

A SHORT SUMMARY
OF THE
EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

How blessed and holy a thing it is to have fellowship with God and the Father, in His thoughts, purposes, and counsels. Having done with self-occupation, we are introduced into the Father's presence in Christ, and there His heart is opened to us, and He says, "Now I am going to tell you a little about my plans, and what I intend to do." What infinite condescension and love! Yet such is the subject of this Epistle. In it we have God's heart unveiled to us, the good pleasure of His will from all eternity, His counsels, His purposes in regard to the glory of His Son, and our blessing in Him. This is indeed wholly outside nature, and we are left to glory in God alone and in His Son whom He has loved.

In the Epistle to the Romans we see man responsible before God, whether Gentile or Jew, guilty for his sins and awaiting judgment. The righteousness of God, manifested in Christ dead and risen, and in glory, is revealed for his justification, and, forasmuch as he is connected with Adam by birth, with a sinful nature which exerts entire dominion over him, so the grace of God has given His Son, who was obedient unto death, and by that death and resurrection has entirely delivered him from the power and dominion of sin, the Son of God having

risen into a new place, the glory of God, and breathed into him His own resurrection life, and so freed him from the power of sin and death (John xx. 22). Hence the believer can say, not only that the Son has died and risen for him, but that he has died with Him, and Christ now lives in him. The Holy Ghost besides has sealed him and indwells him, giving him the knowledge that he is a son of God. Thus in the Romans, we are seen as justified, dead with Christ, and in Him in His new position before God, and having a new nature given in the power of resurrection life. Besides, the Holy Ghost dwells in the believer individually. In the Hebrews we see Christ in the glory, as the believer's perfect acceptance,—his High Priest ever living to intercede for him, maintaining him in his place of acceptance whilst passing through this wilderness, and being the Centre of worship of His people, so that they have free liberty to enter into the very holiest, to worship God and the Father. The believer is seen here below, walking through the wilderness in absolute dependence, but outside Egypt. In Colossians he is seen, not only as dead, but as risen with Christ, Christ his life on high, as well as his hope. In Ephesians we get to the highest step, and that is that the Christian is in the heavenlies in Christ, Christ having been raised as man by the power of God, and placed above all things as Head of His body the Church; the Holy Ghost has come down, and has raised the Church in Christ to the same place.

As it is most important for the saints to get really hold of their true place, and not stop short of anything that God has given to them, I will put the position in another way. In the four gospels, we see Christ as the gift of God, offered to man for his acceptance, and rejected. He came unto His own,

and His own received Him not, but as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name. Now this is as far as the gospels go, God's Son, rejected by the world, is received by His own, He died and rose for them, and they by His work, are justified, have peace, eternal life, and a new nature communicated to them. (See John iii. 3-16, 36 ; xx. 19-22.) But in the Acts we get a step further. We have, first, the Holy Ghost promised under two aspects in chap. i.—first as the Promise of the Father, secondly to baptize these believers into one body (see Acts i. 4, 5) ; secondly, we have Christ exalted as man to the right hand of God (chap. i. 9) ; thirdly, the promise of the Holy Ghost actually fulfilled, and the one hundred and twenty disciples, who had already believed in Christ, and already had received eternal life in Him, and a new nature, now baptized by the Holy Ghost, actually uniting them to the raised and ascended Man at the right hand of God, so that being raised with Him, and seated in the heavenlies in Him, they were made members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Thus we have the Holy Ghost in three aspects : first (John xx. 22), as communicating the life of Christ to the soul, and bringing it into a new distinct place and state before God, so that the believer could say, I have died with Christ ; I am not in the flesh ; if Christ be in me, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness ; secondly, as the Promise of the Father, as come down from heaven on the day of Pentecost, giving to each believer the knowledge of the Father and of his sonship (Romans viii. 9-16) ; thirdly, as baptizing all believers into one body (1 Cor. xii. 12). This last is the true corporate place of the Church.

Now, having made this introduction, I pray God that no believer may sit down to the study of this Epistle in a light way. We are placed in a most dazzling light. May we not, like Peter, expose our weakness and folly, and say, Lord, it is good for us to be here, and show, after all, that we have not done with man, by giving some one or ourselves a place with the Son, as Peter did Moses and Elias; but may we, in the dust, be bowed down, conscious that it is all the grace of God that has placed us in such glory, and hear the voice of the Father speaking from out of the cloud, and saying, This is my beloved Son, hear Him. (See Mark ix. 1-7).

The address is general to all the faithful, in the two most ancient manuscripts, though many of the rest read, "which are at Ephesus." The Christian is seen in three relationships in the Epistle: First (chap. i. 3-18), to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ; secondly (ver. 22—chap. ii. 1-18), to Christ, Head of His body the Church; thirdly, to the Holy Ghost (ver. 19-22), as belonging to the household of God, and builded together with other Christians to be a habitation of God through the Spirit. Thus we have God and the Father as the Source of this blessed unity which Christians are called to exhibit together (chap. iv. 1-6); Christ, the exalted Man, as Head and Centre of it, as well as of all things; and the Holy Ghost as the Divine Power on earth gathering all to Christ, building them together as one building, and taking up His abode amongst them on earth. And this is the circle into which all Christians are really brought, though not all, alas, exhibiting it together as it is the purpose of God they should do.

From chap. i. 3-14, Christians are shown their blessed calling, the purpose of God in regard to Christ and them, and the inheritance He has given

them in Christ, who is to be the Centre of all things both in heaven and earth, as well as the power, *i.e.*, the Holy Ghost, who individually introduces them into all these blessings. From ver. 15-23 he prays that they may understand all about their blessed relation to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory—who He is, His calling, His inheritance, His power to those who believe; the latter point introducing their blessed relation to Christ as Head of His body, to whom they were united, having been brought out of their natural state of death. (See chap. i. 22, 23; ii. 1-10). Their state of Jew and Gentile dispensationally had been brought to an end at the cross, and, as one with Christ in glory, they formed one new man, united together by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, by whom they had access through Christ to the Father (chap. ii. 12-18). They were no longer strangers and foreigners outside, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, growing up to be a Holy Temple in the Lord, which building was not yet finished; but in the meantime, on account of the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth, they were builded together as a visible Assembly, to be the habitation of God through the Spirit (ver. 19-22).

In chapter iii. 1-13 we have Paul brought in as the administrator of this mystery, which we are told up till now had been hid in God, but was now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. From ver. 14-21 he prays that they may be in communion with all these revealed things. The prayer is founded on the relationship of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as that in chap. i. is founded on that of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. Chap. iv. continues the line of truth of chap ii., which shows us the true corporate position of all

Christians. They are called to walk worthy of the high vocation set forth in the first two chapters, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (ver. 1-6). They are then shown the gifts of ministry, supplied to them for their edification and growth, which were to last till Christ came (ver. 7-16). From ver. 17, the individual exhortations in regard to the walk commence, founded on two chief points: first, that they had put off the old man, and had put on the new (ver. 17-24); secondly, that the Spirit dwelt in them as God (ver. 30-32), of whom they were called to be imitators (chap. v. 1-21). God is love. God is light. From ver. 22—chap. vi. 1-9, we have exhortations as to the different relations of daily life, the apostle taking occasion (chap. v. 23-33) to bring out the love of Christ to His Assembly, and the blessed relationship the Church was in, as the bride of Christ. And the Epistle ends with the saints being exhorted to stand fast on their heavenly ground; they are warned that they would meet Satan there, and therefore needed to be clothed with the whole armour of God, so as to be able to withstand in the evil day (chap. vi. 10-19), and having done all, to stand.

The whole standing is heavenly. The saints are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ, in contrast with Israel in Canaan (chap. i. 3). The Church is seen seated in the heavenlies in Christ (chap. ii. 6). Its existence in unity was for the manifestation of the wisdom of God to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (chap. iii. 10); and it is shown in conflict with the wicked spirits in the heavenly places (chap. vi. 12). It is therefore against the exhibition of the truth unveiled in this Epistle, that the whole malice of Satan is directed, and alas, he has well succeeded in the professing church of Christ, by joining the

professing heavenly bride to the world, and many earthly lovers, and also by splitting it up into sects, thus dividing the members of Christ one from the other. May the Lord bring back His beloved ones to understand their heavenly standing and calling.

Let us return now to the study of the Epistle. First, the Christian is seen in his relationship to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is no longer the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and *the Almighty* in His revealed relationship to them (See Genesis xvii. 1). Nor is it *Jehovah* in relationship with the Jews, as in Exodus vi. 3. But our God is the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, the accepted Man, and His beloved Son, in the heavenly places. We are, in consequence, blessed in Him in the heavenly places. Sweet relationship; blessed comfort to our souls; for the Lord Jesus is the One who died for us! He stood on earth as the Perfect Man before God, the Son before the Father. After having been fully tested, and found perfect, He died for us, thus closing all our relationships with the first Adam. He died out of that state in which He stood for us as children of Adam, and then rose up into His new position before God and the Father, where He gives us His place and associates us with Himself in this new place, as He said to Mary Magdalene, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God (see John xx. 17).

As having ascended on high, and breathed into us His own resurrection life (see John xx. 22), and sent down the Holy Ghost from heaven, thus uniting us to Himself, we are not only born again, our sins forgiven and our persons justified, but we get a distinct position with Him in His death and

resurrection. We have died with Him, we are buried with Him, we have risen with Him, we are seated in the heavenlies in Him. Our connections are closed with this earth, and with the first man, and we are in the rejected, but exalted second Man, and united to Him by the Holy Ghost. Consequently, all our blessings are heavenly. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ, exclaims the apostle from a full heart. What has this blessed God and Father done? He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world; that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. The source of our present place in Christ is the eternal election and choice of God from all eternity, and in the Man too who was set up from everlasting (See Prov. viii. 23).*

In time this purpose of God was carried out, and by the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, and the operation of the Holy Ghost, we are set before God in Christ in a holy nature without blame, in love. Christ walked before God down here in this holy nature, without blame, in love. He then associated Himself with the children of God of the day, in this holy nature, taking flesh and blood with them; and, by His death and resurrection, ascension and descent of the Holy Ghost, identi-

* We have seven distinct spiritual blessings mentioned in the first chapter:—

- 1st. Chosen in Him before the world's foundation, to be holy.
- 2nd. Predestinated to the adoption of children.
- 3rd. Accepted in the Beloved.
- 4th. Having in Him redemption.
- 5th. The forgiveness of sins.
- 6th. The inheritance.
- 7th. The Holy Ghost.

fied them with and united them to Himself in the new position He took as man, so that they were in Christ before God in this holy nature. Such is our position before God as new men in Christ even now; and we can sing in the words of the hymn—

“In spirit there already,
Soon we ourselves shall be.”

But not only a new nature is ours in Christ, but we get a new position as sons before the Father. God must have men in a perfect nature before Him. The Father must have them in the position of Children before Him. Consequently we are predestinated unto the adoption of children unto Himself. Predestinated before the foundation of the world; actually adopted as children by the death and resurrection of Christ. The death of Christ closes for faith our Adam condition and relationships, and His resurrection introduces us into the new position of sons—He also having breathed into us His own resurrection life. And this, not by any will of our own, but according to the good pleasure of the Father’s will. His will was the spring of our blessing. His will was set upon it, and it was the glory of His grace to carry it out. The result is we are accepted in the Beloved, that is in all the love the Father has to the Son. The Beloved is the measure of our acceptance before the Father.

Beloved Reader, I would pause, and ask you, whether you have learnt that your very existence, as born of God, and as having the position of a son, is by the will of the Father (comp. John i. 12, 13). How much more then must that same will form and rule your life every day.

Besides we have redemption through Christ’s blood, the forgiveness of sins, and that according to the riches of God’s grace. If we are given a place in the glory as His adopted sons, it is the glory of

His grace to give it; if our sins are forgiven, it is according to the riches of His grace, for we are so very poor. If the Queen were to see a ragged boy at her door, who had nothing to eat, and were to have compassion on him, take him in, wash him, clothe him, give him something to eat; I say, That is the riches of the grace of the Queen; for that is a poor boy. But if she does not only that, but adopts that wretched boy into her family, makes him sit at her table, and gives him the position in her very presence, as one of her sons; I say, That is the glory of the grace of the Queen. She associates him in measure with her glory. Such is the wondrous grace of our God and Father. Such is His wondrous calling. Oh, Christians, fellow-believers in Christ, do you believe it? Do you believe God's everlasting purpose carried out in setting you in a holy nature before Himself? Can you thank Him that you are the Father's adopted son, accepted in the Beloved, in whom you have redemption, the forgiveness of sins? This is truly an exalted position, but all yours by faith, and the Holy Ghost. Oh, do not give way to those God-dishonouring doubts that would rob God of His privilege of saving you, but believe Him because He tells you so in His own Word.

But everything we get is in Christ. Outside Him we have nothing. Does my reader say, What do these words "in Christ" mean? Why they mean just what they say. *We are in that person before God.* If I am in a house, I am in that house, not outside it. If I am in Christ I am no longer in Adam; I am in Him. If He is in heaven I am there. It is not what I am accounted to be; it is the position I am actually in now in spirit. It is actually for Christ to have my new life as born of God beating in His heart up in God's presence.

Just as if He is in me down here, I feel His life in my heart. What a wondrous thought! Christ to love me so as to create me anew, take me out of Adam, put me in Himself, with all the other members of the family of God. This is true as to God's purpose from all eternity. We are chosen, elected in Him (ver. 4). We are accepted in Him (ver. 6). We have redemption in Him (ver. 7). We have the inheritance in Him (ver. 11). We are sealed by the Holy Ghost in Him (ver. 13). We are created in Him to do good works (chap. ii. 10). The Church is seated in the heavenlies in Him (ver. 6). The Gentile is brought nigh to God in Him (ver. 13). The Church is a new man in Christ (ver. 15). A house growing up to be a holy habitation in the Lord, and now builded together in Him as a visible Assembly on earth, to be a habitation of God through the Spirit (ver. 21, 22). All the truth is in Jesus (chap. iv. 21); and the children of God are said to be light in the Lord (chap. v. 8); lastly, they are called to be strong in the Lord as their power for conflict (chap. vi. 10). Every blessing is in Christ. He is the Man of God's counsel and choice—His well-beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. Our blessing then is to make everything of Him.

The apostle having now shown the Christian his present calling, leads him on to the consideration of the future purposes of God in regard to His Christ (ver. 8-10). This is the hope of His calling which the apostle prays that they may understand, further down in the chapter. The heavens are opened to the believer, and he is called to enter, by the wisdom and prudence of God, into the mysteries of His will. This He makes known to us, as well as all His purposes, which He has purposed in Himself. It is His good pleasure that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He should gather to-

gether in one all things in the * Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him. The Church will then be the centre of His glory in the heavens ; Israel on the earth. This will be the millennium. Christ then will be the Bridegroom of His heavenly Bride, and King of Israel and of the nations on earth. All will be gathered round Him as the Centre. And all this is the will, purpose, and good pleasure of God. What madness, then, to fight against it, as this present poor world is doing ! What folly to be ignorant of it, as many of God's poor people are ; thus losing so much of present blessing to their souls !

All this is God's inheritance, but the apostle goes on to say that in Christ we have obtained an inheritance. By the wondrous grace of our God and Father, we have our part in this as heirs with Christ, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will, that we should be to the praise of His glory who first hoped in the Christ. If we have the present blessing of adoption as children, it is according to the good pleasure of His will (ver. 5). If all things are to be gathered round the Christ, the spring is the mystery of His will (ver. 9), and if we have obtained an inheritance there, it is by the workings of the counsel of His own will (ver. 11).

What a blessing, thus to lose sight of ourselves, and the workings of our perverse will, which always would range itself in opposition to God, and to get lost in the thought of the good pleasure of our God

* It is blessed to see the glory of the Person brought out here by the article attached to the Name. He is the Anointed One of whom Peter and John spake, but here in the fulness of His destined glory of whom Paul is the exponent. I would mark the passages in the Epistle where the article is prefixed.

and Father's will, carried along the ocean of love's eternal current, and just be the exhibition on earth of being the carriers-out of the Father's good will and pleasure.

The Jewish believers were those who first hoped in the Christ, but now the Gentile believers were added after hearing the word of truth—the gospel of their salvation ; in whom, after they had believed, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest or pledge of this purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.* Thus, whilst waiting for the inheritance, the Holy Ghost has been given to believers as a seal, as well as the sure pledge of their future inheritance. Their bodies were not yet redeemed, though purchased, nor yet the earth, but when Christ returns this would take place, and in the meantime the Holy Ghost dwelt in them. Under the law, when an Israelite got poor he might have to sell his land, and perhaps himself as a slave, to pay his debts, and a brother-Israelite might redeem him (see Lev. xxv. 25-55). So man has both sold himself and lost the earth, by his sin ; but the Redeemer has redeemed both by His blood, and when He returns both will be fully redeemed by power, to which ver. 14 refers.

And now let me ask my reader a question, before going on further : Are you delighting in the Father's will, purposes, and counsels, in calling you to be His child, and making you an heir of His inheritance? Are you delighting in the purpose of His heart, to make His Christ the Centre of all things in heaven and earth? Or are you so taken up with

* I would mark the three parts of the operations of the Holy Ghost bringing us into the blessing:—

- 1st. Hope produced through hearing. (Comp. John v. 25).
- 2nd. Salvation through faith in the Gospel.
- 3rd. Immediate sealing by the Holy Ghost.

your own interests, your own plans, your own purposes, that you have no room or time to think of the purposes of God, in regard to the glory of His Son? Substitute God's will, plans, purposes, and counsels for your own will, plans and purposes, and all will be well. Your heart will then be open to understand this blessed Epistle.

From ver. 15-23 is a prayer that the believer might understand all about this. Ver. 3-14 expresses worship in the sense of what our God and Father's grace is. If I think of God and the Father, and of His grace, I can do nothing but worship Him; if I look at the saints' need as coming short practically of what God would have them be, I cannot but pray for them. Notice in these verses the difference between the expressions of worship and prayer. Worship is the giving of thanks to God and the Father for what He is in Himself, and what He has done for those who approach Him. Prayer is asking for that which will supply our need, or the need of others.

Since the apostle had heard of the Ephesians' faith in Christ, and love to all the saints, he ceased not to give thanks for them, making mention of them in his prayers; that the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, would give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. Thus there is a condition of soul necessary for receiving Ephesian truth; not only faith in the Lord Jesus, but love to all saints; not to members of my sect or my church, of which there is no thought in scripture, except to brand such as carnal (see 1 Cor. iii. 1-3), but to all saints. Where there is a narrow spirit, there is no place for Ephesian truth, though it may be loudly boasted of as mere head knowledge. But where there is real faith in the Lord, and love to all saints exhi-

bited, we ought to pray for such saints, that they may understand all about the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, the hope of *His* calling, the riches of *His* inheritance, the exceeding greatness of *His* power to the believers (ver. 18, 19), as well as the riches of His mercy, His love, and His grace (chap. ii. 4-7). But what natural mind can understand about God—the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory? Even these dear saints needed a special spirit of wisdom and revelation for this; that the eyes of their hearts might be enlightened!

May God enlighten many hearts to understand these things; that they may live more in communion with the mind of God in regard to His Christ and His Church. Truly we are little and poor; our hearts are narrow, our understandings stupid; but, united to Christ by the Holy Ghost, our little narrow hearts are brought in contact with the large heart of our God—our slow understandings with the infinite mind of God. It is as we realize this that our hearts will enlarge, our understandings become more enlightened; so as to be able to understand all that our God and Father has revealed to us. May many dear saints, then, be enlightened in the knowledge of the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, as to what is the hope of His calling (comp. ver. 3-10), what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (see ver. 9-14), and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in *the Christ* when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. You see He would have the saints know all about this God—His calling, His inheritance, His power. We are to be taken right

out of our selfishness. It is ours in Christ truly ; aye, but all is God's. Is it nothing to God that we are set before Him in a holy nature ? Is it nothing to Him that we are adopted as sons, graced in the Beloved, possessing redemption, the forgiveness of sins ? Yes, it is *His* calling. It exhibits the glory and riches of *His* grace. Again, is it nothing to Him that all things in heaven and earth should be gathered in one round His Son, instead of being now all turned upside down by Satan, and that He should inherit all this in the saints ? Yea, in truth, it is *His* inheritance. And if the saints are to be brought through, and made one body with the Anointed One to reign with Him as His Bride over this inheritance, by whose power are they to be brought through ? By *God's* power ! And this power is measured by raising *the Christ* as man from the dead, and setting Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come ; and by putting all things under His feet, and making Him to be the Head over all things to the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.*

“ Head over all things seated,
 He sits in glory there,
 First-born of all creation
 We shall His glory share.
 Head of the Church, His body,
 To Him by counsel given ;
 Fulness of Him that filleth
 All things in earth and heaven ! ”

And now, dear saints, God would not only have you know about His calling, and His inheritance, but about this *power* to carry you through.

* We see here the rejected King made Head over all things to His Church, which is His body. He is taking out of the world the Church during the time of His rejection.

CHAPTER II.

These Ephesian saints were dead in trespasses and sins, but now quickened; they were walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air—the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all (*i.e.*, the Jewish believers) had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. Thus the saints are reminded of their former condition, under the *power* and sway of a three-fold enemy—the world, the flesh and the devil; but God's *power* was greater: you hath He quickened. Besides, we were not only under *the power* of this three-fold enemy, but we loved it. And such were the objects of God's love, His mercy, and His grace! God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with the Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

What power! What love! What grace! He first places the Christ as man at His own right hand, to be Head over all things; Head of His body the Assembly; and then quickens us together with Him, thus overcoming the three-fold power of the enemy, raises us up together, and makes us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ. Here, in connection with this, Christ is brought in as Head, and the Jewish and Gentile believers are shown their position in Him as members of His body. He is seen in a double character, with everything put under Him, as Head over all things; but, secondly, Head of His body the Assembly, in conjunction with which He is to

reign. He and His body together will reign over all things. In Heb. ii. we see all things not yet put under Him, but we see Jesus exalted, and the many sons being brought to glory. But here, in Eph. i., everything is seen according to the counsel and purpose of God, and so it is looked on as already done. And when the operation of the Holy Ghost is shown in regard to the Church (chap. ii.), it is looked at as composed of the whole body of saints between Pentecost and the Second Coming. It is not till the end of chap. ii., and the beginning of chap. iv. that we see the Assembly as a visible thing on earth.

What blessed power, then, love and grace, there is to carry the saints through, and make them in the meantime walk together as members of the body of Christ! Yea, even if two or three only in a place walk together in this manner, they have all this power and love and grace of God on their side, to carry them through against all the power of the enemy; and God means us to be, throughout all the ages to come, the exhibitors of His love and grace through Christ Jesus. By grace truly we are saved, through faith. By grace—the free favour of God, on His side; on our side, by faith. But if by faith, are we to boast? Nay, that is the gift of God. It is not of works, lest any man should boast. On the contrary, we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Thus faith and works are but a proof of God's workmanship. His gift to us is life in Christ, and with Christ, and that life naturally produces the good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in. The moment we get on the resurrection side of the cross, Christ is given to us from that new place, and life in the risen and ascended

Man connects itself with the soul, for we see in John xx. 22, the Lord breathing into His disciples His own Spirit of life, and from this life good works flow out. Besides this, the Holy Ghost unites us to Christ in glory as members of His body (Acts ii.), so that we get one with the risen and glorified Man, and so in spirit are risen with Him. He is raised as man by God; we are raised with Him by the Holy Ghost. This is more than mere quickening; we are united to the raised Man, as already quickened, and so raised with Him. It is only in this sense that we can say, we are raised with Christ, for it is clear our whole man is not raised yet; our bodies are still unredeemed. But in Spirit, as united to Christ, and already born again, we can say we have a distinct place with the Son in resurrection. We are raised with Him, and seated in the heavenlies in Him. It is clear we are not yet there *with Him*. We are still actually on earth, whereas He is actually in heaven. I say this to guard against an error (which comes further on in the Epistles), of some saying that the resurrection was past already, and so overthrowing the faith of some. It is alone by faith as quickened, and united by the Holy Ghost to the dead, risen and glorified Man, that we can say we are dead and risen with Christ, and seated in the heavenlies in Him. Such is the blessed place where grace has set us here. To God be all the glory!

We come now to the position the Church holds in respect to the ways of God with this earth, and for this the believers are referred back to the original position of Jew and Gentile. We are called to remember what we were. Wherefore, remember, says the apostle, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision, by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made

by hands: that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

The world before Christ, after the call of Abraham, was divided into this two-fold state: Jews and Gentiles. The nations after the flood having gone into idolatry, were handed over to a reprobate mind (see Rom. i.), and Abraham was called out as a testimony for God, in separation from evil, and to him was given the covenants of promise. From him was descended the Jewish nation, who were brought out of Egypt by the power of God, and became His witness on the earth, against the idolatry of the nations, being outwardly brought nigh to Him. God dwelt amongst them in a tabernacle and then in a temple; gave them the law, and displayed amongst them His government as Jehovah. Circumcision was the outward mark in the flesh which distinguished them from the nations; which signifies a cutting off of the flesh. Thus the Gentiles were afar off—the Jews outwardly brought nigh. But now this state of things had all come to an end; the Jews had filled up their iniquity by rejecting their Messiah and King when He offered Himself to them, and they were rejected in consequence for the time as God's nation. Now, in Christ Jesus, ye Gentile believers, who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of the Christ. By birth they were Gentiles; now in Christ Jesus dead and risen they had got a new position and a new birth. In Christ Jesus, on the ground of His blood, they had been brought nigh, for Christ was their peace. He had made both Jewish and Gentile believers one in Himself. There was not only enmity between man and man, but the law of commandments contained in ordinances was the great means of keeping it up.

The Jew was forbidden by the law to have anything to do with the Gentile. The Jew was on the ground of keeping the law and in relationship with Jehovah; the Gentiles were outside—without God, without hope in the world. Thus as long as the law went on, there could not be union between Jew and Gentile in one body. The whole principle was to keep them apart. But now Christ has come in. He perfectly fulfilled the law as a Jew, took up its claims in His own Person, answered to them all, and in His flesh in death He abolished it for believers, and took it out of the way; and having risen, He has laid the foundation of a new creation; having ascended up on high and sent down the Holy Ghost, He has united these two into one—He has formed one new man: Himself the risen and ascended Head, Jewish and Gentile believers, newly created into one, the body.

Thus peace was made, the enmity abolished, and, forasmuch as man and man were enemies to each other and to God, so by the cross He has reconciled both unto God in one body, having slain the enmity thereby, and came and preached peace to the Gentiles afar off, and to the Jews who were nigh. Thus through Christ we have access by one Spirit to the Father. Enemies keep apart from one another, but if one steps in and reconciles them, they are brought nigh to one another who were before apart. Thus man is brought nigh to God through the Christ the Peacemaker. In the cross Christ, having fulfilled the law in His own Person, abolished it. The enmity between man and God in Christ was there brought to an end, Christ having died for us. There the Jewish believer ended his history, there likewise the Gentile, and by the resurrection and ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, these believers were united

together in a new creation, a new man, brought nigh to God in perfect peace.

Thus a new circle was formed in the world, outside the Jewish and Gentile circles. Brought into a new position and state by the death and resurrection of Christ, these believers' original state had ended before God and for faith at the cross, and Christ having ascended upon high, and the Holy Ghost come down, they were united together to Him in the glory, and to one another on earth. This was the body of Christ, which is here called the new man. As the great image of Daniel ii. was a display of the glory of the nations, so the body of Christ now became the display of God's glory on the earth, and of what He was purposing to do. Alas, now, what has it become! But such was what it was at first, and no true heart can read Acts ii. without being saddened with the sad contrast between what the Church* was when it was first set up, and what it is now. Then all were together; they counted nothing as their own; they broke bread from house to house; they ate their meat in gladness and singleness of heart.

But let us return. Through Christ they had now access by one Spirit unto the Father. They had now liberty to worship the Father in spirit and in truth; He being the object of worship, Christ the way to the Father, and Centre of worship, and the Spirit the power to draw nigh.

Here then we have not, as in ver. 1-8, the believer's standing in the Head, but the place of the body in the dispensations of God in the world;—this must be understood, so that believers might

* My reader will do well to remember that the word *church* is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia*, signifying *an assembly*.

act together in gathering as members of Christ's body.

Being brought nigh, they were no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, was growing unto an holy temple in the Lord; whilst they, the saints, were builded together as a present habitation of God through the Spirit.

Here we come to the third great relationship of believers as set forth in this Epistle. First, we have seen that they were related to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, by nature and adoption as sons, and heirs of His inheritance; secondly, to Christ as Head of a body of which they were the members; thirdly, here, to the Holy Ghost who dwelt in the Assembly on earth as in a habitation. What a unity to be brought into! What a holy place! Such was the Assembly as first set up. First, in its individual and family aspect it is in relationship with God the Father. Secondly, it is the body of Christ, according to God's eternal counsels, a circle to be manifested in the world outside Jew and Gentile (comp. chap. iv. 1-4; 1 Cor. xii. 27). Thirdly, it is Christ's building, growing up to be an holy temple in the Lord (comp. Matt. xvi. 16-18; 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5). In this aspect, it is unfinished, but will be displayed as the new Jerusalem when Christ returns to reign over the earth (comp. Rev. xxi.). Fourthly, believers are now builded together on earth to be an habitation of God through the Spirit. This is the visible aspect of the Assembly on earth.

It is well for us to be clear on these points, for Rome has mixed up the outward church with the

real spiritual building which Christ is building, and which He keeps in His own hands; so that the gates of hades shall not prevail against it. We must not confound Christ's building (comp. Matt. xvi. 16-18) with that which was handed over to man's responsibility; as the apostle Paul says, in 1 Cor. iii. 10-16, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every one take heed how he buildeth thereon. Alas for the Church on account of the builders who have not taken heed to Paul's warning. One has built on the foundation good material—gold, silver, precious stones; others, bad; and so the building has been growing up in the world, till, in 2 Tim. ii. 19-22, we find the Assembly likened to a great house, full of vessels, some to honour and some to dishonour. And the word is now to depart from iniquity—to follow righteousness, peace, love with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Again: If thou shalt *return*, thou shalt stand before me; in returning and rest shall ye be saved (Jer. xv. 19; Isaiah xxx. 15).

Oh, dear believers, think of your solemn position. Alas! God's habitation has been turned into a den of thieves. The Holy Ghost's presence is utterly disowned and disbelieved. Man's order has come in, taking the place of God's; so that now, a man clothed in the garb of a priest, or dressed in white, reading out of a prayer book, and conducting divine service for a congregation, the majority of whom are unconverted worshippers, is held to be doing things decently and in order; whilst Christians who meet simply as members of Christ, owning the presence of the Holy Ghost in their midst, remembering the Lord in the breaking of bread, and edifying one another in love, are said to act contrary to that principle. All I ask any dear

Christian to do is to read 1 Cor. xiv., comparing it with the chapters that precede (xi.-xiii.), and see who are those who are doing things decently and in order (1 Cor. xiv. 40).

No wonder God says, *Return!* If I have departed from His standpoint I must return to it, and that is, to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ; and to Christ the Head of His body; and to the Spirit the builder and inhabitant of the house of God. If God's habitation has grown into a great house, I must depart from iniquity in it, to stand upon God's original ground. If Christ's body has been turned into many bodies, I must, in faithfulness to Him, disown the many bodies, with their memberships, to own Christ Head of His body, and His membership. The great point in the Church is to see on the one hand that it is *Christ's* body, on the other hand that it is *God's* habitation. How can unconverted people be united to Christ or His body? It would be to connect sin with Christ. How can the people of God call themselves Wesleyans, Baptists, Presbyterians, if they understand that the Assembly belongs to God? How can evil, moral or doctrinal, be allowed in God's house! If so, and it is not put out, each individual must depart from iniquity, to purge himself, in order to be true to that Blessed Holy Spirit that dwells there. Dear reader, excuse this diversion; it is rather the subject of 1st Corinthians i.-iii., and 2nd Timothy ii., but the importance of it has made me refer to it. What I desire every one to realize is that the assembly is *Christ's* body. He is the Head of it, exalted to the right hand of God, above everything. And the Assembly is *God's* house on earth, and the Holy Ghost come down from heaven indwells it. There is no other assembly but this, and

chap. iv. 4-6 calls our attention to this. (See chap. i. 22, 23; 1 Tim. iii. 15). Thus Christ, as Head, must give His character to, and lead, the body; and if God is in His house, He must guide, and not man.

CHAPTER III.

We now come to chap. iii., which is a parenthesis, and which is brought in to show Paul as the minister of this great truth revealed to us in this Epistle. At this time he was a prisoner in Rome, but a blessed prisoner of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the Gentiles. Mark how he rises above all his circumstances. He will not allow he is Nero's prisoner. Jesus Christ has imprisoned him, and for the sake of the Gentiles. He was filling up the sufferings of Christ, for His body's sake—the Assembly. The Gentiles were to reap the benefit of it all in the truth now administered to them. A dispensation of grace had been committed to Paul. By revelation this mystery had been revealed to him. It was not a dispensation for the government of the world, such as Noah had committed to him after the flood (see Gen. ix. 1-7), nor of promise such as was committed to Abraham (Gen. xii. 1-3), nor of law as was committed to Moses (Ex. xx.), nor of the kingdom such as John the Baptist and the Anointed One preached, on earth. All these were useful in bringing out God's ways with man in various ways, and for the full display of what he was as a guilty creature and a despiser of God's grace when Christ came. But this was the dispensation of the mystery of the Christ, and a dispensation committed to a man who himself was a manifestation of enmity to the last testimony that God had given, namely, the descent of the Holy

Ghost on the day of Pentecost, witnessing to the glory and Lordship of Christ at the right hand of God (see Acts vii. 54-60). When Stephen was stoned, Saul was standing by, consenting to his death, and holding the garments of Stephen's murderers.

But Jesus met him on the road to Damascus, in the full career of his enmity, and called to him out of heaven, saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? The poor enemy looked up in astonishment and said, Who art Thou, Lord? The Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. Here was the wondrous mystery unveiled to him, that those Christians he was hating and persecuting were so actually one with the Christ at the right hand of God, that they were His members—they were part of Himself.

By this revelation he was saved, but more than this, he had also a special commission given him, as a minister to the Gentiles (see Acts xxvi. 16-18). For this he himself was delivered entirely from his connection with the Jewish nation, as also from the Gentiles, unto whom he was to be sent. The glory of Christ revealed to him had cut off for him all his connections with earth. He was no longer to fight for the glory of Israel on the earth, but to live for Christ's glory, the One who had been rejected to Israel. The time for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel was for the time put off, owing to Christ's rejection, and the Holy Ghost had come down from heaven to be a Witness of this, and to unite Jew and Gentile to Christ in one body, finally to be the Bride of the second Man, and be seated with Him on His throne. Of this Paul was to be the witness, as well as a minister of the gospel to the Gentiles.

The Messiah had come, had offered Himself to Israel as their King; they had rejected Him,

crucified Him, and after the descent of the Holy Ghost they had still resisted. Now the Messiah (*i.e.*, the Christ) had taken a new position, as the exalted Son of man in heaven. Thus all distinctions of Jew and Gentile were now broken down. The believing Gentiles were now to be joint heirs, a joint body, as well as partakers of God's promise in the gospel. This was a mystery unknown in other ages to the sons of men (ver. 5), but now revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Spirit. In the flesh, the Jew was a Jew; in the flesh, the Gentile was a Gentile. They were kept apart. But now, in Christ, the Gentile had a new nature communicated to him; likewise the Jew.

The death and resurrection of Christ put them into a new place before God, closing their former connections. And Christ having been exalted, and the Holy Ghost come down, they were not only made joint-heirs together, as having a new position and a new nature given them, but were united together in one body, of which the Christ was the Head, where all distinctions were absolutely at an end. The Holy Ghost had united them to a dead and risen and ascended Man. They were now dead and risen with Him, united to Him in heaven by the Holy Ghost. Fellow heirs! One body! Individually saved for the glory! Such was the wonderful three-fold blessing, the mystery of the Christ unveiled.

Of this revelation Paul was made a minister (ver. 7), according to the gift of the grace of God given to him, by the effectual working of God's power: to him who was less than the least of all saints was this grace given, that Paul should preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of the Christ. Thus he was not only the minister of the mystery of Christ, but of the gospel to the Gentiles

(comp. Col. i. 23-26). Besides, this grace had been given him to make all men see what was the administration of this mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known by the Assembly the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus; in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.

Thus we see that this present time forms a new era in God's ways with man. During the interval of the Anointed One's rejection and His return, the Holy Ghost has come down from heaven, and is gathering out of Jew and Gentile a people for His Name. This people is united to the Christ, Head of His body, by the Holy Ghost, and is to be finally united to Him in heaven, on His return, as His Bride, to reign with Him and share with Him in His glory. This dispensation was committed to Paul specially as the instrument for making it known. It was before hid in God. The Church only then existed in the counsels of God; now it was a visible revealed thing, for the display of the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

Thus the Church exists as a visible thing in consequence of Christ's exaltation as Head, and the descent of the Holy Ghost. This is necessary to its existence. Consequently, there was no Assembly before Pentecost—except in the counsels of God. Secondly, it exists by virtue of Jew and Gentile being united together in one body. This could not be before the cross, for the middle wall of partition was not yet broken down. Jew and Gentile were separate. If my reader will consider these points, all the difficulty as to the Church

existing before Pentecost will be at an end. There were individuals born again, but there was no union of believers in one body, which is an additional thing to new birth, and consequent on two things besides redemption: first, the exaltation of the Second Man to the right hand of God; and, secondly, the descent of the Holy Ghost from heaven (see Acts i., ii.). *

The devil had put Paul in prison, but all the effect of it was that all this blessed truth had come out for the Assembly's benefit. All his sufferings had tended to the breaking up of whatever of the flesh in him would have tended to hinder the outflow of such a testimony. He bore about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, and so the life of Jesus flowed out for the benefit of the saints. He was always delivered up to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus might be manifested in his mortal flesh. And so death worked in Paul, but for the life of the Ephesian saints. Thus he besought them that they might not faint at all his tribulations for them, which was really their glory. And this led him to pray for them to the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in heaven and earth was named; that they might be strengthened.

But before I go further, I desire my reader to consider a little, as to who this wondrous Being is, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ver. 14, 15, contain a most blessed summary of what is contained in the worthy name of *our Father*. If it was simply *our Father* as the Lord taught once His disciples to say, (Matt. vi. 9), we should be inclined to measure the relationship, by what He was to *us* as

* This is a third reason why the body of Christ could not exist before the day of Pentecost. It exists by virtue of the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Acts i. 5; 1 Cor. xii. 13).

our Father; but He is addressed here as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. His dignity then must not be confined to the thought of His being ours, but that He is the Lord Jesus Christ's Father. Oh, how this elevates in thought this wondrous Being! The Father of Him who created the worlds; the Father of Him who was incarnate, as it was said, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee; the Father of that Man on the banks of Jordan, filled with the Spirit, of whom He said, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. The Father of Him, who said, Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again (John x. 17). The Father likewise of the glorified One, who said again, Now, Father, glorify Thou me, with Thine own self, with the glory that I had with Thee before the world was; and again, The Father loveth the Son, and hath put all things into His hands (John xvii. 5; iii. 35).

We are introduced here to the Father of Him who has been exalted far above all principality and power, to be Head of all things, Head of His body the Church. In fact, we have only to think of who the Lord Jesus Christ is, and of His present position and future glory, and our thoughts are elevated to an infinite degree, as to the infinite glory of the Father. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the first chapter He is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostle prays that the saints may know all about Him. But here the blessed relationship of Father is introduced to comfort our hearts while walking through this wilderness.

But we have not done yet with the glories of our Father. Ver. 15 introduces us to further glories; the Father of whom every family in heaven and

earth is named; if in chap. i. 9, 10, we get the purpose of God, that all things in heaven and earth should be gathered round His Son; here we get the further blessed truth, that our God is the Father of whom all these various families that shall then be gathered round His Son, is named. The church, the heavenly family, will then form the central and inner circle of heaven, with the Son as Head and Bridegroom, and the angels as outer circle; Israel will be then the central nation of the earth with Christ as King, Jerusalem its capital city—and the nations the outward circle. All these will then reflect the Father's glory and show the unfoldings of His wondrous purposes.

Yes, and not one poor fallen creature of Adam was ever shut out; God's sovereign grace shuts none out, though it will have some in. His will would be that all might be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, but man has shut himself out; he would not come in, though the Father besought him. How often would I have gathered thee, said the Lord, but ye would not. Such is the title of the wondrous Being before whom the apostle bows his knees. What may we not pray for if we know such a Father, such a glorious One, such a loving One, who never shut any out, but will have an elect family of angels, a heavenly family, a Bride for His Son, a redeemed Israel, and redeemed nations in whom to display His glory, and to fill His heavenly and earthly habitation? Oh, then, may every knee bow at the Name of the Father of Him, round whom all things in heaven and earth will be finally gathered. The Father of our Redeemer and Saviour!

The prayer at the end of the first chapter was more in reference to the knowledge of the saint's position and hope, and that founded on the title of

“the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The power that they were called on to know there, to carry them through to the inheritance, was rather that measured by the exaltation of Christ as man, and the saints quickened out of death in union with Him. Here the prayer refers rather to their practical state, and that founded on the title of “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” that they might be strengthened with might by His Spirit *in the inner man*, that *the Christ* might dwell *in their hearts*, by faith. It refers to their inward state. They needed strength. How were they to be strengthened? By the Holy Ghost, who dwelt in them. He had brought all the strength that was manifested in raising Jesus from the dead, and putting Him in the glory, to be Head over all things to the Church, into their hearts. He had first quickened them into life, then indwelt them, strengthening them in this new life as a distinct Person.

The inner man is mentioned in two other places : first, in Rom. vii. 22, where there is distinctly a new nature communicated, and in conflict with that which is called there the flesh ; secondly, in 2 Cor. iv. 16, where it is put in contrast with the outward man, which perishes. The question is, With which is the Christian identified before God? In Rom. vii. he is learning and does not know, and so sighs for deliverance. In 2 Cor. iv. he does know, and looks forward in full assurance to the glory when, the flesh, the outward man, will be forever put off. As long as we are merely born again, we do not know where we are, we mix up flesh and spirit, and cry out, I am fleshly, sold under sin ; but directly the heavenly Christ is brought into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, we are no longer in the flesh : we are privileged to see ourselves dead and risen with Him, identified wholly with the new

man, and not with the old. Thus, besides the inward man, the apostle prays that *the Christ* may dwell in our hearts by faith. This, as an individual state, we see alluded to in Rom. viii. 9, 10. In Rom. vii. 22, there is the inward man without the Spirit. In Rom. viii. 2, 9, 10, we have Christ risen brought into our hearts by the Spirit, and putting us into our new state. In ver. 16 we see Him as a distinct Indweller, bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. But this is the individual state. Here it is the corporate idea.

If the Spirit were there he prays that they might practically realize His strengthening power. If *the Christ* was in them, he prays that they might daily realize His being there, by faith; by looking out at Him as an object, viz., *the Christ* at the right hand of God (Eph. i. 22-23);* and then he takes them back to Divine Love, that was the source of it all, and prays that they, being rooted and grounded in love, might be able to comprehend with all saints the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and know the love of *the Christ* that passed knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Saints of God, here language fails to describe the blessing that we are brought into, or rather that is brought into us. If Christ, the Centre of the divine counsels and purposes, is brought into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, where are we? what are we? How is it that we, mere worms of the dust, creatures that are worthy of nothing but the wrath of God, should be made the receptacles of

* I would notice the contrast between Joshua i. and this verse. In the former, Joshua is exhorted to be strong in order that he might keep the law of Moses. Here the apostle prays that the saints may be strengthened, that *the Christ* might dwell in their hearts by faith.

such glory! *The Christ* in us! Who can measure such words? It is wondrous indeed to have Him, as in Rom. viii., in us, but when we come to add to it all the wondrous glory attached to Him in this Epistle, as the Centre of the divine counsels, to whom everything shall be gathered in heaven and earth, the Head of His body the Church, as well as of all things; and then think of Him brought into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, one can only say it is wonderful! worthy of Him who is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Supposing we stood in the sun, and then looked outward, and saw his rays shooting out all around us. Such is but a faint picture of the state we are in. The length, breadth, depth, height! Who can scan it? David said, in Ps. ciii., For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. This is wonderful! But is this merely our measure? I think not. Christ in glory, on the throne of the Father, is our measure for height! Christ, on Calvary's cross, for depth! Nothing less than Christ's domain from east to west of the heavenly land is the boundary of glory out to which we look. Ah, my reader, we should be overpowered with the glory if we were not carried back to the Source, divine love, and then on to the love of Christ *which passeth knowledge*; we there find relief in that unchanging calm bosom of Eternal Love, which put us there, keeps us there, and is able to do for us more than either we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever in the Assembly. Amen.

It is the power that worketh in us here, and is to be apprehended by simple faith. May the dear

saints here apprehend it. Again, I would have you remember that it is not merely a power measured by what God did to Christ outside of ourselves, as also that quickened the Church into union with Himself, as we find in chap. i. (end), chap. ii. ; but that same power is seen here brought into the Christians by the Holy Ghost, and works in us that we may be strengthened by it.

Oh, is not this enough to enable a remnant to walk together in these last days, and to separate the whole body of the saints to wait for God's Son from heaven? Let Satan rage, let the world oppose by its governments and princes, let the flesh work in the saints, here is a power which, if but a few saints take hold of, will enable them not only to stand fast on their heavenly ground, and be a testimony to the unity of Christ's body, as well as to His future glory, when the Church will abide with Him for ever as His spouse, to the glory of God throughout all ages ; but will also enable them to walk in accordance with that wondrous calling. I would add that it is in the measure that the Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, that we shall be used in gathering the saints. He is the Centre of gathering, and must gather where there is faith. God is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all we ask or think ; but faith must take hold of the power that worketh in us.

CHAPTER IV.

The practical part of the Epistle now begins. From ver. 1-17 we have our corporate responsibility as members of the body of Christ set before us to walk together in love ; and, secondly, the gifts of ministry given us from the ascended Head for our

perfecting and edification. Ver. 17, and onwards, takes up the individual responsibility of each member.

It is important to distinguish between the Church as an established thing on earth, as we see it in chap. i., ii., that is, as the family of God, as the body of Christ, and as the habitation of God through the Spirit, and the responsibility flowing from this, which results in the saints walking worthy of this calling.

The prisoner of the Lord beseeches us to walk worthy of the vocation or calling wherewith we are called. Let us recall for one moment what this vocation is. It has been fully set before us in the first two chapters of our Epistle. First we are called into relationship with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (chap. i. 3), as His sons and heirs of his inheritance (ver. 4-15); secondly, into relationship with Christ, Head over all things to His Church which is His body, as His members (chap. i. 22, 23; ii. 1-18); thirdly, into relationship with the Spirit, as His habitation—He dwelling in the Assembly as God (chap. ii. 19-22). What a holy unity to be brought into! The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is the Source of it; Christ Head of His body the Assembly, is the Head and Centre of it; and the Holy Ghost, the power on earth that gathers all into it, and then takes up His abode in the habitation that He has formed. Such is the holy calling wherewith we are called; the Father's ultimate purpose being to gather all things in heaven and earth round His Son, His Church being His Bride (see chap. i. 9, 10; v. 31, 32). This is the only corporate position Christians have as set forth in the New Testament.

Oh, my dear reader, if you consider your relationship to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and what that Being is who is Head of this

family, who has called you to be His child, made you an heir of His inheritance in His beloved Son, and in the meantime sealed you by His Spirit, will not your whole being, will, interest, good pleasure be laid down at His feet, that you may seek, as His child, to carry out His will, interest, good pleasure which is set on the glory of His Son, and your blessing in Him? (see chap. i. 1-14). If you also think that, as a member of Christ, you are His, who is the Anointed One, made Head over all things to the Church which is His body, will you not seek to walk simply as a member of His body, owning Him as Head, with just, it may be, two or three others? (chap. i. 19-23; ii. 1-18). And if you think that by grace you are part of God's building in which God the Holy Ghost dwells, will you not flee from any Assembly where God's rule is not owned, or God's character held in honour? (chap. ii. 19-22).

We are called to walk worthy of this high and holy calling, in lowliness and meekness, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. But how can we be walking worthy of it, fully, if we acknowledge every worldly system and sect that has sprung up in Christendom? What the apostle prays for the Colossians is that they may come to the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of Christ (Col. ii. 1, 2). If I acknowledge a worldly church, is this showing that I have full knowledge of the mystery of Christ? If I acknowledge sectarianism, is this confessing the truth of the unity the Holy Ghost has formed? We are told to do it, true, in lowliness and meekness, forbearing one another in love; but how can this be fully done, unless the basis of unity is acknowledged, as it is written, "There is one body and one Spirit, even as we are

called in one hope of our calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all?" The principle of sect denies the spirit of lowliness and meekness pressed here. Instead, there is heart-burning and strife. And that spirit of looseness that smooths it all over, and, under the plea of being unsectarian, makes everything right, is if possible worse: it is positive unfaithfulness to Christ. Does Christ think little of worldly associations? The angels who visited Lot, fresh from the holy association of heaven, could hardly be persuaded to lodge in his house for one night. Why? Because of his association with the world. He pitched his tent toward Sodom! Then he sat in the gate, when the angels met him. Oh, worldly christian, beware! Thy Lord can have no association or fellowship with thee in the midst of Sodom! Come out and be separate, and I will be a Father to thee, is the word. (2 Cor. vi.)

The church, the body of Christ, exists by virtue of its union with Christ in heaven by the Holy Ghost, outside a world on which is written Judgment! And this we are called to express together by breaking the one loaf at the Lord's table (see 1 Cor. x. 16, 17). The death of Christ separating us from all other fellowship (1 Cor. x. 18-20).

Dear reader, do you know that that same death of Christ which has saved thy soul, and has put away thy sin, separated thy Saviour for ever from the world? After the cross the world saw Him no more, and will not till He returns to judge it. And so in regard to us, we are crucified to the world, and the world is crucified unto us. The cross is for us not only the putting away of our sins, but our death to sin, death to the law, death to the world, and Christ having gone up on high, and the

Holy Ghost come down, we are united to Him in a new nature, made members of His body. There is one body and one Spirit. We are called to endeavour to *keep* the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. To make a sect, is to *make* a unity. God's unity *exists* in the world since Pentecost and the Spirit of God gives it its character. The Spirit's unity is rather different to the unity of the body: at first, on the day of Pentecost, both went on together, but now only those who are walking according to the character of the Holy Spirit, and Spirit of Truth, are really keeping His unity. He is working on earth in the saints, and forming them in accordance with what the mind of the Father is concerning them, that they should be before Him as holy children; and according to what the body of Christ is before Him in heaven. We are called to walk in fellowship with the Spirit, in what He is about, and *that* in lowliness and meekness, forbearing one another in love; in the blessed hope of the Head's speedy return to present us to Himself as a glorious Church, in one hope of our calling.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, is the outward unity of profession more connected with chap. ii. 22. We are to acknowledge this outer circle, separate from the evil, and to cleave to the one Lord, one faith, one baptism (comp. 1 Cor. x. 1-12). One God and Father of all seems to be a still larger circle. It embraces every family in heaven and earth (comp. chap. iii. 15). The angels, the Jews, the Gentiles, the Church; but it only appertains to the latter to have His blessed indwelling presence. He is in you all (ver. 6).

We now come to the grace given to all the members for their mutual support and growth. There are special gifts given to some (ver. 8, 11), but grace to all (ver. 7). Unto every one of us is given grace

according to the measure of the gift of *the Christ*. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

Ver. 9, 10, is a parenthesis, which brings out the blessed Lord's power over, and title to, all things. The One who ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, is the One also that descended into the lower parts of the earth. He has robbed Satan of all his claims over man, by going into death, and has earned His title to universal dominion. The gifts to the Church are, in the meanwhile, the proofs of His victory, as having ascended on high. And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of *the Christ*; till we all come (1) unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, (2) unto a perfect man, (3) unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of *the Christ*.

Here we find that the gifts of ministry flow down from the ascended Head, for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ, till each saint has grown up to a full-grown stature, being no longer a babe (ver. 14), but a perfect man. But this will not be as a fact in regard to the whole body till the Lord returns. There is no mention here of man-choosing, of man-ordaining; it is Christ who gives them. The apostles and prophets were the foundations (comp. chap. ii. 20). The rest—evangelists, pastors and teachers—remain. The evangelist, for carrying the glad tidings to the world; the pastor, for feeding and guiding the flock gathered out of it; and the teacher, for its establishment and instruction in the truth.

Page 40, line 33.—The Old Testament believers will also have their own distinct place in the heavenly part of the circle of blessing (Heb. xii. 23).

They are gifts to the whole body, and therefore could not be confined to a locality or place. There is, in the word, another kind of ministry—the bishops and deacons. These were local officers, appointed by apostles or their delegates, and confined to one place. These were more especially connected with the order and government of the Church. There were several bishops and several deacons in one local assembly (comp. Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii.). With regard to the *gifts* of ministry they were to remain till the Lord came. They remain till we all come to a perfect man; and that will not be in regard to all saints till the Lord returns. And, for the comfort and establishment of the poor saints in these days of ruin and confusion, I would add, that the whole truth of Christianity, from the foundation truth upwards to the highest truth mentioned in the Ephesians, is linked with that order of ministry which the apostle graphically describes in the Epistle to the Galatians (chap. i. ii.), as a ministry not of man, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ. And then he links all the blessed truths of justification by faith, life in Christ, adoption into the family of God, sealing of the Spirit, and a walk by faith and in the Spirit (chap. iii., iv., v.), with this ministry, in contrast to that of the Judaising teachers who were claiming connection with, and authority from, the twelve apostles, for teaching the believers that they were under the law. So in this Epistle; all the truth of the Church and its calling is connected with the *gifts* of ministry, that is, with a ministry not of man, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, whilst the highest truth brought out in Timothy and Titus, where the *offices* of bishops and deacons are mentioned, is the doctrine of simple grace and salvation, and then

rules for the order and government of the Church. How blessed that the Spirit of God saw beforehand the assumptions of the clergy, and provided for the maintenance of His truth through gifts coming direct from Christ.

Secondly, these gifts were given that we might be no more children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of man, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive ; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even *the Christ* : from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase in the body unto the edifying of itself in love. Thus every member of the body has its work to do, besides the special gifts given by the Head. The joints have their work to do every bit as much as the hands and feet, they convey the nourishment to every part. To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ (ver. 7).

Thus we see Christ, the ascended Head of the Church, as the Giver of gifts of ministry for the benefit of His body. The saints are perfected by them ; the body built up. They are for the furtherance of practical unity, and knowledge of the blessed Son of God's Person, and for the perfection of the growth of the new man. The saints are by them to be preserved from error ; so as to be no more children, but grow up into Christ. And let me ask the beloved reader whether these marks have not been increasingly seen in the Church, wherever these gifts of Christ have been received. Whilst the man-ordained ministry of Christendom keeps the people of God apart, Christ's ministry conduces to unity, separation from

evil, growth in grace and the knowledge of the Son of God.

From ver. 17 to chap. v. 21, we have the individual walk of the Christian set forth, flowing out from his position. This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind; having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts; who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. The walk is founded on two great principles: first, the truth as it is in Jesus, viz., that the old man has been put off and the new man put on (ver. 21-24); secondly, the presence of the Holy Ghost in the believer (ver. 30), whereby he is sealed to the day of redemption, and in consequence called to be an imitator of God in His double character of love and light (chap. v. 1, 2, 8).

We never can walk till our position by grace is settled, and the life of God (ver. 18) is communicated to us. What a life! but that life was manifested in a Man, and that Man was Jesus. When we have received the truth as it is in Jesus, this life is in us, which has its spring in God, and now flows down through Jesus by the Spirit into our hearts. Having this life breathed into us by the risen Head of the new creation, we are no longer in the flesh; we have put it off. It is here called the old man. We have likewise put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth.

The first man was created upright, but without the knowledge of good and evil. He got this knowledge at the fall, but without any power to do good. The second man was righteous and holy in Himself.

He knew evil from what was outside Himself, who was the perfection of goodness, and kept separate from evil. Now our connection is neither with Adam upright or Adam fallen. We were in connection with Adam fallen, partaking of his sinful nature; but now by grace, and through the death and resurrection of Christ, we are brought into connection with the Second Man risen as Head of the new creation, partaking of a new nature which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth.

The first man, Adam, and his nature, is put off; the Second Man, Christ, and His nature, is put on—the Holy Ghost indwelling and renewing the mind daily. This is the true foundation for the christian's walk by faith. The practice flows out from our position, and good and evil are measured no longer by the law, but by what appertains to the first man and the Second Man—the old man and the new.

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another. Lying belongs to the old man, truth to the new. Be ye angry and sin not (comp. Mark iii. 5); let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good for the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. It might seem superfluous to warn the Christian not to steal, but the flesh—the old man is there, and it is a thief. No longer (true for faith) a part of ourselves, for it is put off by the death of Christ and by the power of the new life, but actually there still; hence the warning.

The Holy Ghost's presence in the body is the next thing pressed as a reason for not grieving Him. He is a Friend, in the power of whom you have been sealed till the day of redemption, and is dwelling in you. Now do not grieve Him. Let all bitterness, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice (they appertain to the old man); and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ hath forgiven you. Thus we are to go forth and show the character of God to one another, forgiving as He forgave us, in Christ. Oh, where do we see these precious fruits of grace in Christians?

Alas for the fallen Christianity of the day! It is still, alas, often an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, instead of forgiving as God forgives, and from the sense that He has forgiven us. Grace has set us in connection with the life of God. We are made possessors of eternal life in the Son, and God dwells in us, who is the very Source of that life. We are called to go forth and show that life to others, to pour grace into other hearts; and the greatest sin we can commit is to fail in showing forth the same grace to others which has saved our souls. It was failure in this that the lord could not forgive in Matt. xviii. 23-35. He had freely forgiven the servant that owed him ten thousand talents, expecting him to show the same spirit of grace to his fellow-servants. Instead of which, he caught one of them by the throat, who owed him one hundred pence, saying, Pay me that thou owest; and, because he could not pay, he went and cast him into prison. This the lord could not forgive, and this is but a picture of the Father's governmental dealings with those who do not show His spirit of grace to others.

It is the failure of walking in grace that is now the hateful thing, and which brings under the Father's government. But that is not the subject of this Epistle, which is entirely grace. We are given this blessed life of God by grace. We are called to go and show it forth to others, forgiving one another as God in Christ hath forgiven us.

CHAPTER V.

Be ye therefore imitators of God, as dear children. As being dead and risen men, and having the Holy Ghost dwelling in you, you have the very life of God in your hearts. Go forth, and imitate Him. But where do we get our example? He is love and light (1 John i. 5; iv. 8). Where do we see it exhibited? Ver. 2 shall be our answer: Walk in love, as *the Christ* hath loved us, and given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. Christ was the exhibition of the life of God, and His character as love. He did not only love us as Himself, but gave Himself up to death for us. Legal love makes self the measure of its love. I am called to love my neighbour as myself. God's love gives up itself to death for us; and this is what we are called to imitate. We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, not thinking of self at all; giving it up. Still there is a human side to this love, for Christ was God-man. He offered Himself up to God an offering and sacrifice for a sweet-smelling savour. This was the measure of His obedience. It was not merely perfect obedience to the law, which no doubt it was, but a laying down of this perfect life in death as a sacrifice in obedience to the Father's will, as He said,

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. And it was on account of this that the glory was given Him as Man ; and this is what we are to imitate. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Rom. xii. 1).

On the one side then there was the perfect love of God shown to the world of sinners in giving Himself up to death ; on the other side there was the perfection of devotedness of an obedient man to God, in laying down His life on the altar. It is this latter aspect of it that the Epistle to the Romans alone takes up. Oh, saints of God, do we understand this wonderful life of God set before us here as an example of which we are called to be imitators ?

Lust is the human corruption of love. When man lost the love of God, he went into lust (comp. Rom. i. 21-26). And here, in ver. 3, we have the warning because the flesh is still there : But fornication, and all uncleanness, and covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints ; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient ; but rather giving of thanks. For such an one has no inheritance in the kingdom of *the Christ* and of God. They were to let no man deceive them, for because of these things the wrath of God was coming on the children of unbelief. He besought them, therefore, not to be partakers with them in these things, They were sometimes darkness, but now light in the Lord ; walk as children of light : proving by it what was well-pleasing to the Lord (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth).

Here then we come to the other side of God's character, viz., Light. God is light, and in Him is

no darkness at all. He can have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; no more are we to have fellowship with them. To make ungodly ones my companions, is to cease to walk with God. If forced to be in their company, my very presence and words should reprove them. It is a shame even to speak of what is done of them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light, for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

Here we see the blessed properties of this side of the character of God. It has only to shine without effort; it manifests everything that is wrong. It does not judge, but manifests. Righteousness judges; light manifests. Adam stood trembling in the very presence of the light. It manifested all, but did not judge him. So with the poor adulteress in John viii. There she stood before the Lord fully exposed; but He could say, Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more. "I am the light of the world." How blessed this is, beloved reader, that we are not called to judge one another, but to shine as lights in the world. Grace has set us in the light, in union with the very Person who was the very exhibition of God's character as light in the world; and we are called to be exhibitors of this light. Often we may see two persons apparently both walking in darkness. The light shines in. It cries, Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from amongst the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee. It separates the two, showing that one was as it were asleep in the midst of the dead; he is now aroused, he shakes himself, and he is manifested as a child of light. Oh, believers, are you shining? See from this what blessed work even the quiet shining in of the light may do. It may deliver souls from amongst the dead.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. All this wisdom we learn in the light. He who is the light is also the wisdom of God. We may find many wholesome practical rules as to our walk in wisdom through the world in the Book of Proverbs. Wine and music give way to the presence of the Spirit, who fills us with spiritual joy, so that we speak to one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting ourselves one to another in the fear of God.

The relationships of life follow, and their duties, up to chap. vi. 9. These all existed in the old creation, but now by redemption they are put on a new platform. The highest natural relationship is that existing between husband and wife. A man even leaves father and mother to cleave to his wife. It was the first that existed, as exhibited in Adam and Eve (Gen. ii.). But since sin has come in, God could no longer own the relationship on that platform. Man was lost, and there was nothing but judgment before him. Therefore, when Christ, the Man of God's purpose, came into the world, the test was whether man would receive His Christ. The husband must leave his wife if it be a question of Christ (see Matt. xix. 29). The relationship must be established on new ground. Redemption must be accomplished; man must be set in a new position, in a new life, before the natural relationships could be really owned before God. But in this highest natural relationship another thing must be unveiled, and that the purpose of God to have a

heavenly Bride for His Son, so that there might be a ground and a heavenly example for the duties of husbands towards their wives, and wives towards their husbands.

Since the ascension of Christ, as man, to the right hand of God, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, this purpose of God is being acted out, and a body, a Bride, is being gathered out of Jew and Gentile, to be the everlasting partner of the Second Man. The Heir was in due time born, though God's Son from everlasting (comp. Gen. xxi.). He died and rose again, in obedience to His Father's will (Gen. xxii.), and the Father having given all things into His hand, has sent down the Holy Ghost to call out of the world a Bride for His Son (comp. Gen. xxiv.). When this is accomplished, the Son of God will return to claim His bride, when the heavenly marriage will actually take place (comp. Rev. xix. 6-9). After which He will claim the earth as His own, clearing off the wicked by judgment, and reign over His inheritance with His Bride as partner.

Wives, then, are to submit themselves to their own husbands, as unto the Lord. And that, not only on the ground that the husband is the head of the wife (for Adam was first formed, then Eve), but by the fact of *the Christ* being Head of the Church, and Saviour of the body. The relationship formed between Christ and the Church, and the Church's submission to Him, is the reason why wives are to submit themselves unto their husbands, in all things.

The love with which *the Christ* loved the Church is to be the measure of the husbands' love to their wives. He so loved the Assembly that He gave Himself up for her. Israel, and the rule over the nations, were all given up because of the love He had for His heavenly Bride. These truly will be

given back to Him, but for the present He who was the Heir of the promises gave them all up, for this higher relationship; and that He might set His church apart, having cleansed it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

What a holy and blessed example for husbands to follow! There is no room for natural love here. It is the love of Christ for His Church that is before us. He gave Himself for it, loving it better than Himself; that is His past work. He sanctifies it by the Word, having cleansed it; that is His present work. He will present it to Himself a glorious Church; that is His future purpose. Oh, husbands, is this the measure of your love to your wives? Christ did not once love His assembly and then leave her to herself. No, He sanctifies her every day by the Word. Husbands, do you shew your love to your wives like this, with the final thought of presenting them to Christ, in holiness and glory?

But Christ also loves the Church as His own body. He loves His body as Himself: so should husbands love their wives as their own bodies. They two are one flesh, so that he that loves his wife loves himself. No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes it, and cherishes it, even as *the Christ* the Church; for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Oh, how sacred then is this relationship rendered, by being brought into connection with the thought of the higher relationship between Christ and His Church. The apostle quotes Gen. ii. 24, in view of husband and wife being one flesh. A man leaves father and mother and all to cleave to his wife, in the thought of being one flesh with her.

But there is a great mystery unveiled in this. I speak concerning Christ and the Church, says the apostle. It was not enough, that Christ should become incarnate. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. Christ must die and rise again. He must go up on high, and the Holy Ghost come down, before His Church could be really formed, a new man, one Spirit with the Lord. It is on this ground that husbands are to love their wives as themselves, and the wives to see that they reverence their husbands.

CHAPTER VI.

Children were to obey their parents, in the Lord; and not merely on the ground of the fifth commandment, which was the first commandment with promise. The commandment is owned as part of the ways of God in government, but the higher ground of being in the Lord is attached. All relationships in the flesh were at an end for faith at the cross; but the Lord had risen as Head of a new creation, and had breathed into His own, His own Spirit of life. This had delivered them from all their connections with the first Adam; they were not in the flesh but in the Spirit if so be the Spirit of God dwelt in them. They were adopted out of the family of Adam into the family of God; and this new place of being in the Lord, and this new relationship were the basis of all obedience of children to their parents.

Christ's example, as being subject to His parents, was for them; but this was always founded on and subordinate to the higher relationship between Him and the Father, as He said, when His parents

found fault with Him, Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? (comp. Luke ii. 49-51).

May Christian parents ever remember that the relationships of sons to the heavenly Father, and of brethren together, is a higher relationship than every natural one, and bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The Lord's Name comes in here in connection with responsibility, as authority. It is authority founded on the grace that puts us in connection with that Lord, and therefore it is in direct contrast with law-obedience, which is authority without grace.

Obedience to commandments is not grievous but real liberty, when we know that we are in the Lord. To disobey is to do violence to the desires of the new nature, in which we are connected with the Lord.

Servants were to have the Lord before them in all their obedience to their masters; consequently all eye-service would go for nothing. If the Lord's good pleasure is before the servant, all eye-service for his earthly master's good pleasure is at an end. He will obey him to do the will of God. The encouragement of reward from the Lord is also set before him (ver. 8). This is distinct from that sovereign grace that gives us the glory. Rewards and chastisements have to do with the Lord's government in this world. All these dealings are founded on that sovereign grace that has given us the glory.

Masters were to take the Lord's ways towards His servants as their example, doing the same things towards their servants, moderating threatening, remembering that their Master was in heaven, neither was there any respect of persons with Him. He saw no difference between rich and poor.

Finally the saints were to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. There was a conflict they were engaged in, far worse than that Israel engaged in to take the land of Canaan. They needed then to put on the whole armour of God, that they might be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, like Israel in Canaan, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in the heavenlies. The strength to meet it is in the Lord. We are carried back to chap. i. 19, 20, to be reminded how this power was to be measured. It was exhibited in a Man in the glory, whom God had raised from the dead, and set at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that was named. That power was committed into this Man's hand. God had made Him Head over all things, Head of the Assembly which is His body, the complement of Him that fills all in all. The members of that body had been held under the three-fold power of the enemy; they did walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind, but by His great love and mercy and grace were now quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ. Thus the Church was in contact and union with Him who was the exhibition of the power of God, in raising Him up and making Him Head over all things. The saints were to stand together in that blessed position, strong in the Lord and the power of His might. All that same strength had been brought into them by the Holy Ghost, who was to strengthen them in the inner man for their walk:

and God was able to do exceeding abundantly above all they asked or thought, measured by that same power that worked in them (comp. chap. iii. 16-20). Thus they were encouraged to stand fast against the power of the enemy, in the knowledge of that exceeding greatness of God's power to them that believed, strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

But, besides this, they needed to put on the whole armour of God so as to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. The devil here is the serpent, not the lion, and the armour is for the most part defensive armour against his wiles. Those wiles might be exhibited in a minister, Satan thus transformed into an angel of light (comp. 2 Cor. xi. 13-15), or in a beggar coming to your door, perhaps in the form of a mendicant friar or sister of mercy (comp. Joshua ix. 3-15), or in other ways. Thus in the very place of our highest privileges, the heavenly places, we are brought into direct conflict with the enemy. He has well acted his serpent-like character, in making the poor foolish saints, thinking themselves wise, to represent him as locked up in hell. God represents him here as ranging about, with his wicked spirits, the heavenlies, and the saints are exhorted to stand fast against his wiles. He is the wily tempter of the saints to unbelief and sin, and then the accuser of them before God, the author of divisions between the children of God (see Gen. iii. 1-6; Rom xvi. 17-20; Rev. xii. 9-11). Wherefore the saints are again exhorted to take to them the whole panoply of God, that they might be able to resist in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

The pieces of armour mentioned are the girdle, the breast-plate, the sandals, the shield, the helmet, and the sword; and these, connected with truth,

righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Spirit. Prayer completes the whole. The girdle is the first, and perhaps the importance of it is from the fact of its binding together the different parts of the man's clothing and bracing up his loins for strength for the battle. Truth is connected with it, no doubt alluding to the great truths of the Epistle, but as to the practical understanding of them, and carrying them out in our warfare against the enemy.

Peter exhorts the saints to gird up the loins of their mind (1 Pet. i. 13). The truth thus seems to be connected with the mind.

If I know the truth of the purposes of the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, in regard to His Son's glory, His will as to the children, and their inheritance in Him (chap. i. 1-15) ; if I know what He has done to His Son, in the meantime, for the carrying out of these purposes, exalting Him above everything, and gathering out a body—a Bride for Him (chap. i. 16-23) ; and building the saints together on earth for an habitation of God through the Spirit (chap. ii. 19-22), I shall be walking worthy of the vocation wherewith I am called, endeavouring to keep, with as many other members of Christ as will walk with me, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, realizing that there is one body and one Spirit, etc., and thus walk outside all worldly or sectarian unions (chap. iv. 1-5). I shall be braced up with the truth, and be able to face the various forms of error around me, in their corporate character. If I know again, as an individual, what the truth as it is in Jesus means, and have embraced it, namely, to have put off the old man and his deeds, and be renewed in the spirit of my mind, and to have put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness, and holiness of truth ; then, putting

away lying, I shall speak truth to my neighbour, knowing that all lying is outside the new man, who is the truth (chap. iv. 20-24). Thus again shall I be braced up and strengthened, having on the girdle of truth.

The breast-plate is the second piece of armour, and is connected with righteousness. The new man which I have put on is created in righteousness and holiness of truth, but this appears to be the practical carrying out of that righteousness in my daily walk; loving God with all my heart; dealing justly and righteously with my neighbour; doing to each as I would they should do unto me; for the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit (see Rom. viii. 3; comp. also 1 John ii. 29; iii. 7-10); but this again will only be carried out as practically I bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. It is only then that the life of Jesus will be manifested in my mortal flesh. If I do unrighteously, I get a bad conscience, and Satan thus gets an advantage.

Thirdly, the feet are to be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. Peace is the end of enmity, and is the portion of the new creation, for Christ is our peace. All difference between man and man, and Jew and Gentile, is at an end at the cross. The law of enmity which kept Jew and Gentile apart is also abolished in the flesh of Jesus. The believer is brought nigh and reconciled to God in the glorified Christ, who has sent down the Holy Ghost, and baptised all believers into one body. Peace is proclaimed to everybody from the Peacemaker, who is in the glory; and all who receive the glad tidings of peace, are brought out of the scene of enmity into the beautiful world of peace of the new creation. No wonder the prophet exclaimed, How beautiful are the feet of those that proclaim

the glad tidings of peace (Isaiah lii. 7). The feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace, is the practical carrying out of this towards every one. Wherever I walk, I should carry peace. Thus will my feet be protected from evil. My feet should be marked with peace, for the cure of all quarrellings, fightings, and enmity.

Fourthly, above all, the shield of faith should be taken. This piece of armour is outside, to cover all, and to be grasped with a firm hand. Faith never thinks of itself; it is occupied with its object, and that is the God of all grace, who has given His Son to die, and set Him in the glory. So God says to Abraham (Gen. xv. 1), I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. David says (Psalm iii. 3), Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me, my glory and the lifter up of mine head. Who is the God you know, Christian? He is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Lover of your soul, who has chosen you in Christ before the foundation of the world, adopted you as His son, given you redemption through Christ's blood, and an inheritance in Him whom He has chosen to be the centre of all things in heaven and earth. He is the God of love, mercy and grace, who, when you were dead in sins, quickened you together with Christ, raised you up and made you to sit in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, giving you a place in Christ's body, of which He is the Head. Oh, what a God we know! What dart of the enemy can penetrate such a shield, if held up? The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of His infancy, of His boyhood; who carried Him through the temptation of Satan, the opposition of Pharisees, and the coldness and unfaithfulness of disciples; who enabled Him to carry out the work of redemption for us; who raised Him out of the dead, and by

His power placed Him in the Glory, is the God we know. Such is our shield against the fiery darts of the wicked one. Let me be ever so low, I can always fall back on the God of love who gave His blessed Son to die for me, a poor sinner. There is the answer to Satan's most fiery dart. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. xii.)

The helmet of salvation is the next piece of armour. This is for the protection of the head—a most vital part. It is no doubt dwelling in the consciousness of a known salvation. Salvation is a large term, embracing the past, the present and the future. This should be all a settled thing with my soul. We know first a God who has saved us—not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel (2 Tim. i. 9, 10).

Again, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour (Titus iii. 5, 6). Again, By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. ii. 8, 9). Again, Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls (1 Pet. i. 9).

Salvation in this aspect is a past work, connected with the purpose of God, manifested by the appearance of Jesus Christ, who worked it out by His death and resurrection. It is applied actually to us by the word, and the Holy Ghost, by which we are washed and renewed. On God's side it comes

by His free favour ; on our side it is received by faith, and the soul seems to be the present seat of it.

In Heb. vii. 25, and Phil. ii. 12, we see it as a work going on every day, on the one hand through Christ's never-ceasing intercession for us at the right hand of God, and on the other hand by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost in us, who causes us to will and to do of God's good pleasure. Thus we are carried through all the difficulties and trials of our wilderness journey here below, preserved by the intercession of Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost.

Thirdly, it is a future thing, and has reference to the coming of Christ on the one hand, and the resurrection of the body on the other (Phil. iii. 20). For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the *Saviour*, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. We are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption, of our *body* ; for we are saved by hope (Rom. viii. 24). In this aspect the Thessalonians were exhorted, to put on for an helmet the hope of *salvation* ; for God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. v. 5-9). The intelligent knowledge of this then is the helmet of salvation spoken of in our chapter. The head is the place of intelligence, but without this intelligence being connected with salvation, this vital part is exposed to the enemy.

We come now to the only weapon for offensive warfare used in the passage. This is the sword of the Spirit. The Spirit wields the Word of God as His sword, so should we. The Saviour used it against the enemy in his threefold temptation. And the last was such a deadly thrust, that Satan fled away in dismay. (See Matt. iv.)

There is a seventh thing mentioned, which, though not a piece or armour, is what is absolutely necessary for a Christian soldier to use, and that is, Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for Paul too that utterance might be given to him, that he might open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which he was an ambassador in bonds; that he might speak with all boldness. Prayer is to encircle everything, and then watching thereunto, for dangers and difficulties surround us on every hand; and not forgetting the instruments God was using for the carrying out of His will.

Tychicus would make known to the Ephesians how Paul did, and as to all things going on; a touching instance of that simplicity of love that concluded the interest the saints would take in him, and at the same time cared for them. He concludes by wishing peace to all the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace also with all those that love the Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption. A saint who does this will care for the Person of that Holy One whom God did not suffer to see corruption (Acts ii. 27).

May God in His love and grace own the feeble opening up of this wondrous letter; own it as His own gift of ministry for the saints, specially the young; that they may no longer be children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into their living Head, in all things.

NOTE.

I would add a note here as to the full line of testimony concerning the Christ, the Son of God, as seen in this Epistle. It brings out the full purpose of God concerning His Anointed One. Round Him it is His purpose to gather everything in heaven and earth. This is the fulness of His destined glory (Eph. i. 9-10).

On earth, when He came the first time, it was to fulfil the promises made to the fathers, and to offer Himself to Israel as the royal Son of David. The Gospel of Matthew speaks of this. Rejected by Israel, Peter confesses the truth of His Person as the Christ, the Son of the living God, to whom He gives the first revelation of the Church, and to whom He commits the keys or administration of the kingdom of heaven in its new form, as it was to be set up amongst the nations consequent on Israel's rejection of Him (Matt. xvi. 16-19). But this form of it was to be marked by the absence of the King at the right hand of God. Israel would not see Him henceforth till they said, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah (Matt. xxiii. 39). Peter therefore testifies on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii.), that the One whom the Jews had rejected, God had raised up, to sit on David's throne, but that whilst waiting for this place, He had been exalted to God's right hand, had sent down the Holy Ghost, was made in heaven Lord and Christ, was sitting at the right hand of God till His enemies were made His footstool, that if Israel repented He would come again, and introduce the kingdom in power as Peter had seen a vision of it on the Mount of Transfiguration (Acts iii. 19-21; Matt. xvii. 1-5; 2 Pet. i. 16-18). But the Jewish Nation refused the testimony, persecuted the apostles, and stoned Stephen (Acts vii., end).

Now God breaks with Judaism, and acting on the new basis of the heavens being opened to Stephen, Philip carries the testimony of the Christ to Samaria (Acts viii. 5), which is linked on to Jerusalem by the Holy Ghost being given through the laying on of the hands of the apostles Peter and John. An Ethiopian is next converted, and finally Cornelius the first Roman, or pure Gentile, is introduced into the kingdom of heaven, and into the Church. Paul is now converted and to him is given the new revelation that the Christians on earth were one with the Anointed One at the right hand of God. Besides, he goes into the synagogue at Damascus and preaches that Jesus is the Son of God (Acts ix. 1-22).

Now this introduces us to the full unveiling of the purposes of God concerning His Christ, as we see in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. During the time of the

Anointed One's rejection by Israel, He is sitting at the right hand of God, the rejected King. But the Holy Ghost has come down, and is forming the body of Christ, in union with the Christ the Head in heaven. God is now gathering out of the world the Church which is to be the Bride of His Son, when He takes His great power and reigns. When everything is gathered round Him in the dispensation of the fulness of times, the Church will be His heavenly partner in reigning over all things, and the exceeding riches of God's grace, in His kindness to those who compose her, will thus be displayed to the countless myriads of His creatures in the ages to come (Eph. ii. 7).

All this is connected with the line of testimony that Jesus is the Anointed; but His higher glory is brought out also with it as the foundation that He is the Son of God, revealing God and the Father (Col. i. 12, 15, 19). I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world and go unto the Father (John xvi. 28). On the ground of redemption, and having glorified the Father on earth, He has been glorified in heaven, and as revealing the Father from heaven, He has introduced all believers into His place as sons of the heavenly family (John xvii. 4-8); the Holy Ghost dwelling in them on earth, and sealing them till the day of redemption. Finally before the Anointed One comes to reign, He gives His brethren the glory (v. 22). He will descend into the air, the dead in Christ will be raised, the living changed, and all caught up to meet Him in the air. This is not the kingdom, but the introduction of the family of God into the Father's house before it takes place.

All this is not developed in the Epistle to the Ephesians as to every detail, but the sons of the heavenly family are seen blessed in the heavenly places, having their inheritance there, and the body of Christ is being formed on earth, to be the Bride, the Lamb's Wife (Eph. i., ii., v., 22-33). Her standing likewise is in the heavenly places.