY POSITION.

239

and so they can rejoice together, "the brother of low degree in that he is exalted, and the rich in that he is made low." Both through the same grace brought to the same level in Christ; a divine level, spiritual and moral, which faith accepts, all outward circumstances notwithstanding.

Now it is these very outward circumstances with which faith has to grapple, and which faith alone can overcome. The poor sinner and the rich sinner do not necessarily change their outward circumstances when through grace they become saints. The poor may remain poor, and the rich, rich. But their relation to each other is entirely altered, inasmuch as their common portion and standing in Christ, and as members of His body is immeasurably superior to the old relation in which they stood apart from each other. They have in Christ a common bond in life, in love, in association, in sympathy, in hope, which, as they walk and live in the power of it, gives them to taste and prove the reality of divine communion. It does

240 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

not supersede their relation as to outward circumstances, while it is superior to it. It does not change their respective positions in the world, while it sets them free in these positions to act as the servants of Christ, and not according to the fashion of the world. The grace of God which brings salvation does not take a man out of his earthly sphere, but "teaches" him how in it "to deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world."

The man of property, the merchant, the professional man, may remain so still after his conversion; the only limitation now is that he must manage his property, conduct his business, or follow his profession, first of all with reference to his new profession as a Christian, and his new relation as a son of God. The man of family and social rank has however a somewhat further step to go, for he cannot, *as a Christian, maintain* these positions at all. They are purely arbitrary and worldly distinctions; they pertain to that old man which we are

WORLDLY POSITION.

241

told, and the Christian professes, "has been crucified with Christ." We do not of course mean that a man can put away or change the facts of his birth or connections, but we do say that their assertion or maintenance is contrary to Christianity, and can only exist at the expense of spirituality, and witness for Christ. If the Christian is faithful and consistent, the world will have none of him, and will cast him out, but for all that will respect him. If he is inconsistent the world will despise him. While the world will gladly seduce the Christian from the path of faith, and separation, it will thoroughly despise him when it has succeeded. Thus the Christian who asserts worldly position, or social distinction, is really good for nothing. He is introducing a foreign element into his Christianity which ruins it, and at the same time his worldliness is bad of its kind; for since he is in a place (as a Christian) where his worldly position will not, or at least should not, be recognized apart from his assertion of it, it involves on his part the

242 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

exhibition of what even the world will term vulgarity.

In accepting, then, the salvation of God, which Christ has wrought, and which the believer receives through faith, it is well to sit down and count the cost. "He gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world," and Christ died as much to deliver a man from his gentility—if ever he had any—as to save him from sin and death and judgment. What else does the apostle mean when he exclaims, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world," except the judgment, the thorough judgment as by death, of all that is in the world," the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life?" Not merely did Christ bear the believers' "sins in his own body on the tree," but there "our old man was crucified with him." There in His death, the believer sees his own death, and accepts a new life in the risen Christ, with all its pre-

WORLDLY POSITION.

243

sent and future consequences of rejection by the world, of peace with God, of separation from the world, of association with God's saints, and of hope of glory which maketh not ashamed.

But we must not forget the poor man. He has also his snares, and difficulties, and the same grace that is needed to teach the rich man to be abased, can alone enable the poor man to bear to be exalted. As a matter of fact the poor man frequently gains in Christianity in the very earthly circumstances in which the rich man loses. His christian profession often makes for him friends, and prospers him in his occupation in a manner unknown to him when he was in his sins. He finds himself also associated with those superior to him in a worldly sense, who yet receive him on equal terms as a brother in Christ. It is now that such a one needs all the grace and power of God to keep him. He has to remember that communion is not communism. Grace brings us into spiritual communion, and teaches us how to use it. Flesh demands com-

244 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

munism, by the levelling of social distinction.

The secret of fellowship with God, and, as those who fill different ranks in life, with one another, is in the following of this simple exhortation, "Let every man wherein he is called, *therein abide with God.*" If we "abide with God," everything will be in order. The rich man will not regret what he has to lay aside, the poor man will not covet his richer brother's position. In God's presence, and in His company, each will know how to "bear his own burden," and yet at the same time, "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Each has his own trials and responsibilities peculiar to his station in life, thus differing in kind, but inseparable from their circumstances, and not interchangeable.

We are living in difficult days, when the spirit of the world presses hard upon the people of God, and especially on those who would seek to hold fast His word, and walk in His ways by faith. Two of the great difficulties are the

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 245

democratic spirit, and the worldliness and luxury which are developing everywhere, and find their way even into the assemblies of God's people. Self is the spring and motive in each. It is sometimes asked, "How are these things to be met?" We can only say, by the word of God, and in the spirit of Christ. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." Flesh cannot subdue flesh, and encroachments on one side will never be repressed by assertion on the other. To rich and poor, to high and low, to each and all, we can only prescribe one remedy; "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost." "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

"LOVE NOT THE WORLD NEITHER THE THINGS THAT ARE IN THE WORLD."

THE world began when sin entered—when in the garden of Eden Satan induced the woman to surrender confidence in God's word, to look instead, at things visible, and to be influenced by them.

246 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

The moment faith in God was given up, the world came in, in principle. The things here, as they suited man, and as they addressed man, ruled and governed him, instead of God and His word. It is always most important to trace things to their sources, because we thus see the nature and intention of them at its very beginning, and in its simplest elements. There may be, and there will be, many additions afterwards, but the unmistakable nature of its main object, will be expressed at its first appearance—at its birth. There is always an effort of the enemy to deceive and to represent the beginning of any new evil in a false and pretentious light, but this deception is more successful in the development of the evil, than at its beginning. It is evident that every truth when first revealed, however elementary it be, always presents the features which distinctly mark it, and while it may develop to greater proportions, you will always require to return to its first enunciation in order to learn its elements.

The world, as I have said, began in

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 247

the garden of Eden, when Eve, disregarding the word of God, saw that the forbidden fruit was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise. These are the elements of the world. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," is not of the Father, but of the world. It will help us immensely to be able to distinguish easily between what is of the world, and what is of God. The distinction is simply this; when what is visible influences and controls our feelings or actions, it is the world; and when it is things *not* seen, of which faith is the evidence, then we are in victory over the world. To either of these we must become subject. It must be with us either faith in God, or subjection to the world. If we are not kept by the power of God, dependent on Him, we become subject to the world; the things here affect and influence us, and we are ruled by them. In a word, it is either the evidence of *things unseen*, conveyed to us by the word of God, or the influence of *things*

248 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

seen, as they affect us as men. Once we are clear as to the manner and principle of these two forces, we are able to judge ourselves accordingly.

When we examine scripture we find that the testimony of every servant of God depended upon the way he refused the influence of visible things, and trusted to the word of God, which was given to guide him. Cain, feeling the distance between man and God, essayed to remove it in a worldly way, and resorted to a presentation of visible things in their beauty. He brought of the fruits of the earth an offering unto God. There was no faith here; there was an appropriation of visible things according to the suggestion of his own mind. Abel, on the contrary, acted in faith; he takes into account the holiness of God, enters into His claim, and offers the firstlings of the flock, and of the fat thereof. It is a simple question, Is it the mind of God which influences me, and controls my actions, or is it the order of things around me? for the latter is the world. Faith overcomes the

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 249

world. The world, in its influence on me, is the rival of God's word, and many a one who knows what faith is for the safety of his soul, is nevertheless not safe from the world.

There are two ways in which the world exerts an influence over a man : in one it appeals to him as a man in the flesh, and in the other it ministers to him by the things which suit him in the flesh. Now in order to set him free from the things, you must either remove the things altogether, and then you would have man pining for what he could not find, or you must remove the state in which he is; that is, he must be set above the man in the flesh, and then the things that would suit him in that state, cannot reach him. Hence the one and only effectual way of delivering the saint from the world is by presenting a Person to him, who entirely eclipses himself, and places him in the most elevated surroundings ; therefore it is said, " Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son

250 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

of God?" It is not merely the faith which effects the deliverance, but the *Person*. The Saviour in whom the soul by faith has found deliverance is revealed to it in the dignity of His person, as Paul says, "He revealed his Son in me." 1 John v. shews how this is declared by His death; the blood, the water, and the Spirit, all by their testimony establishing the fact that God hath given us eternal life—life after a new and unprecedented order; and this life is in His Son. Hence, we are superior to the world, and the things that are in the world. We neither form a part of it, nor are we affected or influenced by the things that are in it. Thus we see that the power that overcomes the world is faith, and faith in Jesus the Son of God sets us free from man in the flesh; because we believe in a far greater One, who through death on our account, is our Saviour and life. He was put to death in the flesh but quickened in the Spirit. In the Old Testament saints, we see the man of faith reaching to great victories, like a

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 251

powerful horse going over fences ; and "of such the world was not worthy," but we do not see them superior to the things which affect them as men ; they are not running in a race. Abram is diverted from the path of faith by a famine. Jacob, after returning to the land, and after that wonderful night of wrestling, when he learned the greatness of divine power, was drawn aside at Shalem. Joseph lost the mind of God as to his own children, when he thought of them in respect to their age (Gen. xlviii. 17), when the visible thing swayed him.

Before the death of Christ, faith always proved itself in the way it carried the saint above the order and influence of things here ; yet as man in the flesh was not set aside, there was not a call for the action of faith beyond the maintenance of the truth then revealed ; there was not absolute and continual abnegation of the world, because there was no absolute and complete institution of a new order of creation, in the Person of the Son of God. Now, the measure of our separation from the world is no less

252 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

than His; we are not of the world, even as He is not of the world. This is our definite and established position. We are not merely like the Old Testament saints, called to prove ourselves for God in overcoming *special* things; but we are called to overcome *every* thing. To us it is said, "Love not the world, *neither the things that are in the world.*" We are in fellowship with the Holy Ghost, whose first and great testimony here is against the world, making evident its sin in not believing in Christ. There is now a new Man, the Son of God; and all believers in Him, He is not ashamed to call His brethren. Everything connected with Him is only known by the Holy Ghost, and as He is in heaven, the power to act for Him and to please Him here is the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost unites us to Him, and sustains us through faith in connection with things unseen; so that we are not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our mind. Here then, we are pilgrims and strangers; pilgrims because we are going on to another

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 253

place, and strangers because we do not belong to the place where we are. The Holy Ghost is the only power to separate us from the world, because He is the only power to preserve us from the flesh. "If we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." It is a great thing for the saint to comprehend the entire newness of the being, and the order of it, of which he is, and in which he is sustained by union through the Holy Ghost with the heavenly Man. He moves in the sphere where the first man is, but his power of life, and his associations are with and in Christ, in an entirely new, and as yet unseen sphere ; and therefore all by faith.

But it will be contended that we are here on the earth, and that God has appointed that we should be here, after the old order, dependent for life and health on the things that are seen. I reply, we are not enjoined to retain any connection with this scene but such as Christ will enable us to fill better than ever they were filled by any mere man. He fully sustains according to God.

254 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

The saint on the earth can discharge the duties of his calling according to God, but then he must distinguish between what God has appointed, and what the world inculcates. The domestic relations and duties are of God, and they are the very channels through which the grace of Christ flows. Hence I do not learn from the world how I am to act in them, I am taught of God, I have a new power; and as to the powers that be, I am simply subject to them. I can admire the works of God, as I pass through the scene a pilgrim, and not be worldly while I remember that they are the works of God, which on account of Adam's fall have been made subject to vanity.

There are two things which especially exercise the saint: one is position in society, as it is called: and the other bodily care—food and clothes. When I am happily conscious of my union with Christ, believing that Jesus is the Son of God, I have a position which sets me far above any conventional one here. And the moment I seek or maintain any

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 255

here, I do violence to my own spirit because I descend to an earthly one. The only true and happy place for a saint is to abide in his wondrous position in Christ, and then he is consciously above and independent of all earthly position : but when a saint takes an advantage of this indifference to position in another, to exalt himself, except in the familiarity of fellow-labourers, it is radicalism ; he avails himself of his brother's grace, to prove his own lack of it. If I see that to maintain position is worldly, the question of bodily care is easily settled. The body is to be properly cared for, but to be kept in subjection ; having food and raiment I am therewith to be content. I do not maintain position with regard to it. I do not look to the world to learn how my table is to be served, or what I should wear. I determine before God, irrespective of the world's ways, what would be necessary and suitable. Thus I neither follow the fashion, nor am I eccentric, but all things are done decently and in order.

FRAGMENTS.

THERE is no strength or blessing on earth for us, save in connection with the death of Christ here, and Christ Himself up there. All rolls round Him there. He cannot have a wish but it must be fulfilled. He has sent a message not only to Paul and the church, but to you individually, that He wants you to carry in your hearts and lives down here, His death until He comes. That death is the sole bud and blossom, and that is to push all else out of the globe which He has redeemed to Himself, and to push out Satan too.

WHEN I get near Christ, it is not that my wishes flow out for something He has got; but it is the sense of all my need being met; all His fulness put on me; and I want to praise Him; I do not need to bring in high sounding words and nicely rounded periods in order to praise. The heart that can praise is the one that has learnt its lesson in the wilderness of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, the One who shed His blood, and carried it in there, that the Father might let His love flow out. *He* is the One whom I know individually.

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

PART XIX.

Verse 32 of chapter xxiv. begins personal exhortations to verse 44. These exhortations have their application to that remnant and close with personal separation by judgment, the spared one being left on earth. Verse 45 we pass over to general christian ground—the disciples up to the destruction of Jerusalem having both positions (though the twelve and Paul had a different dispensational position), both founding the assembly; though its place was not yet revealed as afterwards by Paul, and carrying the last testimony to the Jewish people. Thus Acts ii. you have church testimony; Acts iii. you have remnant Jewish testimony. This closed morally with the death of Stephen, where we first find Saul as an adversary in ignorance, and judicially in the destruction of Jerusalem. Stephen began the departure to heaven, forming the heavenly company of Christians.

Matthew xxiv. 45-51 gives us the

VOL. VII.

K

258 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

general history of the service willed of God, in the assembly as a whole, and the source of it in view of the Lord's return, and the resulting alternative as regards the professing body upon earth; and the parable of the ten virgins, those who went out to meet the Bridegroom, which is not the character of the Jewish remnant. The Lord comes to them where they are. These accompany Him to the wedding.

The parable of the talents is the responsibility of service all the time He is away, as to their service by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, personal grace or knowledge of Christ being the testing point. Now all this is a solemn warning to Christians, as to their state and service, founded on true knowledge of Christ.

In chapter xxv. 31, we have formally His coming to earth and seating Himself there on the throne of His glory, connecting itself immediately, as I have said, with chapter xxiv. 30, 31, which terminated the Jewish part of the pro-

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

259

phesy and instruction. But when coming in glory with all the holy angels, He does not verily come as a flash of lightning, but takes, and seats Himself on, the throne of His glory, and gathers all the Gentiles before Him. He sits to judge the nations on the earth, the nations then living on it, to whom the message of the then coming kingdom, as declared in chapter xxiv. 14, had come. They were judged consequently according to their reception of these messengers. No other test or ground of judgment was applied to sheep or goats. Remark further there are three classes here, the goats, the sheep, and the brethren. There is no reference to the dead, nor to resurrection. When the Lord judges the dead at the end of the world, He does not come at all. He sits on the great white throne, and heaven and earth flee away, and the dead small and great are brought up before Him. They are judged according to the works.

And note here, that the ground of judgment in this parable does not apply

260 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

to the great body of those of the Gentiles judged there when raised. They had had no messengers. The ground of their judgment is stated in Romans i., ii. What renders them inexcusable is quite different from the ground of judgment here. What is here is not mentioned there, what is there is not referred to here. The judgment of the assembly on earth, and of special judgments as to the state of individuals and their service, we have already had in the three preceding parables. But before the end, God, ever mindful of His mercy, sends out a message to warn the inhabitants of the whole world that judgment is just coming — what in chapter xxiv. 14 is called *this* gospel of the kingdom, warning them, that is, that the kingdom was just going to be set up. The final character of the testimony is found in the everlasting gospel, Revelation xiv. and Psalm xcvi. called, I believe, everlasting gospel as being, not the testimony of sovereign grace taking us to heaven and revealing Christ sitting in glory at God's right

hand, but that which was announced in the garden of Eden, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Compare Revelation xi. 17, 18, and chapter xii., the former passage going on fully to the end, for the casting into the bottomless pit is not the final bruising of Satan; that is in Revelation xx. 10. But Christ's coming and the binding of Satan in the bottomless pit is the close of God's earthly dispensational dealings, and the strange mystery of a disorder which God allows to go on while calling out souls in grace.

The whole prophetic history then is contained in chapter xxiv. 1-31. Verse 31-44 is judgment on the Jews when He comes. Chapter xxiv. 45—xxv. 30 is the judgment of Christendom, of the whole state and system, then distinctive judgment. Then chapter xxv. 31 takes up the consequence of the establishment of Christ's throne upon the earth in the judgment of the Gentiles. But for the immensely important fact of setting up the throne of the earth, we might say all is judgment from chapter xxiv. 31.

262 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

But this fact is all-important because God has a throne of judgment on the earth again, which he has never had since Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem. The Lord *comes from heaven* and judges the beast and the apostasy, all that rises up against the Lamb. But by this He establishes His power on earth, and in fact in Jerusalem, and thus takes His earthly throne in connection with the Jews and the heavenly saints, to whom judgment, in the sense of ruling government and power, is given. The war-judgment against the beast is in Revelation xix., the sessional-judgment in chapter xx. This judgment of the Gentiles is spoken of in the Old Testament too. Indeed all the psalms from xciii.--xcix. are the full inauguration of it, in the cry of the remnant, and then first giving the appeal to Israel and to the Gentiles. Psalm c. being the call of the world up to worship after judgment is accomplished. In a word, our parable is the judgment of the quick only, exclusively the Gentiles (the Jews had been judged, chapter xxiv,

32-35), and the ground of it their reception of the messengers who had been sent out to announce the coming kingdom. The judgment of the quick is as final as the judgment of the dead. These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous unto life eternal. The wicked have their lot with the devil and his angels in the everlasting fire prepared for these. The kingdom will be inherited down here by the righteous, blessed of His Father. It was prepared for them before the foundation of the world.

We may notice here that those who have preached the introduction of the millennial kingdom will have a place that those born under it will not, though these enjoy the fruit of it in peace. They have gone through tribulation and are before the throne of God, and praise Him with a nearness the others cannot (see Rev. vii. 9-17), though still on earth. I am disposed to think the 144,000, Revelation xiv., are the Jewish remnant. I have so considered them habitually, and the everlasting gospel to the Gen-

264 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

tiles comes after them. These spared ones who have received the messengers go into everlasting life. It is not merely the kingdom but personal salvation. Those born during the millennium are not necessarily quickened; hence, when temptation comes, they follow Satan. Indeed though we know that we have eternal life by many testimonies, yet the only passages in which it is spoken of in the Old Testament (Daniel xii. and Psalm cxxxiii.) speak of it in reference to the millennium. We have it in a higher and better way, with and like Christ.

Some practical details I would yet notice. We have seen that what stamped the character and calling of the Christian was lost while the Bridegroom tarried, and the virgins were asleep. They had originally gone out to meet the Bridegroom, left the rudiments of the world and all religious association with it, for that especially is going out. They had got back into worldly religion, into the world for ease, while still making profession. There were living saints there,

but what stamped their calling was lost, and therefore no separation took place. Asleep, a virgin without oil was as good as a virgin with it. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." But the midnight cry awoke both. Religious activity was roused—how much we see of it. But this led to separation, the interval between the awakening cry and the Lord's being there tested the reality of their state. They did not endure; their profession of Christ got dim and was not maintained. Thus the midnight cry restores the character of the Christian and puts all professors into the place of their calling. But secondly, their getting into this tests their real state. They cannot go on apart from the world. Their faith does not endure, and then comes the solemn fact it is now too late. Just as in Thyatira (the papal body), she had time to repent and did not, and now it was judgment; she was replaced by the kingdom and the morning Star. So here, it was too late to get the oil now and go in to the wedding.

266 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

It was not the time of calling and supply of grace, but of separation and testing as to the possession of grace. A solemn thought. Who can say how soon it may come; whether individually it may not be come for some who have heard the cry, woke up and given all up, or gone back to the world?

This is the point, I believe, intended by not getting oil from the others; and no more than this; it was not the time of calling and communication of grace, but of testing as to possession of it. It was too late, and Christ does not know them. If this be so, and the cry is gone out, and in some measure I believe it has, it is a very solemn thought. A time does come when the calling of grace to this place and position closes and the time of separation begins. As in another aspect of things it is true, the net was drawn to shore and the good put into vessels and the bad left on the shore, though there the tale continues to the actual execution of judgment; here they are only shut out. But that says all. The door was shut. A Gospel

CONFIDENCE.

267

to heathens who have not heard, may and will go forth, but a possessed Gospel definitely without effect there is no Gospel for.

CONFIDENCE.

THERE is nothing which so honours God, and which gives such rest to the heart, and power for walk and service, as confidence. Confidence is the result of faith, but is dependent on two things, God must be known, and the heart must be uncondemned ; in fact we may say that it is dependent, 1st, on what God is, and 2ndly, on what we are doing. The foundation of confidence is the character and being of God. He cannot be trusted unless He is known, and He cannot be truly known without being trusted. Partial acquaintance with Him begets fear and bondage ; full knowledge of Him sets the heart to rest. But to preserve the confidence which His knowledge gives, there must be a good conscience and an uncondemned

268 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

heart. However well God may be known, if our heart condemn us, our confidence is shaken. On the other side, however clear the conscience, however little the heart may know against itself, there is no true confidence unless God be known—and that not only by the hearing of the ear, but like Job, with the eye of faith; “*now mine eye seeth thee.*”

There appear to us to be three distinct forms of confidence. The confidence of faith. The confidence of communion. The confidence of approval. As saints it is our privilege to know and enjoy them all. The first belongs to us as believers; the second as children or saints; the third as servants of God.

The first is the common privilege of all who believe. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The bright and blessed story of God’s grace in Christ, sets the heart of the believing one at rest before Him. The cross of Christ tells us that “God is for us.” God’s

love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, answers every question and stills every doubt of the heart of man. His perfect love casts out fear, and the saved soul rests satisfied in the knowledge of that God, who delivered Jesus for our offences, and raised Him again for our justification. This confidence of faith is solely established on the ground of what God is, and what He hath wrought by Christ. Having no confidence in the flesh, of such a one it can be truly said, "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." God being thus faith's object, and faith's confidence, nothing can shake it. Earth may shake and heaven also, but God never, neither therefore the soul that trusts in Him. "Let us therefore hold fast grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

Whilst then faith's confidence is immovable, founded as it is on the being and character of God, the confidence of communion is on a different footing. Whatever disturbs communion will disturb this confidence. "Beloved, if our

270 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence towards God." This is the ground of our confidence, and we may well bless God that it is so. He will have His people to be partakers of His holiness, and His children to be followers of Himself. "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." It is the very fact of our relationship with God, as children with a Father, which necessitates this fellowship in thought, and word, and deed. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things." I can find nothing in myself which He has not already found;—I can know nothing which He does not already know. He does not say that He condemns, but that what our hearts condemn, He already knows; and this is His manner of appeal to us; this is His way, "who giveth liberally and upbraideth not." If we know a thing to be inconsistent, how much more does He? If our dull and selfish hearts condemn a thing, how much more must He, who knows all its bearings; who

CONFIDENCE.

271

knows both its source, and its inevitable end if it be allowed to go on unjudged? Nothing is so common among God's people as this want of confidence of communion. It is often lacking, where in measure the confidence of faith is present. Naaman's "In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant:"—David's, "Let us fall into the hands of the Lord for His mercies are great;"—Job's, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him;"—tell tales of things allowed and done, which the heart and God alike condemn, and though faith stands, communion is shaken, and chastisement is anticipated. And this under a brighter and full revelation is, alas! the state of many of God's children into whose hearts the knowledge of His glory has shined in the face of Jesus Christ. And indeed the better He is known the more susceptible is the heart of that which is inconsistent, and the higher the responsibility to maintain a corresponding walk. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God."

272 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Is there anything under the sun worth having or holding, for which to forfeit this confidence of communion? Communion with God, the highest privilege, the deepest joy which man can know upon this earth; and for the loss of which for one hour, not all that earth can give, could compensate. We need honest and true hearts able and willing to detect and root out the things which the heart condemns, and God who is greater than our hearts already *knows*. How many a child of God walks in habitual darkness and distance as to communion, for the want of five minutes deliberate dealing with God about some besetting sin or vanity which they have not heart or devotedness to judge. The low state may be, and often in words is, mourned, but the root being untouched conscience and heart at last become accustomed to the darkness, and it is accepted as the normal state. Many and many a saint is thus looking for judgment, rather than for glory. They may not doubt their salvation, and that the Lord will bring them home at last,

CONFIDENCE.

273

but they do not know, and they greatly fear what may happen to them on the way: and all this for the sake of some wretched thing, which the heart condemns, and knows that God sooner or later must judge.

The confidence of communion, then, may exist in a *negative* sort of way: that I know nothing against myself, and my heart condemns me not. Thus indeed I can rest in the happy sense of the Father's love, and can "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." But the true-hearted saint is not content with a negative state of communion, He looks for something positive, not only that there is nothing to condemn, but that there is something to approve; and this leads us to the third form of confidence of which we spoke, the confidence of approval—the confidence that springs from the sense of God's satisfaction in our walk and ways. It is not every saint as he walks, or every servant as he serves, who does it in the confidence that God is content with his

274 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

ways or work ; that what he is about is not his own, but the business of Him who has sent Him. Christ could say, "I do *always* the things that please him." But the faithful servant can speak in the same spirit. "Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done unto this people."—"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded," were uttered in no doubtful sense by Nehemiah of old, and Paul in later days, while the latter could challenge all criticism by his question, "the things that I purpose do I purpose in the flesh?"

Service ought not to be the "hit or miss" sort of thing that it is with so many, undertaken without distinctness in guidance or object in result, in which consequently formality, imitation, and religious dissipation have so large a place. Confidence should as distinctly mark our steps for service, as our hearts for peace, and so it would were self more thoroughly set aside and the judgment of men, whether in reproach or blame, ignored.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 275

There is no need for us to wait for that day when "every man shall have praise of God," to hear the words "Well done," for the servant who is in His Master's confidence may know it now. The Lord keep us from a doubtful mind, and from allowing for one moment a shadow to rest between our souls and Him whose "joy is our strength."

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

THE GLORY OF THE GRACE, AND THE
RICHES OF THE GRACE.

GRACE is God's favour to man according to His own heart and counsel. It has therefore to meet man in his need, and also to express God in His greatness. These two things, man's need and God's greatness, are maintained in grace: Without the former, man would be unreached and undelivered; and without the latter, God, the Giver, would not be known. If the need of man were the sole measure of the grace of God, then man only would be thought of, the work of Christ would be simply for man, and

276 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

the power of God merely expended in rescuing man and securing his relief. Man would be the object and end of it all, and not God. If a man expended all his money in benefiting his country, what should we think if there were no memorial of the benefactor, nor any distinction conferred on him? . . . "He by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man." (Ecc. ix. 15.) Now this is just the snare that Israel fell into in the land, and the one of which they had been forewarned. (Deut. viii. 11, &c.) They appropriated all the blessings which God had given them, and used them for their own enjoyment, and forgot God who gave them. Whenever the heart drops into its own thoughts, which is always the case when we are walking in our own strength, and not in the power of Christ, it will reduce grace to man's level, making his benefit the exclusive object as Jacob did at Shalem, when he called his altar El-elohe-Israel. (Gen. xxxiii.) He did not give up grace in its bearing on himself; but he shewed

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 277

how little God was the object in his heart, in that he confined it all exclusively to himself. When he reached Bethel, it was otherwise, and his altar bore quite another name; even El-Bethel, for God was his object there.

It will be said that the soul's need must necessarily first occupy it. This is quite true. But he who is most relieved, is most drawn to the One who has relieved him. The repentant thief, as the consequence of his faith, prays that the Lord would remember him in His kingdom. The relieved demoniac prayed Jesus that he might be with Him. The two disciples of John who followed the Lamb of God (John i.), ask Him "Where dwellest thou?" The heart which is truly and deeply sensible of the relief vouchsafed to it, always cleaves to the Blessor, and not merely to the blessing. It is quite true that the relief is the thing first needed, but the more intensely I have felt the need of relief, and the greatness of the favour conferred on me, the more am I attached to the deliverer. He that is forgiven

278 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

much, the same loveth much. It is not that the forgiven one rejoices in forgiveness merely, but he loveth the one who has forgiven him.

If the only object of grace were to relieve man, then man could be relieved without nearness to God, and this is really the effect of confining the heart exclusively to the fact of relief.

Man is relieved from judgment and he pursues his course as a man on earth, with the sense of relief; but Christ, the Man in heaven, is not his object, nor is his aim to represent Him here. The grace of God could never have limited itself to man's need, seeing that the greatest thing God can confer is nearness to Himself; and though Christ in grace had necessarily to descend to the depths where man was, He never could have answered to the mind of God in its purpose as to man, without making the prodigal acquainted with his father's joy in His own sphere. There is the glory of the grace as well as the riches of the grace. The "riches of the grace" reaches down to the need of

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 279

the sinner ; “in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins ;” the “glory of the grace” is all that He can do for the forgiven one according to His good pleasure. The full purpose of grace is to bring man near to God. “Old things have passed away, all things are become new, and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.” If grace were only to relieve man of the misery which sin has brought in, he might be a vastly improved man, and a happy man ; but then God would not and could not form any part of his happiness. He might feel indebted to Him for His mercy, but if grace effected nothing more than this he would not be brought to God, and though there might be joy in the sense of forgiveness, there would be no joy in God, no separation from man in the flesh, and no known power in the Holy Ghost. The *beginning* of grace is with our need, the *finish* of it with God. When a rope is extended to a drowning man he grasps it, and his need is met, but that is not

280 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

all; the rope is intended to bring him to the spot from which the rope was extended, and when he reaches that spot, he is in the same security, the same sphere as the one who had extended the rope to him. We are not perfected in grace unless we joy in God, unless God is known as our Father. The "little children" know the Father. (John ii.) The one who has learned to make merry in the presence of God has passed fully and distinctly from man's side to God's side. Christ is all and in all, and until he has reached this point he has not the enjoyment of a child. No doubt he was born of God before, but he has not walked in his true state till now. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

Scripture carefully sets forth how God provides for man's side in everything, but this is not fully enjoyed by the believer unless he understands God's side, for though grace, like the rope, reaches to where man is, and is first occupied with the sinner's need; still, I cannot truly or fully understand the value of the

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 281

beginning of grace, where the rope has reached me, until I have got to the spot, or the hand from which the rope came.

The grace comes to man *from* God, and it leads back *to* God; and no one understands clearly or even effectively the riches of the grace until he knows the glory of the grace; for when he has reached the latter, he has reached the full efficacy of it. What so confirmatory to the prodigal that he is fully rescued from the far country, that old things are passed away, as the fact that he is a favoured guest in the greatest festivity in heaven. He is perfectly assured of the riches of the grace, when he is in all the lustre and beauty of the glory of the grace. How could the "far country" or the famine or the consequences of his own evil or unworthiness appear in such a scene? and yet they could and will appear *anywhere* else; so that really one cannot be perfectly freed from all one's own side, and its consequences, until one is fully and festively on God's side.

But there is another thing. No

282 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

believer can understand how God orders for him on the earth, who does not first know how He has provided for him in heaven; so that here again the glory of the grace, God's side, must be known before one can see and comprehend in its true light, the ordering of God for us here. Where is the believer who understands the Lord here as the good Samaritan—who knows the full story of His grace to him as such (see Luke x.), who has not learned the glory of His grace in the Father's house?

The parable of the prodigal son sets forth God's side; he is kissed, clothed, and feasted in the Father's house. Here on earth, oil and wine are poured into his wounds, he is set on His own beast, brought to an inn, and taken care of. Who really and heartily would put up with an inn here on earth, unless he had first known that he had the brightest home outside of it? A man might be resigned to an inn because he had nothing better, but no one could be happily or cheerfully satisfied with it, except on his journey homeward; and because he

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 283

knows He has a bright home elsewhere. Souls lose every way when the full tale of grace is not unfolded, when the beginning of it is only told and not the end.

The effort of Satan is, and ever has been, to keep man at a distance from God. We find all through scripture that His aim is to disconnect the favours of God from God Himself, in order to induce man to enjoy himself apart from God. But God's desire or purpose is that we should find our joy in His presence. In Job's case the great thing that was proved to Satan was, that Job's heart would hold on to God, when deprived of every favour.

The reason of there being greater opposition to the finish of the grace than to the beginning of it, is evident; for if the finish of it is known, the heart being fully and entirely brought to God, there is no place for man; old things *must* pass away and all things become new; because all are of God. It is easier for souls to accept relief than to be so sensibly indebted to the

284 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Saviour as to be bound in heart to Him. All Israel benefited by David's slaying Goliath, but Jonathan "loved him as his own soul;" stripped himself for his deliverer. Ministers of the word find it easier for their own consciences to confine their preachings and teachings to man's need. We cannot present truth beyond our own experience with a good conscience. A servant has no real power in presenting God's side to souls, unless he be there in measure and purpose himself. He cannot go beyond his light, but when he has refused the light in order that he may retain the world, he excuses his own state by designating it as "too high," and unfit for souls. There is on our side the natural opposition of the flesh in every man to God's side; and the minister, in order to be popular, or to save his own conscience, at first does not see what would so entirely set aside man, but if at length he refuses it, then "his right eye is utterly darkened" (Zech. xi. 17), and he *opposes* it, like "all they which are in Asia" who turned away from

THE WORD OF GOD.

285

Paul. The man who is most *for* God, will be most sustained *by* God; but the minister, in preaching or teaching, who will most command the ear of men, and allow himself most of the world, is the one who confines himself to that which merely meets man's need, and which the natural conscience will accept; so that broadly, popularity and a low order of truth (which will awaken sentiments of merely natural religion), always go together; and the riches of the grace are really not known, because the glory of the grace has been neglected or refused.

THE WORD OF GOD.

. . . . In the external learning of the Old Testament my work has advanced me. But it all makes the word of God more precious to me, and as such, the questions and difficulties of men's minds belong to men's minds—the proof and sap of God's word belong to God's word, and to Him who gave it; and the con-

286 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

trast of the power, riches, depth, moral instruction in which God's own nature is displayed in it, with the arbitrary suppositions of men, make the latter appear in their naked poverty and littleness. In it I find the whole display of God's nature in Christ, in reply to all that came out of the heart of man ; goodness in the midst of evil ; the heart of God meeting the need of man's heart. We shall see Him as He is, and be like Him ; but oh ! how is the word its own proof, and how has it its own power, though surely nothing but the Spirit of God can give it that power in us. But in walking with God, alone can we draw out its sweetness and feed upon it. I believe that the Spirit of God is a positive teacher in this respect, and may give, if He sees fit, developed thoughts of its contents, but if rivers are to flow out, we must drink for ourselves as thirsty for it.

THE PATH OF LIFE.

(Acts viii. 38.)

"His life is taken from the earth,"
Our history closed by Him in death,
He opens now the upward path.

A "path the vulture hath not seen,"
Where lion's footmark ne'er hath been,
Nor aught defiling or unclean.

"The path of life" known to "the wise,"*
Seen now by those whose dazzled eyes
Behold the glory in the skies.

Who, listening, hear e'en now the voice
Of Him who made through death the choice,
To win His own at that great price.

His own, redeemed and made His own,
Part of Himself—who now sit down
Flesh of His flesh, bone of His bone.

The old links gone, a new life given,
Baptized in death, with Him now risen,
His members here, the Head in heaven.

Shall joys of earth be mine while here,
If likeness to His death I bear,
And in His life up there I share!

Shadows may group themselves around
The desert way—while sight and sound,
Telling of sin and death abound.

* Proverbs xv. 24.

288 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

But through the darkness as I pass,
I see a light—and as I gaze,
Forget the shadows in its rays.

Oh! wondrous scene of life and light,
Of unveiled glory and delight,
Opening upon my ravished sight.

A suffering Christ, now glorified,
Gates opened wide for Him who died,
A vacant place, now occupied.

A place He gives us now to share,
A pathway left for access there,
And, oh! what *gain* for loss down here.

A well-known love, an unveiled face,
A "mark" to press to in the race,
While pilgrims here a little space.

To wake and watch while many sleep,
A testimony here to keep,
Owned in the day when He shall reap.

A fragrance which ascends to Him,
A radiance to be caught from Him,
To shine in this dark night for Him.

A presence-chamber all His own,
A garden kept for Him alone,
Fruits gathered there His hand hath sown.

Yearnings of heart 'twixt Him and me,
A fellowship which none can see,
Waiting—until He comes for me!

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

PART XX.

THE prophetic testimony of the Lord was closed, the immediate circumstances of His last hours now rise up before us, still in these moments of humiliation He remains the same blessed object to teach us what the wisdom of God is, and even the power of God, though giving Himself up for a season to the will of man, and shines only the more brightly by passing through it.

The introduction is very striking, though simple. In divine calmness the Lord tells His disciples what is about to happen : after two days was the passover, and at that time the Son of man was to be betrayed to be crucified. The true Passover was to be sacrificed, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Such was God's sure purpose. The chief priests anxiously seek not to have it then, fearing a tumult of the people who so eagerly listened to Him and had seen His miracles. They need not

290 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

have feared; His hour was come and the heart of man would be led by Satan's power, where alas, they wished. Enmity against God was to have its full course. At the passover at which they feared the people, the whole people would follow them to have Jesus crucified, to bring the victim on the altar,—God's lamb, but a rejected people. They would now have their will, but God's purpose was to be accomplished. Evil was to have its way, and all, save the special work of grace attaching the heart to Jesus, and so ordering a testimony to Him and to the heart it filled, all were to bow to the power, and yield to the tide of evil.

The Lord is at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper; a woman comes (we know elsewhere it was Mary the sister of Lazarus, but here it is Jesus who is in view and the state of mind as to Him) and spends what she had most precious on Him; righthearthed devotedness drawn out through grace by the growing power of evil. But the disciples, led away by the spirit of Judas, are indignant at what

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

291

they call waste. To be sure, spending anything on Jesus is waste in the eyes of the world. On what is useful for man, that is not waste. Even, if worldly-wise wisdom does not see too much encouragement of them contrary to the rules of political economy, spending something on the poor is not waste; but on Christ, devotedness of affection to Him—to what purpose? Man's benefit may pass, but testimony of affection of heart to Him, be it that it only does that, cannot pass in the world, no, nor with disciples, where that devotedness is not. The calculations of hypocrites lead them astray, finding ready access to their heart in the state it is in. But the Lord owns it. Care for the poor is all right and well, the Lord owns it, but love to Him when the world's ruin and eternity depends on the manifestation of His self-sacrificing love, rejected or owned, is above all. It is not a Corban to those who hold the place of priests, and use His name to the neglect of duty to God and those He has put us in relationship with, but a free and uncalculating heart

92 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

which shews as best it may, its unselfish devotedness to Him.

I have noticed elsewhere that it is this devotedness to Christ, to Himself, which obtains true knowledge instinctively in doing what is right, or in the revelation of Him and of truth. Thus Mary Magdalene's watching at the sepulchre makes her the vessel of communication of our highest privileges to the apostles themselves; so the gospel is first fully brought out in the blessed Lord's meeting the case of the poor woman that was a sinner in the city, —like this Mary in affection, though so different in state, but each bringing out the suited testimony of the Lord. But the attachment to His person draws it out, for He is the centre of all truth and blessing, and when rejected in this world, brings out further grace connected with Himself; for in Him all divine riches and purposes are found and fulfilled, and it is His breach with the lower position of this world and promise, that raises us up with Him into the higher world of purpose and glory,

and it is just there we are now in Matthew.

It was worthy to be recorded in all ages that one heart estimated the Saviour when the world was gone against Him and the disciples even had no heart or understanding to see and know His preciousness in that solemn moment. It was not insincerity in them but poverty of heart—it was man's heart that looked no deeper than prudence and common sense—divine perception was not there. Attachment to Christ felt what was fitting in heart and drew out divine knowledge from Him. In Judas we have the full contrast with Mary. It may be that the spending the precious ointment on Christ, and so much money lost, as he would think, roused his cupidity. It is very probable—at any rate the hour was there, and good and evil were coming to their full crisis and contrast—money was his motive and Satan suggested to him, blinded utterly by his wretched avarice, to sell the blessed Lord. Nor is the price unnoticed by the Holy Ghost. It is fearful to think for how

294 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

small a sum he could betray the Master he had so known, but man's heart was to be manifested, and here, man's heart under the leading and hardening power of Satan. The love of money was there, that was the lust; Satan suggested the means of gratifying it, and then hardening his heart against even natural feeling. Many a natural man would recoil from betraying one known in long kindness and grace with a kiss. It is evident also that being ever with Christ with evil in his heart and ways must have hardened him in hypocrisy.

For my own part I believe Judas expected Him to get off as He had so often escaped their power, blind as he was as to the hour being come; but this only makes it more horrible. Alas! he had sold himself, not Christ. For He could have got off, had twelve legions of angels, or gone away when they went backward and fell to the ground. But therefore it was the greater sin, and man was to be shewn by his dishonouring the Lord, measured in his mind by this goodly price. For Christ and

Christ's perfectness bring fully out the evil of man's heart. What thief being alongside another would insult and outrage the companion of his misery? but when Christ is there the poor criminal can join in ribald insults against the Lord of glory. Oh, what a test He is, and what it shews is in the human heart under God's searching power, the searching power of Christ's presence.

But another scene was to take place before all was accomplished. The blessed testimony of grace in the institution of the Lord's supper. Yet here also the power of evil was to be ripened by the presence of grace. It was one that dipped his hand with Christ in the dish that was to betray Him, and as we read elsewhere, after the sop. he went out. All is prepared of God and used by the Lord in the calmness of divine perfectness. A heart was ready to provide the room, nay, had it ready, and the Lord sends him word,—My time is at hand (for that indeed He was come), I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. The Lord there refers to His

296 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

betrayal in words which express what indeed other passages reveal, His deep feeling as to its being one of the disciples who should betray Him. He knew who it was, told it here, but what was on His heart in His love to His disciples was, that one of them should do it. The disciples, I think, here shew a true and right spirit and which indeed spoke their innocence. They were sure the Lord knew and told what was certain. Some of them would, and they distrusted themselves, but their asking freely shews they had no such thought: sorrow and honesty of heart were there. The Lord's answer alludes to the prophetic statement which told of His sorrow and the cause of its being so poignant. (See Ps. xli. 9, lv. 12.) The Son of man must go as it was written of Him, but terrible was the doom of him who did it. In truth it was awful. One who had seen His miracles, had been sent out to work them himself, and seen His grace and perfectness, and then to sell Him for thirty pieces of silver. This drew out unhappy Judas; who must

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

297

speaking like the rest though avoiding doing it till thus denounced. Now he would say as all, to seem as clear as others, afraid, his doom thus denounced, to be different from the rest, but only to bring out the full testimony to his known guilt.

The Lord then institutes the supper, putting first Himself, then the blood of the new covenant, then its being shed for many, in the place of the Jewish passover, the old covenant, and the limitation of everything to that people. This is the distinctive character of the supper here, suited to this Gospel. Mark's account is essentially the same. Luke's is much more personal and connected with, surely divine, but also human affection to the disciples. But in all it is the blood of the new covenant, or the new covenant in His blood. In Matthew it is leaving association with them, breaking with men, even with the disciples down here, drinking no more of the fruit of the vine; only in Matthew and Mark His drinking it again with them after a wholly new sort (*καὶνὸν*) is

L 2

298 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

also spoken of. It was the simple and blessed testimony of the displacing all that was before, man and any previously presented ground of man's relationships with God. No new covenant was yet established, but the blood on which it was to be founded was shed, and it could be announced so that Judaism was closed, that is, man's relationships with God as in flesh, and in the footing of man's righteousness; also closing any connection between the Lord come in flesh and man. His body, but His body as dead, was given as meat indeed. This carried the double testimony that there was no possible connection any more between man in the flesh and God; but also, that redemption was wrought, the true passover offered. Hence, as before that, death was death to man, now he lives by death, the death of Christ. It is not here as in Luke, "Do this in remembrance of me," but His separation from His disciples is strongly marked. He does not eat or drink with them but gives what was the sign of His death to them, the sign of a perfect redemption

by His death, but that His death, not His life with them was their portion with Him. This was a total and mighty change, the essence of their whole relationships with Him and having an eternal character. Death was the portion of the Son of God as man down here, and their part with Him and with God was founded on it. The blood was shed for many for the remission of sins, and the new covenant was founded on it, all was dispensationally changed, but all was eternally founded also as to man, the believer's relationships with God. But present association was wholly broken off till renewed in a new way in His Father's kingdom. This is an expression of Matthew's Gospel like the kingdom of heaven. It is the higher and heavenly part of the kingdom. In chapter xiii. we find it in the explanation of the tares and the wheat. We read "the Son of man shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend . . . then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," that higher part where

300 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

they shall be in the same glory as Christ Himself, predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, only here it is my Father, there, "their." Then Christ will anew, but in a blessedly new way, enjoy companionship with His disciples and they with Him. Blessed place and blessed familiarity! If the Lord has given up the companionship of His disciples, it is to accomplish their redemption, and He waits, as we wait, to renew it in a better place and in brighter scenes, but as truly and more intimately than they could have it here. Nothing more beautiful or touching than this intimation of the Lord at the moment of His departure. He shewed where His heart was, His love to us. And they sung a hymn together, and went out to the mount of Olives, His wonted resort.

MIND the root, and then the branches and leaves will be according to the state of the root. Bulbous roots first grow much more over ground than under the soil. By-and-by they increase in secret, until at length the value is all in the root, and every eye can see that it is so.

“ WITH PERSECUTIONS.”

(Mark x. 29, 30.)

NATURE loves ease, and nature in a saint is in no way different from nature in a worldling. Christianity now-a-days has comparatively so easy a path, that Christians are astonished, and even resentful, when they find that sacrifice and self-denial are involved for Christ's sake. Doubtless every true believer has to, and does, renounce something for Christ's sake. The very first step in the way of faith, generally involves this in more or less degree. But in the freshness of first faith and love, the sacrifice, be it great or small, is not noticed, nor thought worthy to be compared with what has been gained. The first step having been taken, the question then arises, Shall I go on *with* Christ, in the way of faith, or not? We do not mean that any question is raised as to giving up Christ for salvation; no believer contemplates this. But that which depends on the individual is whether they will continue in that path of self-sacri-

802 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

fice and devotedness, into which they as truly entered when first they believed, as they did into the way of everlasting life, in which the Lord has pledged Himself to preserve them unto the end. For we must ever distinguish between life in Christ which is God's gift, and which we can neither take nor lose; and that "part *with*" Christ which involves the following in His footsteps, with all its consequences.

Now although outward persecution is not the character of difficulty which the saint has now to meet, who seeks association with Christ, and to assimilate his mind to that "mind which was also in Christ Jesus," yet we believe there is a principle in the words quoted at the head of this paper, from Mark x., which applies to all God's people so long as they are in this world. The Lord says there is no man who hath left anything for His sake, who shall not receive an hundredfold now in this time, "*with persecutions.*" The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and He who has given for us His only-begotten Son,

and has prepared for us an eternal habitation of glory in the heavens, does not grudge His people one good thing, which it is His to give on the earth. It is more blessed, with God, to give than to receive, and if it were consistent with His glory, and our good, there is not an earthly blessing that He would withhold from us, any more than the heavenly blessings, which He has not withheld. The saint now that has the mind of Christ, knows that the things of this world, and the testimony of God in this world, are all out of order. As the prophet said to his servant in Israel's evil day, this is not a “time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maid-servants.” It is not a time to receive, but to lay aside, not a time to accumulate but rather to let go. The heart true to Christ and to His testimony, finds every accession of this world's things is accompanied by an accession of care. Though they be the very mercies of God Himself, and be accepted as such, yet

804 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

with them comes the responsibility and anxiety how to use them as He who gives would have them used : and herein is the need for denying self, and pleasing the Lord.

Having this before the soul, gives the saint great liberty of spirit. He expects nothing, where Christ took nothing, and yet again is able to take all things that God is pleased to give him. In his measure like the apostle, he has learned how to be "full and to be hungry, both to abound, to suffer need." He can give up anything, or everything for Christ, yet he can receive again one hundredfold from God, but "with persecutions," or their equivalent. For God's gifts and mercies in this world, are not supernatural even to His people, and everything they have done here must have its qualification.

It is easier to say that, "here we have no continuing city," than to act upon it faithfully ; easier to profess that there is nothing perfect here below, than to be contented in, and with, the imperfection. Yet the secret of peace, and

“WITH PERSECUTIONS.” 305

of the absence of care, is to accept the world as it comes, and the things of the world with their disappointments. The saint ought not to be surprised, or disturbed, to find that earthly things savour of earth, and worldly things of the world. We too often expect our circumstances here to be like heaven, or like that which characterizes heaven, even the absence of all disturbing elements. On the contrary we ought to expect them, and be thankful that God has given to us spiritual perception enough to learn what earth feels like when we touch it. A body without pain, a family without anxiety, bread eaten with the sweat of the face, or without effort, disappointment, or care, a friend that never disappoints, a master always just and equal, a servant ever faithful; these would befit heaven, and not earth, yet the absence of these conditions, and much less important things than these, distract saints' minds, and instead of proving their patience, affect their mental and spiritual state. “With persecution” was the qualification for temporal mercies,

306 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

which the Lord promised to His faithful followers in their day ; and every earthly thing has its qualification now. So far then as we take our temporal mercies from the hand of God, shall we be also able and content to take them with the needed qualification ; but so far as our spirits resent the inevitable troubles, disappointments, and imperfections, connected with every circumstance of our earthly state, so far do we shut God out, and His proffered mercy becomes an affliction. His ways are *truth* and perfectness, and in a world lying under the wicked one, a world yet waiting for its judgment, He will not let us be deceived, by finding a single thing upon it that is without a blot.

Happy indeed is the heart that can own God in every mercy, and yet expect and understand the presence of imperfection, and that instead of fretting, can bear it with thankfulness and adoration, to the grace that teaches us to bear with patience the suffering of the present time, not reckoning it worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

HOW DECLENSION BEGINS.

WE enjoy "every spiritual blessing" by faith; that is, we attain to it by faith, and yet no blessing is acquired by attainment. Every spiritual blessing is ours through grace; faith appropriates what is ours already, yet every one does not enjoy what is really his own, because he has not faith to lay hold of it. "If you be not faithful in that which is another man's, who will give you that which is your own." Faith is the evidence of things not seen; you attain by faith, and as you walk by faith, there is progress, but the moment you look at what you have attained to, you turn from faith (which always reaches on to a still fuller evidence of things not seen), you are declining, and the simple reason of your declension is that you are not in the energy of the Spirit of God. You are not following after, that you may apprehend that whereof you are apprehended in Christ Jesus. You have by faith reached a certain

308 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

truth, and you accept it as your standing, but when that which you have reached becomes prominent, then faith which alone can keep you up to it, and which enables you really to enjoy it, wanes, and you are declining.

Declension does not begin with surrendering the standing, but with losing the state which answers to the standing; that is, you are not holding in faith what you have reached in faith. You are contenting yourself with your attainment. Faith is a power which is only sustained while it is in exercise, as a bird only knows the power of flying while it is flying, or as a steam-engine is useless without steam. No motion from previous activity will continue when a bird ceases to fly, or a steam-engine ceases to act, no past performance can prolong the power of either. Thus when faith is unexercised no former faith can impart or confer any enjoyment or prospect. The fact that I have seen a truth is light, a fact for information, but it is not necessarily possession. I must be livingly in it, in order to derive

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 309

from it that which, as a reality, it can contribute to me. If I have been to a foreign country, and have seen something very beautiful there; when I return, I can no longer see it, and though I may very accurately remember that I have seen it, yet memory is simply the mind retaining a remembrance of the objects as they have been impressed on it. Memory is not faith, and as soon as faith drops down to memory, then there is declension. Power is only effective when used.

The desire and the tendency to consider for one's natural feelings and wants, is, when yielded to, the beginning of declension; myself is more before my mind than God. Hence, when Abraham in the path of faith had by faith reached the true place or standing to which he was called, he drops out of faith for a time because of the pressure of circumstances—the famine, and goes down to Egypt. (Gen. xii. 10.) He does not actually retrace his steps, or say that he made a mistake in coming into the land, but he does not keep in faith what he

310 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

has reached by faith. Without doubt faith had brought him to the desired place, and he lost it, not because he could not get up to it, but because he could not keep it after possessing it. It was not right nor title he failed in, but in the power to keep possession, he lost the power that brought him there, and he turned aside to Egypt. Memory then could only have proved his declension, because if he remembered having been between Bethel and Hai, it was only a proof that he was not there now. It is thus with many now-a-days; they betray themselves and their present declension, when they talk of what they were by faith years ago. A man who recalls you to what he used to be, is like a superannuated soldier, who is clearly not in the vigour of active service now.

Lot still more grievously surrendered faith, while in the place of faith. There was no pressure compelling *him* to give it up: there was no trying of faith in his case; he did not give up the standing in which faith had formally set him, but he gave up faith as the principle of

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 311

his life there, and his declension is marked enough, and describes that class of saints now, who give up their light for present advantages.

Isaac in a very humbling way fails in faith (Gen. xxviii.); he decides to give the blessing to Esau because he did eat of his venison. This seems a very unworthy reason, but it shews how declension may begin when there is no intention of giving up one's standing, which is the inheritance of faith. Immense sorrow and humiliation were entailed on Isaac's family because of this unbelieving decision. A man of faith acting without faith, is more incongruous than a bird without a wing, or a steam-engine without steam, but it is not only that he is incongruous and powerless, he is mischievous too. The class represented here are those who misapply the truth of God (for instance such truths as brotherly love and charity), in order to benefit those who have endeared themselves to them personally by kindness and attention.

Jacob had gone through much before

312 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

he recovered his true standing in returning to the land, and had known deep exercises of soul after he had reached it, yet even after all this, and after the name of Israel is given him (chap. xxxii.), declension sets in ; he surrenders faith which required him to go on up to Bethel, and settles down at Shalem, where he tries to quiet his conscience by religiousness, erecting an altar the very name of which exposes his true state, and discloses that he had lost faith, and had become occupied exclusively with what God was to him, having lost sight of what God is in Himself. Jacob at this stage of his history represents that class of saints who look for mercies on earth, and would limit God to themselves, as if they were His object on the earth.

Israel, after being established in the land, forfeited the greatest of God's favours to them there, because of unbelief. For 490 years they did not keep the sabbatical year ; they had not faith for it ; and thus they lost the most remarkable and visible interposition of

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 313

God in their behalf; God's promise was that He would cause every sixth year to bring forth fruit for three years, in order that the seventh year might be a sabbath of rest (Lev. xxv.), but this divine interposition they surrendered for their own labours; and thus they represent those saints in this day, who from lack of faith, lose the intervention of the Holy Ghost, and think their own exertions paramount or more to be relied on.

One more example; when the captives on their return to Jerusalem, were prevented from building the temple, they at length accepted it as inevitable (Ezra iv. 24), and devoted themselves to their own blessing which they were zealous enough in seeking. (See Haggai i.) They had suffered much to regain their lost inheritance; yet from lack of faith, they grew indifferent about the chief thing—even the house of God. In like manner many in the present day while seeking their own enjoyment and blessing, often lose sight of what is due to Christ on earth; and their efforts, even for themselves, prove ineffectual. “Ye looked

314 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

for much, and lo ! it came to little, and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why ? saith the Lord of hosts : because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house." The sum of the matter is this,—faith always holds on to what the word of God by the Spirit reveals to the soul, and when faith is in exercise, then assuredly God is before the soul. In a scene where everything is of man, the more I walk with God, the more absolutely must it be by faith. Hence when faith wavers there is declension ; knowledge is not lost, but all spiritual progress is stopped.

If Abraham had faltered in his faith at the last step to Mount Moriah, or even when he took the knife in his hand to slay his son, all the previous faith which had enabled him to ascend that trying path, would have been fruitless. Where all depended on it, he would have failed. There must be no cessation in faith ; no nearness to the finish is of any use if the point, the finish itself, be not gained. Where there is a wavering

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 315

there is an end to progress ; for where there is no faith, there is no power to hold on, and there must be a dropping down to a spot where faith would not be needed. Self comes in, in some form or other, and God is lost sight of.

The one walking in faith has God ever before him, as the strength of his heart, but he presents a different expression according to the side on which he has to act. To God he is beside himself ; to man he is sober. (2 Cor. v. 13.) When I am dependent on God, I am always as He would have me to be. But on either side, be it God's side or man's side, it is with God sensibly that I have to do. It is as necessary to maintain faith on God's side, as it is on man's side. Saints often think it necessary to depend on God with respect to things here, because they are so trying ; but there is quite as much need of faith in accepting and enjoying the things of God. In the exercise of faith I learn its power and value. Faith is like a high-mettled steed, but I must be borne by it, or I cannot enjoy its power or

316 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

usefulness. I may remember how it has served me in time past ; I may even be certain of its usefulness, and that it is mine, but unless I am *using* it, I am not in the power of it. Thus it is with faith ; though I know its value, though I have used it, yet I am as much apart from its power when not using it, as I am from my horse when I have dismounted. When I am walking in faith, I find the strength of Christ enabling me to surmount all things here, and as I look up, no power of the enemy can divert me from my portion in heaven, which I never enjoy by sight, but by faith. Stephen being full of the Holy Ghost looked up stedfastly into heaven, leading the way into it, and it is now open to faith. The more I exercise faith, the more habitual it becomes. All we have received as yet is a new nature, and the Holy Ghost, by which we are united to Christ in heaven. All the rest is by faith. I have a place in heaven, and as I have faith I enjoy it, and rise above all circumstances and difficulties here. The light of scripture is not faith,

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 317

though it shews me where faith ought to reach; and where, according as the faith is in God, it *does* reach. Light from the word is like the rail for the train, faith is like the steam engine which bears me along the line which light has disclosed to me. One without the other is of no use. Every believer has some of both, but often we see some with more of one, and some with more of the other. But unquestionably the one with more faith is to be preferred to the one with more light. The latter is more ready and expressive, but the former is more deep and contemplative. In faith I am more absorbed and detained by the greatness of God, and feel unable to grasp the immense and increasing fulness presented to me, while in light I know what I see.

May the Lord keep us in faith, while daily increasing in light; for when light is deemed enough without faith, there is declension.

PAUL'S WORD FROM THE PRISON.

CHAPTER I. of the Epistle to the Philippians is marked by a collection of beautiful jewels. Amongst many others appear, fellowship in the gospel (ver. 5.); mutual thought (ver. 7); a love deeply seated (ver. 8); an intelligence which understands God's ways of blessing above all that is of sight (ver. 12); a love for the name of Christ which rises above all that which actuates man, even, it may be, Christians (ver. 18); the balance between being with Christ above, or here for the sake of those loved by Him (ver. 23); suffering for Christ here a gift (ver. 29).

Then in the following chapters, three brilliants of extra magnitude appear; namely, in chapter ii., humility; in chapter iii., energy; in chapter iv., contentment. A humility which goes down lower and lower till it reaches death; an energy which counts but loss and dung all that which stands in the way of gaining Christ; a contentment which

WHERE THOU GOEST, ETC. 819

imparts perfect peace when the last step but one of chapter ii. has been reached; and a chain in a prison binds the vessel in which has been displayed the energy of chapter iii.

This is an Epistle which those gathered out in separation in these days will do well to study. It is not marked by doctrine, but by that spirit, conduct, and walk in believers, which the Holy Ghost commends. Joy is that which especially marks the Epistle, furthered no doubt by gift whilst here (chap. i. 25); but not lessened when the vessel containing the gift is taken away (chap. ii. 17).

WHERE THOU GOEST THERE
WILL I GO.

A HOMELESS stranger amongst us came
To this land of death and mourning,
He walked in a path of sorrow and shame,
Through insult, and hate, and scorning.

A man of sorrows, of toil and tears,
An outcast man and a lonely,
But He looked on me, and through endless years
Him must I love, Him only.

320 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Then from this sad and sorrowful land,
From this land of tears, He departed,
But the light of His eyes and the touch of His
hand
Had left me brokenhearted.

And I clave to Him as He turned His face
From the land that was mine no longer,
The land I had loved in the ancient days,
Ere I knew the love that was stronger.

And I would abide where He abode,
And follow His steps for ever;
His people my people, His God my God,
None should hinder me, none should sever.

And where He died would I also die,
Far dearer a grave beside Him,
Than a kingly place amongst living men—
The place which they denied Him.

Then afar and afar did I follow Him on,
To the land where He was going,
To the depths of glory beyond the sun,
Where the golden fields were glowing.

The golden harvest of endless joy,
The joys He had sown in weeping,
How can I tell the blest employ,
The songs of that glorious reaping?

The recompense sweet, the full reward,
Which the Lord His God has given,
At rest beneath the wings of the Lord,
At home in the courts of heaven.

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

PART XXI.

But on the way the Lord reveals to them what was about to happen, and that immediately. But still with His heart resting on them. They would find only an occasion of stumbling in Him. With what gracious calmness the Lord tells them of it. For it was a poor and base path, one, alas, too natural to us; but He only thinks of them to warn and apprise them of it as those He loved. But, as it was written, they were the sheep of His pasture, and the Shepherd was to be smitten and the sheep scattered.

He speaks of them as those gathered to the good Shepherd in this world, the Jewish remnant gathered to Messiah the true Shepherd of Israel, though now to enter on brighter and better hopes and a more blessed service, but here the sheep of His flock already gathered, and now to be dispersed by the death of Messiah the Shepherd.

But He would rise again and then go

322 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

before them into Galilee, the place where according to prophecy He had been the Light of Israel, and gathered these poor of the flock around Him. As such they are looked at here, as such His death scattered them. For Messiah, the true Shepherd, was smitten, and cut off, and what was the flock with the Shepherd taken away? But risen, He would go before them again into the place where He had been associated with them—for in Matthew we have no ascension.

The Acts are wholly founded on Luke's mission. But Peter trusting as ever his own strength declares that he never would be offended if all were, if Jordan overflowed all his banks he was not afraid to dip his foot in it. But self-confidence in a disciple must be corrected by abasement of self. Humble, we are safe, for God gives grace; self-confident and not humble, we must be humbled, so with poor Peter. The Lord warns him, but he maintains his confidence; and so instead of watching and praying goes to sleep, and, though he knew it not, the enemy close at hand, man's hour and

the power of darkness. And how easily we are led by what is wrong without exactly what is apparently evil, but what suits human nature. All the disciples are led away into the same self-confident assertion ; so they chime in with Judas about the ointment, so they were carried away,—even Barnabas, by Peter's dissimulation. What is of man is contagious for men, be it false boldness, or servile fear. But we are drawing to the last scenes of the blessed Lord's life. He is here, the tested, but perfect victim, while, alas, the disciples again shew what man is, but all only brings out the Lord's grace. It is not as in John, a divine Person above all, offering up Himself, nor the man overcoming in dependence all that pressed upon Him. Obedience and grace must be perfect in the true and spotless victim. Death and the cup were there and He must be put fully to the proof in His obedience. But He passes through it all with His Father and yet can think of others who can think but little of Him ; for, as to them, it is the testing of the disciples more

324 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

than what was special to Christ that is portrayed. He looked for their watching and they failed Him. But we have Jesus perfect in patient obedience, Jesus perfect in referring all to His Father, though feeling, and when feeling all He had to go through.

It is the perfectness of His mind when His being a victim is in view that is here specially brought before us. He takes all the disciples with Him to Gethsemane, and then telling them to tarry there while He went on further and prayed, He takes Peter, and James, and John, who had also been with him on the mount of transfiguration, and afterwards had the place of pillars further on, and there all that was before the blessed One came upon His spirit. He began to be sorrowful and very heavy, He felt as man what He had to undergo, not mere pain or suffering, the power of death weighed upon His spirit, weighed upon it as man, yet with a weight no man could fathom. Yet with what calm simplicity He tells it out, we ought to know it, though it may be beyond our know-

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

825

ledge. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." His need was there, and told out to hearts that ought to have felt it and watched earnestly, occupied with Him. He looked for this, some one to have compassion. "Tarry ye here and watch with me." Blessed Saviour! what ought a heart to have felt to whom He said it? Oh how should it have watched, but alas, what are we? He went on to be alone there with His Father about that which with Him only He could enter into, and which must be altogether with Him. He was perfect in referring it to His Father, and referring it alone. There the solemn question must have its solution. There alone it could, and there alone His perfectness could bring it. He fell on His face and prayed, saying, "Oh my Father," in supplicating earnestness, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." He should feel it fully and He did; submission would not have been perfect else, but then His obedience and submission were perfect: "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." In the perfect

326 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

sense of the cup to be drunk, and the holy desire to avoid it, the piety of soul which desired it, (for it was all the repulsion of sin from God, and what our wretched souls had fallen into—what man was as departed from God, which He must take upon His soul, if indeed He had to drink it, if He undertook our cause, and it was a holy desire to shrink from such a judgment and being made sin, even as bearing it before God,) yet with perfect submission and obedience to His Father, whatever His will was, and to His Father He brings it there where it ought to be brought, alike perfect in desiring not to drink it, and obediently submitting to drink it if it was His Father's will; and this was His second utterance, "If this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done." The no reply now to His first demand leaves His soul in the unclouded perfectness of the second and third, for He was with His Father in full and solemn sense of what it was, but with Him—He is occupied with it. How could it be otherwise? It ought to

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

327

have been so. The disciples sleep, left Him alone with God. Where else could He have now been with such a work, such a cup before Him? Now it is over, one can linger round this scene to learn His perfectness and love, the love we shall enjoy in brighter days when we shall see Him as He is;—when He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Yes, it was well; it was only right that He should be alone with His Father then. It could have been nowhere else, and He went naturally there, if I may so speak, for all His thoughts were perfect.

But where was he (let us think of ourselves) who was to go to prison and to death? With what touching grace He calls up to view the strange inconsistency. “Peter, could ye not watch with me one hour?” Where was the strength that was going through everything just now? yet with what grace He warns, with what grace He excuses! “Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” How must one have hated oneself for such a want of

328 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

earnestness and love to Him ! alas, how we have to do with it ! But here so perfectly is He with His Father for the depth of what was before Him, so perfectly had He had all that with Him only, that the free unhindered grace could in all liberty be as perfect towards His poor feeble but failing disciples. No weight on His spirit with them, that was borne with His Father. How perfect are all His ways, what could they be else ? But He can warn them, and warn them as to what was just going on. To Him it was now the path of obedience, but what was not that was temptation. So indeed with everything, all we meet with is occasion of temptation or obedience, only there brought out where all was brought to a crisis with man. But this intercourse with the disciples at this moment is a witness of a depth and calmness in His path which is divine perfection, though in man and in human ways and grace which calls for adoring recognition. We struggle or faint, or hide our sorrow in pride. I have known what it is not to know relief till I said,

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

829

Oh my God, my soul is cast down within me. But He has all with God, and can state it as to the fact in perfect simplicity to man. We cannot tell our grief, we need support; and where are we to trust it if it be heavy? He had His resource so elsewhere—all His heart out, looking to His Father that He could confide where really there was nothing to lean on, only truth of heart—the spirit was willing.

Now this is greatness, only in perfection, yet in lowliness, not in self-sufficiency, in conscious weakness of humanity, but all told in perfect faith and dependence to God His Father, yet never losing His human place, yea, the very expression of it; it is here it comes out so perfectly, never a thought that was not human indeed, but never one that was not suited to such a place in the presence of God, that is, to death and drinking the cup, nor though a man's feelings there in view of it, not one but what was according to the perfectness of One in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily. It would not do that He should not have been fully in

M 2

380 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

conscious manhood there, for He was there for us, nor that in that place a thought or a feeling that was not divine in its fitness for it, should have been there, and so it was; He was not drinking the cup, but He had to feel it as to all that it was, and feel rightly about it; had He not been God as well as man that could not have been. Surely He could not have drunk it else, but He could not have thought about it adequately, if a divine source and measure of thought had not been the spring of it in man's necessity before God.

Blessed Lord, I do not pretend to fathom what Thou wast, who could? but we may learn from it and adore in our hearts, we may look on and learn who was there, and with thankfulness of heart. No man knows the Son but the Father, but oh, what traits of paramount blessedness flow forth from this Son being a man! And we shall see that, very man as He is. And who shall tell the joy of that? Yet He is as perfect in gracious gentleness to man. What it must have been to them, when they

PREPARED AND FURNISHED. 331

had the Holy Ghost, to look back to, and when they knew themselves in their flight from that which He was going to meet. Humbling surely, but a great thing for the heart to have been thus humbled; for after all, we must learn what we are where Christ was, save of course atonement, and even there in respect of guilt to know the perfectness that is in Him. It is not by our minds but in looking at perfectness in the same place in our weakness. Who will know strength like the weak one that leans on it? Still *we* know it as taught of God, as He in the perfectness of His Person.

PREPARED AND FURNISHED.

“God,” we read, “is not the author of confusion, but of peace.” Order marks His way in everything. There is a time to sow and a time to reap. “The husbandman *first* labouring, must be partaker of the fruits.” There is a time to learn, and a time to practise what we have learned. Nothing causes more confusion, both in faith and practice,

832 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

than our tendency in things spiritual to put the cart before the horse, or, like an unskilful huntsman, to ride over instead of following the hounds.

In keeping with the divine order we learn in the 2nd Epistle to Timothy, that there is a way to be "prepared for," and a way to be "furnished unto all good works." What we have to mark is that the preparation comes first, and the furnishing afterwards.

This Epistle is full of instruction for the saint in the last days, through which no intelligent Christian can doubt that we are now passing. As the 1st Epistle teaches the man of God "how to behave himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," while the order of God's house was yet maintained; so the 2nd Epistle instructs the same man of God how to act when the external state of things has assumed the shape set forth in chapter ii. Blessed provision, giving a divine light for a dark path. The true hearted saint need not descend to, or abide in, the moral state

PREPARED AND FURNISHED. 333

of that which surrounds him. There is on God's part always a provision for faith. His word is perfect, and perfects those who have faith and discernment to act upon it. Chapter ii. thus shews us the true preparation for a saint in an evil day; chapter iii. how he who is thus prepared, may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

It is the privilege of every Christian to maintain good works, "which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." It is thus of the first importance that we should know what are good works, and of the last importance that we should be both prepared and furnished for them. But we must again note the order, preparation before furnishing.

All true Christians will agree that "good works," in the true sense, are works of faith. That is, works done with reference to God: done in the very faith, fear, and love of Him, and Him alone. These are the works which justify and these alone. Other works, or even the same works done from other motives, may benefit our fellow man,

334 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

but works of faith, done under the eye of God, done for Him, and because "He is," alone can glorify Him, or benefit the doer. It is the "doer of the word" (that is of the work which proceeds from being a true hearer of the word,) who is "blessed in his doing." Far be it from us to define or detail what are and what are not good works. It is in the source and motive far more than in their detail, or immediate object, that their goodness consists. Philanthropy, or love to man, apart from love to God, is worthless to the philanthropist. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth *me* nothing," and yet, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

The value to the doer depends on the presence of divine love in the one case, and that it is Christ's brethren who are served in the other. But I might both feed the poor, and benefit Christ's brethren upon a totally different and lower motive. *They* may be equally the gain-

PREPARED AND FURNISHED. 335

ers, but *I* lose my all, my work and my reward. Good works then are those which God, not man, approves as good ; which will bear measuring by the heavenly standard, and by no earthly one whatever. Next to the knowledge of what is good in God's sight comes the necessity for preparation, and furnishing for its performance. We believe that true preparation is separation. Separation to God, and all that is for Him, and from all that is against Him. But the *to* is more important than the *from*. There may be separation from various forms of evil, without God being much in question ; while separation to God necessarily involves the other. If God be the motive, the attraction which draws the heart, if He be the one sought, and the knowledge of His will that which is desired, evil, step by step will be departed from, and iniquity forsaken. Right things are often done in a wrong way, and so separation from evil itself, may be the result of selfwill, selfpleasing, intelligence, in fact anything but simple seeking after and sympathy with God.

336 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Abraham was "prepared" when he left his father's country, and his father's house, and "went out not knowing whither he went." Moses also "forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible." Elijah separate from the court of Ahab was prepared, as Obadiah though a saint was most certainly not. Daniel and his fellows were prepared in heart when they refused the king's meat and the worship of Babylon. Ezra's and Nehemiah's preparation was in returning to the place and position with which the testimony of the Lord upon the earth was connected. John Baptist was "in the deserts," apart from the professed religion of the day, "till the day of his shewing unto Israel." And in varying circumstances and with variety of action according to their day, the same may be traced in the history of every true servant of God. Until separated by divine grace and power from sin, world, nature, or religion, as they may appear in opposition to God, and to His will, they are not meet for the Master's use, nor pre-

PREPARED AND FURNISHED. 337

pared for every good work : and the extent of their separation is the measure of their preparedness.

Now observe, scripture does not say prepared for any good work, but for "every good work." It must be admitted that God in His grace uses, and accepts the services of His people who are not really separate from the evils of the church and of the world ; but only up to a certain measure. An unseparated servant may be fit for some things, but not for everything. We cannot lift others above our own level, even as water cannot rise above the level of the source from which it originally flows. While we know that the Spirit divideth to every man severally as He will, it is a searching question for the servant's heart, Am I attached to anything here below which disqualifies me for the Master's use, so that I am consciously unprepared for every good work ?

The upright soul desires to be right with God, whatever may be the condition of things around him, and that all his relations in the world, and with the

338 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

world may be such as God can sanction and approve. For a Christian to be content in a state of things which is contrary to God is most deplorable, to be discontented and yet abide in it, is not much better, for it produces restlessness, and the waiting for some change, short of the coming of the Lord. Such a one feels he cannot be as he is, and yet "be found of Him in peace without spot and blameless." So far as we can say that our circumstances are of the Lord, and not of our own making, so far are we happy and free in them ; so far however as they are ours and not the Lord's shall we be filled with carefulness, and looking for a change. As one has said, "A distracted heart is the bane of the Christian."

To be purged from vessels of dishonour in that which is likened to a great house ; to "depart from iniquity," is the saint's preparation now. It is not intelligence ; it is not even large acquaintance with scripture ; but uprightness of heart towards God which is the secret. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the

PREPARED AND FURNISHED. 339

darkness.” “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.” Thus a true heart leads a saint in ways in which mere intelligence could never alone guide him; but where there is faith to act upon the convictions wrought by the Spirit upon the conscience, the word of God will not fail to confirm the step.

When a soul walking before God, follows with uprightness the light given, it will be led out from associations contrary to the mind and to the Spirit of God. “In a great house,” says Paul to Timothy, “there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.” Self-excuse inquires, “How am I to judge?” The reply is, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

Separation then from evil and to God is the preparation required. It is not the completeness of the servant, who

340 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

has been (as all have) entangled in the confusion of the great house. Before one is fully qualified, he must be furnished.

Many fail in usefulness and are discouraged from not observing the divine order. Having separated themselves from evil associations, they too hastily assume activity for God. But this they have not necessarily acquired fitness for. Separation has made them meet for the Master's use, but where the heart is right and the spirit subject, it will generally be found that after separating himself from former evil associations, the one who has been most active is for a time compelled to sit still. This is the case whenever there is true recovery from a false way, whether such has been pursued in ignorance, or through failure. The fact is, such a one needs furnishing. As to the past, he has much to judge; as to the future, he has much to learn. We doubt the character and depth of work in the conscience of those who carry on the activities from an old and false position, into the new one, without a break. Either their service

PREPARED AND FURNISHED. 341

and ministry in the new position must be incomparably below the mark, from lack of instruction, or they must have been ministering, in their former place, truth which should long before have delivered themselves from the snare; and this should cause in them the deepest humiliation. In either case their service and ministry must lack savour, and the power of the Spirit.

Now the knowledge of the holy scripture is the true furnishing for the man of God. He cleanses his way by taking seed into them. The word, hid in his heart, keeps him from sinning against God. Sanctified by the word of truth, he can take his place as a "stranger in the earth," from whom God will not hide His commandments. The law of God's mouth is dearer unto him than thousands of gold and silver. Great peace is his portion, and nothing can offend him. But to learn aright, he must be in a right place, or, at all events, not in a wrong one. A great house full of mixed vessels is not just the place in which to learn the mind of God, or the application

342 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

of His word. We cannot gather light in the place of darkness. It is as separated and apart from its evil, that truth must be learned ; and as a separated and prepared one, the man of God must sit down to learn afresh the "holy scriptures, which are able to make him wise unto salvation," and thus be thoroughly *furnished* unto all good works." To Timothy the apostle could say, "continue thou in the things that thou hast learned, and been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them," but to the saint now-a-days the exhortation must rather be to *discontinue*. It is true that the memory may in some cases be well stored with scripture, and the heart may have learned, even in the confusion of the great house, much of the grace and of the ways of God, but there is still much to unlearn as well as to learn, and the truest souls are the most ready to acknowledge it. While therefore we admit that there are saints well versed in scripture, who have yet not purged themselves from the vessels of dishonour in that which is likened to a great house, we

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 843

can only compare them to a man who puts all his furniture into his house before it is painted, papered, and otherwise prepared. The furniture is there, it is true, but the house not being prepared, nothing can be put into its place, or applied to its right use.

The Lord teach His people the true preparation He looks for, even separation unto Himself, and so fill them with the knowledge of and subjection to His word, that they be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

MINISTRY: ITS USE AND ITS
RESPONSIBILITY.

THE first great thing connected with ministry, is that it is the communication of the truth of God. In the beginning of God's dispensations with man, the mind of God was revealed by inspiration, word by word. The prophet could only say what the Spirit communicated to him. This of course was the basis

844 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

and authority for every exhortation in connection with it. In those early times we do not find so much the preaching side, as the practical effect produced by the revelation; hence, the opening books of scripture are for the most part a detail of the effect produced on men of God through faith in the revelation. There is very little actual revelation, but a great deal of the effect produced by the power of God on man, in keeping with the revelation. The revelation to Noah, directing him to build an ark, produced a history of its own; the revelation of the new covenant. (Gen. ix.) introduced a new era, and there were effects accordingly. The effects were certain, whether essentially natural or spiritual, so that the history sets forth on the one hand the reception of the truth, and the nature of it; and on the other, the rejection of it, and the nature of that. It is a faithful record of both sides,—the reception and the rejection; and it is by inspiration, because no one but God could distinctly so determine what, according to His mind, is ad-

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 345

herence to His word, or what is the denial of it, or how both would be disclosed or ascertained.

Further on, we get the prophets, and to them the revelation was much larger and more copious. It announced the judgments that were coming on Israel, because of disobedience, and on man in general, because of departure from God, and it also announced better things to come, the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow.

Now when we come to the New Testament, it is all different. In it, we have God manifest in the flesh, the record of Him in four different aspects, and how man answered to it. It was not a mere revelation, but it was God manifest in the flesh, walking among men ; doing everything in divine perfection ; and every response or return made to Him by man, disclosed what man was, in relation to God, because God was there beside man, clothed in the humble garments of a man. Thus man was thoroughly tested. This we have in the gospels, but when the Lord, being

346 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

rejected and ascended on high, having led captivity captive, He gives gifts unto men ; and now for the first time true ministry by gifts really begins. It is not merely, as at first, revelation to guide the saint, nor is it the prophets to recall what was already given, while pronouncing judgment, or foretelling the eventual state,—even a new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Gifts are now given from the ascended Christ,—the exalted man. It is not simply *revelation*, but *gifts* concurrent with the fulness of revelation, for the perfecting of the saints. The apostles and prophets are the channels of the revelation, and the others more the missionaries, each in a peculiar way, of what has been revealed. The apostle the great channel to introduce and establish the truth, or to recover it and re-establish it, if lost ; the prophet (as a gift) to use the word so as to expose the state of the heart ; the teacher to expound the word of God ; the pastor to apply it to any individual case ; the evangelist to declare or preach

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 847

the gospel. Now the power and usefulness of each gift is as the gifted one uses the word of God, in its force and integrity, to effect that for which it was sent, and for which he received the gift. A gift is not eloquence or any mental power, but it is a faculty conferred by the Spirit for expounding and presenting a distinct line of truth, drawing from the word of God that which will contribute to the good of souls. His power is not anything natural or acquired, but it is simply great according to the true and direct application of scripture. The power is in the word of God, and the Spirit of God alone can impart it, and the gift is the effective direction of the word of God in its own peculiar, perfect light.

Thus, the use of ministry is incalculable. No study of the word for oneself can ever supersede ministry. No one possesses all the gifts in himself, and yet if he does, he is dependent on his gift for edification, and not on his mere knowledge of scripture. No soul indifferent to the gifts can be perfected,

348 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

The word of life may and often does reach the soul apart from any apparent instrumentality, but there is not progress without appreciation of the gifts; as I know the nurture and admonition of the Lord I value the gifts. Ministry by gifts is the great evidence of the exaltation of Christ. "He gave gifts unto men." The gifts are the means, divinely appointed, for the edification of the body. It is true that there is an edification of the body effected by the contribution which every joint compacted together supplieth, but then the gifts and their special effects are all there. ~

I shall now call attention to the various ways in which ministry is regarded. I shall not refer to the use superstition makes of it, except so far as it leavens the saints. First then there are some who disregard ministry, and say that they can learn from the Bible for themselves. These gradually sink to a low standard of truth, or they become unsound because they have not subjected their own thoughts to the scrutiny of gifted men beside themselves.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 349

It is reducing the whole of the circle of Christ's interest and power to an individual, and therefore something unnatural and preposterous must be the result; and if bad in a man, how much worse in a woman! Paul communicated the gospel he preached to the apostles privately (Gal. ii.) lest by any means he should run, or had run, in vain. Self-taught men, who have not submitted their acquisitions from scripture to the scrutiny of their brethren, are generally unsound. The best taught do not hesitate to invite discussion respecting the truths they have seen, and thus have been only confirmed in them and enabled the better to expound them. Those who fall into the snare of rejecting ministry are but drones in the hive; they derive from it, but add not to it; they are never bright, and never concerned for Christ's interests on the earth, however interested they may be in works of philanthropy; they condemn every one but themselves. Secondly, there are those who have their favourites as to ministry: these border

350 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

on haying “itching ears;” they consult their own tastes, and the minister is the impersonation of those tastes, while at the same time, he presents truth sufficient to satisfy their conscience. They are bound to him, not as to a pastor, whose care and knowledge of them personally might entitle him to a special place with them; and indeed if he were such, he would expose and condemn the gross partiality which led them to confine themselves to the ministry of only one of the Lord’s servants, as the Corinthians did, when they said, “I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos.” A soul might as well expect to grow and advance when warped by this exclusive partiality, as a man could expect to be constitutionally in vigour, who devotes his whole attention and energies to the cultivation of one sense. The Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, and the value and use of ministry is lost sight of and unappropriated, when only one person, be he even Paul or Cephas, is the sole oracle,—the one you class yourself under; for no one saint can say

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 351

that he is exclusively of Christ. We are all of Christ, and all the gifts are ours in common too. Contentions and eccentricities are the result of this abuse of ministry. Such are not practically governed by the truth, however great and devoted their assumed patron, "they have men's persons in admiration."

Thirdly, there are those who are Athenian in their character; who like some new thing. (Acts xvii. 21.) They like going to hear where they are interested. Good words and fair speeches greatly affect them; they like to be acted on, and the remarkable and painful consequence is, that as a rule, those who seek to be acted on, rarely act out the word and truth of God. It is for solemn warning to every minister, lest he should intermix with the word of God that which can meet the human mind, and thus damage souls by constructing that which is unreal, forgetting the commission to the minister, namely, "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which

352 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

trieth our hearts." This class tend to produce those who are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Fourthly, there is the right class; those who with fear seek the word of the Lord from the mouth of every taught servant, with purpose of heart to carry it out. They always apply themselves to the understanding of the word, because it is as the word is understood that the conscience is ruled by it, and their one desire is to be governed by it. They are often less quick in apprehension of its meaning than the less conscientious and sentimental, but they always value the close and direct exposition of the word of God ministered in the quiet solemnity which always marks one who is himself controlled by what he expounds. It is not a mere vision which excites him, but a reality that he himself is in, and into which he seeks to conduct others.

The Lord teach us both the use and the responsibility of ministry.

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

PART XXII.

IN verse 45, in tender words which yet shewed them their service was over, and how He had been alone, He says, Sleep on now, watching time is finished, the power of evil in act is here. Arise let us be going, he that betrayeth me is at hand. But they must be fully proved, He does not send them away. They must be with Him to the end, learn the tale however gently. If there was over confidence as in Peter, yet even so it fitted him to strengthen his brethren when restored by a deeper knowledge of what human strength came to in the things of God. But we must learn ourselves where He was, save where He was wholly for us, instead of us, making propitiation for our sins. There He was perfectly alone, alone with God. Who else could have been? He was practically alone in Gethsemane, but He looked for their watching with Him, susceptible of human interest and watch-

354 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

ing with Him, though indeed He had only to feel how man failed Him even in that. If He looked for that watching, the sense of some one with Him, it was to feel that there was none. But the betrayer was there—and here man and the blessed Lord must be again in contrast. Unhappy Judas, over whom one's heart would draw a veil, betrays the Lord by that which was the expression of long intimacy and that held Him fast. It is horrible. Oh he was up to his work, and would shew he was.

The Lord receives it with the calmness of One who now in the path of obedience had perfectly bowed to His Father's will. Friend, wherefore art thou come? For indeed when He warned His disciples He might have gone away, for it was dark, but for that He had not come. He could have had twelve legions of angels, but how then should the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be? It was now, having gone through all with His Father as to His path, a settled thing, not His feeling about it but the divine path itself. It must be : scripture, the true revealed

,MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

355

mind of God, had pointed out that path. What a testimony to scripture and its authority! In that greatest and lonely hour that stands out from all, and has none like it, it sufficed. How then should the scripture be fulfilled that thus it must be? It was by that the Lord conquered in the wilderness, by that He was as to authority determined in this moment in which He gave up all to glorify God and atone for our sins. It is to be remarked here that there is no healing of the servant which we know was wrought; another subject is set forth by the Spirit here, the obedient and submissive victim. He was going as a lamb to the slaughter. This was His place. He ever perfectly obedient, He was learning obedience by the things that He suffered; and that path is ours, human violence and human weapons in the Christian will meet with human weapons and stronger ones in the world; submission to God's will and the cross, is the path marked out for God's glory, as the world is—a wondrous lesson but a blessed one.

356 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

If we do well, suffer for it, and take it patiently, this is acceptable (*χάρις*) with God. This Jesus was now doing, and in the most perfect sense. He could have had His legions of angels and used no violence, but He came to obey and suffer, and do so to the full, accomplishing the work given Him to do, not to contend or escape. But here too, as with the disciples, yea even with Judas, He has His word for the multitudes. He had sat daily with them in the temple, and they laid no hands upon Him, now they came out against Him as against a thief.

There is tenderness and compassion in these words toward them; and the sense that the truth was, His hour was come as to Himself. He had been quietly with them in the temple, and they hanging indeed on His lips, and they had laid no hands on Him. But so it was to be, He was to lay down His life for the sheep, for all the glorious purposes of atonement. They were led by others, but would not have been were they not away from God. Compassion on igno-

rance there might be, but this time was to signal Satan's power and Jesus' submission. He is conscious of the difference; expresses calmly, as to His disciples, His sense of the state of things and notices it in grace and bows to it.

He was there to submit and accomplish His work. If such was the case what were the disciples to do? Go His path they could not, though not with the evil. They were powerless, and the enemy exercises all the power over them he can. They forsake Him and fly; fail utterly in faithful love, when danger is there. They save themselves, it is all they think of. Fight they might have done, flesh can do it, but this path flesh cannot tread. The ark must go alone first through those waters. It was the moment for devotedness; with man, a friend, that might have been; but with Christ—no—He must stand alone.

There is a great difference between the joy of intelligence and the joy of life.

DEATH AND GLORY.

“DEATH or Glory,” is the motto of the world’s hero. I will face the one to gain the other. I will risk my all for time and eternity, for the sake of fame, renown, and the applause of men. He knows that it is an alternative, and not a pleasant one, but he takes his chance : and the world says, “Well done.”

Not so speaks the Christian. He says, I want no risks, I want certainty. I will be content with no alternative, for glory I will have, though it be by the certainty and reality of death. My motto is not “Death *or* Glory,” but “Death *and* Glory.” I do not merely risk death for the chance of obtaining a passing glory here in this world, but I deliberately seek it, and undergo it, for the sake of the eternal glory to come. After all then the true Christian is the true hero, though the world looks on him as a poor weak-minded creature. He does not, like the world’s hero, merely risk a life that he loves, for the sake of adding to it something which

will make it more desirable, and so love it still better, but he deliberately forfeits it, he "hates his life in this world," that he may "find it unto life eternal."

Now in this as in everything else, we learn the superiority of the way of God over the way of the world,—of the gift of God over the gift of the world. The world offers men honour and glory, while they are in it, or at the most, while the world itself lasts. But a man must risk his life to obtain it. It is, as men say, "double or quits,"—always a dangerous game. If he loses his life, he loses also the sought-for glory, and all is lost, "for man's life is as grass." If he wins, he keeps his life and the glory too, so long as they endure; but after all, "the glory of man is as the flower of grass," and as "we brought nothing into the world, it is certain we can carry nothing out."

Now let us look for a moment at the other side; at the thoughts and deeds of him who "seeks not the honour that comes from men, but that which cometh from the only God" (or God only). He

360 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

says, I also seek glory, but a glory not of this world ; I seek an inheritance, but it is one that "fadeth not away : " I also am laying by for the future, but it is a "treasure in the heavens that faileth not." I have no objection to a name,—though I do not seek one,—provided the name be connected with that which is of God, and not that which is at best of the world, and often of doubtful, or even infamous character. The Christian seeks not notoriety, but shuns it, even as his master, who "neither strove nor cried, and whose voice was not heard in the streets." To the Christian, his life is more than his name ; his soul, more than all the world can give. He wants that which is certain, that which will endure. He does not despise glory, far from it ; he covets it, but he desires it in a tangible, enduring, and perfect form, and this he has learned the world cannot bestow. "Neither," says he, "count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy," so that I may "receive that crown of glory that fadeth not away."

DEATH AND GLORY.

361

There is no truth more plainly taught in God's word than this, that there is no entrance for man into the glory of God, into that heaven where He dwells, into that holy présence where evil cannot enter, except through death. The thought is distasteful to man. Nature and flesh shrink from it; reason rejects it; human religion seeks to evade it; but it runs through the revelation of God, from the first page to the last; as it is written, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

Some one may object, this is not new, that everybody knows that we must all die before we can get to heaven. But even if this were true, (which it is not, for it is written, "we shall not all sleep") it is not at all our meaning. What scripture teaches is that not in the case of many, but that in the case of all, death, morally and by faith, must be acknowledged and submitted to by every soul that is to enter into the glory of God. Every saint of God must learn the lesson sooner or later, and the

N 2

362 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

sooner for their own peace and joy, the better. The path of our Saviour-God through this world proves the truth of the statement for all that have the faith of Christ. It was not by His incarnation that the way for sinners was opened into the glory of God. It was not by his holy harmless life on earth, that reconciliation has been made for an evil world, by a holy God. These human and purely natural thoughts may suit the self-righteous and unexercised, but they will not do for the convicted conscience, or the broken and contrite heart ; neither will they do for God,—“ they savour not of the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” Christ’s own words were, that He must suffer many things and be *killed* ; again He says, “ I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.” “ Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it abideth alone.” And again, “ the Son of man must suffer many things, and be *slain*, and be raised the third day.” Again, “ Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and

DEATH AND GLORY.

363

to enter into His Glory?" As the substitute and Saviour of sinners, He must needs suffer; and even "He who came from God, and went to God," could not return to Him as the Captain of the salvation of His people, except by the way of the cross, and of death, and of the grave.

Faith, then, identifies the believing soul with the Saviour Son of God. Faith says, it was my sin that nailed Him to the tree, and bore Him down into the grave. It was my death that He died; and "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." It is His glory which He has called me to share. Shall I then shrink from the way by which He Himself has reached it? God forbid! for

"In His blest triumphant story,
We read the record of our own."

But here we must admit comes in the difficulty. We desire heaven, we covet glory, but we shrink from the way by

364 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

which it is to be reached. Nature abhors death; but then unredeemed nature ends in death. This then is the question the soul has to face: this is the alternative presented. The world now, then death, and after death, the judgment; or, death *now*, no judgment to come, but glory with Christ for ever. It is a tremendous question; who can fully estimate the issues? But it is a question which cannot be evaded, and if it be met and answered *with God*, difficulties, fears, and anticipations vanish; and joy and peace fill the soul. Face death we must, and Christ's hero faces it *now*.

There is no enjoyment of the future glory, while the heart and mind are alive to the world. One may have believed, may have been justified by faith, may have so far peace with God; but if the world be yet in the heart, and the affections and lusts, which are said to have been crucified with Christ, are not yet mortified by the believer, the enjoyment of the prospect is simply impossible. There may be the hope of heaven, but

DEATH AND GLORY.

365

it is a poor hope, for we shall not value the promised joys of to-morrow, while we are enjoying the things of to-day. If things that are seen are allowed, those that are not seen stand a poor chance indeed. Many saints, seem to think of the glory as the next best thing to the world; and merely as a necessary alternative, when they must needs let this scene go. Morally then the Christian is called to pass through that death, which Christ died for him penally, and to taste death in his own soul in fellowship with Christ. The lesson must be learned, and according to the depth of the lesson will the prospect be enhanced in value, and appreciated. Christ died in this world, and through death passed out of it, and His path is ours.

Abraham learned the lesson in Genesis xv. God promised him the glory, and he, as many of us do, "believed God," and was counted righteous. But this did not satisfy Abraham as it does too many a believer now; he desired to *know* it, as well as to hope for it.

366 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

But for this he must learn the reality of death. In the death of the victims he is called to offer, Abraham recognizes the need of atonement, but more, he must in the "horror of great darkness," taste in his own soul the reality of that death, through which alone God and His glory can be reached. But so soon as he thus learns death, not only the fact, but the extent of the inheritance is made known. "In the *same* day, the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt, unto the great river, the river Euphrates." What eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived of the good things God hath prepared for those that love Him, He does reveal unto us by His Spirit, and we are intended to explore their extent and to enjoy the foretaste now. "We have the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead." "The light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more eternal and exceeding

DEATH AND GLORY.

367

weight of glory." It does not, cannot increase it, but in affliction, and in death, the heart learns to value it.

This then is the way of God, and of faith ; suffering and reigning ; dying and living ; " Death and Glory." As death is owned within, and recognized on all around without, so does the heart understand and desire, and the Spirit of God,—the earnest,—speaks to it by anticipation of this glory to come. Let then "*Death and Glory*" be our motto. Do not separate what God has joined together. Do not be afraid of death, for we have not to face it alone. As Christ's death for us is the foundation of our peace, so is our death *with* Him the only real deliverance from the power, pressure, seduction, and strife of the present scene. The enjoyment of the best things, and the endurance of the worst, are neither of them " worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

HOLINESS—WHAT IS IT?

INNOCENCE in itself is not holiness. Adam in the garden of Eden was innocent; he had no idea of what evil was, but as soon as he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he knew evil, because he had committed it. Evil governed him and innocence was lost. Now the separation from evil by the introduction or maintenance of what is of God, is holiness. Mere suppression of vice is not holiness. Where evil is regnant, since in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing, a vice may be suppressed in order to obtain more reputation for oneself, or to secure more self satisfaction; but this exertion of the natural powers only increases the sense and strength of one's own independence of God. It is not holiness, because it is not God who is ruling, but man's natural power is exerted to improve himself.

To understand what holiness is, the *first* thing is a standard. Everything

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 369

depends on the standard. The standard is Christ, as He says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." If the standard be man, then the holiness must necessarily be defined by whatever renders a man commendable, and anything which would not compromise one's character in the eyes of man, nor offend against man's sensibilities, would be considered holiness. It is constantly the case that a Christian's sensibilities, which the company or influence of pious people institutes and fosters, become the standard by which holiness is determined; so much so, that I have known instances where though the smallest departure from good conduct would not be tolerated, yet false doctrine was suffered on the condition that it would not be propagated or discussed. In such cases sensibilities have been produced and educated by christian principles, and the standard of holiness was man's feelings and not God's will. Now, in all theological systems, the great defect on the subject of holiness is, that the thing to be effected is the

870 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

great problem before the mind, and not the standard to which we are to be transformed. There may be a true and earnest desire to be holy, but the mind is occupied with the attainment, and not with the One who can alone effect it, and whose influence and power can alone suppress the evil, and express what is of God. It is as if a plant were to occupy itself with the *effect* of the sun instead of with the sun itself, and turn all its leaves and branches downward, instead of upward to appropriate its rays, assured that the effect would thereby descend to the roots.

The true way of exposing defects or errors respecting any truth is to insist on the truth itself in its simplicity. The thing desired is holiness, to be partakers of His holiness. Well, we must start with this, that in our flesh dwelleth no good thing; nothing to suit God. Now holiness is something to suit God; it must be *of* God. His holiness is what I desire. I have, through grace, a new nature; I am a new creation; I am born of God; I sin not in that creation. The

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 371

power of this creation is not natural power; it is the Spirit of God—the Holy Ghost, and this is the *second* thing. Now as the Holy Ghost acts in me, the new nature is in concert, but I am in the old creation in which dwelleth no good thing, because I have in Adam surrendered it to the ruling principle of evil. The standard of holiness for me is Christ; the *power*, the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is in me in consequence of the redemption obtained by Christ and therefore comes down to me from Him the glorified Man, asserting and insisting on His right and claim to make my body the instrument of setting forth His ways on earth.

The body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. It is bought with a price, and I am to glorify God in my body, which is His. The saint is set here with a new nature, the Holy Ghost dwelling in him, he has no conscience of sins because he is brought to God, through the sacrifice of Christ, and is by one offering perfected for ever, and therefore he is not debtor to the flesh to live after the flesh, for he

372 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

is dead in Christ, in that wherein he was held, and therefore if he lives after the flesh, there is death ; but if through the Spirit he mortifies the deeds of the body he shall live. Now this is the great aim of the saint here — even, that Christ should be magnified in his body. The flesh is in the body, but the Holy Ghost makes it His temple ; having first built, as it were, a house for Himself in the new creation, He then lives in it, and He mortifies the workings of the flesh, and brings forth divine fruits ; this is the continued action of the Holy Ghost, because there is a new and peculiar demand at every turn. There is never the same thing, as to every particular, occurring again, and every occurrence and change of scene, acts in one way or another on the flesh ; that is, on man's will, and unless mortified by the Holy Ghost, it leads and masters him. There is no such thing as holiness in the flesh. The flesh is repressed by the Spirit, and in its place He sets forth Christ ; but there is the ever recurring sense of the existence of the flesh and its

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 373

readiness to rise up and act, as well as the conviction that there is no power to reduce or control it but the Holy Ghost ; and this promotes, as we advance, earnest diligence of soul, in waiting on the Lord ; that the flesh may be as dead and Christ magnified. For the more we are in the Spirit, the more we detect the flesh in its incipient and secret workings. Our senses are exercised to discern good and evil.

Thirdly, two things mark growth in holiness ; one, is a deeper sense of man's corruption ; the other, a greater zest and longing after Christ only. The corruption is discovered and felt, as the power of the Spirit increases ; for many a thought and act passes without pain to the conscience, where Christ is less before the soul, which will be refused and condemned, as the knowledge of Christ increases in spiritual power in the soul. Thus the word of God penetrates even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

One is shocked at the once unnoticed

374 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

motive which has governed one, or at least which has sought to do so ; but the very inclination to act selfishly is unholy. If I desire what I have no right to appropriate, I am unholy even though I do not attempt to appropriate it. If the flesh were holy, things that now invite it would get no response. I have not only to guard against the invitation, but I have to mortify the readiness to respond—the readiness in my flesh to desire even when there is not power to act. “The Spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh against the Spirit.” That shews that the flesh is still there, and “they are contrary one to another,” but the Spirit gets the upper hand, “that ye may not do the things that ye would.” As the Spirit acts, as Christ the perfect One is maintained in me, the principles and desires of the old man are superseded ; the one is repressed in order that the other may be expressed ; and hence the greater my knowledge of Christ the more do I detect the contrast, and discern through the Spirit what is contrary to Christ.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 375

I am daily more humbled and broken because of my own corruption, and while rejoicing that I am crucified with Christ, "I always bear about in my body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in my flesh." I have no remedy for it but in death; in Christ's death, but not this only, but the *life* of Jesus is to be manifested in my body. There is therefore more real brokenness about the one who begins in the light to see himself as he is in the flesh; he abhors himself, and at the same time there is a more intense desire, and seeking after the beauty of the Lord, so that brokenness of spirit, and earnestness of heart, characterize the one in whom the Spirit of God is unhindered. I cannot understand the beauty of the Lord but as I am in His presence, and the better I understand it, the more clearly I see and detect that which is of the flesh, because whatever is not the Lord's will, is my own will, and that is sin.

When a saint declines, there is a surrender of both. Things once feared and

376 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

disallowed are first tolerated and then promoted; and the earnest cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart, gives place to a sort of complacency, and a recounting of how much one has gained or advanced. As I understand the ways and motives of the Holy One, I must be increasingly abashed in myself, and intensely more eager, because of the Spirit (who shews me what I am in contrast to Christ,) to walk as He walked.

Sanctification is a subject of great interest. The truth sanctifies; that is, it controls the heart or mind through the Spirit for God; making it instrumental for the display of Christ. The measure of this sanctification is Christ's own. "For their sakes I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified by the power of the truth." That is, that His sanctification, and the nature or extent of it, might be reproduced in us; the same character, no lower order, no lesser quality. The more habitually one is governed by the Spirit of God, the more the dominion of the Spirit increases. When I grow in sanctifi-

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 377

cation, it is not that there is any improvement in the soil of my heart, but that it is more monopolized by Christ now, overgrown by the one plant, even Christ; and in proportion as I seek Him, this takes place, and the more do I grow in sanctification.

The "*adding*" (see 2 Pet. i. 5-8) proceeds, and increases as there is addition, because there is more of my heart subject to the new Master. The "*adding*" is the evidence of the vigour of life, and as it goes on, it must necessarily be with the two-fold sense of having none naturally of that which I seek to add, and of the immensity of that which through the Spirit of God is conferred. The sense of the value of the treasure increases, according as the known possession of it increases.

In the pursuit of holiness to which we are all called, may the Lord keep before us these three points: the standard, the power, and the marks of it, so that we may not be deceived.

THE RICHES OF THE GRACE AND OF THE GLORY.

RICH, our God, art Thou in mercy,
Dead in sins were we,
When Thy great love rested on us,
Sinners, dear to Thee.

Blessed path of grace that led us
From the depths of death,
To the heavenlies in Christ Jesus,
Quickened by His breath.

Riches of Thy grace have brought us
To that home on high,
Riches of Thy glory make us
Thine eternal joy.

Not alone the stream that cleansed us,
Flowed from Jesus dead,
Tides of glory now are flowing
From our living Head.

Down to us from Christ in heaven,
Those bright rivers run
In His lowest saint and feeblest,
God beholds His Son.

THE RICHES OF THE GRACE. 379

He with deep delight is tracing,
Every feature fair,
Of His Son, His well-beloved,
Throned beside Him there.

And those lines of glorious beauty
Here His eye can see,
Back to God in light reflected,
Christ revealed in me.

Gazing on the cloudless glory
Of the Lord we love,
When unveiled He fills with radiance
Those bright courts above.

Day by day a change is passing
O'er each lifted brow,
Soon to shine like Christ in glory,
Though so dimly now.

Evermore that light transforms us,
In our Father's sight,
Not His *love* alone our portion,
But His full delight.

Guilty, Christ has been our shelter,
Vile, our hiding place ;
Now, with nought to hide before Him,
We behold His face.

380 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Not because of guilt, but glory,
Doth His love provide,
That fair robe so well beseeching
Christ's unspotted bride.

Fair amidst His new creation,
Formed from Him alone,
God in us His Christ beholding,
Rests, His work is done.

Wondrous riches of the glory,
Won in shame and blood,
And from heaven outpoured in fulness,
Endless love of God.



G. Morrish, 24, Warwick Lane, Paternoster Row.