

# EDIFICATION

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A MONTHLY  
MAGAZINE

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“Seek that ye may excel to the edifying  
of the Church.” (1 Cor. xiv., 12.)

VOLUME I.

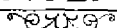
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## EDITOR'S FOREWORD.

THE title of our magazine expresses in one word the object for which it exists. We do not forget that the edification of believers, as also every other branch of Christian service, is subservient to the glory of God, and it is His glory we seek. Yet the particular way in which we aim at serving Him in this periodical is by rooting and grounding the souls of His people in the truth, the building up of all who may read these pages in their most holy faith, the feeding of the flock of God, and especially the shepherding of the lambs of that flock. We desire to do the little that may lie within our power towards "the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. iv. 12).

In carrying this out we shall aim at *simplicity*, which is not to be confused with shallowness. The profoundest thoughts may be clothed in simple language, as witness the Gospel of John; whereas obscurity of language is often used to cover great poverty of thought.

We hope, the Lord permitting, to furnish our readers with consecutive articles of an expository nature which aim at unfolding the direct teaching of the Word, since the

foundation of all Christian instruction lies in the answer to the question, "What saith the Scriptures?" Except we have a sober, intelligent and Spirit-given understanding of the main drift and meaning of Scripture we cannot be effectually built up on our most holy faith, nor can we be proof against the many vagaries, extravagances and fantastic applications or perversions of Scripture, which work so much havoc amongst God-fearing souls to-day, to say nothing of the ensnaring antichristian systems which are around us. As to these we shall bear in mind the injunction to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," whilst pursuing simple lines and using simple language ourselves, remembering that God has "made foolish the wisdom of this world."

We hope to receive help from God to present truth in an experimental and also a practical way. *Experimentally*; because only that truth which thus affects us, however much we may know intellectually, is really effective in moulding our characters into conformity to Christ. *Practically*; because only thus is it evidenced that we have entered into an experimental knowledge of truth. As we obey the truth its government of our lives is seen in practice and thus we are built up and God is glorified.

We are very conscious that the programme we have sketched out is a large one and we

are not sufficient for these things. Still our sufficiency is of God. May His grace be abundantly vouchsafed for so long as He may permit this magazine to be published !

## GOD'S GLORIOUS GOSPEL.

**W**E understand that "*Edification*" is intended to be for the help and encouragement of those who have been not many years on the Christian pathway.

We feel sure that all into whose hands this New Magazine may be placed will wish it a hearty God-speed, and will seek to further its usefulness by passing it on to their fellow-believers.

We believe that one of the first questions that rises in the mind of a young Christian is:---"What shall I read? How may I learn more of those precious things of which, as yet, I know practically nothing?"

We remember hearing a servant of the Lord, happily still with us, giving an address many years ago, when *we* were young. He told his hearers that just after he decided for Christ he asked an older Christian: "What shall I read?" "Read the first eight chapters of the Epistle to the Romans," was the answer. He did so, and duly informed his friend of the fact, asking, "What next?" "Read them again," came the reply. Once

more he perused these chapters, hied off to his adviser, reported progress, and repeated his request for further guidance. "Read these eight chapters eight times over," counselled his friend. The preacher said he did so; and though now he is spending the evening of his days in retirement, he would tell us, if we were to ask him, that he has thanked God over and over again for that splendid start, and that to him Romans i-viii. are still unspeakably precious.

We should like to pass on this advice to our dear young Christian friends, and if our older readers would like to join our reading circle, we feel sure they will be more in love with this precious portion than ever before.

The subject of the Epistle, as the first verse indicates, is

### THE GOSPEL.

As we read and re-read these chapters in the presence of God, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God, we shall exclaim: "Why, it is simply glorious!" As we seek to scale its heights, sound its depths, and compass its breadth and length, we shall all be fully agreed that we may well speak of it as—

### GOD'S GLORIOUS GOSPEL.

We propose to deal only with the first eighteen verses which are introductory to the Epistle, and which tells us what the gospel is.

(i). We have brought before us

### THE SOURCE OF THE GOSPEL.

It is "The gospel of God" (i. 1). Only in the heart of God could it have been conceived, and only by His mind of infinite wisdom could it have been planned. Think of it! It is so simple that a child can understand it, believe it, and be saved; it is so profound that the oldest, most mature saint is lost in the wondering contemplation of it.

Nor is that surprising. We consider what it is as the unfolding of the heart of God. We think of what it does. It takes men and women from the very gutter of sin (chapters i., ii., iii.), and not only fits them for heaven, but proposes to set them down conformed to the image of God's Son (chapter viii.).

(ii). We learn who is

### THE SUBJECT OF THE GOSPEL.

Perhaps we thought it was ourselves, but we would make a very poor subject. It is for sinners, but it is not about sinners. Nay! It is "Concerning His Son" (verse 3). See how He is presented. "Jesus Christ, our Lord." Having accomplished redemption, He has been raised from among the dead, and God has made Him "both Lord and Christ" (Acts ii. 36). "Made of the seed of David according to the flesh." In Him, risen from the dead, every promise of God is established. "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of

holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (verse 4). He demonstrated this in the days of His flesh when He called Lazarus out from the grave. It has been proved beyond all question by His own triumphant resurrection. If the Source of the gospel is divine, a divine Person forms its wonderful Subject.

(iii). We would notice

### THE SERVICE OF THE GOSPEL.

"For God is my Witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son" (verse 9). The beginning and end of Paul's Christian life was the gospel. The preaching of it, by life and lip, was his one concern. We want to say just here that *the service of the gospel is incumbent upon every true believer from the youngest to the oldest, and if there be those who are not engaging in it, they have missed God's purpose for them in leaving them in this world.*

It may not be public service either in the foreign field or in the homeland. It may be in the isolation of some little out-of-the-world hamlet, it may be in the drudgery of the kitchen, the comfort of the drawing-room, the daily round of the tradesman, the professional work, etc., etc., etc., it may be a word spoken in season with much fear and trembling, above all else, it *should* be the life that is spelled in six letters:--CHRIST, but we cannot, we must not, we dare not seek to escape the service of the gospel.

(iv). We see next:—

### THE SCOPE OF THE GOSPEL.

“I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also” (verses 14, 15). The scope was, and is, unlimited. Everybody must hear it.

We may not be able to go to distant lands, nor even to leave our own town or village, but we can tell it to, and live it before, our next-door neighbour, whilst labouring fervently and constantly in prayer for those who have the privilege, and the honour, of proclaiming it to larger numbers. Let us remember, “God so loved the WORLD,” therefore the scope of the gospel is world-wide.

(v). We are not surprised to learn of  
THE SUPREMACY OF THE GOSPEL.

Nor do we wonder that, as the magnificance of it filled and thrilled the soul of the inspired Apostle, he should write:—“I am not ashamed of the gospel” (verse 16). Have we not got to challenge our hearts sometimes as to whether *we* are ashamed of it? Is there not occasionally a blush on our cheek, a catch in our voice, an apologetic tone if we speak of it? Or is it with us that we are so captivated by it, whence it comes, the message it brings, and what it does, that we are positively proud of it?

(vi). We may well be, as we consider  
THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL.

"For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (verse 16). The power of the gospel is commensuate with "the exceeding greatness of His power . . . which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. i. 19-20). There is nothing that the power of God cannot effect, therefore, there is nothing that the gospel of God cannot accomplish. Go on, ye gospel preachers, and if left here during this year of grace, 1927, preach the gospel, assured of its infinite, almighty power.

(vii). And with this we must close, we discover

THE SECRET OF THE GOSPEL.

"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed" (verse 17). Does some reader say: "I do not like that word, I should have expected the text to say the love of God." Read Romans i.-viii., dear friend, read it again, read it eight times over, and when you have finished, we think you will say, "Now I understand why the secret of the Gospel is the righteousness of God, and with a better apprehension of His righteousness, I have a deeper appreciation of His love." It would require a paper of its own to deal with this grand secret and then we could only skim the surface. Perhaps if we stop



here, the editor will allow us to take up the matter at some future date, God willing, when we all have had time to read these eight chapters eight times over. Meanwhile, let us lay aside the paper, betake ourselves to the Book, read Romans one to eight at a sitting and may God bless it to each one of us.

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

## DEMAND AND SUPPLY.

**T**HE one is connected with Mount Sinai  
(Heb. xii. 18-21).

The other is connected with Mount  
Sion (Heb. xii. 22-24).

The one stands for demand.

The other stands for supply.

The one is the ministration of condemnation (2 Cor. iii. 9), and of death (2 Cor. iii. 7).

The other is the ministration of righteousness (2 Cor. iii. 9) and of the Spirit (2 Cor. iii. 8).

The Mediator of the one was Moses (Gal. iii. 19).

The Mediator of the other is the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. xii. 24).

The one was glorious, even as one may look at the star-spangled sky on a dark and cloudless night and see worlds upon worlds—a veritable galaxy of glory.

The other is superlatively glorious, like the rising of the sun. The stars in their millions continue to shine in undiminished splendour, but not one is seen when the sun of our system rises and pours such a glorious flood of light on the scene. "For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth" (2 Cor. iii. 10).

When Moses came down from the holy mount, the skin of his face shone so gloriously that he had perforce to wear a vail. The children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which was to be abolished. And even to this day the vail is on their hearts.

But in the case of the Mediator of the better covenant, our Lord Jesus Christ, all the glory of God shines in His face, and so wonderfully is every question settled for God and for us that the believer can look upon that glory with infinite delight. No vail upon His face; no vail upon our hearts, "but we all with open face beholding . . . the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). What a contrast!

The one was law.

The other is grace.

How lightly, with no sense of the responsibility of their act, did the children of Israel say when the law was given, "All

that the LORD hath spoken we will do " (Exod. xix. 8). Who could keep the law? The flesh in man resented its every ordinance. No one could keep it perfectly, and nothing short of perfection will do for God.

The principle of the law was, "This do, and thou shalt live" (Luke x. 28). It was not, "Do your best," as people are so fond of saying, but "THIS *do*" -it was to be 100% or nothing, 99% would not do, it must be perfection or—*condemnation*.

And seeing the law demanded, and only demanded, its only movement was to condemn, and the only condemnation it knew involved death. It was indeed a ministration of condemnation and death.

Why then was the law given? It was only given to one nation, but it was given to one nation as a sample of the bulk, and it has a world-wide, a universal lesson to teach. Just as an analytical chemist might take a few pounds of material from a rubbish heap weighing thousands of tons in the hope that he might discover something in it of commercial value, some by-product that would pay, but finding nothing but valueless rubbish in his sample, he would condemn the bulk.

So we read, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. iii. 19).

There is then no hope from the first covenant. It does its work when it brings us to that conclusion.

Moreover, the law pure and simple was never given to man. Along with it was given the ritual of the sacrifices.

The former for convenience we call the *moral* law, the latter the *ceremonial* law.

What meant these sacrifices, the sin offerings, the trespass offerings, the peace offerings, the burnt offerings? What meant the day of atonement? What meant the altars of sacrifice? They were all types of God's gracious provision for man's need in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You will remember when the law was first given, and Moses was returning from Mount Sinai with the two tables of stone containing the ten commandments in his hands, he heard the sound of singing. He knew too well what it meant. Israel was breaking the first and foremost commandment, "Thou shalt have no other god before Me" (Exod. xx. 3). The singing was the accompaniment to the idolatrous dancing round the golden calf to the blasphemous refrain, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exod. xxxii. 4).

As Moses neared the camp, and saw what was going on, with rare intuition and courage he hurled the two tables down the mountain-side and brake them. To bring a naked law into the camp in the circum-

stances would have meant death to all in it.

Instructed to come up to Mount Sinai to receive the law a second time he was told to bring with him an ark of shittim wood, and into this ark the tables were deposited (see Deut. x. 1-5). In this we see that God could only go on with man on the ground of Christ and His finished work, for the ark was typical of Christ.

So we read, "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. iii. 24). A new translation makes the meaning of this verse clearer, "The law has been our tutor up to Christ." It is not that the law brings us to Christ, but that it was teaching its lessons until such time as Christ came. There was a two-fold lesson to be learned:—(1) our inability to keep the law, and (2) that the system of sacrifice pointed on to the sinner's only hope, Christ and His finished work. Thus the law is a tutor, a schoolmaster, till Christ appears on the scene.

We thus see that the new covenant was not an after-thought, brought in when the old covenant failed. God knew the end from the beginning. The new covenant was in His mind from the very first. "He taketh away the first that He might establish the second" (Heb. x. 9). Again, "In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away"

(Heb. viii. 13). Hence the word *new* does not merely mean *new* as opposed to *old*, but that the new displaced the old—they cannot abide side by side !

What then is the new covenant ? It is not a covenant between God and man—God demanding and man lightly saying, “All these things will we do.” It is a covenant between God and Christ in which man is blessed in sovereign grace—no demand made, but a ministration of righteousness and of the Spirit—righteousness, setting the believing sinner in God’s presence in favour ; the Spirit, enabling the believer to respond.

We read of the Apostle Paul and Timothy, “God . . . hath made us able ministers of the new testament” (2 Cor. iii. 6). The word *testament* and *covenant* are the same in the original. What then are the terms of the new covenant ? It was promised in Old Testament times, and Paul refers to it as something familiar to his readers.

Jeremiah xxxi. 31-34 and Ezekiel xxxvi. 24-36, enlighten us. The new covenant is to be made publicly with Israel, the fulfilment of God’s unconditional promises to Abraham, 430 years before the law was given. For this Israel must be gathered back to her own land, and the public ratification of the new covenant will be coincident with the millennial reign of Christ.

Its terms are:—

- (1) *New Birth.*
- (2) *Forgiveness of sins.*
- (3) *Gift of the Holy Spirit.*

The sprinkling of clean water upon the people is symbolic of the new birth. This is followed by what emphasizes it, viz: a new heart and a new spirit granted to them.

But the reader will say, these three blessings are what believers know now. Exactly !

The death of Christ is the righteous foundation of the new covenant. Unless that atoning death had settled the whole question of sin righteously for God, He had no ground on which to act in grace.

*New Birth* is evidently God's sovereign act. As the Durham miner put it bluntly, "No man can born himself again." And yet God must have a righteous ground for this, and He finds it in the death of Christ. A new heart, a new spirit is thus given.

*Forgiveness of sins* could not be procured by law-keeping. On the face of it, when a man needs forgiveness, it is a proof that he has broken God's law. Forgiveness of sins can only be on the ground of faith in Christ and His finished work.

*The Holy Spirit* is given as the seal of all this: "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13).

Of course, the believer in this dispensa-

tion of the heavenly calling gets a fulness of blessing which the saint of the earthly calling does not enter upon, blessed and glorious as that is. Yet all believers, of whatever dispensation, have this in common, that their blessing is on the ground of the death of Christ, which enables God to bless in righteousness.

An illustration may help. Take three coins- a sixpence and cover it with a shilling, and cover that again with a half-crown. Evidently the shilling covers the sixpence *and more*; and the half-crown covers the shilling *and more*. Let the sixpence stand for the Gentiles blessed under the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom after the Church is gone. They will, however, not be as fully blessed as the Jews, who will have the presence of the Lord in the restored temple, and all the glory of being the head nation of the world with the Lord Jesus as their King.

But if the shilling stands for the Jews, so wonderfully blest in the future day, the Christian has still larger blessings represented by the half-crown. He is called with a heavenly calling, brought into relationship with God as his Father, and into relationship with Christ as belonging to the Church, which is the Lamb's wife.

But as the half-crown covers the shilling and the shilling the sixpence, so these three circles have common ground in the blessings



of the new covenant, that every one blessed must be

- (1) Born again.
- (2) Forgiven.
- (3) Receive the Spirit.

There is no demand here—it is supply. It is not law but grace. God takes the initiative in sovereign grace—"the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John iii. 8). Forgiveness of sins is ministered when the sinner believes in Christ, and the Holy Spirit (given in a special way in the Christian dispensation) is given as the seal of this.

Lord's Day after Lord's Day, when we respond to the dying request of the Saviour in the remembrance of His death, we have before us His own words concerning the cup, "This is the blood of the new testament [covenant] which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28).

What a day it will be for this world when that new covenant shall be publicly inaugurated; when,

*"He'll bid the whole creation smile,  
And hush its groan."*

Meanwhile we Christians enjoy its blessedness, though our blessings reach still further beyond.

A. J. POLLOCK.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

### 1 *Peter i.* 1-9.

You must open your Bible at the passage indicated and follow this article with the Scripture before you, if you would get any real help. Space forbids quotations of any length from the passage so, as you read, refer to the Scripture and THINK.

If consequently fresh light begins to break in upon you, do not lightly turn from it, but pursue your searching of the Word on the point. It may open up to you a fruitful field of truth and you can resume your reading of the article on another occasion.

**W**E begin by noticing certain features which characterize the whole epistle:—

1. It is definitely called in its heading a *general* or catholic epistle, inasmuch as it is not written to any particular church, nor to an individual, as most of the others.

2. It definitely addresses the "*strangers scattered*" in the provinces of Asia Minor, yet "*elect*"—*i.e.*, Peter writes to converted people of his own nation scattered throughout the regions to the north of Palestine. Peter was the apostle to the circumcision (see Gal. ii. 7, 8), yet it was Paul who traversed these lands and evangelized the Jews while carrying the Gospel to the Gentiles; so Peter exercised his ministry towards them by pen and ink.

3. It is a definitely *pastoral* epistle.

Peter manifests throughout it his shepherd care for the spiritual well-being of those to whom he wrote. He gives instruction in Christian truth, but even before he concludes his instruction and turns to exhortation, he pauses to deal with the practical state of their souls, as witness verses 13-17 in the midst of chapter i. In all this Peter was true to his commission to "feed" or "shepherd" the sheep and lambs of Christ (John xxi. 15-17).

4. These things being so, there are a very large number of allusions to Old Testament Scripture, with which his original readers were so well acquainted. This is especially marked in chapters i. and ii., wherein he unfolds the place and condition and hopes which now were theirs as Christians. He *quotes* plentifully from the Old Testament; but beyond this, almost every sentence contains an *allusion* to the ancient Scriptures, and it is the catching of these allusions that so greatly helps in the understanding of the Epistle.

Commencing then our reading of the Epistle, we find the opening address in verses 1 and 2. To whom does he write? To "strangers scattered" or "sojourners of the dispersion," to people who were a standing witness to the fact that the Jew had forfeited his ancient privileges, to folk who had lost all the earthly foothold they ever had, though it was a big foothold as originally granted.

Yet the sojourners he addressed were not by any means all the scattered Jews of those provinces, but such of them only as were "elect," or chosen of God.

Three things are mentioned as to God's choice of them, connected respectively with the Father, the Spirit and Jesus Christ. Note the prepositions used:—

"According to," indicating *character*.

"Through," indicating the *means* employed.

"Unto," indicating the *end* in view.

God's choice of them—and of us, for both Jew and Gentile come into the same Christian blessings on the same ground, as Paul's epistles show—was characterized by His foreknowledge as Father. What a comfort this is ! How far removed it is from the blind fate which is supposed by some to preside over human destiny. God's election is never capricious and the idea of a sinner earnestly desiring salvation, and yet prevented by an adverse decree, is a nightmare of human reason and not Scripture. God chooses, knowing the end from the beginning, and therefore His choice is always right and justifies itself in its results.

His choice is made effectual "through sanctification of the Spirit." The root idea of "sanctification" is "setting apart for God" and the Holy Spirit is He who, by His inward life-giving work, sets apart the one who is the subject of it.

The end in view is that the one so set apart should be marked by the obedience of Christ—that is, obey even as He obeyed—and also come under the efficacy of His blood to this end. The words “of Jesus Christ” refer to both the obedience and the sprinkling of blood, but why, we may ask, is this order observed; why not the reversed order, for do we not need the cleansing of His blood before we can obey at all? The answer is, because of the reference there is to Old Testament Scripture.

They belonged racially to the people who were God’s elect nation, chosen in Abraham, and sanctified, that is, set apart, as Exodus xiii. 2 testifies. Now read Exodus xxiv. 3-8, and you will observe there the order, *first* the obedience promised which the law demanded, *then* the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifice in ratification. Peter, addressing believers who were very familiar with this, carefully observes this order, only showing that we Christians have these things on a far higher plane in a vital and spiritual way, and the blood of Jesus Christ instead of being like that of the sacrifices of Exodus xxiv. 8, which had a *penal* force (that is, it indicated that death was the penalty attached to disobedience to the law’s righteous demands) is wholly *purifying*, and the righteous basis of all our standing and relations with God. Sanctified by the Spirit and sprinkled by the blood of Christ we are committed to a life of obedience after the very pattern of

Christ. With so exalted a course set before us we certainly need the multiplication of both grace and peace !

Verse 3 opens the apostle's message in striking a note of praise to God, now revealed as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, since He has begotten us again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As belonging to the commonwealth of Israel they had formerly had national hopes which centred in a Messiah upon earth, but the light of those hopes was quenched in their hearts when He died rejected, crucified between two thieves. The story of the two going to Emmaus, as told in Luke xxiv., is a telling illustration of this ; but, when those two had their eyes opened and beheld Him risen, a new hope dawned in their hearts which nothing on earth could quench. It was a living hope because centred in a Saviour living beyond the power of death. How aptly the very words of verse 3 would have sprung from their lips as they entered the upper room in Jerusalem to tell the news to the rest after their return journey of three-score furlongs ! They were like men who had been born again into a new world of hope and expectation, in the great mercy of God.

Israel's hopes, when brought out of Egypt, centred in the land that was to be given to them as their inheritance. The Christian's hope also has an inheritance connected with it, as verse 4 shows, but what a contrast is

here ! Palestine as an inheritance proved a sad disappointment. The land itself was all that a land should be, still it was capable of being corrupted, and consequently it was speedily defiled by those who inherited it, since they were left to their own responsibility. Thus, bit by bit it was forfeited and it faded away. *Our inheritance is reserved in the heavens and consequently it is beyond the possibility of corruption, undefiled and unfading; and we, for whom it is reserved, are being kept by the power of God for it. There shall, therefore, be no slip betwixt the cup of the inheritance and our lips !*

The power of God keeps us and not our fidelity, yet God's power works through faith. Faith is our side of the matter. God is sovereign in exercising His power, and we are responsible as to the exercise of faith. Many are puzzled as to how to put these two things, God's sovereignty and man's responsibility together, and regard them as quite incompatible and irreconcilable. Yet here, in this fifth verse, they are found going hand in hand, preserving the believer to the salvation that awaits him in the last time. The salvation mentioned here is future. It is the final deliverance that awaits the believer at the coming of the Lord. That final deliverance is a certainty before us; yet we cannot await it with self-confidence, for nothing short of the power of God is needed to keep us, nor can we await it with care-

lessness, for God's power is effective through faith, on our side. How then do we await it? Why, with exultation, yet tempered with the heaviness of many trials, as verse 6 declares. The coming glory shone brightly before the faith of these early Christians and filled them with great rejoicing, so that they were like ships with sails set and filled with heaven's breezes. On the other hand they had plenty of ballast in the shape of heavy trials. These trials are permitted in love, for they only come "*if need be.*" In one way or another we all do need them. If we try to rejoice in the world and its pleasures we need trials to dislodge us from the world by stirring up the comfortable nest we would fain build below. If we are exulting in the coming glory we need them as sobering and steadying ballast, lest our exulting should overbalance us.

The heavy trials, however, are "*now, for a season,*" even as the "pleasures of sin," which charm the poor worldling are "for a season" (Heb. xi. 25). Soon the worldling will say good-bye to his pleasures, and the Christian to his trials.

Moreover, the very trials themselves are profitable as working in us—in our character and lives—the qualities that glorify God. Hence verse 7 declares that faith (which is much more precious than gold) being tested by the fire of persecution, will come out to the praise and honour and glory of God when Christ appears. Many a bold con-



fessor, suffering fiery trial—even to death perhaps—may have been tempted to think that, their light being extinguished, all was *lost*. The apostle tells them that, on the contrary, all would be *found* in that day. Christ being revealed in His glory, everything to His praise and honour will come into the light and be displayed.

Then Christ will appear, or be unveiled, as the word is. At the present time He is unseen. These dispersed exiles had never seen Jesus in the days of His flesh for they had been driven far outside the land of Promise, nor were they then looking on Him. Yet they loved Him, and He was the Object of their faith and this caused them to exult with a joy beyond words and full of glory.

We, like them, have never yet seen the Lord, but is faith as active with us? Faith, remember, is the telescope of the soul, bringing into the field of our spiritual vision what is unseen to mortal eyes. Then we see Jesus as a living, bright Reality, and our joy is filled with the glory of what He is and the hope of what He is going to be, which is beyond all human language. Believing we *rejoice*, and believing we *receive* the salvation of our souls, for *soul*-salvation is the end, or result, of faith in the risen Saviour.

Love, faith, joy and hope are all found in

verse 8, though the last is inferred and not explicitly named. How excellent must be the spiritual state marked by these things ! Yet all produced not by being occupied with one's spiritual state, but by Christ Himself being the loved Object of faith's vision.

F. B. HOLE.

## ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

Propounded at some recent meetings.

What is the difference between the *calling* in Romans viii. 30, Ephesians iv. 1, and the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospels, "For many are *called* but few are *chosen*"?

IN each of the three Scriptures you cite the word *calling* has a somewhat different significance.

There is first of all the general call from God which reaches men in the gospel. To this the Lord's words in Matthew xxii. 14 refer.

Then there is the particular call or, as it is sometimes termed, the effectual call, which reaches the individual soul when the gospel is received and obeyed in faith. Romans viii. 30 refers to this.

Thirdly, there is the place to which we believers are called, characterized by certain relationships and privileges and imparting to us a certain character. This is the vocation or calling of Ephesians iv. 1 and 4.

If a large business firm sent word to the head of a commercial college that they had half-a-dozen posts to offer to enterprising young men the result would probably be as follows:—

1. The issuing of a general “call” by the head of the college to his students, inviting their applications.

2. Many applications received, and after careful sifting the chosen six “called” into their new posts by definite appointment.

3. Each of the six would now have a new “calling” in life with responsibilities and privileges, and they would have to behave suitably thereto.

This may serve as an illustration of the difference.

When does a soul become indwelt by the Holy Spirit? Does being “sealed by the Spirit” and the indwelling of the Spirit take place at precisely the same time?

The answer to the first part of your question is found in Ephesians i. 13. That verse furnishes us with the divine order which is always observed, viz., first, hearing “the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation”; second, believing the gospel; third, the sealing of the Spirit. Having heard, we believe; having believed, we are sealed. *Hearing, believing, sealing* is the invariable order.

If the Acts of the Apostles be searched, differences can be discovered as to details in connection with the reception of the Spirit by one and another; in one case baptism preceded it, and in another it followed it, and so on. But the order just indicated is always observed and there is no variation as to that, though in an exceptional case a short interval may clapse between believing and sealing.

The answer is therefore that we become indwelt by the Spirit when we believe the gospel of our salvation,—*the tidings of the crucified and risen Saviour*. To believe merely so much truth as John the Baptist preached does not bring with it the sealing of the Spirit as Acts xix. 1-6 shows. *What* we believe is clearly therefore of the utmost importance.

When we speak of the sealing of the Spirit we allude to one great aspect or feature of His indwelling. The Spirit's indwelling is one of the great characteristic features of this dispensation, and it is His indwelling that is the seal. By putting His Spirit within us God sets His seal upon us and marks us out as His.

This being so, the sealing of the Spirit and His indwelling must clearly take place at the same time. His work in us producing the new birth is, of course, another matter entirely. He works in us before He indwells us.

## JUST AFTER CONVERSION.

**J**UST *before* conversion we were full of fears and questionings. The fact is, our consciences were at work and well we may thank God that they were. Our sins rose up before our memories. They witnessed against us and we found ourselves impeached by the unerring Word of God, and consequently, conscience spoke against us with an accusing voice.

Every Christian reader has known something of this. There is no such thing as cleansing from sin without there being conviction of sin. First sin is confessed by man, then it is covered by God. As David put it, "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psa. xxxii. 5). The

### ACCUSINGS OF CONSCIENCE

are a very real and pressing thing and once really produced by the action of the Spirit of God there is no true rest until they are silenced.

What silenced them? One thing, and one thing only—the knowledge of the finished work of Christ. We probably turned first of all to our own works. They were but human, imperfect and unfinished. The atoning sacrifice of Christ was divine, perfect and complete. Hence His dying cry,

“IT IS FINISHED ” (John xix. 30).

Here was that which presented a full answer to the accusings of our consciences. “ Who is he that condemneth ? ” asks the apostle. Can even our own consciences condemn ? NO, for “ It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God ” (Rom. viii. 34).

Having turned to God and got free of the accusings of conscience many of us, however, fell victims to

### MISGIVINGS OF HEART,

and hence, just after conversion, we found ourselves not as happy as we knew we rightly should be. Some may be a prey to these misgivings to-day—even as you read these lines. If so, it is because you are in some way seeking a point of assurance and repose in yourself.

You are not seeking any merit in yourself. Doubtless you are clear as to that and have learned to look away from yourself and wholly to Christ in that connection. But are you seeking stability and constancy and fixity in yourself ? Something so constant and stable that you might be able to congratulate yourself as being unquestionably one of the people of God because things are so satisfactory in the realm of your feelings !

You are bound to be disappointed in that direction. A far more advanced Christian than either you or I had to write,

“Yet, Lord, alas ! what weakness  
Within myself I find,  
No infant’s changing pleasure  
Is like my wandering mind.”

And just as he could not find any point of assurance or anchorage in himself and his spiritual state and feelings neither can we.

The fact is, God does not want us to find anything in ourselves. Not what we are or can do, but the finished work of Christ silences all accusings; and so also not our feelings, but the definite and abiding Word of God dismisses all misgivings. If we would say goodbye to all misgivings we must know the force of the words,

“IT IS WRITTEN” (John viii. 17; x. 34).

The Jews came to the Lord with a false insinuation. “How long dost Thou make us to *doubt* ?” said they, “if Thou be the Christ tell us plainly.” His answer was, “I told you.” He gave them His *spoken* word which was the Word of God. A moment later they accused Him of blasphemy. His reply commenced thus—“Is it not *written* in your law”—referring them to the Scriptures. To-day we have not the spoken Word of God. This ceased with the disappearance of the inspired apostles. The written Word of God remains and is the antidote to all doubts. It alone has *authority*.

There is no authority in our impressions or feelings—even those which may be produced by the Spirit of God. Nothing that fluctuates and changes *can* be authoritative. A clock which gained yesterday and lost to-day is not one by which people will set their watches, even if it happens to keep good time to-morrow. Somewhere there is laid up the authoritative yard measure. It is correct to the ten-thousandth part of an inch and deposited where it is beyond the reach of alteration or tampering. It is the authoritative standard by which all good measures may be tested. But then it is unalterable.

In things spiritual therefore, we need not have misgivings. He who has not really trusted in Christ should have none as to his position. He is *not* saved and should know it. We who have trusted in Him should have none. The Word of God declares we *are* justified. We know it, taking God at His Word.

Some of you would tell me that you are converted and have the assurance of your justification and place of favour before God, yet you are not really very happy. You have a vague sense of disappointment and emptiness and failure. The fact is, you have

#### LONGINGS OF SOUL,

—and they are not satisfied.



Now listen ! They never will be satisfied until you discover in Christ an Object to command your affections, a Master to control your life and service. When His disciples were in the storm on the lake they were filled with fears and longings for land. Jesus appeared and made Himself known to them in the words,

“ IT IS I ” (John vi. 20),

that was enough. Their fears ceased and their longings were satisfied.

Have you ever yet, by faith, caught a soul-satisfying vision of Christ in His glory ? Does He seem to you so attractive that you catch a little of Paul's spirit—“ that I may *win* Christ . . . that I may *know* Him . . . that I may *apprehend* that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus ” (Phil. iii. 8-12) ? Does His service occupy and delight you so that you can also say with Paul, “ Whose I am and whom I serve ” (Acts xxvii. 23) ? It so you will not be amongst those who drift on aimlessly and unhappily with the world's stream.

The aimless and objectless person is a sorry sight wherever you find him, and never more so than when it is an aimless and objectless *believer* that is before you. Be not thus, good Christian reader, we beseech you. The Lord Jesus Himself is infinitely worthy not only of your heart's

trust, but also of your heart's adoration and service. If hitherto you have been asleep as to this do not slumber on another hour. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," or "shine upon thee" (Eph. v. 9). Oh, what a transformation is wrought in the heart and life of one who comes into the shining of Christ !

Happy indeed it is if this blessedness is ours, not at the end of our careers, but at the beginning of them—just after conversion.

F. B. HOLE.

## SINS AFTER CONVERSION.

**A**LAS ! that it should be possible to speak of such. Many a young convert, in the first flush of the joy of salvation, imagines that he is never going to sin again, and the first time he does he is often plunged into the depths of despair.

He finds that there is an evil nature within, unchanged, incapable of anything but evil, and although he may by God's grace and help be able to refrain from following out the desires of the flesh, they are there to his horror and surprise. Often he learns more of what sin is after conversion than before.

He finds that before conversion there was no conflict—after conversion there is, and often it is so strenuous that he may begin to wonder if he is saved after all.

But the fact that there is conflict shows that along with the presence of old desires there are new desires—the old desires are of the flesh, always vile and evil—the new desires are of the new divine nature God gives to all His own—hence there is conflict.

An illustration may help. An infidel judge in America drove out into the country to do some duck shooting, taking with him, Sambo, his coloured coachman, who was a true but unintelligent Christian.

As they drove along the judge said, "Sambo, how can you explain this? Here am I—I don't believe in God or Christ or the Bible or heaven or hell, and I am left in peace. Here you are, a Christian, and you are always groaning and complaining of your badness and how the devil tempts you. Are you better off than I am? Explain this, Sambo."

Sambo scratched his woolly pate, but could frame no answer to the judge's question.

At length the duck haunts were reached. The judge killed and wounded some ducks, and Sambo ran off with the intention of picking up the dead ducks. The judge shouted out, "Sambo, leave the dead ducks alone. Go after the wounded ones, make sure of them—the dead ones will wait."

Sambo obeyed instructions, and coming back said, "Master, I can answer your question now. You are the dead duck. The devil leaves you alone for he can get you at any time; but I am the wounded duck, and he goes after me."

The moral is easily learned from the foregoing illustration. *Conflict* marks the born-again soul. In one sense, instead of leading the young convert to despair, it ought to really encourage him. It is the proof of a new nature, or else there would be no distress when the old nature's desires urge one to sin.

After the first happy flush of conversion we often go through a trying period in learning that the flesh is the flesh still, and that the flesh is still in us, unchanged and unchangeable. But we also learn there is a new nature, which gives us desires after God and truth and holiness.

How then is sin dealt with? Are all our sins forgiven up to the moment of conversion, and sins after conversion to be forgiven as they arise? This is the idea that very many Christians have.

I once heard a prominent Christian worker tell a crowd of young men that their sins were all forgiven when they were converted, and that the blood of Jesus kept cleansing them day by day as Christians. He quoted in proof of his statement the verse, "The

blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." He laid great emphasis on the word "cleanseth."

But that form of the verb is much used in the apostle John's writings. "Cleanseth" in that verse does not mean a continuous action, but describes what is *characteristic*. For instance, we have the verse, "He that *believeth* on the Son hath eternal life." Now there is a moment when a person believes on the Son, and that moment becomes the possessor of eternal life, according to this verse. The believing is not an oft-repeated act, but it is characteristic of the believer—he believes. I might hold up a bottle of deadly poison before a class of students, and say, "This poison kills." It is not killing at that moment. It is safe in the bottle. But to kill is its characteristic feature.

Now the character of the blood is to cleanse from ALL sin. The moment it is efficacious in your case and mine it cleanses from ALL sin. We have past, present and future. In one sense God has no past, present and future with Him. His very name as Jehovah means I AM. Our future is present before Him. So we can take up the very language of Scripture, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter ii. 24), and yet not one of your sins or mine were committed when the Saviour died on the cross. And if God looked into the future thus and Christ bore the countless sins of multitudes un-

born, we may ask, How many of our sins did He bear? If He only bore our sins up to conversion, it would avail nothing, for if we sin after conversion and Christ had not atoned for all our sins, He will not die again, and we should in that case be assuredly lost for ever.

No, thank God, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from ALL sin" (1 John i. 7). "I write unto you, little children, because your sins ARE FORGIVEN you for His name's sake" (1 John ii. 12).

Hebrews x. is very emphatic. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE FOR ALL" (verse 10). "By one offering He hath PERFECTED FOR EVER them that are sanctified" (verse 14). "Their sins and iniquities will I remember NO MORE" (verse 17). And as if to emphasize this it adds, "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (verse 18).

No, the sins of the believer are ever looked at in Scripture as forgiven once and for ever in their totality. They are gone and gone for ever from the sight of God.

But is God then indifferent as to the believer's sins? We know that He is not. His holy government comes in on our behalf. The apostle Peter tells us, "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what

shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter iv. 17, 18)

The fact is, God takes special reckoning of the lives of His saints.

It is as if, when we are converted, God takes the book of our responsible lives *as sinners*, giving us the forgiveness of all our sins, letting us know the blessedness of "the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. iv. 8), and that righteousness without works is imputed, *and closes the book ONCE AND FOR EVER*, never to be re-opened.

But if God, as it were, closes the book of reckoning between Himself and the sinner, He opens another book of reckoning between the Father and His child.

There is no fear of *penal* punishment for the believer, there may be *parental* punishment. The believer is never to come into judgment in its eternal aspect. He has eternal life and will never perish. These are the assuring words of the Lord Himself.

But we have the exhortation, "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" (Heb. xii. 9). And we are told in the same chapter, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (verse 6).

And to show that the punishment or discipline is just because we are for ever saved, we read, "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. xi. 32).

But what is the course the believer should pursue if he is in the sad case of having sinned? Self-judgment is the first step—"if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Cor. xi. 31). Confession to God our Father is the next step. Examine carefully 1 John i. 5--ii. 2. The ground of our being in the light, and having fellowship is that "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Yet it goes on to say, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," and then "if we *confess* our sins [as believers] He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

We do not come to God as sinners, but to the Father as sinning saints. We come in the knowledge that the sin has been for ever atoned for at the cross, and this should lead to a sense of grace and a deeper repentance, for have we not sinned as those who belong to Christ, whose bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost—sinned against the light and in the knowledge of what sin cost Christ on the cross?



It is like a spot of ink on a white dress, whereas the sinner's sin is like a spot of ink on a black dress.

So much so is this the case that there is "a sin . . . unto death" (1 John v. 16), and also we read of the many "weak and sickly among you and many sleep" (1 Cor. xi. 30).

But when self-judgment takes place and confession is made, then there comes assuredly parental forgiveness and that on the ground of the whole question being settled once and for ever on the cross.

"My children, these things write I unto you," wrote the apostle John, "that ye sin not," and, as if horrified at the prospect, and reluctant to speak of a believer sinning, he adds, "and if *any man* sin [not any believer, though he is a believer] we [believers] have an Advocate with the Father," showing the relationship existing and that it is the Father we go to, and adding that the Advocate (the same word as the "Comforter" in John's gospel) is "Jesus Christ the righteous."

What encouragement for the believer when broken-hearted, he can come in self-judgment and confession and get forgiveness—parental forgiveness—and communion and happiness are restored. We know how these things work in the family circle, which serves as an illustration of these divine things.

May we all be very sensitive as to sin in our lives as Christians. A. J. POLLOCK.

## THE JOY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

**N**EVER were the seductions of the world more attractive than to-day, yet their emptiness is as manifest as ever. True joy is still only to be found in CHRIST and His service. This has been proved and illustrated times without number, yet we will relate two scenes by way of contrast. Both are perfectly true and occurred almost at the same time, and within the knowledge of the writer.

### SCENE ONE.

One brilliant summer day in a delightful part of England, was seated a young lady in her room. It was a most luxurious apartment, every comfort and convenience lay ready to her hand. It would have been difficult to suggest anything that could have added to her requirements.

Her house was splendidly equipped, she had pictures, jewels, gardens, motor cars, friends. Servants waited on her slightest wishes, and a devoted husband sought to gratify her latest whim.

On this delightful day as she lounged listlessly, she was heard to say, or rather to moan, "What a bore it is to live, I wish I had never been born."

She was thus in the twentieth century finding that the experience of king Solomon, centuries ago, was true of her. "All is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccles. i. 14).

## SCENE TWO.

A poor and feeble man, with snowy hair and beard, aged by privation and poverty beyond his years, stood hesitatingly in the midst of a small company of Christians in a manufacturing town in the North. In a faltering voice he told how he had known but little of the comforts and pleasures of the world, that sickness and hardship and trial had been his lot, and that his scanty wages had not been sufficient to provide for the barest needs of his family. But he then added in a rising voice, and in an increasing tone of confidence and strength so that his hearers were startled and thrilled, "I am deeply thankful to the Lord that I was ever born, even in such circumstances. I consider it to be the greatest honour and my greatest joy to have learned in this life that Christ Jesus is my Saviour. I cannot rejoice in my circumstances but I can in my God. I know my sins forgiven, I have peace with God. I know the peace that passeth understanding and the love of God fills my soul. I know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and have had my soul ravished with the joys of heaven. Even now as I speak I feel introduced into the happy atmosphere of the Father's house." Then as if altogether un-

conscious of the presence of his hearers, he poured out a flood of praise and adoration to the God he knew so well.

As he sat down exhausted by the effort of this sustained speaking he said, "Oh, what a privilege to have been born so as to be able to share such bliss and to know such a God."

This was almost the last scene in the dear old man's life. Soon after, his frail body broke down under the load of years and he departed to be with his Lord, there to realize to the full the blessedness that had cheered him through his sad life here.

We ask our readers to consider which of the two they *have been* pursuing and which they *will henceforth* pursue—the knowledge of the world or the knowledge of Christ.

S. SCOTT.

## A PARABLE FROM CORNWALL.

ONE hot day last June, I stood waiting near St. Ives for the motor-bus.

Cornish roads are kept in most splendid condition, but the best things down here soon show signs of decay, so even these thoroughfares often need repairing. My waiting time under a broiling sun proved most interesting, as I watched a gang of men who were mending the Penzance high road. The Cornish method differs somewhat from

that of the farther coast of England, where tar is often sprayed on to prepared blocks of wood. In St. Ives, chips of the local granite, already mixed with tar, are brought in huge carts, and then shot out from the back of these, on to the road.

I watched those men as they spread this sticky composition over the highway. On one side of the road was a small furnace, in which were several spades. When a man started work, he took one of the hot spades with which to shovel the tarry mixture, and he used it as long as it held sufficient heat. When the spade cooled down he returned it to the fire, and took another hot one for his use. As soon as the second one cooled, he returned that in like manner to the brazier, again selecting another hot one, and so on. It was apparent that a cool instrument was useless to him. Heat was essential for his work. If the spade had been able to keep a diary, its entry for the day would have been, "furnace—service; furnace—service; furnace—service."

In a flash my thoughts flew to 1 Peter i. 7, "Your faith . . . though it be tried with fire." Sometimes the Lord's discipline is so incessant that we are apt to "weary" of it: it is so oft repeated that we "faint" under it. We wonder why? forgetting that a cool instrument is useless to Him. He can only use a hot one, and well He knows how often we need the furnace to re-kindle our affec-

tions, which—alas—so soon get cold. The Lord hates lukewarmness, as Revelation iii. 16 shows us.

His discipline is never to incapacitate us from service, but rather to fit us for it more fully. "Fruit," "more fruit," "much fruit," were the Lord's own comparative words in John xv. His only aim is that we may each one be a "vessel *meet* for the Master's use."

E. R. M.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

1 *Peter i.* 10-25.

You must open your Bible at the passage indicated and follow this article with the Scripture before you, if you would get any real help. Space forbids quotations of any length from the passage so, as you read, refer to the Scripture and THINK.

If consequently fresh light begins to break in upon you do not lightly turn from it, but pursue your searching of the Word on the point. It may open up to you a fruitful field of Truth and you can resume your reading of the article on another occasion.

THOSE to whom Peter wrote were quite familiar with the idea of a salvation which consisted of temporal deliverance, such as the deliverance of their fathers from Egypt, and they had expected a supreme salvation of that kind at the advent of their Messiah, as promised through the prophets; but by faith in the risen Christ (verse 3) a salvation of a spiritual sort affecting their souls had reached them, though they were externally

still under the iron heel of Rome. Of this salvation the prophets had also spoken, for the theme of their testimony was twofold—first, the sufferings of the Christ, and second, the glories that were to follow. As the immediate result of His first advent to suffer there is a soul-salvation for those who believe. As the direct result of His second advent to reign in glory the bodies of the saints will be saved from the power of death and public and universal salvation will be established for those who enter His kingdom.

Three very important things should be noted in verses 10 to 12.

(1). The reality of *inspiration*, and its remarkable character. The prophets ministered, but the source of their prophecies, whether oral or written, was the Spirit. The Spirit *in* them testified *through* them, and He was so really the source of their utterances that they had to search diligently their own words and inquire as to their real force, only to discover that their full meaning was beyond the apprehension of the age in which they lived, and that they were really writing for the instruction of saints in a coming age—even for us.

(2). Though in the bygone age Christ had not been manifested, yet the Spirit in the prophets and speaking through them, could be spoken of as “the Spirit of Christ.” Christ was accordingly the Speaker by His Spirit even in Old Testament days. We shall see the bearing of this when we

consider verses 18-20 of chapter iii.

(3). The strong difference drawn between the age before and the age after Christ. The soul-deliverance, which is the common possession of believers to-day, was for even the prophets of the bygone age a subject of enquiry; it is spoken of as "the grace that should come unto you," *i.e.*, it was not come in the previous age. Further, the things now reported to us by the apostles and others who have preached the Gospel by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven are the things which were only prophesied before. Then *predicted* by the Spirit; now *reported* by the Spirit. Then the Spirit was in the prophets for the purpose of inspiration, but now the Spirit is sent down from heaven. The present age is marked by the sufferings of Christ having been accomplished and consequently by grace having come, soul-salvation being realized, things that angels desire to look into being reported, and the Holy Ghost having been sent down from heaven.

Having unfolded these great and blessed facts, the apostle turns aside to exhortation in verses 13 to 17. The great advance which marks Christianity as compared with Judaism entails a corresponding advance in the character of Christian life and behaviour. We are now children and call upon God as our Father, but we are to be obedient. On the one hand, we are to be braced up mentally, marked by sobriety and



confident hope; on the other hand, we are to avoid the old desires which mastered us when we were in ignorance of God, and to be holy in all our conduct as God Himself is holy. What God has revealed Himself to be sets the standard for all our conduct. Moreover, the One whom we call Father is the impartial Judge of the work of each, hence, reverential fear becomes us. He is Judge, but He is our Father, and we are before Him, therefore, in filial fear.

These exhortations, which spring out of the truth unfolded in verses 1 to 12 (notice the word "wherefore," commencing verse 13), are reinforced by the further details of truth expounded from verse 18 onwards to verse 10 of chapter ii., as witness the word "Forasmuch" with which verse 18 starts.

They knew, and so do we, that we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. Their fathers had been redeemed with silver and gold—a typical redemption carried out under Jewish law. Sometimes actual money was given as in Exodus xxx. 11-16; Numbers iii. 44-51. Sometimes it was by sacrifice, as in Exodus xiii. 13-15; still, even then, silver and gold were involved, since they were needed to purchase the animal used for sacrifice. Silver and gold are the least corruptible of metals, yet they *are* corruptible. The price of our redemption was incorruptible and precious.

The Jewish manner of life had degenerated

into a matter of mere tradition received from their fathers. This was quite manifest in Isaiah's day (Isa. xxix. 13), and the Lord Jesus charged it home upon them, quoting Isaiah's words, in Mark vii. 6-13. Even the right things they did, they did not because they were enjoined of God, but because ordered by tradition. Thus their manner of life had become corrupt and most offensive to God. Our Gentile manner of life was pure darkness and lawlessness, and equally corrupt. Whether, however, it were we or they, we have been redeemed out of our old manner of life by the precious blood of the One who was typified as the unblemished and spotless lamb of Exodus xii. 3-6; only He was ordained not a mere matter of four days before sacrifice, but from before the foundation of the world. Our redemption, therefore, was according to the eternal counsels of God,

The Lamb of God was ordained in eternity, but manifested in time. He appeared "in these last times"—the "end of the world," or the "consummation of the ages" of Hebrews ix. 26—and that not only as the *Redeemer* but as the *Revealer*. God was perfectly revealed in Him so that it is *by Him* that we believe in God. We do not believe in God by the wonders of creation, nor by the law as given through Moses, nor by visions of angels, but by Christ, once dead but now risen and in glory. Our faith and hope repose in God who is known to us

as He who raised Christ up from the dead and gave Him glory. How wonderfully this fits in with Paul's testimony in Romans iv. 23-25, and x. 9.

From this it is clear that if we desire to win the faith of men for God we must present Christ to them—Christ once dead; Christ as risen; Christ now in glory. Every other theme is useless. We may possibly find subsidiary matter elsewhere. Useful illustrations may abound in the fields of creation and providence. They may be furnished sometimes by the facts, or even the speculations of science—though as to the latter, the greatest caution must be exercised as they are mostly *wrong*, as witnessed by the ease with which the oncoming generations of speculators dispose of the hypotheses (or, *guesses*) of their predecessors. Still, the fact remains that if men really believe in God it is by Christ that they believe in Him. Let us therefore preach CHRIST, whether by life or lips or pen.

Redemption is, of course, a work accomplished *for* us. We need also a work wrought *in* us. Of this the apostle proceeds to write.

The truth of the Gospel had brought their souls into subjection and obedience in the energy of the Spirit. This had wrought a mighty work of purification. The purifications of the law had consisted in "divers washings" of water (Heb. ix. 10),

purely external. This was a soul-purification, a moral renovation with love as the outcome, for love is as native to the new nature as hatred is to the old.

If verse 22 presents the work wrought *in* them and us as it might be observed and described by man, verse 23 lets us into the real secret of it all, from a point of view impossible to man and only to be known because revealed by God. We are born again.

The necessity of this new birth for Israel was alluded to, though in veiled terms, in Ezekiel xxxvi. 25-27. The Lord Jesus yet more strongly enforced its necessity when speaking to Nicodemus in John iii. Nicodemus should have known the passage in Ezekiel, hence the Lord's words, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" The teaching of the Lord is based upon Ezekiel's words, though He greatly expands and clarifies them. Even so, the Lord did not drop all figurative language and still spoke of "water." In the main, however, He stressed the Spirit's sovereign action in new birth. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Peter's epistle was written in the full light of Christianity. It was not now the Lord Jesus on earth speaking to a Nicodemus, but the same Jesus, risen and glorified after the accomplishment of redemption, speaking through His inspired

apostle to Christians. Hence, figures are dropped and the matter stands out with full clearness. Here the energy of the Spirit is only alluded to in verse 22 and the main stress is laid on what we are born *of* and *by*.

The life of Adam's race, to which we belong, whether Jews or Gentiles, is utterly corrupted; its nature wholly evil. We must be not only redeemed, but purified. The Spirit of God works to this end and we obey the truth. The real inwardness of the matter, however, is that the Spirit uses the Word of God in such a way that we are born again of incorruptible seed. Consequently, we possess a new nature, springing from a divine source and beyond the taint of corruption. Here, then, is a purification of a most profound and fundamental sort brought about through the Spirit of God by the agency of the Word of God—the "water" of John iii. and Ezekiel xxxvi. It is not difficult to see how apt a figure "water" was.

You will find it helpful to glance at 1 John iii. 9, which carries the matter a step further. The expression "*born of God*" emphasizes the divine source whence we spring. The seed of God remains in us and the born-again one is positively sinless, for the "seed" is incorruptible, as Peter has told us. This is the essential character of our new nature, as will be plainly manifested when the last trace of the old nature is

eliminated from us at the coming of the Lord.

Returning to our passage we note that the Word of God by which we are born again is living and it abides for ever, and in this it is directly in contrast with ourselves as the children of Adam. All flesh is as grass which grows up and speedily withers. All man's glory is as the flower of grass, which falls away and disappears even more rapidly than grass itself. Man's glory speedily fades, and man himself passes away into death. The Word of the Lord lives and abides for ever, and by it we are born again.

How wonderful this is ! That which is born partakes of the nature and character of that which gives its birth. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It is equally true that that which is born of incorruptible seed is incorruptible, and that which is born by the living and abiding Word of God is living and abiding. And that enduring Word of the Lord has reached us in the gospel message that we have believed. We shall not be surprised therefore when in the next chapter we find ourselves spoken of as "living stones" and as connected with a "house" which is incorruptible and abiding.

F. B. HOLE.

## ANSWER TO A QUESTION.

Propounded at some recent meetings.

What is fasting, and how does it apply to us to-day?

**W**HEN the disciples asked the Lord concerning their inability to cast the demon out of the child, He replied, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. xvii. 21).

We read of the Lord fasting forty days and forty nights in the wilderness (Matt. iv. 2); of the prophets and teachers at Antioch fasting when they chose Barnabas and Saul for the ministry (Acts xiii. 2, 3)—doubtless actual and literal refraining from food for the time being, so that they might be undistracted in their spiritual exercises.

But there is a practical and constant side to fasting that we ought to have our attention drawn to. We refer to Isaiah lviii. 3-8. Fasting is not merely *external*, as Isaiah asks, "Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?" If fasting is just a matter of food, attitude, dress, it is pure hypocrisy. Alas! how much there is of this.

Churches filled Sunday morning, a fasting communion, knees bent, eyes closed, lips moving, repeating a form of prayer; at night the theatre or the whist drive or the mazes of the dance. Where is reality in all

this ? It is sickening hypocrisy ! But says the Lord, " Is not this the fast that I have chosen ? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke ? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house ? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him ; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ? "

In short, fasting embraces *self-denial*, so that the needy of all sorts around may be helped and blessed. If Isaiah lviii. were faithfully carried out it would mean constant self-denial, and this would prove a most acceptable form of fasting of a very practical nature. If the Christian, young or old, practised Isaiah lviii. they would realize in detail what fasting means.

And yet, in practising it, what feasting would be the portion of the one so fasting—the feast of joy in seeing the blessing of others—the being watered in the act of watering others. Try it, and it will open out before you a path of fasting as to luxury, ease, self-gratification, but feasting in the recompense of so doing.

[A. J. P.]



## THE GOSPEL OF GOD.

**W**E assume that our many friends who have become regular readers of *Edification*, have given themselves the pleasure of reading the first eight chapters of the Epistle to the Romans eight times over.

We should be very glad to hear from any who care to write to us, c/o The Publishers, to know what impression they have formed, to compare notes, and, with the Editor's permission, to consider some in a later issue if the Lord permit.

In our first paper we dealt only with the early portion of chapter one which, as we remarked, gives us the introduction to the Epistle. We observed that, in verse sixteen, the supremacy of the Gospel is brought before us in the Apostle's exclamation, "I am not ashamed of the gospel." The words "of Christ" are omitted in other and reliable versions, and here it is really "the gospel of God" as stated in verse one.

We have then, in verses sixteen, seventeen and eighteen, three remarkable words, viz:

The Gospel of God.

The Righteousness of God.

The Wrath of God.

The conjunction of the two latter we can understand, for we should conclude that if God were to act in righteousness towards His creatures, He must of necessity pour out His wrath upon them. The first word indicates, however, that a way has been found by which God's wrath can be averted and yet His righteousness can be maintained.

Shall we, just at this point, take up our Bibles and read chapters one, two, three and four, which comprise the scope of our present study. Here we learn that God has formed a wondrous plan by which He can just as righteously justify an ungodly sinner (iv. 5) as He must, apart from that plan, have visited him with His wrath.

We find that in chapters one to four the three prominent words are:—

Righteousness  
Redemption  
Justification.

The centre word gives us the keyword of the Gospel; the foundation of the divine plan; and the basis of our blessing.

Let us consider what is meant by the term "the righteousness of God." We have already noted that this is the grand secret of the gospel. It is that which is so much in evidence in this Epistle. We fear that many who may be true believers fight shy of it. They say, "We like to think of the love of God, but the thought of the righteousness of God frightens us." That indicates that they

have not yet got right thoughts about God. Their idea is that God took pity on them in their lost estate, gave His Son to die, and now offers to forgive their sins if they will believe in Jesus. This is true, thank God, but it leaves the persons concerned without any idea as to why and how God has come out in this way at all, and not knowing that, they have no real, settled, lasting peace.

Let us get hold of this in the first place. God is righteous, we are unrighteous. We have only got to read the awful yet only-too-true description of what man is by nature as found from i. 18—iii. 18, to see how unrighteous man is. There we see man—we mean man representatively—described at his worst and at his best, but iii. 19 and 23 make it clear that whether at his best or at his worst, all are alike “guilty” for “all have sinned.” If God, then, were to deal with His creatures—and these chapters describe every reader of this Magazine—in righteousness, only one thing was possible, viz., *WRATH*. He wanted however, to act in *GRACE*. What a contrast there is between wrath and grace. If God’s righteousness demanded His visiting wrath upon His creatures, then how could He in consistency with His righteousness deal with them in grace?

Therein lies the grand secret of God’s glorious gospel. Look at iii. 23-26. Let us read the verses again and again until our hearts are thrilled with the grandeur of

them. Here we have in plain, simple, easy-to-be-understood language,

MAN'S RUIN.  
GOD'S REMEDY.

No verdict could be more sweeping than that of verse twenty-three, and what should we expect to follow but a declaration of God's wrath.

Instead of that we have the proclamation of His grace. We read of how those described in verse twenty-three may be not judged but justified. Who proposes to justify them? God. How can He do it? "By His grace." On what ground will He do it? "The redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Why does He do it? Ah! that is the unanswerable question. The word "*FREELY*" in verse twenty-four is very interesting. It is the same word which in John xv. 25 is translated "Without a cause." There, the Lord Jesus was speaking of His enemies' treatment of Him, and He said, "They hated Me *without a cause*." Why were they His enemies? What cause had they for it, and for hating Him as they did? None whatever. On the contrary, they had every reason for loving Him. What cause had God for justifying the ungodly? None. On the contrary, He had every reason for judging them. But just as man, naturally, is incapable of loving God, so it is not possible for God to hate man, and "freely," "without a cause," because of the grace that

ever filled his heart, He determined to justify him.

This is a new word in the Epistle: *GRACE*, and it is indeed "a charming sound." But what about God's righteousness? Note the three outstanding words in these verses:—

Grace.

Redemption.

Righteousness.

Twixt grace and righteousness there comes redemption as the beautiful connecting link. In Christ Jesus God has found a propitiation, more truly a mercy-seat, a meeting-place. In the blood of Christ God has found a way by which He can meet and justify the ungodly. At the cross "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm lxxxv. 10). God's glory has been maintained, His righteousness has been vindicated, every claim of His throne has been met, and now He can be "just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (iii. 26). We do not know a more wonderful word than that in all the Bible.

Now note. In chapter i., the righteousness of God is manifested. In chapter iv., those who believe in Him that justifieth the ungodly are reckoned righteous. That does not mean that the righteousness of God is imputed to us (nor do we ever read in Scripture the oft-used expression "the im-

puted righteousness of Christ,") but it does mean that those who, receiving the testimony contained in the gospel, believe in God, are justified by Him, and by Him are accounted righteous.

We must, however, have regard for the Editor's space, and we therefore leave the development of this important subject to be dealt with in another paper.

In closing, we would suggest that there is no reason why we should cease reading Romans i. to viii. after having perused it eight times.

We might with much profit go on reading these magnificent chapters again and again, and yet again.

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

## MEET FOR THE MASTER'S USE.

**I** WILL take it for granted, Christian reader, that you desire to be "a vessel . . . meet for the Master's use."

Can any one be so regardless of the claims of the Lord, so utterly selfish, as not to feel that

"Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands his soul, his life, his all"?

Surely no truly redeemed soul but must be conscious of this demand and long to fulfil it, so that if you have no such feeling and

desire, you may well question whether you are a Christian at all.

But the desire being there, it must be granted that there are hindrances to its being realized. The vessel may be of "silver," but there is more or less "dross" present preventing its being meet for the Master's use, or at least, its usefulness may be much impaired thereby.

"Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer." What a precious yet searching text ! (Prov. xxv. 4).

To be a vessel for the Lord in this world where He was rejected—a vessel in which He may be displayed in grace and in truth, and in which He may be glorified. What an honour ! What a privilege ! What a blessed opportunity of reciprocating love on our part ! Oh ! to get rid of the dross then, that the vessel may indeed be fit for the great Refiner.

The *normal* way of refining is by the Word,—“the washing of water by the Word,” and well for us if the blessed Refiner has not to use other means.

When the refiner puts the crucible full of silver on the fire, he watches it; removing the dross as it shows itself, till he sees his own face clearly reflected in the bright metal. How apt an illustration of the work and object of our blessed Lord as He deals with His own, in order to see His image reflected in the vessels of His grace,

We can bless Him for every way in which He deals with us for such an object, however painful the process, but if our ears and hearts were more open to His Word how much of suffering might we be saved !

Every exhortation, every example, in the Word, whether *positive*, in the inculcation of good, or *negative*, in directing away from evil, are directed towards the discovery and purging out of the *dross*. By the Scriptures the man of God is "furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17).

When you read the Scriptures, then, be careful to be doers of the Word, and not readers only. By the Scriptures we discover what is unsuited to the Lord in and about us, and, obeying them, they become the active, cleansing power of our souls and lives.

Let us not shrink from their scrutiny. Let us invite their searchlight upon our motives, words, and actions, and they will search to the very springs of our moral being (Heb. iv. 12, 13). Thus the silver will be refined. The *dross* will be apparent to us in its worthlessness, and we shall be enabled to judge it as a hindrance and purge it out that we—spirit, soul and body—may be each a vessel for the gracious, worthy Refiner.

In His grace He counts us as *silver*—precious, because redeemed at such a price. Then, as precious to Him, let the sense of



His desire to have us as vessels to His praise, vessels for His own use, inspire us to earnest care that in each of us His desire may be fulfilled. Let His love constrain us to live not to ourselves but to Him who died for us, and rose again, so that when He comes we may not be ashamed before Him.

F. L. HARRIS.

## GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY.

**H**OW can you reconcile God's sovereignty with man's responsibility? is a question which perplexes and troubles many a young Christian.

Amplified the question stands much as follows: If God is sovereign in His electing grace, if a man must be born again to see the kingdom of God, and he cannot himself bring about the new birth, if no man can come to the Lord except the Father draw him, as our Lord asserts in John vi. 44, how can man be responsible to believe the gospel? It is as good as telling a blind man he is responsible to see, or a deaf man to hear, or a man without legs to walk, or a dead man to live.

The witty reply of C. H. Spurgeon, that sovereignty and responsibility do not need reconciling because they have never quarrelled, is true; and this indicates a great

fact, that little as we may understand it, there is NO CONTRADICTION in these two great truths. How can there be, if both are taught in the Word of God ?

That Scripture teaches God's sovereignty is abundantly proved by the following Scriptures:—

“ I . . . will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy ” (Exod. xxxiii. 19).

\* \* \*

“ According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world ” (Eph. i. 4).

\* \* \*

“ Elect according to the foreknowledge of God ” (1 Peter i. 2).

That Scripture teaches man's responsibility is equally plain, as the following Scriptures show:—

“ God . . . now commandeth all men everywhere to repent ” (Acts xvii. 30).

\* \* \*

“ Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life ” (John v. 40).

\* \* \*

“ Everyone of us shall give account of himself to God ” (Rom. xiv. 12).

To our minds and with our limited knowledge, the sovereignty of God and the

responsibility of man are like two absolutely parallel lines—extend them as you may they are no nearer to each other, and never can be.

But God knows what we do not. He must know how the two doctrines can be explained in their relation to each other, for everything in God's creation, whether in the material or spiritual realm, has a relation to every other thing. Some day we may know more than we do now, but revelation is complete as far as this life is concerned. We cannot get beyond the Bible. To speculate above what is written is unholy and dangerous work.

Perhaps it may help the young Christian if the writer narrates how he came to a conclusion in the matter, bringing with it rest of mind. His mind was naturally inclined to scepticism. God has great patience with us, and he can look back with gratitude to the tenderness and goodness of His dealings.

The question came to his mind again and again. There seemed no solution—no answer—no explanation. He plied older men with questions and never got any satisfaction. At length he was brought to this point: God in His Word affirms His sovereignty; He likewise affirms man's responsibility. The only right thing then to do is to believe both without question. God is sovereign—man is responsible.

He did so, and his mind was like a ship tossed about by the waves gliding into the

smooth waters of the harbour. Rest of mind was his portion. Conflict and questionings were over.

But you may ask, When preaching the gospel do you not press man's responsibility with a reservation in your mind, knowing that God is sovereign? The answer is, Certainly not. Man is responsible, responsible without any reservation, responsible without question. God can have no reservation in His mind, for reservation is deceit and dissimulation. We, therefore, should have none in our minds.

If man were not responsible God could not hold him accountable for his actions, which He certainly does. God has given to man a God-consciousness, and a conscience which rebukes him when he sins. Man knows that sin is sinful. Hence God's call for repentance to every man.

And as to sovereignty, God always uses it on the side of blessing. There is no room for the awful doctrine that God elects people to be damned.

The reader may ask, "But what about God hardening Pharaoh's heart? Was that not sovereignty exerted in the sense of bringing evil upon a man?" The answer is that Pharaoh was already resisting God, already acting with cruel brutality to the people of God, and the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was governmental, and merited, and not at all an arbitrary exercise

of sovereignty. Moreover, we find Pharaoh hardening his heart again and again. What fault can be found with God doing to him what he deliberately did for himself? We repeat it was government rather than sovereignty.

Romans ix. 22, 23 brings out the distinction clearly. "What if God, willing to shew His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory."

Notice, the vessels of wrath fit themselves to destruction—God is not responsible for man's sin, but holds man responsible for it. He endures with much long-suffering, so that when His wrath falls it may be deserved to the full and righteously meted out. For instance, he endured the Amorites for four hundred years, till the cup of their iniquity was full.

But when it comes to vessels of mercy it attributes sovereignty to God—"Which He had afore prepared unto glory." How carefully chosen are the words of Scripture! How the hall-mark of inspiration is seen in every part of it!

As to sovereignty, the universe is stamped with it indelibly. Who chose to create the world? God! Who ordained the orbits of the planets? God! Who ordered the

sequence of the seasons ? God ! Who ordained that I should be a man ? God !

We may ask ten thousand such questions and get only one reply—God ! And if we ask, Why did God do so-and-so, we can only reply because He choose to in His sovereign wisdom. We may well exclaim with the Apostle Paul when he had stated the grand truth of God's sovereignty, " O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out ! " (Rom. xi. 32).

What a mercy that we cannot understand everything. If we could, God's mind would be within the measure of a man's mind. The fact is, the man who has most true knowledge is the one who knows most the extent of his ignorance.

We are glad there are mysteries in the Word of God which we cannot understand. We can understand Milton and Shakespeare and scientific, historical and literary books, for they are written by men like ourselves, but when we come to the Bible we should be woefully disappointed if we could scale its heights and plumb its depths, or measure its length and breadth. Revelation would then be no greater than the mind of man, and that is little enough.

And yet the very fact of the Bible containing deep things that are beyond us is

satisfying to our souls. How can we understand God, a Being dwelling in awful solitude, dwelling in light unapproachable, uncreated, yet creating all things, unsustained, yet sustaining all things? Could we understand all this, God would cease to be God, for He would be no bigger than the measure of a man. How true it is,

"The higher mysteries of His fame,  
The creature's grasp transcend."

So with sovereignty. We cannot imagine God without this attribute. If all things were created by Him He must have made all things as by His sovereign choice. That much is plain. Who was there for Him to take counsel with? We can exclaim, "Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (Rom. xi. 36).

So we firmly, and without reservation, believe both truths—God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.

In many ways sovereignty and responsibility are linked together. For instance, God has ordained that men shall live by assimilating food. That is His sovereignty. We are responsible to maintain our lives by eating the necessary meals each day. That is our responsibility. Sovereignty and responsibility here combine to an end.

So in the spiritual realm God is sovereign. He elects the believer to eternal blessing, He predestinates him to spiritual blessings in Christ; that is sovereignty. Man is

divinely called to repent and trust Christ if he is to be saved. Man is responsible.

One thing is certain, God knows the relation between His sovereignty and our responsibility and He has revealed all that is necessary for us to know. We may rest content there. Sovereignty is His matter; responsibility is ours.

A. J. POLLOCK

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(1 *Peter ii.* 1-10).

You must open your Bible at the passage indicated and follow this article with the Scripture before you, if you would get any real help. Space forbids quotations of any length from the passage so, as you read, refer to the Scripture *and* THINK.

If consequently fresh light begins to break in upon you, do not lightly turn from it, but pursue your searching of the Word on the point. It may open up to you a fruitful field of truth and you can resume your reading of the article on another occasion.

THE latter verses of chapter i. have shown us that the new birth which has taken place with each believer has a purifying effect, therefore the first verse of chapter ii. takes it for granted that we lay aside those ugly features which are the nature of the flesh in us. Of the things specified, malice, envy and evil speakings specially concern our relations with our fellows, and they are particularly mentioned because Peter is now going to bring before us truth which shows us the believer in



intimate relation with all his fellow-believers as a stone in a spiritual house, and as one of the priestly family. In such connections, nothing will proceed rightly unless these evils are laid aside.

It is not enough, however, to lay aside evil, we must go in for that which is good. We must not merely put on good as an outward dress or adornment, but imbibe it as spiritual food. There is "the sincere milk of the Word" suitable for the new-born babe, and we are to earnestly desire it. If we feed upon the Word we grow up. But even then we still need the Word, for it is meat for those of full age as well as milk for babes, as Hebrews v. 12-14, tells us.

This furnishes us with a very clear answer to the oft-repeated question—Why do some Christians make such good spiritual progress and some hardly any at all? Because some feed heartily and regularly upon pure, spiritual diet. They feast their souls upon the Word, whether as milk or meat. Others feed upon it but little and are half-starved spiritually. Others again, choke up their minds and hearts with light and foolish reading. Some go in for sentimental love stories, slightly flavoured with the gospel perhaps; such, naturally, do not progress spiritually any more than a child would progress physically whose diet consisted only of sweetmeats. Others take up reading of a more intellectual sort but with a strain of infidelity in it; and progress no better than

would the child brought up on solid food with small quantities of poison in it.

Food for our minds and hearts we must have. Let us see to it that it is the Word on which we feed, seeing it is by the Word we have been born again, if indeed, we have tasted the goodness of God—for all this supposes that we are truly converted people, that we have really come to the Lord.

And who and what is the Lord to whom we have come? He is the "Living Stone." This is a remarkable title of our Lord. It sets Him forth as the One in whom is life, who became Man, and who, by death and resurrection, has become the Head and Foundation of this new structure which God is building composed of men who live through Him and in Him. He is the "chief corner stone, elect, precious" (verse 6), "the head of the corner" (verse 7). The men who, as "living stones," have been built into this "house" of a living sort, became such by coming to Christ, the Living Stone.

Evidently, the Apostle Peter never forgot his first interview with the Lord Jesus, as recorded in John i., and in these verses we have a definite allusion to it. John i. introduces the Lord Jesus to us as the Word, in whom was life, become flesh that as Man He might die as the Lamb of God, and then in resurrection baptize with the Holy Ghost (verses 1, 4, 14, 29, 33). Then Andrew brings his brother Simon to Jesus, as the

Christ. The Lord Jesus, knowing that which was before Him, and conscious of all that He Himself was—whatever Simon might know or not know Him to be—instantly assumed possession of him and changed his name to Peter, which means “a stone.” It was as though the Lord said to him, “Coming to Me in faith you have become—even though your faith is partial as yet and incomplete—of the same nature as Myself.”

Neither did Peter forget the subsequent interview recorded in Matthew xvi. On this occasion Peter had confessed the Lord Jesus as the Son of the Living God, which was virtually to confess Him as the Living Stone. The Lord Jesus in reply reminded Simon that his real name now was Peter—“a stone”—while He Himself was the Rock; and that Peter as a stone was not to be left in isolation, but to be with others builded into the church or assembly which Christ called His own—“*My Church.*”

When the Lord Jesus spoke thus to Peter all was future, for He said, “I *will* build.” Now Peter writes to others who also had come to Christ and thereby become living stones, and he can speak of all as a present and existing thing, though not an absolutely completed thing. He says in verse 5, “Ye are built up”—or, “Ye are being built up a spiritual house.” A spiritual house they were, yet it was not a completed thing for other living stones were continually being added,

Now a house exists for its occupant, and we are thus builded together as a dwelling-place for GOD; not a material house of the sort they had been accustomed to as Jews, but a *spiritual* house. Moreover, where God dwells there He is to be praised and so, by His work and ordering, we fill a further capacity as "an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." These spiritual sacrifices are "of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Heb. xiii. 15).

Every true believer is a living stone in the house, and a priest as belonging to this holy priesthood.

Had we approached one of the sons of Aaron and asked him how he became a priest, he would doubtless have told us that it was, firstly, by his birth; and that, secondly, being born of the priestly family, he was put into the priest's office by the washing of water, the sprinkling with blood, and the anointing with oil, as ordered in Exodus xxix. We, too, are priests by birth. Being born of God, we are priests of God. We, too, have had the washing of water by the Word (i. 22, 23). We have been redeemed by blood, the precious blood of Christ (i. 19), and we have received the Spirit, who was typified of the oil; though that particular feature is not brought before us in the passage we are considering. We have come to Christ (ii. 4), and thus we are

priests, just as Aaron's sons were priests as having come to Aaron, and being thus associated with him in the priest's office.

Every believer to-day is then a priest. But we must remember that it is one thing to be a priest, another to really enter into and exercise our priestly functions. The first exercise of our priesthood is Godward, in the offering up of the sacrifice of praise. This is "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," for He is the Great High Priest, as the Epistle to the Hebrews makes so manifest. All that we offer we offer by Him; and this of course accounts for its acceptability to God, since He is the chosen One and precious in God's sight, as the sixth verse shows.

It must never be forgotten, however, that He is not elect and precious, nor is He the acceptable One, in man's esteem. The very reverse, He is disallowed and rejected. The fact is that man has become a disobedient creature as verse 7 reminds us. Instead of falling in with God's plans, he wishes to push ahead with plans of his own. Instead of being content with God's building and with being called to have a part in it as a living stone, man wishes to create a building on his own account—a building which shall conform to his own fallen ideas and result in his own glory. When the Lord Jesus appeared, men attempted to work Him into their building and failed. Had He consented to fall in with man's ideas it would have been otherwise. They would have been delighted

if so great an One as He had been a supporter of, or even a developer of, Roman government, or Greek philosophy, or Jewish religion. Coming as He did, on God's behalf, He exposed their folly and fitted in with none of their notions. He was, as it were, a stone of such peculiar formation that there was not a single niche in the imposing temple of man's fame where He fitted in. Hence He became "the stone which the builders disallowed," and "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" to the proud men who rejected Him, whilst being elevated of God into the headstone of the corner in the divine building.

Consequently, we who are priests of God in association with Him are no more of man's building, of man's world-system, than He is, though we have another priestly function which has direct reference to the world through which we pass. We are "a chosen race, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession"—as verse 9 has been rendered. We are those whom God has chosen out and separated to Himself. In the coming age the kingly character of our priesthood will be more manifest than it is at present, but now we are commissioned to show forth the praises, the virtue or excellences, of God in this disobedient world. This is our priestly function manward.

In the coming age the saints are going to judge the world, as 1 Corinthians vi. 2 tells us. As kingly priests we shall then be com-

missioned to dispense His judgment. We are kingly priests to-day, but commissioned to dispense His excellent righteousness expressed in grace, to set forth His character as light and love. This, of course, we do even more by what we *are* than by what we *say*. It is the character and spirit and attitude of the royal priest that counts for so much.

Do some feel inclined to declare this an impossible task? Nay, not impossible! Difficult, perhaps, because not natural to us as men in the flesh, though natural enough to the born-again, redeemed, Spirit-indwelt priesthood to which we belong. *Possible*, indeed, because we ourselves have been the subjects of the grace that we are now to "show forth" to others. We have been called "out of darkness into His marvellous light."

Can you not imagine one of the converted Jews to whom Peter wrote, crying out at this point—"Darkness! But, Peter, you forget, we were never benighted heathen as were others"? For we, who were brought up in conditions controlled by an enlightened and christianized civilization, might say the same. "I know it," the Apostle would have replied, "but your Judaism was darkness, for all that." God was not fully revealed, was not "in the light" (1 John i. 7), if Judaism be considered in its original purity. When it was corrupted into a mass of tra-

ditions and observances by the Pharisees it was darkness indeed.

All was darkness for us whether we were called out of Judaism or heathenism, or a nominal and corrupted Christianity, and now we are in a light which is marvellous; we are the people of God, having obtained mercy.

*Marvellous light!* Is this how we feel about it? The world plunges on, deeper and ever deeper into its darkness and unbelief. Its learned scientists and philosophers fill the air with triumphant shoutings as to their investigations and their discoveries. Yet really they are as men who clutch at elusive shadows while their science is an enshrouding mist. Their discoveries enable them to do lots of clever and curious things in the world, but not a ray of light shines in them as to things beyond the grave. And here are we, put in the light of God fully revealed in Christ, in the light of His grace, His purposes, His glory. Are we studying these things, so as to become even more and more enlightened, and consequently, luminous ourselves?

On a cloudless night at the season of full moon we get the benefit of our satellite shining in the light of the sun. How marvellous must be the sunlight that can make a dark body shine so brightly! Well, the world is still in the dark, for its back is turned towards God. We are in the light of



His truth and grace,—the light of the knowledge of Himself. How marvellous that light is may be discerned in the fact that it can make dark and unattractive people, like to ourselves, show forth His excellences and reflect Himself.

Oh ! to be more fully in the unclouded brightness of God's MARVELLOUS LIGHT.

F. B. HOLE.

## AN ANSWER TO A QUESTION.

I desire to please God, and to really grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and in devotedness to Him. All true spiritual progress is, I know, by the Holy Spirit of God, yet I feel I ought not to shelve my responsibility and just say in a fatalistic kind of way that I will leave Him to work it all out. What really are the things one should do in order to advance ?

**Y**OU will find in verses 12 to 16 of 1 Timothy iv. an answer to your question.

“ *Give attendance to reading . . .* ” It may have been that reading aloud in public (a common practice when books were scarce, having to be laboriously produced by hand) was what Paul specially referred to. Yet it must surely have included reading for Timothy's own personal profit. It was to be pursued “ Till I come,” since when Paul arrived Timothy could inform himself directly from Paul's inspired lips. During his absence he was more shut up to inspired

writings. We might then begin to answer your question by asking the question, *Do you read?* You certainly say, "Oh! yes." Then, another question, *What do you read?* It is unquestionably a great day for reading, and reading matter is mental food. Upon what do you feed your mind? Just take time to consider. Look over the books and papers that you have perused during the past month. Have the Inspired Writings and helpful literature based on the Scriptures had the leading place? If not, you need hunt no further for an explanation of spiritual enfeeblement.

Give attendance to reading of a right sort and you will lay the solid foundation for a super-structure of real progress.

*"Neglect not the gift that is in thee."* Timothy was a man of great gift, you have no special gift at all. Yet you have some gift, some ability in the sense in which "gift" is spoken of in the passage Rom. xii. 6-21. Read it and see if it be not so. Some of the things there enumerated are within your power. Well, then, do not neglect them. Cultivate an interest in the work and service of the Lord. Find out your niche in His interests and do not neglect the giving, the showing mercy, the loving, the serving, the praying, the hospitality, the sympathy, or whatever else it may be, that you can do for His Name. To have a definite interest in the work and service of the Lord and to

cultivate it, is an immense help to the growth and advancement of your own soul. In watering others you are watered yourself.

*“Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them.”* Paul thought it necessary to emphasize meditation, though he had already spoken of reading. It is so easy to read without *thinking*—especially to-day. The majority of people have become great novel readers. They let the story flow through their minds for the sake of the sentiment, or excitement, or thrill that it produces. Nothing much remains when it is all over, since there is nothing to remain—save, alas ! in many instance, an incitement to folly and immorality. They are not led to think, for there is *nothing* to think about. Now this habit of reading without thinking has become very common. The infection of it is everywhere. It accounts for much spiritual poverty. It is not what we *eat* that really nourishes us, but what we *digest*. Similarly, it is not what we *read* that enlarges us spiritually, but what we really *assimilate* by meditating upon it. If we would but take time for the quiet consideration of the things of God, and give ourselves “wholly to them”—*i.e.*, be so wholly occupied with them that for the time, at least, all other matters are excluded—we should indeed get on.

*“Take heed unto thyself, and to the doctrine.”* Having carefully considered the

truth of God by meditating upon it we are now to turn to the consideration of ourselves and our ways in the light of the truth. This must by no means be omitted, inasmuch as it is just this which produces that alteration in our thoughts and ways that brings us into practical conformity to the will of God. When we read the Scriptures and meditate upon them, so that the truth becomes clear to us and is the food of our souls, do we go one step further and *test* ourselves by it? Has it become a habit with us to always enquire.—How does this truth affect me? Am I in keeping with it? Do I walk in obedience to it? By so doing we bring ourselves under the power of the doctrine or teaching.

If we become diligent readers of the Word and of that which will help us in the Word; if we are not neglectful of the Lord's work and interests according to our gift; if we cultivate meditation upon the truth and learn to apply the truth to ourselves so as to bring our own lives and ways under its sanctifying power, and if consequently we "lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us," submitting thereby to definite alterations in our lives, we shall have the help and support of the Holy Ghost of God and we are bound to make spiritual progress.

## WHAT OCCUPIES OUR THOUGHTS?

**M**Y head," said one of the most famous men in English literature, "is like a tavern in which a company of low punch-drinkers have taken up the room that might have been filled with lords drinking burgundy." It was an arresting saying and many of us may have to confess that our heads are not unlike that. Having the flesh within us and the world around us it is easy for us to become carnal and worldly in our thoughts, and our characters and ways cannot be better than our thoughts, for the Scripture says of man, "As he thinketh in his heart so is he" (Prov. xxiii. 7). If it is so with us, what a dishonour it is to God who has made us His children, and what a loss of present joy and blessing it is to us.

The importance of our thinking cannot be exaggerated, everything indeed, whether of joy to ourselves, testimony to others, or glory to God, depends upon it. The Epistle to the Philippians was one of the last written by the Apostle Paul, probably the very last written to a church. It is a beautiful epistle, full of Christ, and of the wonderful effect

that the knowledge of Him has in the lives of men upon earth. Paul wrote this farewell letter to that church that he loved so well that they might understand all this better, and we know that he was moved and inspired by the Holy Ghost to do this. He closes the Epistle with a series of exhortations, and the last of these is certainly not the least important. It comes down to us with all its force, and only as we heed it can we be kept from slipping away from our steadfastness and joy in the Lord.

"Finally, brethren," he says, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things.*" We feel as we read this list of exalted things that our heads will not be like a tavern of low punch-drinkers if they fill our thoughts, but where are they to be found? We must have guidance if we are to get on the track of them. And Paul does not leave us to our own imaginations as to what they are, but continues, "Those things, which ye have both learned and received, and heard, and seen in me, do." In a former chapter he had written, "For me to live is Christ." So that these things that controlled Paul's mind and came out in his speech and deeds when he was at Philippi, whether by the river-side, in the house of

Lydia, in the inner dungeon, the jailor's house or in the assembly, are all enfolded and disclosed in Christ.

But the heart lies at the back of the mind and that which we love most occupies our thoughts most. The low punch-drinkers love their punch, the sensual man thinks sensually because he loves sensuality, and the man who loves the Lord Jesus thinks of Him, and consequently, speaks of Him and he becomes like Him in his ways. It was so with Paul, and we are to be like him. I need not say that we love and rejoice in the Lord as we realize His love to us. But this exhortation as to thinking is necessary or it would not be given. We shall have to set our minds with purpose to it, and fill them up with Christ, or the "low punch-drinkers" will fill them, for none of our minds can be a vacuum.

There is a present result of this right thinking. So Paul writes further, "THE GOD OF PEACE SHALL BE WITH YOU." Not only shall we be able to hold converse with the very aristocracy of God's kingdom of peace, but the God of peace Himself will be with us. This is truly wonderful. We know of course that God ever found His delight in His beloved Son. He said so twice in the hearing of men when the Lord Jesus was on earth, but this word declares that He finds His delight in those who delight in Him also; if our minds are filled with the beauties

and glories of Christ God will give us His company. It will be His joy to do so. We know that when we may choose our company, we go to those whom we love and in whom we can find our pleasure and with whom we have things in common. It is so with God Himself. He delights in the company of those who delight in Christ; and what a dignity this puts upon them, they are truly peers in His kingdom of peace and can drink with Him and one another the wine of His joy in Christ, for Christ is the "wine which cheereth God and man" (Judges ix. 13).

There will be no peace in that tavern that is filled with low punch-drinkers, and there will be no peace in the hearts and minds of those who are earthly, worldly, sensual; but if we have Christ as our portion and are rejoicing in Him, the Lord, alway, then will there be peace indeed within us and holy communion with the God of peace. And this will be to us a foretaste of heaven, and we shall be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation," among whom we shall "shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life" (chap. ii. 15, 16).

J. T. MAWSON.



## “WHETHER IN DEATH OR LIFE.”

ONE of the finest expressions of loyalty and devotedness of heart ever uttered was that of Ittai to David, when he said, “As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be” (2 Sam. xv. 21).

The circumstances leading to the declaration are well known. We may recall them in a few words. Absalom had rebelled against his father and David had to flee for his life from Jerusalem accompanied by such as were true to himself. These faithful ones nobly declared, “Thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king may appoint,” thus placing themselves at his disposal absolutely. Together with these there were found six hundred men who had come after David from Gath, where he had been as an exile and which he had taken when he had come to the kingdom. He had won the hearts of some of the men of Gath and these had followed him and now were loyal and true to him when he was dispossessed of his throne for a time by Absalom’s insurrection.

Ittai was one of them and becomes spokesman for them and declares their faithfulness and allegiance to the rejected king.

David’s position at that time is typical of the position of our Lord Jesus as now re-

jected by the world. He has been refused His rights by His earthly people Israel. The only crown given to Him was one of thorns, the only sceptre a reed, the only throne a cross. He is cast out by the world and His position becomes a test for us who are His own. He has said of His loved ones, for whom He laid down His life, "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world." *We belong to Him* and the question arises how shall we respond to His love which has made us His own, and own our fealty to Himself.

Let us look at the noble utterance of Ittai and see how far we are like him in faithfulness.

"As the Lord liveth." These words of faith ring down the centuries from the beginning. In every dispensation the truth of the abidingness of God has been the resource of the godly. God lives, and He is not indifferent to the condition of things in the world. He is the Observer of all and records every thing. Ittai recognized this and recalls it for the comfort of the outcast king.

"And as my lord the king liveth." He had confidence that God cared for David and would bring him through this time of trial, and re-establish him upon his throne. And we know that God will yet place Christ upon the throne of His father David and will give Him universal dominion. He shall be the

"one Lord and His Name one." "And He shall reign from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth." God lives. Christ lives. And it is but "A little while and He that shall come will come and will not delay."

Ittai's expression of trust in God is followed by his expression of attachment to David.

"Surely in what place my Lord the King shall be, whether in death or life, there will also thy servant be." David's position governed Ittai's. If David was in death, Ittai would be in death with him. If David was in life, there Ittai would be. His "Surely" told of decision and definiteness which nothing should shake. And as we see later David's remonstrance failed to move him in the least. He stood firm and was not to be deflected from the course he had taken.

Can we take up such language with regard to our Lord?

Happy are we in knowing that Christ's place before His Father and God is our place also. We are before God in Christ. And "IN Christ" is as Christ. It was this which the Lord declared in resurrection when He sent the message to His own by Mary Magdalene from the open sepulchre's side, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to My Father, and to your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John xx. 17). Through His atoning death He had

won for them this place. Every question as to their sins and sinful selves was settled and He could lead them in triumph into His own place of relationship with the Father and of righteousness with God.

Anticipating His work and its results He had said, "My peace I give unto you." "That My joy might be in you." "The words that Thou gavest Me I have given them." "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them." "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them." His peace, His joy, His glory, ours, and the Father's communications to Him and the Father's love resting upon Him shared with us. He had said, "Not as the world gives give I unto you." The world gives away what it bestows. It gives a part of its possessions, and usually a small part, and it preserves its own position of superiority to those to whom it gives. Christ gives by bringing us to share with Him all that it is possible for us to enjoy. As the husband brings his wife into his home to enjoy with himself all that he delights in, sharing his all with her and finding his delight in doing so, *thus* the Lord introduces His loved ones into the circle of sunshine and gladness in which He finds His own pleasures. There are His own Godhead glories which no creature can ever share; but all that it is possible for a creature to have with Him, He loves to impart to us,

finding His own deep joy in having us with Him appreciating it all, as we find our deepest joy in being *with* Him, the Giver of it all.

But while it is true that His place before His Father and His God is ours, it is also true that His place before the world is ours; both go together. It is expressed in the epistle to the Hebrews by the position “Inside the veil” on the one hand, and “Outside the camp” on the other. If it be ours to enter in with Christ into the Holiest of all by His blood, it is ours also to go forth to Him outside the camp of this world, “outside the gate,” sharing shame and dishonour with Him our rejected Lord.

We may note that Ittai said, “Whether in death or life.” He puts death before life in his thoughts and utterances. He was prepared for the worst. He would die where David died. It was his love for David, flowing from his previous acquaintance with David, which led to this pledging of his troth. And we are to be in death here with Him who is our Lord, as we look to be in life with Him eternally. “If we have died with Him we shall also live with Him.”

Our death with Him is figured in our baptism. We have been baptized unto His death. We have been thus identified with Him in His cutting off. His life has been “taken from the earth” and we have ours taken from it in figure too. This was done for us by another.

In the partaking of the Lord's Supper we do for ourselves what was done for us by another in our baptism. We become identified again and again with the death of Christ in the world, as it is said, we "do show forth the Lord's death till He come." He is away, but we are here in the place of His rejection and we own His rights and unfurl His flag where He has been and is refused.

In our baptism and in partaking of the Lord's Supper we say with the Christian poet, "Know ye not that our Lord Jesus died here." We share with Him in the place of His death, in figure; and are called to be true to our identification with Him in all our association of life here.

And with us it is but "Till He come." We know that the moment of His return draws nigh. Then the place of glory will be ours with Him as the place of shame has been ours now.

We are called to devotedness to Him who was devoted to us unto death. He was for us here and we are to be for Him here.

Ittai was honoured when David was restored to his rightful throne, and became one of his trusted field-m Marshals; a third of David's army being put under his control. And "if we suffer we shall also reign with Him."

David valued Ittai's devotedness so plainly expressed. Can Christ our Lord appreciate ours?

I. FLEMING.

## OPPORTUNITY.

**A** VISITOR was once shown by a sculptor over his studio. One piece particularly took his attention, that of a figure, veiled so that the features could scarcely be discerned, and with a wing on each foot.

“What does it represent?” asked the visitor.

“Opportunity,” was the sculptor’s reply.

“But why is his face hidden?” asked the visitor.

“Because men seldom know him when he comes to them,” was the reply.

“And why has he wings on his feet?” asked the visitor.

“Because he is soon gone, and once gone cannot be overtaken,” was the reply.

What a world of meaning is wrapped up in these replies! We older men can look back, sadly enough at times, on opportunities which we did not see were opportunities, or, if we did, we lacked the moral fibre, the spiritual energy, to avail ourselves of them. Too much sloth and lethargy marked us, and as the years have fled the opportunities have passed beyond recall.

Young brethren, young sisters, will you not take this as an encouragement and a warning? You are young, you are healthy, you are sound in mind and limb—these are very great assets. Best of all you are the Lord's.

Just now the labour markets are overcrowded. Men, who would gladly work, cannot get it. Men, who dislike the necessity of receiving the dole, walk the streets, eating out their hearts. But there is no overcrowding of the Lord's labour market. At home and abroad, at your very doors, or "far away in heathen darkness lying," there are opportunities of service awaiting you.

What are you going to make of your life? A brother writing to me from Brazil speaks of the large number of young Britons who, for the sake of a livelihood, will face a tropical climate and the learning of a foreign language. He asks sadly, "Where are the Christian young men or women, who are willing to do this for the Lord's sake?" What a boon they would be, self-supporting, yet able to work in a dark and needy place for the Lord. Qualified medical men or women, dentists, opticians, really good photographers, have particularly useful qualifications, which would support them easily in many a needy part of the world. Then there are accountants, clerks, and the like.

A missionary in my hearing electrified his audience recently when he spoke of the need



of the work he was connected with in the heart of Africa. He spoke of the tiny handful of workers as contrasted with over one thousand young men and women employed by a huge English firm in that neighbourhood—young men and women ready to face the breaking of home links and the learning of a new language and the dangers of malarial fevers and worse, all for the sake of a livelihood.

We know one brother, not young and, consequently, with the mind less adaptive and receptive, and memory not at its best, who has with infinite patience acquired a foreign language in which he can proclaim the message of salvation in other lands.

Well may we ponder over the following Scripture:—

“ But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

“ Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few:

“ Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest ” (Matt. ix. 36-38).

We would shrink from attempting to send forth any labourer, but we can pray fervently that **THE LORD** *may do it*. If He

does, He will send the right ones and support them in it, whether wholly dependent on the Lord for their maintenance, on the lines of the ordaining of the Lord that "they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Cor. ix. 14), or self-supporting by taking suitable employment. The latter makes the servant more local and restricted in his sphere; the former gives the opportunity for greater scope.

But whether we stay at home or go abroad, whether we are altogether free for the Lord's service or are employed, we have the Scripture which says:—

"For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants and TO EVERY MAN HIS WORK, and commanded the porter to watch" (Mark xiii. 34).

Opportunity is yours. Opportunity is a wonderful word. In its derivation it means, arriving at the harbour—*ob*, near: *portus*, harbour. How comforting are the words, "So He bringeth them unto their desired haven" (Psa. cvii. 30). God knows our desires to please Him, and these desires, if given by Him, He will fulfil and support, and bring us right into our desired harbour. May we not miss our way.

## OUR SECURITY.

**A** SERVANT of the Lord had just finished his evening service. He was standing at the head of the stairs, saying, "Good-night" to his congregation as they wended their way homeward. Presently, he saw coming towards him a blind man leaning heavily on the arm of a friend. Anxious for the man's safety, he called out in a friendly voice, "Aren't you afraid of falling?" and he says he will never forget the blind man's reply. Pointing to the friend on whom he leaned he said, "I shall fall when *he* falls."

What a beautiful illustration of faith ! For our salvation depends entirely on the Lord Jesus Christ, upon *His* Word, *His* Worth, *His* Work. It is the value God puts on His precious blood that secures our pardon. God was so perfectly satisfied with the work of His beloved Son at Calvary that He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His own right hand in glory. There our Substitute is to-day, crowned with all honour, power and majesty, so that each of us, too, may say like the blind man, "When *He* falls, I shall—never before ! "

Let us thank Him afresh for having accomplished an "*eternal* redemption" for us, for giving to us an "*eternal* salvation."

## WHAT IS THE GAIN?

**I** DON'T see what benefit you gain from being religious, you do not seem to have any sort of enjoyment, you do not attend either outdoor or indoor amusements. Whatever you find in it I am at a loss to understand."

Such were the remarks of the Chairman of the Board to a Christian, and such are the thoughts of thousands of others who have never known the Lord.

Shall I illustrate the gain by the story of the silver egg of Dresden ?

In the museum of that city can be seen a silver egg that had once been given to one of their queens. If a certain spot on the surface were touched the egg would suddenly open, and a yolk of pure gold appear. And when this yolk was pressed, it, in turn opened, and revealed a chicken also of gold.

But this did not end the surprises, for when the wings of the chick were raised a magnificently jewelled coronet lay within, and then within this, was a ring set with the most precious gems.

What must have been the astonishment of the receiver, as for the first time she saw the hidden wonders of the new gift. Even the first opening would create surprise which

would grow as the fresh unfoldings displayed the wealth that lay within.

God's giving is of this sort. The more one knows of it, the more there appears; the more the grace of it is tasted, the sweeter it is found to be.

Let us then consider the silver to represent the first sight the converted sinner gets of the grace there is for him in Christ. What a treasure he has got ! How he rejoices in it, and tells others about it and yet how little he really knows of its unsuspected store.

He sees that he has been delivered from his sins and all their consequences, that he has been brought to God, out of darkness into His marvellous light, from being a slave of Satan to becoming a son of God. Does not this fill the heart with truest happiness, and the mouth with songs of deliverance ? Indeed it does !

A little later he learns that he has not only been mercifully blessed, but also *righteously*.

Sin had to be dealt with and man's rebellion against God answered for. This the Lord Jesus did. He was the Lamb of GOD. In many parts of the Scriptures these holy requirements are represented by Gold. We may therefore quite properly allow the golden yolk to speak of this righteousness,

and at the same time the little chicken may speak of life.

We might readily ask, "What greater blessing can God show than He has in bestowing grace and righteousness ?" Is not this the limit of His giving ? Yet we read, "God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son" (1 John v. 11). "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. vi. 23). Who could expect such bounty, and who can sufficiently appreciate it when it has been given ? Surely He freely gives as God !

There are yet other hidden things. If God has so richly endowed the sinner in perfect righteousness, what shall be done to the One who has made all this possible ? He has been crowned with glory and honour and set over the works of His hands. He is Lord of all. He has been made Head of the Church, and all things have been put into His hands. Let the coronet tell us of these grand and worthy honours.

And last of all the ring, which speaks of the strong and close bonds that exist between those who are dear to each other, intimacy, affection and tender regard. Behind all the dealings of God with His ransomed ones, there lies the eternal proof of His love, deep, sweet, strong and personal. It is the love of the Bridegroom for the Bride ; it is divine, it is eternal, for love is

of God and God is love !

This is something of the gain in knowing Christ. Who would not covet to know more and yet more of such a heart as His ?

S. SCOTT.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

*1 Peter ii. 11-25.*

You must open your Bible at the passage indicated and follow this article with the Scripture before you, if you would get any real help. Space forbids quotations of any length from the passage so, as you read, refer to the Scripture *and* THINK.

If consequently fresh light begins to break in upon you, do not lightly turn from it, but lifting up your heart in thanksgiving to God, pursue your searching of the Word on the point. It may open up to you a fruitful field of truth and you can resume your reading of the article on another occasion.

**A**T verse 11 of chapter ii. the apostle Peter turns the "marvellous light" of God upon the daily lives of the holy and royal priests to whom he writes, addressing them as "strangers and pilgrims."

They were, of course, strangers in the lands of their dispersion, as the first verse of the Epistle told us, but this is not what is alluded to here. *Every* Christian is a stranger and pilgrim, and we need not be surprised at this, since by the very fact that we are brought into such near and honoured relationship with God there must be a corresponding

severance from the world. The world is entirely antagonistic to God and we cannot hold with both at the same time. It must be one or the other. For us it is relationship and communion with God, and hence strangership and pilgrimage in the world. The world itself began with Cain, who was "a fugitive and a vagabond" (Gen. iv. 12). We may summarize the matter thus:—

A fugitive is a man who has fled from home.

A vagabond is a man who has no home.

A stranger is a man who is absent from home.

A pilgrim is a man who is on his way to home.

The actual presence of God is the true home of our souls and we are disconnected from the world-system so as to be strangers in it, though left in it for a time to show forth the excellencies of God. Still, we do not wander aimlessly for we are pilgrims also; and this means that we have an objective before us—a fixed point of destiny to which we wend our way.

The world is consumed with fleshly "lusts" or "desires," and consequently, given over to the gratification of those desires. The Christian has other desires of a spiritual sort which proceed not from the flesh at all, and the only way to foster these is to abstain from the desires of the flesh. This is a very personal matter.



Verse 12 deals with our lives in relation to others. The Gentiles were naturally very critical of these Jewish sojourners in their midst and disposed to speak against them. When any of them became Christians the Gentiles were more likely than ever to denounce them, as witness the way in which a Christian to-day gets denounced if he gives the world the smallest occasion for it. Therefore, their whole manner of life was to be right and honest. The Jew, with his notoriously strong instincts in the matter of profit-making may have particularly needed this exhortation, but who of us does not need it at all? If we maintain righteousness, ultimately our very antagonists will glorify God. They may do so in a way that will ensure their own blessing. They will certainly do so when God visits them in judgment.

Verses 13 to 17, inclusive, work this exhortation out for us, in its details. These dispersed Christian Jews might very possibly be inclined to resent many of the Gentile authorities who were over them, whether kings or governors, and also the many ordinances and laws and regulations that had been instituted, so many of them very different to what had been given of God through Moses, to which they and their forefathers had been accustomed. Still, they were to submit. Government, they had to recognize, was a divine institution. Hence they and we are to be subject for the Lord's

sake. The Christian is of course, free for he stands in the liberty of Christ. Still, he must not use his freedom as "a cloke of malice"—in any way to vent his spleen upon others—but he must regard it as liberty to serve God, and the service of God demands the subjection to rulers which is here laid down.

The matter is tersely summed up in verse 17, and we find what becomes "the servants of God." As to all men—honour. As to the brotherhood, *i.e.*, all believers—love. As to God—fear. As to the king, the representative of all human authority—honour. Carrying out this we do the will of God and silence foolish adversaries.

Having thus exhorted all Christians to submission, the apostle specially addresses servants in verse 18. The word used means not exactly "slaves" but "household servants." These, too, are to be subject to authority and specially to the masters whom they serve. These masters may be often men of the world and ill-tempered. The servant may consequently often have to suffer wrongfully. There is no credit to the Christian if, suffering for wrong doing, he takes it patiently. Such is the divine way of thinking, though nowadays people—even Christians—are very intolerant of a small rebuke for their faults. What does please God is to take patiently suffering which is endured for doing well and acting with "con-

science toward God." Nothing is harder to us naturally than this. How indignant we feel when our well-doing only serves to bring trouble upon us !

What will help us in this ? Two things. Firstly, the example of Christ. Secondly, His atoning sacrifice and its results.

Verses 21 to 23 give us the first. No one ever did well like the Lord Jesus. No one ever was so misjudged, reviled and persecuted as He. Moreover, He did no sin, no guile was ever in His mouth. There was nothing in Him or His life to justify the smallest slur being cast upon Him. Yet no one suffered as He, and no one ever took the suffering with such meekness and perfection. He fulfilled the word of Isaiah liii., "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." In all this He was an example for us, for we are called to His path, and to follow His steps. The consideration of Christ in all the glory of His perfection cannot fail to have its effect on us, conforming our thoughts and ways to His. If called upon to suffer we, too, shall commit ourselves to Him that judges righteously, instead of attempting to avenge ourselves.

Yet even so, we are not as He was, for we have sins and He had none. We needed,

therefore, the atoning sacrifice of which verse 24 speaks. He who did no sin "bare our sins in His own body on the tree." This is something altogether beyond us. We cannot follow in His steps here.

Every part of this wonderful verse deserves our most careful attention. *His own self* became the Sin-bearer, and no other. He *bare our sins*. Isaiah liii. had said He should bear our griefs and carry our sorrows, but it also predicted that He should be "wounded for our transgressions" and "bruised for our iniquities," and be stricken for "the transgression of My people," and His soul be made "an offering for sin." These sins were *ours*, for the verse definitely speaks of the work of Christ, not in its Godward aspect as propitiating Him, but in its believer-ward aspect as bearing his sins—*his* sins, and not the sins of everybody.

Moreover, He bore our sins *in His own body*. He was definitely our Substitute. We had sinned in our bodies, and having become a true Man, apart from sin, He bore our sins in His holy body as a sacrifice for sin. This He accomplished *on the tree*, for it was exclusively in His death that atonement was effected. He did not bear our sins during His life, but in His death, and we are healed by His stripes as Isaiah liii. had also declared.

But then He bore our sins and delivered us from the stripes that our sins deserved,

not in order that we should go on in our sins, but rather that we should henceforward be dead to the old life of worldly corruption and the sins which it entailed, and now live unto practical righteousness. Our sins have been atoned for and dismissed as to their judicial sentence, in order that we should be delivered from the practice of them and from their power.

This verse may be helpfully compared with the truth set forth in Romans vi. There *sin* is in question—sin as a tyrant and a master—here *sins*. There we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to 'God. Here we are to be dead to sins and live unto righteousness. In both cases the cross of Christ is that from which all flows, but Romans vi. is the believer taking up the reckoning of faith in his experience. Here it is the practical result which follows. The consistent believer becomes as a dead man to all the sins that formerly pleased him, and he lives now for the will of God which is practical righteousness. And this because of the fact that the One who died for him as the Lamb of sacrifice now lives as the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul. We were indeed "as sheep going astray"—a last reference to Isaiah liii.—but now we have a living Shepherd to lead us in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake.

## REMEMBER THIS.

**H**OW desirable it is that we should deal faithfully with ourselves, judging everything before God that is of self. And, withal, seeing that the truth, as it is in Jesus, pervades the whole heart and forms and fashions the life; that the affections are governed and the character formed by the hope of His coming. Cherish a tender conscience. Remember this—whatever unfits for Christian duties, whatever cools the fervour of devotion, whatever indisposes us to read the Scriptures or engage in prayer, whatever we could not engage in with a perfectly clear conscience in the presence of a rejected and suffering Saviour, are not for us. The pleasures, amusements, recreations, which we cannot thank God for should be avoided. When the thought of God, of Christ, of His coming, of the judgment seat, falls like a cold shadow on what we call enjoyment, we are out of our right place. Let us flee from it.

Let us never go where we cannot ask God to go with us. Let us never be found where we cannot act as Christ would have us. Let us pass each day as pilgrims consciously on the way to their heavenly inheritance. Let us press after closer communion with Jesus. Let the love of God reign in our hearts; and thus shall we be kept from a thousand

snare, exhibit a holy consistency, and become possessed of a peace and a joy which passeth knowledge.

*From the writings of C. H. M.*

## ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT.

NORTH SHELDS.—What is the distinction between (1) "I give unto them *eternal life*" and they shall *never perish*." (2) "When Thou shalt make His *soul* an offering for sin" (Isa. liii) and "we are sanctified through the offering of the *body* of Jesus Christ" (Heb. x.)

**T**HERE is a very clear distinction between *eternal life* and *never perishing*. It may help if we note first of all that in Scripture "life" is not mere existence, just as death is not non-existence. To perish is to be utterly ruined as regards the purpose for which a thing or person was made, and it involves as regards mankind, lying for ever beneath the divine judgment, all links with God being for ever severed.

Eternal life does not simply mean existing for ever. The believer will, of course, exist for ever, but possessing eternal life by the gift of God he enters into the relationships, the communion, the activities, the joys that are proper to it even now, though the life in all its fulness of manifestation will only be seen in the time to come.

Receiving eternal life we shall of course never perish. The possession of the positive secures us against the negative, but it would be a great mistake to treat them as though they were one and the same thing.

As to your second question, it is well to remember that no one passage of Scripture exhausts the fulness of the atoning work of Christ. There is probably no fuller or more comprehensive statement of His work than that contained in the words "Once in the end of the world [the consummation of the age] hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix. 26). Here "sin" stands for sin in its totality, root and branch. The sacrifice needful to put it away, so that ultimately it shall disappear entirely from all things in heaven and on earth, was nothing less than that of HIMSELF. All the fulness of His deity, all the perfection of His manhood, is wrapped up in that word *Himself*.

Considering things more in detail we find in Scripture, as you have pointed out, both the offering of His soul and of His body. The thought of the body of Christ in connection with His death is a good deal emphasized in the New Testament. The sins that had to be atoned for were *man's* sins—sins wrought by men in their bodies. The Lord Jesus became a Man, taking the body prepared for Him (see Heb. x. 5), and that body He offered up in sacrifice. But it is equally true that His soul was made an offering for sin. It was not merely His body that was offered, but all that He was in the unfathomable, unknowable depths of His being. No wonder then, that the results of His work are eternal and abiding. "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand."



## THE FAVOUR OF GOD.

**WE** should like our readers to go over once again and ponder prayerfully the first eleven verses of chapter five in this wonderful epistle to the Romans. This portion is of special interest because it brings us to the close of the first section of the Epistle. It may help to a better understanding if we indicate that in these verses we learn that the true believer has,

- (i.) Peace with God;
- (ii.) Stands in the favour of God;
- (iii.) Rejoices in hope of the glory of God;
- (iv.) Is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God;
- (v.) Has shed abroad in his heart the love of God;
- (vi.) Is reconciled to God; and
- (vii.) Can joy in God.

Thus, if he commence with the A.B.C. of the Gospel, by a gradually ascending scale we reach the X.Y.Z., or, in other words, we finish on the top note.

It will be observed that it is God that is prominent, and indeed, it is this that is characteristic of the epistle. It is a question of man, and we use that word representatively, being brought into right relations with God. Chapters i. 21 to iii. 23 show man by nature at a distance from God. Chapters iii. 24 to v. 11, let us into the secret of how God has found a means whereby, in perfect consistency with His righteous character, man can be brought back to Himself. Hence it is "the Gospel of God" (i. 1), the grace of God (iii. 24), those who believe are justified by God (iii. 26), and the justified are they who believe God.

This is of the greatest importance. There are many, we fear, who have trusted the Lord Jesus as Saviour, and who, in a sense, know that their sins are forgiven, but there is a feeling of distance between them and God, and the result is, they are not in the enjoyment of peace. This suggests a defective apprehension of the Gospel of God. It is God who has taken the initiative; it is God who has devised the plan; it is God who has found a way by which His righteousness can be maintained and His grace can flow forth; by which His sinning creatures can be justified, and set down in His presence with "not a cloud above, not a spot within."

In chapter three we have seen that grace is the source of our justification, and chapter four has shown us that it is on the principle

of faith, altogether apart from works, that we are justified (iv. 5). Note the word:—*JUSTIFIED*. It is not simply that we are forgiven, that is true, but to be justified means that we are as completely cleared of every charge as if we had never sinned at all.

We see in chapter iv. 24, 25, how this is brought about. "We believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Every believer is entitled to say, "He was delivered for *my* offences." At the cross He satisfied every demand of God's throne, every claim of divine justice; He glorified God and defeated the devil; He put away sin and annulled death; He vindicated God's righteousness and revealed His love. The proof that God is satisfied with that great work, the evidence of His acceptance of it, and of His delight in the One who has accomplished it, is that He has "raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." All that remains for us is to believe on God. When we do so we know that we are justified, and that by the very One against whom we had sinned and who might have condemned us. The result is that "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 1).

"Yes, PEACE! since every claim is met,  
Lord Jesus, by Thy blood,  
And Thou, 'our Peace,' art risen, and set  
On high by God."

Ye doubting, trembling souls, be of good cheer ! Give ear to " the Gospel of God " ; believe on God ; you will be justified by God ; and you will have " peace with God." That, however, great as it is, is just the beginning. Not only do we know that our debt is paid, that our guilty past has been for ever blotted out, but we discover that we are now introduced into the enjoyment of all the wealth of heaven. We stand in the favour of God (v. 2). Do we realize this—that all the favour of God rests upon us ?

Will you just here individualize yourself, dear fellow-believer, and say, " All the favour of God rests upon *me* ? " Say it when you rise in the morning, and let that thought be uppermost in your mind in all the circumstances of the day ; find in it a downy pillow on which to place your weary head as you lay down to rest at night :—" All the favour of God rests upon *me*, therefore, all is well."

Then, looking onward, we " rejoice in hope of the glory of God." No mere man could stand in the presence of that glory. When Moses had " reared up the tabernacle," he " was not able to enter . . . because . . . the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle " (Exodus xl. 35). When Solomon's temple was completed, " The priests could not stand to minister because . . . the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord " (1 Kings viii. 11). In the presence of that glory the seraphim cover their faces and cry,

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts” (Isa. vi. 3).

We had “sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. iii. 23), but now, whilst it prostrates us in lowly, reverent worship, it strikes no terror to our breast. We look on to the time when everything will be brought into perfect conformity to that glory, the day when the age-long problem of good and evil will be solved, the day of the great triumph of God, and, in fellowship with Him, we rejoice. *Hallelujah!*

What then of the “in between,” in other words, our Christian pathway? We must go to school, and in the school of God we shall receive the best training from Himself, *the Teacher*. By tribulations we shall learn patience, that will produce experience which, in turn, will eventuate in hope. For all this we shall have the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells every true believer. He will shed abroad in our hearts “the love of God,” and tracing back to this precious source the tribulations, the trial of patience, the sometimes bitter experience, we will be enabled to “glory” or to boast in it all.

Those who have read chapters one to eight will have noticed that in these verses we have the Holy Spirit and the love of God mentioned for the first time in the epistle. The Holy Spirit keeping us in the warm glow of this wonderful love seeks to render us superior to all the vicissitudes of our

pilgrim journey. And how great is that love ! It is "*HIS* love," His own love, that gave Christ to die for us when we were "without strength," "ungodly," "sinners" (verses 6-8). Now we are reconciled to God.

Never do we read of God being reconciled to us, nor should we expect to read that. It is enemies that need to be reconciled. God was never our enemy, but we were ever His enemies. Oh, the marvel of it ! "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son (v. 10). Every trace of enmity has been removed, every shade of distance is gone. The Son's place is our place, we are loved with that same love of complacency with which He is loved.

Read once again, at this point, Luke xv. 11-24. Visualize the scene in the father's house. The erstwhile prodigal is there, but showing not one single mark of his prodigal career, and not a rag of the far country. With the best robe—graced in the loveliness of Christ; the ring—in the circle of eternal affection; the shoes—the unmistakable mark of sonship, he sits in the father's presence, the object of his love, and together they feast upon the fatted calf. Just write across verses twenty-two and twenty-three "*RECONCILIATION.*" It is the father who speaks and he says, "Let *us* eat and be merry."

Who are the "us" ? We recall the word in Genesis i. 26; where we read, "And

God said, Let *US* make man in our image, after our likeness." The Godhead seemed to take counsel together as to the creation of man. The story of the so-called prodigal son is the story of man's history from Eden to the cross; by the cross man has been brought back to God; justified by God, made the possessor of peace with God; and reconciled to God. Once again we hear the voice that spake in Genesis i. 26, the voice of the Godhead, saying, "Let *US* make merry and be glad."

That is not all the story. Luke xv. 24, tells us, "they began to be merry," and the "music and dancing" of which we read in verse twenty-five, shows that all in the father's house were sharers in the father's joy. This brings us to our last point: "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation" (marginal reading).

Mark the opening words of Romans v. 11, "And not only so." We read the preceding verses with wonder and amazement, as we learn of blessing upon blessing, greater and still greater, and when we think we must have reached the highest point, the inspired penman adds, "and not only so," and then he puts on the top stone, for higher than this we could not get.

Before we do anything further, let us once and again read these eleven verses, let us pray that they may be built into our souls in the power of the Holy Spirit, and

then, with hearts filled with heavenly joy,  
let us worship Him, who is the Spring and  
Source of it all.

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

## THE MOUNTAIN.

"The disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them, and when they saw Him they worshipped Him" (Matt. xxviii. 16, 17).

**I**T was *His* wish that they  
Should meet Him there,  
The day, the spot, the hour,  
Were all His care.

He longed once more to be  
Amongst His own,  
And He must have them there  
With Him alone.

Not to the temple proud  
He leads their feet,  
Nor in the city's walls  
Would He them meet.

Now to a different scene  
He leads their heart.  
Upon a mountain bare,  
With Him apart.

The temple ritual past,  
With all its wealth:  
Not to a "place" they come,  
But to *Himself*.



The Son of God is there,  
And naught beside,  
They, won by perfect love,  
Are satisfied.

What can they do but praise  
When at His feet?  
Their hearts had never known  
A place more sweet.

Illumined by His love  
That mountain-side,  
Blest trysting-place to those  
For whom He died.

E. R. M.

## THE SHEPHERD PSALM.

**T**HERE are wonderful statements in Psalm xxiii., but all flow from the first great statement—the most wonderful of all—"The Lord is my Shepherd."

There are temporal needs at every turn, but "The Lord is my Shepherd"; therefore, "I shall not want" (1).

There are spiritual needs, but "The Lord is my Shepherd"; He will lead me into green pastures, and beside the still waters (2).

There may be failure, but "The Lord is my Shepherd"; He will restore my soul (3).

There may be the valley of the shadow of death to face, but "The Lord is my Shepherd"; I will fear no evil (4).

There may be enemies to meet, but "The Lord is my Shepherd"; a table will be prepared for me in the presence of mine enemies (5).

There is eternity before me, but "The Lord is my Shepherd," and, at last, He will bring me to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever (6).

It is one thing to say "The Lord is *the* Shepherd," and quite another to say "The Lord is *my* Shepherd." The first is a matter of knowledge; the last is a question of experience. "The Lord is my Shepherd" is the language of one who has proved the Lord in the varied circumstances of his pathway, and gladly submits to His leading.

First of all we do well to consider the Blessor. The safety, comfort, and blessing of the flock entirely depend upon the care, wisdom and devotedness of the Shepherd. Who is my Shepherd? The LORD—Jehovah. And Jehovah of the Old Testament is Jesus of the New Testament. He is the Man of the twenty-second Psalm, but also the Man of the twenty-fourth Psalm. In the twenty-second, He is the forsaken Man, in the twenty-fourth, He is the accepted Man. In the twenty-second, "His strength is dried up like a potsherd." In the twenty-fourth, He is "strong and mighty." In the twenty-second, He is "a worm and no man." In the twenty-fourth, He is "the Lord of hosts" and "the King of glory." This is the One

who is "my Shepherd." One who has "descended first into the lower parts of the earth." "Who has ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." He has filled every position in which a man can be found, from the utmost distance into which sin can put a man, to the highest glory which God has purposed for a man. He has trodden every step between these vast extremes, and well He knows the rough places and the solitary way. With such a Shepherd we need fear no evil, nor wonder at any blessing He bestows.

*"I shall not want."*

With such a Shepherd, the Psalmist argues that he cannot want. And yet, if we look at this world with its many wants, and failing supplies, it is no small thing to say, "I shall not want." But with a great Shepherd we can say great things. It has been said, "We shall not want, not because we are sheep, but because He is our Shepherd. This conclusion flows, not from what we are to Him, but from what He is to us."

*"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters."*

Not only does He provide for our temporal needs, but He satisfies us with spiritual blessings. He would set me free from earthly cares to fill my soul with heavenly joys. He not only brings His

sheep to green pastures—pastures of tender grass—but there He makes them lie down. No hungry sheep will lie down in green pastures: the hungry sheep will feed in the pastures of tender grass, but the satisfied sheep will lie down and rest. So our Shepherd not only provides us with spiritual nourishment, but He can fill our souls with satisfaction and rest. He that cometh unto Me, shall never hunger."

Moreover, not only does our Shepherd provide nourishment and rest, He also ministers refreshment to our souls. "He leadeth me beside the still waters." Not the running streams that dry up, but the deep, still waters of the well. In Genesis xxi., we read of a poor woman wandering in the wilderness of Beersheba, the water in her bottle spent, weeping beside her dying child; suddenly she heard the angel's voice, for we read, "God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water." In that dreary wilderness, face to face with death, God led that poor, out-cast sheep beside the deep waters of quietness.

Like Israel of old, who forsook "the fountain of living waters and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that could hold no water," we, too, often seek satisfaction in earthly things, only to find that all earthly springs run dry. If only we could trust the Lord, not only to save our souls, but to satisfy our hearts, He would lead us into

the green pastures that never wither, and beside the still waters that never run dry.

*"He restoreth my soul."*

Alas ! we often turn aside. And after a season of deepest spiritual blessing we are in the greatest danger. We enjoy the green pastures and the still waters and then we wander. In Matthew xxvi. we find the world in an uproar: chief priests, scribes and elders, plotting to kill Jesus. But in the upper-room all is quietness and peace. The Lord has been leading His weak and weary sheep into green pastures and beside still waters, as He spoke to them of the Father's home and His coming to receive them to Himself, and they close that time of sweet fellowship by singing a hymn. But immediately the Lord warns His sheep that, on that same night, all would be offended because of Him, and every one would be scattered. Singing a hymn in His company one hour, and offended and scattered the next. So we read they all "forsook Him and fled." But if they wander, He restores. Peter breaks down and denies the Lord, but he cannot restore himself. The Lord's prayer for Peter, the Lord's look upon Peter, the Lord's private interview with Peter, brought about his restoration. Says restored Naomi, "I went out," but she has to add, "The Lord hath brought me home again."

*"He leadeth me in paths of righteousness  
for His name's sake."*

We wander into paths of sin, but when He restores He leads us into paths of righteousness for His name's sake. He will lead us so to walk as to glorify His name. His name expresses what He is, it stands for all that is holy even in the sight of His enemies, for they have to own they find no fault in Him. In leading His sheep He makes good that name. He leads in paths of righteousness that accord with His name.

*"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."*

The paths of righteousness may lead into the valley of the shadow of death. It was so with the martyrs. They suffered death rather than sin. They resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Why did the Psalmist fear no evil? He gives us four reasons to dispel our fears in the presence of death.

First, he was only going "through" the valley. We do not fear when we go into a tunnel, because we know we do not go in never more to come out. We are going "through" and on the other side is the bright sunshine. The valley indeed is dark, for over it is the shadow of death, but on the other side is the everlasting day — the morning without clouds.

Second, we must not forget it is but the "shadow" of death. When the good Shepherd took His lonely way down into the dark valley of death it was to bear the

"substance" of death in all its terror, as the wages of sin. If the believer is called to go through the valley it is only the "shadow" we have to meet. The penalty of death has been paid, the sting of death is gone.

Still, sheep are poor, timid things and easily frightened, even of shadows. Well, there is a third thing to silence our fears. When the good Shepherd took the way of the valley there was no man with Him.

"Alone He bare the cross,  
Alone its grief sustained,"

But if we pass the way of the valley we have company, and such company—the One who has already been through death's dark flood journeys with us. Well may we say, "I will fear no evil; for THOU ART WITH ME."

But there is yet a fourth reason why we need fear no evil, for the Psalmist says, "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." The rod is for defence, and the staff is for support. Does the enemy make a last attack upon the believer as he enters the valley of death? Then let not the believer fear for the Lord is there with *His rod* to defend His sheep, and drive off the enemy. Is the sheep fearful by reason of his weakness in the presence of death? Let him not be discouraged, for the Lord is there with *His staff* to support.

*"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."*

Some of the sheep may never have to take the way of the valley, but even so, they will have enemies to face, and in the presence of the enemy the Lord can uphold His people. In spite of the enemies, yea, in the very presence of the enemies, the Lord prepares a table for His people. We have a Shepherd who can provide for, and sustain, His sheep in spite of all that man can do, so that we may boldly say, "The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man can do unto me" (Heb. xiii. 5, 6). But there is more, not only can He sustain me in the presence of mine enemies, but He can make me rejoice, for He anoints my head with oil—"the oil of gladness" (Psa. xlv. 7). And when the heart is filled with gladness it overflows in praise, like a cup filled to overflowing.

*"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."*

With such a Shepherd what other conclusion can we reach? The Lord goes before, the sheep follow after, and goodness and mercy bring up the rear. How blessed that goodness and mercy should follow behind, just, indeed, where they are wanted; for there are weak sheep, and sick sheep, and lame sheep, and the weak and sickly sheep lag behind, and follow afar off, but goodness



and mercy will pick them up. How do we deal with the weak and sickly sheep? Alas! too often like the shepherds of Israel, of whom the prophet had to say, "With force and with cruelty have ye ruled them" (Ezek. xxxiv. 4); but with goodness and mercy the Lord deals with them. If we cannot count upon the tender mercies of one another, this at least we know, the goodness and mercy *of the Lord* will follow us all the days of our life.

And when the days of this passing life have run their course, what of the far future that stretches into eternity? The Psalmist closes with an answer of ringing certainty, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." This is the glorious end of a great beginning. For what can be greater, in this world, than to go through it with the Lord Himself for our Shepherd. And if "the Lord is my Shepherd" it must follow that not only He will lead me through this wilderness world, but He will bring me at last into the glory where He Himself is gone.

"For the path where our Saviour has gone,  
Has led up to His Father and God,  
To the place where He's now on the throne,  
And His strength shall be ours on the road.

Till then, 'tis the path Thou hast trod,  
Our delight and our comfort shall be;  
We're content with Thy staff and Thy rod,  
Till with Thee all Thy glory we see."

HAMILTON SMITH.

## THE BRAZEN LAVER.

**I**N this laver the priests washed their hands and feet, and thus maintained that purity which was essential to the proper discharge of their priestly functions. It was not by any means a question of a fresh presentation of blood; but simply that action by which they were preserved in fitness for priestly service and worship. . . . There can be no true communion with God, save as personal holiness is diligently maintained "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (1 John i. 6). This personal holiness can only flow from the action of the word of God on our works and ways. "By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." Our constant failure in priestly ministry may be accounted for by our neglecting the due use of the laver. If our ways are not submitted to the purgative action of the word, if we continue in the pursuit or practice of that which the word distinctly condemns, the energy of our priestly character will assuredly, be lacking. Deliberate continuance in evil and true priestly worship are incompatible. . . . The man who has constant recourse to the word of God, and who allows that word to tell upon his heart and conscience, will be maintained in the holy activities of the divine life.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

1 *Peter iii.* 1—22.

You must open your Bible at the passage indicated and follow this article with the Scripture before you, if you would get any real help. Space forbids quotations of any length from the passage so, as you read, refer to the Scripture *and* THINK.

If consequently fresh light begins to break in upon you, do not lightly turn from it, but lifting up your heart in thanksgiving to God, pursue your searching of the Word on the point. It may open up to you a fruitful field of truth and you can resume your reading of the article on another occasion.

THE opening verses of chapter iii. continue the exhortation to submission.

The apostle commenced this exhortation at verse 13 of chapter ii. In verse 18 he applied it to those who *socially* are in the subject place. Now he applies it to those who hold the subject place in that great *natural relationship* which is the foundation of all human relationships.

The Christian wife is to be in subjection to her husband. If he is a Christian he *obeys* the word and she *obeys* him. A most excellent and delightful arrangement made according to the wisdom of God! Subjection, be it remembered, does not mean inferiority. In business partnerships two men may be equal partners and yet one is recognized as the senior with whom the

final decision rests. So in the marriage bond the man has been creatorially fitted for the senior, directing place in the partnership, the woman for the subject place, though she is an heir together with her husband of the grace of life, and a sharer together with him in his exercises and prayers. If the husband loves and honours his wife as a fellow-heir and partner, and she honours and obeys him, an ideal marriage is the result.

But, as the first verse indicates, some believing women may have husbands who, not being converted, do not obey the word. In this case, the converted wife is still to act towards him as the word directs. She, at any rate, is to be a Christian woman and let her Christianity shine in her pure manner of life (v. 2), her avoidance of worldly artifices for self-adornment and self-display (v. 3), her meek and peaceful spirit, which is so great a thing in God's estimation (v. 4), and her subjection to him, coupled with the doing of good and a spirit of calm confidence in God (vv. 5, 6). By such "conversation" or "manner of life" many a husband has been won "without the word."

The "church," dominated by the principles of the twentieth-century world, may cut the word "obey" out of its marriage service, but see what you Christian wives are going to miss if you cut it out of your hearts and

minds ! Should your husband be unconverted you may miss the joy of winning him. Should he be a Christian, how much of the grace of life and of prayer may be forfeited.

Verse 8 brings us to the final word of the apostle in connection with the matter of subjection. The gracious, gentle, humble spirit is to characterize the whole Christian company. We are never to indulge in evil or recrimination on the principle of tit for tat, but always to be in the spirit of blessing since blessing we receive from God, and this because we are left to pursue our pilgrim way under His holy government.

The principles of God's government of His people do not change. When David wrote Psalm xxxiv., it was the age of law and God's people were in the place of servants. To-day is the age of grace and we are before God as His sons, as Galatians iii. 23--iv. 7, shows. Yet the apostle Peter can quote David's words from Psalm xxxiv. as applying equally to us. 'We reap what we sow in the government of God; and the way to "see good" is to "do good," as verses 10 to 13 of our chapter show. Many a disagreeable event in our lives is clearly the result of our own disagreeableness. If we sowed more good we should reap more good.

At this point let us notice the remarkable

way in which the apostle has set before us in its main outlines the truth set forth typically and in historical fashion in the books of Moses.

Genesis is the book of ELECTION. It shows us how God chose Abel and Seth and not Cain, Shem and not Ham, Abram and not Nahor, Isaac and not Ishmael, Jacob and not Esau, Joseph and not Reuben, Ephraim and not Manasseh. Peter brings before us first of all God's electing mercy (i. 2).

Exodus is the book of REDEMPTION. Israel was redeemed out of Egypt, and brought to God. Peter proceeds to tell us how we have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ and brought to God with our faith and hope in Him (i. 18-21).

Leviticus is the book of the PRIESTHOOD. It contains directions as to sacrifices for priestly guidance, and as to customs and cleanness for priestly fitness. Thirdly, Peter sets before us the Christian priesthood, its constitution and its privileges (i. 22—ii. 10).

Numbers is the book of the WILDERNESS. It specially reveals the wilderness journey of Israel with all its vicissitudes and lessons. Fourthly, Peter instructs us as to our pilgrimage and the conduct that befits us in it (ii. 11—iii. 7).

Deuteronomy is the book of the GOVERNMENT OF GOD. In it Israel were warned of the consequence of their disobedience, the reward of obedience. And we have just got to the part of the epistle in chapter iii. where Peter warns us that though we are as Christians set in the grace of God we still come under His government and have to make our reckoning with it.

Verse 14 introduces another consideration. We may of course suffer for our own folly in the government of God. We may, on the other hand, be receiving blessing in the government of God, and yet be called upon to suffer for righteousness' sake. If so, God guarantees our happiness in it and under it. We are not to be afraid of men but, sanctifying the Lord God (or "Lord Christ" as it probably is) in our hearts, to testify meekly to the truth while maintaining a good conscience by holy living.

Notice in passing how verse 15 makes manifest the true force of the word "sanctify." It is not primarily "to make holy," for the Lord cannot be more holy than He is. He can, however, in our hearts be *set apart* in His own proper place of glory and supremacy and authority. To sanctify is to set apart.

Now no one ever suffered as Christ. He is our supreme Example. Yet His sufferings

as verse 18 presents them, were in a class by themselves and altogether beyond us, for He suffered for sins as a Substitute—the Just for the unjust ones. The actual word substitution does not occur in our English version, but that which the word represents is very clearly in this verse. Note the object of His substitutionary sufferings—"that He might bring us to God," making us thoroughly at home in His presence, having a fitness to be there. Are we all in our own hearts and consciences happily at home with God?

The Lord Jesus suffered for sins even to death and He rose again by or "in" the Spirit, the day of His flesh being over. In the Spirit also He had preached before the flood to those who now are spirits in prison. These people who now are spirits in prison once walked the earth as men and women in Noah's day and through Noah's lips Christ in Spirit (or, the Spirit of Christ) spoke. They were disobedient, hence their present imprisonment in *hades*, the unseen world. The Spirit of Christ spoke in the Old Testament prophets, as we noticed when reading chapter i. verse 11. He also spoke in Noah.

If any of our readers have doubts as to whether this is the correct explanation of the passage, let them turn to Ephesians ii. and read verses 13 to 18. Having done so they will find that the "He" of verse 16 (which "He" refers also to verse 17) is undoubtedly



the Lord Jesus. In verse 17, "you which were far off" were Gentile: "them that were nigh" were Jews. The passage states then, that having endured the cross the Lord Jesus "*came and preached peace*" to the *Gentiles*. When? How? Never, in a personal way. Only by the lips of the apostles and others who were filled with His Spirit did He do so. Exactly the same figure of speech is used in this passage as in the one we are considering in Peter.

As a result of this ante-diluvian testimony of the Spirit of Christ only eight souls were saved through the waters of the flood; a tiny handful that, the merest remnant of the former age. Now baptism, which is but a figure, has just that force. The flood cut off that little remnant of the ante-diluvian age that through the waters of death they might be disassociated from the old world and enter the new. The converted Jews to whom Peter wrote were exactly in that position. They, too, were but a small remnant, and in their baptism they were dissociated from the mass of their nation that was under wrath and judgment, that they might come under the authority of their risen and glorified Messiah. Baptism is in figure dissociation by means of death and in that sense it saves. The Jews as a nation were like a foundering ship, and to be baptized was to formally cut one's last link with them which meant salvation from their national doom. Hence Peter's words in Acts ii. 40. "*Save*

yourself from this untoward generation." What followed? "Then they that gladly received his word were *baptized*."

Baptism accomplishes nothing vital and eternal, for it is "a figure." It is, however, not a mere ceremonial washing as were Jewish "baptisms." It is rather the "answer" or "demand of a good conscience toward God," as we see with the eunuch and with Lydia (see Acts viii. 36; xvi. 15). A good conscience gladly accepts it, and even demands it, accounting it as faithfulness to the Lord to be in figure cut off from the old life, even as He was actually cut off in death; and thus identified with Him.

All, however, is only effectual "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." For if there were not really and actually a new world of life and blessing opened for us by His resurrection who would cut their links with the old? It was by the resurrection that these Christians had been begotten again to a living hope, as chapter i. verse 3 told us. They would cheerfully go down into the waters of baptism, and so bid a formal good-bye to the old Jewish footing with its impending judgment (See 1 Thess. ii. 14-16), in view of the vast range of grace and glory with its living hopes, that stood revealed to them and secured for them in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Not only is Christ risen, however, but He is gone into heaven and is already at the right hand of God, which signifies that He is the appointed Administrator of all God's will. A man of large business interests who has someone of great ability acting for him and carrying out his wishes, will often speak of him as "my right-hand man." The Lord Jesus is indeed the "Man of Thy right hand" of whom the Psalmist spoke (lxxx. 17), and we have been baptized to Him and come under His authority. To Him all angels and authorities and powers are subject.

How great an encouragement for us ! All these verses (15-22) have sprung, remember, out of the thought that we may have to suffer for righteousness' sake. It was just when the converted Jew formally severed his links with Judaism by being baptized that he did suffer. But then being baptized to the Lord Jesus he came under the authority of the One who sat in the place of supreme authority and administration and since all powers were subject to Him, no power could touch them without His permission.

Similarly, when we, who are converted Gentiles, cut our links with the world, we have to taste suffering, but we, too, are under the mighty authority of Christ and need have no fear.

## ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT.

TEWKESBURY. Will you explain 1 Corinthians xi. 30, please? Is it bodily sickness that is meant, or spiritual sickness; and does it apply literally to-day?

**I**N this verse sickness and death of *the body* are alluded to, for the word "sleep," here as elsewhere, means death. The previous verse tells us that to eat and drink the supper of the Lord in an unworthy manner brings upon us judgment from the Lord in the course of His governmental dealings with us. The form that judgment took with the Corinthians was sickness and even death. Had they but judged themselves, which would have at once led to the correction of the evil, they would not have been thus judged. But being judged they had to recognize it as a chastening from the Lord's hand sent so that they might at once come under the divine dealings and not have their judgment postponed to the great day of reckoning that awaits the world.

It unquestionably applies to-day. The Lord still deals with us in chastisement if and when necessary. He may not send it in the form of sickness or death, but in other forms. That is as seems best to Him. Not all the sins of a Christian are "a sin unto death." (1 John v. 16, 17). Nor is all chastisement that may come upon us necessarily in *retribution* for sins committed. Chastisement may be *preventive* (See 2 Cor. xii. 7) or *educational* (See Heb. xii. 5-9).

Happy is that believer who learns to habitually judge himself and who consequently walks in obedience and avoids the things that would call for the chastisement of the Lord.

## ON TRUSTING CHRIST.

“**W**HAT is the difference between you and me?” a lady once asked me, “I believe in Christ, I believe every word in the Bible and yet I know there is a difference.”

“Is it not,” I asked, “that you believe in Christ as you do in Julius Cæsar, or in any other historical personage? but I trust Him wholly, for time and for eternity.”

“Yes,” she said, “I think that is it.”

Twenty years have passed away and I have never seen her since; I can only hope that she too, has learned to trust herself wholly to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We might divide people into these two classes, those who trust Christ and those who do not. The great apostle Paul belonged to that first class, he puts himself among those who “first trusted in Christ,” and in his wonderful letter to the saints at Ephesus he puts them into the same place, saying to them “In whom ye also trusted” (Eph. i. 12, 13).

Some have objected that this is too easy a way of salvation, that it is necessary to do what we can to keep the law, to lead a good life, etc. But this objection arises from not understanding the ways of God.

My reader has perhaps heard his Christian teachers speak of dispensations, and possibly, has no very clear idea of the meaning and use of the word in the Scriptures. Shall we change this long word into very simple words which may convey the meaning to us? and say, the house-law or the law of the house. We understand in earthly things that there must be the rule of a house, the house without rule or law is a house in confusion. A dispensation then is the law of the house for the time then present, the rule to which God has put man under obedience.

The first, I need hardly say, was the garden of Eden, and the rule or law was that Adam was to keep the garden and dress it, but not to eat of one tree.

Again, to Noah, just emerged from the ark after the flood, the command was to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and the fear and dread of him was to be upon every beast, every fowl, and upon all fishes.

Israel was given a law which was, as the apostle Paul tells us, "holy, just and good," with God as their King. Then later, when they desired a king another dispensation was ushered in, and a kingdom was established, three very simple rules being given to the king.

The result is, alas! too well known. Adam ate of the tree; Noah could not rule

himself; Israel broke the law before the tables of stone containing it reached them; Solomon, the king, in all his glory, proceeded to break all three rules as quickly as possible.

What can be done with such rebellious people? God, in His great love, has brought in a new dispensation of which the one simple rule is that we should TRUST CHRIST, and yield allegiance to Him. Can it be supposed that God will go back to the dispensations which have passed away and permit man to try again any of the ways in which he has so utterly broken down? Impossible.

To bring in this new dispensation the Lord Jesus died on the cross and for ever settled the question of sin and rebellion for those who trust Him. It has been well said, God has made the way so simple for the one who trusts, but to do this it cost the Son of God the suffering and shame of Calvary. Who will dare to add ought to such a work as this? Surely the only answer to Him is loving adoration, heartfelt trust, unquestioning obedience.

To trust Christ is, as we have seen, the beginning of the Christian life—to trust Christ is the unfailing resource for the Christian path. In how many blessed ways has He revealed Himself. Are we sad at heart because the way is long and difficult?

Let us trust Him, "the good Shepherd" who gave "His life for the sheep" (John x. 11), and who gives unto them "eternal life" (John x. 28), the "great Shepherd of the sheep" risen from the dead (Heb. xiii. 20): "the chief Shepherd" who is coming again (1 Pet. v. 4).

Are we discouraged because of infirmity and failure? The remedy is the same, let us trust Him, our great High Priest, "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. iv. 15).

Are we conscious of sin? He is the "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous" (1 John ii. 1).

Are we doubting and distressed because the best and wisest men do not agree in their opinions and teaching? do we long for one to teach us the way of God? He alone meets this need saying, "I, your Lord and Master [or Teacher]" (John xiii. 14).

Are our hearts troubled in any way from any cause? He draws near and says, "Let not your heart be troubled, . . . I will come again, . . . I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John xiv. 1, 2, 6). Yea, He is all these and much more—the Son over God's house, the Son who came to reveal the Father, and to introduce us into His Father's house, for our present joy and to be our eternal dwelling place.

i      Some one reading these simple thoughts



may say "Yes, it is all very well, but He is gone so far away." He has anticipated this also and has sent down that other Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to dwell in our hearts, and to bring Him to us, and us to Him in blessed and abiding "remembrance" (John xiv. 26).

L. R.

## CHRISTIAN ARMOUR.

*Ephesians vi. 13-18.*

**I**N these verses we have instructions as to how the Christian should be arrayed so as to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

The first thing we are told is to "stand having our loins girt about with truth." Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself was the truth, for He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John xiv. 6). The apostle Peter in his 1st epistle speaks of "the loins of your mind," exhorting us to gird it up, and be sober, (i. 13), so if the believer is to be used by God in the conflict with the powers of darkness, he must be equipped with truth, not thinking more highly than he ought, but thinking soberly. He, who was the truth, won the victory in the wilderness by a three-fold appeal to the written Word.

Next comes the breast-plate of righteousness, which speaks again of the Lord Jesus, as in Jeremiah li. 10, and Malachi iv. 2. The previous part of the equipment, the girdle, is connected with the mind; the breast-plate with the heart. The heart is like a fortress that has to be kept with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. We are told of Job that he was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil," and because he had on the breast-plate of righteousness, Satan could not defeat him. Of the Lord Himself we read in Isaiah lix. 17 that "He put on righteousness as a breast-plate."

We must also have our feet shod with "the preparation of the gospel of peace." There was a time, according to Isaiah lii. 7 when the feet of the Lord Jesus alone were beautiful upon the mountains, as He came bringing good tidings, publishing peace. But the Spirit of the Lord has quoted the verse in Romans x. 15, in the plural, "How beautiful are the feet of *them* that preach the gospel of peace, and bring good tidings of good things." Every believer should be in his or her sphere, a preacher of the gospel of peace, ever ready to give an answer concerning the hope that is in them. The "shoes of preparation" are connected with the believer's walk, the way is not smooth, so shoes are necessary. The preparation, the readiness, which the gospel of peace brings, what does it do? It makes one

ready for the battle of life, ready for the good fight of faith, ready to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

The shield of faith comes next, which again speaks to us of our blessed Lord. We read of Him in Hebrews xii. verse 2 as "the Author and Finisher of faith." God said to Abram, "Fear not Abram, I am thy shield" (Gen. xv. 1). Psalm xci. 4 tells us, "His truth shall be thy shield and buckler," the result being "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night nor for the arrow that flieth by day," (Verse 5). You shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. As one has said, speaking of the Lord Himself—

"But spotless, undefiled, and pure,  
The great Redeemer stood,  
While Satan's fiery darts He bore,  
And did resist to blood."

The message for the redeemed is, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James iv. 7).

In the case of Job we see that faith protects him like a shield, for in his temptation we hear him say "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Likewise Paul in the shipwreck holds the shield of faith, saying, "I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me," (Acts xxvii. 25).

Then we are told to "Take the helmet of salvation." Christ has become our salvation. There is a parallel passage in 1 Thessalonians

v. 8-10, "Putting on . . . for an helmet, the hope of salvation, for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us." Salvation known and enjoyed, as represented in the helmet of salvation, or salvation in those aspects of it yet future, an object of hope, as shown in the helmet of the hope of salvation, is to be a protection for the mind. Not only does the heart need guarding, but the mind also. (See Philip-  
pians, iv. 7).

We now come to this last part of the equipment, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." This was the sword used by the Captain of our salvation, when He was here upon earth. His three quotations from the book of Deuteronomy were sufficient to make the adversary depart defeated, after the forty days' conflict in the wilderness. When the believer is strong and has the word of God abiding in him, he also is able to "overcome the wicked one" (1 John ii. 14).

Now a few words about the armour as a whole. The need for the **WHOLE** armour, is according to the value of the possessions which we have in Him, and which are to be so diligently guarded. The chapter we have read is the only place in which the apostle tells us to put on the whole armour of God. Every weapon in the Divine armoury is now called for, and **ALL** are to be worn, just

as a soldier of the king has his whole equipment strapped on when marching to war. We notice that all the armour, with the exception of the sword of the Spirit, is for defence. The word of God acts as the sword of the Spirit when wielded in the power of the Spirit. In the temptation in the wilderness, the Lord drove Satan away with the word "It is written." The possessions of the Ephesian saints, and our possessions are so great, "Blessed . . . with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ," and while they are all secured by being in Christ, yet the enemy's object of attack is to rob us of our enjoyment of these riches, and one has to admit, he often succeeds. No wonder we require the whole armour of God. To be well equipped is most important, but even this would not lead to victory without the energy of the Spirit in prayerful dependence upon Him. We gather from David's refusal of Saul's armour that nothing of human ingenuity can be of any use to us in the conflict. He tried the coat of mail, but found it would only hamper him, and so he resorted to what was purely of God. We must be prepared before the enemy comes. It is no use running for the sword when he is upon us. How many have been taken by surprise and caught like the man of God in 1 Kings xiii; he was surprised under the tree, he was deceived by a false enemy, and slain by the lion. The armour is all a

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matter of character. The things that are ours are to live in us, and they are only armour as they become characteristic of us. We may stand in righteousness, but we are to be characterized by it. We apprehend it by faith, but to be a breast-plate it has to become characteristic.

We are to have our loins girt about with truth. No mere intellectual holding of the truth would be armour. The preparation of the gospel of peace is to walk in peace in a scene of moral confusion. The Christian walks in peace knowing that what caused the confusion has been removed from before God's eye. Christ is our peace, because He made peace by His death.

We become aggressive as we use the sword of the Spirit. The point is to be in the *state* to hold the sword. A sword is not armour; the armour is protective, but the sword is aggressive. Truth puts everything in its place. It is the expression of things as they are for God, the revelation of God, and Christ who is before Him. Stephen saw the truth in the glory of God and Jesus.

In addition to the armour we are in the 18th verse exhorted "to pray in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

How important it is to put on the *whole* armour of God. We are so apt to leave

off some portion, and depend upon it if we do, the fiery darts of the devil will get in, then like the wounded soldier who does not enjoy his natural life, we, as Christians, if wounded, will not enjoy our spiritual life.

It requires the whole armour of God, both protective and aggressive, to ward off the attacks of the enemy.

Gird thy heavenly armour on,  
Wear it ever night and day;  
Ambush'd lies the evil one;  
"Watch and pray."

A MOORE.

## ABOUT MOSES.

**M**OSESES, the servant of the Lord lived for 120 years ere he received his home call from the top of Pisgah. In Acts 7, his life is divided up, by the Holy Ghost, into three parts. He was 40 years in Egypt, (v. 23) then 40 years in Midian, (v. 30) while the last 40 years he was engaged in carrying the children of Israel through the wilderness.

It was recently said by one of God's children, that during the first 40 years he was learning to be *somebody*; in the second 40 years he was learning to be *nobody*; while during those final 40 years he was

learning that *God must be Everything*. He also proved then how much God can do through a man who is willing to decrease, if so be that God shall thereby increase.

How thoroughly Moses had learnt to be "somebody" may be gleaned from Acts vii. 22, where we are told he "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." This is not the fulsome flattery of some paid newspaper reporter, but is the testimony of the Holy Spirit as to the natural attainments and abilities of this remarkable man. It is difficult for us to fully realize the high grade of civilization in Egypt at that time, or to understand the advanced standard of education that then existed. Egypt possessed two Universities, and the ruins of the college at Seti in the Valley of the Kings—where it is believed Moses studied—are still standing. We are told that "literature, medicine, architecture, music, and art in general" were taught there.

Moses must have been a magnificent specimen of cultured manhood. From his subsequent history we know he was a prophet, legislator, historian, poet, administrator, judge, a fine soldier, and well acquainted with the laws of hygiene, astronomy and architecture, though, of course, then he was instructed and illumined by the Spirit of God. How magnificent his



account of the Creation in Genesis i. 1. With what literary skill does he record the early history of God's ancient people ! How matchless the poetry of the two sublime "songs" with which he inaugurated and closed his public ministry, as also his peerless Psalm (xc). Josephus tells us that Moses received a thorough military education, and became an illustrious General. Moreover, he led the Egyptian army against the Ethiopian city of Meroe, which he successfully took. No other human biography has ever shown the history of any man so brilliantly clever as Moses, or who excelled in such variety of attainments as he did. "Learned in *all* Egyptian wisdom."

Then as regards his social position, we know that as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, who was childless, Moses was near to the throne of the two Egypts. The power and territory of Egypt in those days was tremendous. Moses lived in royal state and dressed in princely apparel; servants waited upon his every need, and as he rode past in his splendid chariot, all bowed low before him. He had indeed learned to be *somebody*. If any one ever climbed the greasy pole of earthly splendour, that one surely was Moses.

His own nation just then was passing through a time of dire calamity, and badly needed someone to deliver them from the thrall of their oppressor. Can we wonder that Moses thought he was the right man

to attempt this hazardous undertaking? Are we surprised that he felt equal to the gigantic task of rescuing the children of Israel from their captivity? Who better able? We may conclude this from Acts vii. 25, "He supposed . . . that God *by his hand* would deliver them." And so out to the fray in his own strength he rushed. He murdered an Egyptian, and was obliged ignominiously to flee in terror. All ended abruptly in defeat and disaster.

Then followed 40 years in God's school. Forty years learning to be *nobody*. God's university was in Midian, and He trained His servant in the back of the desert. How that intellectual and accomplished scholar must have loathed keeping sheep. He had been brought up amongst Egyptians, to whom even a shepherd was an abomination (see Gen. xlv. 34). Fresh from his college and his books, where he had been studying arts and sciences with the most brilliant intellects of that enlightened age, his companions now are witless sheep. After all the luxuries of palace life in Egypt, the drought by day and the frost by night, combined with all the menial labour ever connected with the care of sheep and little lambs, must have been uncongenial and unsupportable to him. We get a side light as to this, in the name Moses gave to his eldest child. He called him "Gershom, for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land." "But Moses, have you forgotten it was in

Midian you wooed and won your bride !  
'Twas there you experienced *the sacred joy*  
that comes only once in a man's life, when  
his first born son is laid in his arms." Even  
with the flush of fatherhood fresh upon him,  
his subdued soul echoes, "Midian was a  
strange land to me, and I was only an alien  
in it." Be it to his credit, Moses never ran  
away from his desert life, as he had pre-  
viously done from Egypt.

For 40 years Moses endured this training  
under the hand of God. The wheels of God  
may grind slowly, but then they grind ex-  
ceeding small. God saw that 80 years pre-  
paration was necessary to fit Moses for the  
40 years service for which He needed him.  
As soon as sorrow's work was done God  
sent relief, and Moses reached the third  
stage of his history, and he learns who *God*  
*is*. God honoured His servant by revealing  
Himself to him by a Name never revealed  
before (See Exodus iii. 14). How exquisite  
the time of communion he had with God by  
the burning bush. How surpassing sweet  
the intimacy of the conversation between  
them, as Moses listened to the voice of the  
Most High and was privileged to hear  
about Jehovah's sympathy for His suffering  
people, and learnt His future plans for them.  
No other man had been so honoured. The  
Lord spake to him "face to face as a man  
speaketh to his friend." (Exod. xxxiii. 11).  
Hagar might have learnt "*Thou God seest*  
*me,*" but Moses knew something more sub-

lime, for he *saw God*, who is invisible. His preparation for this, lay away back on the west side of the desert. Did Moses grudge those irksome years in Midian that enabled him to enjoy the friendship and the glory of God? Methinks not.

That he had learnt his Midian lesson is evident by contrasting Acts vii. 25 with the song of Exodus xv. For after he had brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea, instead of ascribing any honour to his own hand as before, he says with worship, "Thy right hand Oh Lord, is become glorious in power; *Thy right hand*, Oh Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy."

That Moses had learnt his second lesson in God's school may be inferred from Acts vii. 34. In his early days he had sought to work for God in his own strength, and failure had been the result, but when an old man, 80 years of age he is a "Vessel meet for the Masters use" and Jehovah says to him, "And NOW come, and I will send thee into Egypt."

It seems as though, after this, the Holy Spirit would heap honour upon honour on this servant of the Lord, designating him as "prophet," (Deut. xviii. 15), "priest" (Ps. xcix. 6), and "king" (Deut. xxxiii. 5), an accumulation of dignities bestowed on no other mortal man.

Moses lived 120 years.—Deut. xxxiv. 7.

40 years

—

In Egypt

—

Learning to be  
Somebody.

40 years

—

In Midian

—

Learning to be  
Nobody.

40 years

Learning  
Who GOD is.

E. R. M.

## A FRAGMENT.

**A** little piety means spiritual deadness. If the presence of Christ is worth anything at all do not peep at Him through the keyhole. Open the door wide, and ask Him to sit down at your table. If the Bible is worth anything at all, do not hastily stuff down a chapter on retiring, when you are too tired to enjoy it. Make it your daily food. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (Col iii. 16). Either Christ is all in all (Col. iii. 11) or He is nothing at all.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

1 *Peter* iv. 1-19.

You must open your Bible at the passage indicated and follow this article with the Scripture before you, if you would get any real help. Space forbids quotations of any length from the passage so, as you read, refer to the Scripture *and* THINK.

If consequently fresh light begins to break in upon you, do not lightly turn from it, but lifting up your heart in thanksgiving to God, pursue your searching of the Word on the point. It may open up to you a fruitful field of truth and you can resume your reading of the article on another occasion.

THOSE of you who have carefully followed our Scripture Portion thus far, have possibly noticed that the thought of suffering, both for Christ Himself and for His followers, has been very prominent from chapter ii. verse 11, where we started the practical and hortatory part of the epistle.

That suffering must be expected by the Christian is very clear. His life is to be one of well doing, but he may suffer for doing well (ii. 20). It is to be a life of righteousness, but he may suffer for righteousness' sake (iii. 14). The first verse of chapter iv. reverts to this matter, and instructs us that we are to be armed for the conflict with the mind to suffer. It was the mind that animated Christ. He suffered for us in the flesh, and that even unto death (iii. 18). There is, of course, a difference. He

suffered for us in atonement, and this we can never do. He "suffered being tempted" (Heb. ii. 18), because being perfectly holy, the very thought of sin was abhorrent to Him. We suffer in refusing temptation and in ceasing from sin, because, alas ! sin is alluring to the flesh within us. If we gratify the flesh we do not suffer, but we sin. If we refuse temptation and have done with sin, the flesh suffers instead of being gratified. But it is just that suffering that is incumbent upon us.

In our unconverted days we lived in the gratification of our natural desires without any reference to the will of God. Now we are on exactly opposite lines, as verse 2 indicates. We do well to remember that God divides up our lives into two parts; "the time past of our life," and "the rest of our time in the flesh," the hour of conversion marking the boundary between them. In the earlier part we wrought the will of the nations who never were put under the law of God. Now we are to carry out the will of God, which has been made known to us not merely in the law but in Christ.

By the very fact however that we do not act as the world does we are open to the world's dislike and criticism. There are always many to be found who think and speak evil of what they cannot understand. This need not disturb the believer for there is One who is ready to judge the living and

the dead and the accusers will stand before Him.

Now the ground of all judgment will be the testimony as regards God and His truth which may have been rendered to those who are subject to judgment; in other words, the responsibility of each will be measured by the divine testimony they have heard. "The gospel" of verse 6 is not the Christian gospel in particular. It is just "glad tidings" such as has at different times been preached to people of bygone ages, now dead. In particular it refers to the glad tidings of salvation by the ark through the flood, for "the dead" refers to the same people as the Apostle had alluded to in chapter iii. verses 19 and 20. All through the bygone ages there was also glad tidings of a coming Deliverer and always then, as now, the glad tidings separates those who hear it into two classes; those who refuse or neglect it and have to stand their judgment as men in the flesh, and those who receive it and consequently live in the spirit as regards God. Those who thus pass from death to life by the hearing of Christ's word of glad tidings do not come into judgment, as another Scripture assures us.

Now we Christians have to remember that we have come to the end of all things. Obviously Peter did not mean that when he wrote—somewhere about A. D. 60,—



*the end of this dispensation* was reached, but rather that *the end dispensation* was reached, that it is "the last time." The judge is quite ready as verse 5 has told us. He stands "before the door" (Jas. v. 9), ready to enter the court and take His seat so that the judgment may begin. All things then were quite ready for judgment at the very start of this epoch in which we are living, and it is only the longsuffering of God which holds the judgment back as Peter's second epistle tells us. How sober and watchful unto prayer should we therefore be.

More than this, we should be marked by fervent love amongst ourselves, and the utilization of every gift and ability to the glory of God, from whom all such things proceed. The world is a cold and critical place, the Christian circle should be a place of warm love. When love amongst Christians exists in fervour it expresses itself passively in covering a multitude of sins and actively in giving and hospitality. There are alas many sins even with true believers. The antagonistic world delights to advertize the sins of believers, proclaiming them upon the housetops. Love in the Christian circle feels them as though they were its own and covers them. When a Christian busies himself in advertizing the sins of some other Christian, he thereby advertizes his own carnal condition. Many of us would be rather careful not to advertize the sin of

some other believer who happens to meet with us in our public gatherings. Are we as careful in regard to believers who do *not* meet with us ?

Whatever we may have received from God we are to hold it in trust for the benefit of all saints. The grace of God is very manifold and various. This one may speak, that one may serve. He who speaks is to speak as God's mouthpiece. He who serves as in strength that God supplies; and thus those who benefit by the speaking or serving will trace all up to God and glorify Him and not the one who happens to be the vessel or channel of supply. Speaking "as the oracles of God" does not mean, "according to the Word of God," though of course we always should so speak. It means, speaking as a mouthpiece of His word. If a speaker comes to us telling us what *he thinks*, what are *his impressions and conceptions*, we end by thinking him a very wonderful man, and doing him homage as a kind of spiritual hero ! If he, on the other hand, just gives us what really is the word of God, we are subdued and we glorify God instead of glorifying him.

If fervent love prevails we shall not only give one another our due but give God His due also. Things will be right within the Christian circle even if the world without is very antagonistic.

In verse 12 the Apostle returns to the matter of suffering for the Christian, and he speaks of it with increased plainness and with prophetic foresight. There lay before these early Christians a "fiery trial," it was indeed already upon them. It very soon became as we know literally a trial by fire. They were not to account it "some strange thing." We are taught by this remark that suffering from the world is the *normal* thing for the Christian. We may hardly realize this, living, as we do, in a land of christianized culture and toleration. We may easily come to regard a life of ease and pleasantry in the world as the normal thing for us and persecution as a very abnormal thing. Then should persecution come upon us we would feel aggrieved and scandalized.

It is this wrong view of things and the "softness" which shrinks from "hardness" (2 Tim. ii. 3) which largely accounts for the great weakness of to-day. Only a small minority of Christians are prepared to stand up for anything, or stand out against anything in the world. A weak spirit of compliance and compromise is in the air. Suffering is avoided but power and joy are lost.

How does Peter present this matter of suffering? In verse 13 he holds out to us the *honour* of partaking in Christ's sufferings—i.e., we enter into sufferings that

have the same character as those which He endured as the great witness to God in a rebellious world. This is, according to his account a matter of *rejoicing*,—and here he only preaches what he himself practised as accorded in Acts v. 41. We are to rejoice now, while the suffering proceeds, and thus shall we be manifestly conquerors in the presence of our foes. The day of Christ's glory hastens on however and then we shall be glad "with exceeding joy." We shall "rejoice with exultation," the suffering being over and the day of reward having arrived. Christ's supreme sufferings are to be crowned with His supreme glory. It will be our honour and joy to share in both. Which shall we see to be the greater honour in that day? Let us call shame on our faint and cowardly hearts!

But we shall get not only persecution in the world, but *reproach*, and often this is the harder to bear. Well, supposing reproach rolls in upon us, are we to be specially commiserated? Not at all. We are declared to be happy or blessed if the reproach be "for" the name, or "in" the name of Christ; which means that the world sees in us His representatives. The Lord Jesus was once in this world as the Great Representative of Jehovah, and He consequently had to say "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me" (Psa. lxi. 9). That was assuredly no disgrace to Him, and to be reproached

in the name of Christ is an honour to us. Men may blaspheme Him and reproach us, but we glorify Him and the Spirit who indwells us rests upon us as the Spirit of glory and of God. Many a Christian who has been through reproach of this sort looks back afterwards to the occasion as a time of the greatest spiritual exaltation and blessing.

We are to be most careful not to suffer for evil doing of any sort but only as Christians. Then we have no need to be ashamed for we can glorify God "on this behalf," or "in this name." Here we have the Spirit of God accepting and sanctioning the name *Christian* as applied to believers. It was first used as a descriptive nickname at Antioch (Acts xi. 26). It had come into general use later (See, Acts xxvi. 28) and now is formally accepted by the Spirit of God. We may accept it therefore, and as Christians we glorify God even as Christ Himself did.

One further thought as to suffering is expressed by the Apostle in verse 17. Though it comes upon Christians from the world it is overruled of God to serve the ends of His government—the government of which he had spoken to us in chapter iii. Now God's governmental dealings especially apply to His own. He is of course the Judge of all, and beneath His judgment all will ultimately come. But He keeps

specially short accounts with those acknowledged as in relationship with Him, those who are of His household. When failure supervenes and sin invades the holy precincts of His house He begins to make the weight of His judgment felt in the way of His governmental dealings.

That this is God's way was manifest in Old Testament times. Read chapter viii and ix. of Ezekiel and see. Judgment was to be set in Jerusalem and the instruction was "Begin at My sanctuary." So it had begun to be in the church of God. These early Christians had to accept these fires of persecution as permitted by God for the purifying of His house. We all know there is nothing like persecution for weeding the false out of the midst of the true.

But if judgment thus starts at God's house, if God does not spare these, what about those that are not in relationship with Him at all? What shall their end be? If the righteous is saved with difficulty where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? These are tremendous questions which only admit of answers of most terrible import.

The righteous may come through with difficulty, as many an Old Testament Scripture illustrates, but he IS SAVED, nevertheless. He may have even to suffer to the extreme point of death according to

God's will, as verse 19 indicates. If so he has but to go on doing well and thus commit his soul into the hands of God "as unto a faithful Creator." We know God not merely as Creator but as Saviour and Father. Still we do not lose the benefit of knowing Him as Creator, and as faithful to His own handiwork.

How happy for us to know God in all these varied ways.

F. B. HOLE.

## ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT.

LACEBY. "Whilst reading the second chapter of Mark we noticed that the Lord preached *the word* in the synagogue. Would you please enlighten us as to what the word would be? We thought it would be the gospel of the grace of God, but had always understood that this was not preached until after the Lord's death and resurrection. Also, with reference to Romans iii 31,—in what way do we establish the law?

"**T**HE Word" is a term which signifies the message or testimony of God at any given time. When the Lord Jesus spoke in the synagogue, as recorded in Mark ii. 2, He did not, of course, proclaim the gospel as we preach it to-day, but He brought before the people that which was God's message for that moment. At the beginning of His ministry, He picked up the threads of John the Baptist's testimony (see Matt. iii. 2, iv. 17). But in the sermon on the mount, Matthew v.-vii. He went far beyond anything that John had said. Later, as

in Matthew xiii., He began to announce very definitely "things new and old," and the new things began to be more prominent than the old. Later still, in the upper chamber, as recorded in John xiv.-xvi., He dwelt exclusively on the new things that were before His disciples, preparing them for the advent of the Spirit, consequent upon His accomplishment of redemption. Then it was that "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts xx. 24) began to be preached.

There was thus a definite progression of teaching all through the time of the Gospels and well into the Acts. But it was all "the Word" in its season.

As to the expression in Romans iii. 31, it must be taken strictly in its context. The Jewish opponent of the Gospel would argue that it could not be of God because it antagonized and overthrew the law given through Moses. He would say, "We know that God spake unto Moses, and if this Gospel overthrows Moses it cannot be of God." But the coming in of the faith of the gospel confirms and establishes the law, inasmuch as it confirms and enforces its righteous sentence of condemnation upon the guilty, as verse 19 of the chapter had shown. The death of Jesus under the law's curse was the most impressive establishment imaginable of the law's righteousness and majesty, and the death of Jesus is one of the main themes of the Gospel.

The believer is, of course, not under law but under grace, as Romans vi. 14 declares. That is another matter, and does not in the least clash with what is stated in Romans iii. 31.



## OBEDIENCE BETTER THAN SACRIFICE.

"Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Sam. xv. 22.)

**S**UCH were the historic words spoken by the prophet Samuel to King Saul long years ago.

The reason for this utterance is very significant, and the lesson to be gathered very salutary.

Saul was bidden by Samuel as the mouth-piece of God to utterly destroy Amalek, who was the implacable enemy of God's people. Man, woman, infant, suckling, ox, sheep, camel, ass, all had to be utterly destroyed. We may not call in question God's decrees. They are altogether justified. The circumstances call for them.

Saul's duty was to carry out God's clear instructions to the very letter.

But Saul evidently thought otherwise. He spared "Agag and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly" (verse 9.) In other words, Saul acted as if he knew better than God.

This action cost Saul his kingdom. He might and did plead with Samuel that he had spared the best of Amalek's flocks in order to sacrifice them to the Lord God. Surely this reason was very praiseworthy. He was not enriching himself by his action, but honouring God, so he would urge.

God thought otherwise. A principle was at stake. How could Saul rule a kingdom if he did not obey God. How could he expect to be obeyed if he himself did not obey. If his subjects could improve on Saul's decrees, where would be his authority? Saul's action in thinking he could improve on God's decree was unpardonable. In one blow he destroyed his kingdom.

Samuel used some strong words to Saul in describing the seriousness of his action. Rebellion, witchcraft, stubbornness, iniquity, idolatry, form a pretty stinging array of epithets. "For rebellion," said Samuel, "is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, He hath also rejected thee from being king" (verse 23).

The stripling David is anointed king, and then follows the struggle between Saul and David—Saul with all the resources of the kingdom behind him, David with God behind him. In the despised cave of Adullam was found God's anointed king,

and with him the anointed priest and the anointed prophet.

And then the final phase in the sad story. Amid the shoals of spiritism, forsaken of God, in utter despair Saul commits suicide, falls upon his own sword and thus ends an ignoble career.

And what voice has all this to-day? We stand in difficult times for the Christian, whether we view things from a world-wide aspect, nationally, politically, financially, or above all, religiously.

The Christian's faithfulness to-day may and will involve him in difficulties in his church associations or in his business, financially, or in his relations to the state.

The question is, Am I, are you, prepared to obey God at all costs? Christians everywhere to-day are disturbed by the condition of things. Take Modernism in the churches. How can a faithful Christian go on with that? Think of the new Prayer Book, traitorous to the principles of the Reformation, opening up the way for Popish practices—prayers for the dead, the mass, etc. How can faithful Christians go on with that?

What then is the course open to the Christian? It is to obey God at all costs—to follow His word, to be obedient to God's will. This may involve his changing his ecclesiastical associations. So much the

better. It may create difficulties in his business associations. God will honour faithfulness. David said, "Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psa. xxxvii. 25). The time will come when the Christian is called to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Will my opinions or expediency form a good excuse for not carrying out the will of God as expressed in His word?

To begin with, if this were done by all Christians, there would be cleared out every sect, denomination and division in Christendom. We may not expect that, but we may put Christendom right *by ONE man*.

It is said that when J. N. Darby was a young man, he was speaking to his father about the abuses in the Christian profession. Said his father, "John, you cannot put everybody right, but you can put yourself right." And if every Christian, young and old, were to be absolutely loyal at all costs to God's truth, there would be a big change. But here and now we plead that the individual reader should seek to obey rather than to sacrifice, and to hearken than to offer what answers to the fat of rams.

When J. N. Darby put himself right, as God revealed His will to him, he proved to be the instrument in God's hand of a mighty revival, the effects of which are continuing to this day.

A. J. POLLOCK.

## SET FREE!

*Romans v. 12, vi. vii.*

OUR fellow-readers of Romans i.-viii. will have observed that at verse 11 of chapter v.—at which point we concluded our previous study—we have a distinct break in the Epistle, and that verse 12 commences a new section. Before proceeding further, we might indicate the following divisions of the book.

- (1) Chap. i.—i. 17. Introduction.
- (2) Chaps. i. 18—v. 11. The SINS question.
- (3) Chaps. v. 12—viii. 39. The SIN question.
- (4) Chaps. ix.—xi. God's dealings with Israel.
- (5) Chaps. xii.—xv. Practical exhortations.
- (6) Chap. xvi. Postscript.

We have already seen that number one forms the introduction to the whole, and that number two shows us how the question of sins has been so completely met by the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that now God is “just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (iii. 26). Now we are to learn that God has gone to the root of all the mischief, and has dealt with

the question not only of SINS but of SIN; not alone the effect, but the cause; not merely the fruit, but the tree itself. Apart from this, we, who have believed the Gospel, could not have been delivered from sin's awful power; nor could the whole creation be freed, as it shall be, from its fearsome bondage. Here we learn that we are sinners not only in practice but by nature, and that the former is the result of the latter.

To deal adequately within the compass of one short paper with the three portions now before us, would be impossible. We must therefore confine ourselves to a few suggestive notes calculated to assist us in our more intensive study. It has been pointed out by others that we have in

Chapter v. 12-21. Two Heads.

Chapter vi. Two Masters.

Chapter vii. Two Husbands.

Verse 12 of chapter v. reveals the secret of all the misery that is in the world to-day. Death, that devastating fiend, has stalked abroad unhindered, bringing sorrow in its train. What caused it? The intrusion of sin. Men may object as much as they please to this word sin. They may tell us it is an ugly word, and indeed it is, and it is an ugly thing producing ugly results, but it exists and is the prime cause of the ruin of the race.

We have to observe in the first place that verses 13-17 inclusive, form a parenthesis,

and in order to understand this part of our chapter, we should read verses 12 and 18 together. From verses 12 to 21 we find four keywords placed in striking contrast.

SIN.            GRACE.  
DEATH.        LIFE.

"By one man SIN entered into the world, and DEATH by sin" (verse 12). This carries us back to the tragedy of Eden recorded in Genesis iii. Men who draw large salaries for preaching this, may, and do, seek to deny it, but the grim fact remains, and here it is emphasized by the Holy Spirit in terse, trenchant, unmistakable language. It is also confirmed by our conscience and by our experience. By his sin Adam became the head of a fallen race, hence the further statement in this verse, "And so death passed upon *all* men, for that *all* have sinned."

The caviller may ask, "Why should one man's offence constitute all his race sinners?" As well ask, "Why should this house be on fire?" while the building is burning. Accept the fact, and escape from the building. So with regard to this divine statement, accept the fact and inquire if there is a way of deliverance. Thank God there is. If "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (verse 12). We are sinners not because

we sin, but we sin because we are sinners, and can do nothing but sin. God has not attempted to *mend* that state of matters, but He has *ended* it in the cross of Christ. Christ, as the second Man, has by His obedience shown Himself competent to become the Head of a new race, and to that new race every person belongs who truly believes in Him. The first race under the headship of man is characterized by SIN and DEATH. The new race under the headship of Christ is marked by GRACE and LIFE.

Here then, we have the general principle, now we come to the details. Chapter vi. shows that if Christ has died to sin, and He has, so have we, and our baptism is the proof of it (verses 1-4). We have died, we have been buried, and now it is our privilege to seek the "walk in newness of life." We *reckon* ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin on the one hand, on the other hand we *reckon* ourselves to be alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. We were the slaves of sin, now we are the slaves of righteousness, bondmen to God. The end of the former was death; the end of the latter will be eternal life (verses 16-23). This is not merely a fine theory or a doctrine only to be admired. It is something which, if apprehended, will revolutionize our life, hence the exceedingly practical exhortation of verse 13, "YIELD YOURSELVES UNTO GOD !" We may revert to this in a later paper if the Lord permit.



In chapter vii., we find the difficulties of the man who was under law. The problem was, how could he be delivered from it. If the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives, then obviously, only by death can he be freed. If a woman has a husband, no matter what sort of a husband he may be, she is bound by the law to him as long as he lives, and only death can sever the bond. Now see the application in verse 4. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, *that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*"

The remainder of the chapter is mainly occupied with the miserable experience of the man under law. He wanted to keep it, he tried to keep it, but he could not. The law told him what he *must* do and what he *must not do*, but it did not give him the power either to do the one or not to do the other. This man resolved to do right, and he found he could not do it. He determined not to do wrong, and that was exactly what he did. There was nothing wrong with the law, but everything was wrong with himself. Thus, by bitter experience, he learned the humiliating lesson that "in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (verse 18).

At long last, he arrived at the end of himself, and uttered the despairing cry, "O wretched man that I am ! Who shall deliver me from this body of death" (verse 24, margin). This is believed to refer to a fearful form of Roman punishment by which a prisoner was chained to a dead body. Anything more loathsome or horrible one could not conceive, but for the poor wretch there was no deliverance unless it came from outside, or he himself died. No sooner did the man in our chapter cry out in despair, than immediately he exclaimed, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." He has now learned of the mighty Deliverer, of how the great deliverance has been effected, and in verse 2 of chapter viii. we hear him triumphantly saying, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus HATH MADE ME FREE from the law of sin and death." Hallelujah !

We must leave the further consideration of this till another time (D.V.), but meanwhile we can surely thank God from full hearts for His glorious gospel, so simple, so comprehensive, so complete. May we understand it better, and may we be enabled to walk worthy of it.

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

## REDEMPTION.

**W**ITH the Lord there is mercy, and  
with Him is plenteous redemption "  
(Psalm cxxx. 7).

Redemption shines resplendent on the  
pages of Holy Writ. Job, its earliest, and  
John, its latest writer, celebrate its glories.  
Job knew three things.

He knew his Redeemer was alive.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth."

He knew He would come to this world.

"He shall stand . . . upon the earth."

He knew that his eyes would behold Him.

"Whom I shall see for myself."

(Job xix. 25, 26, 27).

DO YOU KNOW THIS FOR YOURSELF ?

Redemption is *from* the power of the  
enemy (Psalm cvi. 10). It is found *alone* in  
Christ Jesus (Rom. iii. 24). It includes the  
body (Rom. viii. 23). It is secured at the  
infinite cost of THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF  
CHRIST.

Redemption is the anthem of heaven.

"They sung a new song."

The Redeemer is the Lamb.

"A lamb as it had been slain."

Redemption and Calvary are inseparable.

"Redeemed to God by Thy blood."

Redemption is "out of every kindred,  
tongue, people, and nation." (Rev. v. 9).

HAS IT TAKEN YOU OUT ?

H. N.

## “MY GOD.”

In death, in resurrection, and in glory.

**I**N view of the sufferings of the cross, our Lord said to His loved ones, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death” (Matt. xxvi. 38). What those sufferings and sorrows were the finite human mind can never fathom. The darkness and distance He knew in that awful hour we can never penetrate. It is ours to worship before Him as we remember that it was for us He suffered and sorrowed thus.

The darkness and distance were His that the light and nearness might be ours. He was forsaken that we might be received. He was alone in the desolation and solitariness of Golgotha, that we might be His companions in the delights and communion of the glory of God.

Throughout His pathway He had ever rejoiced in the love of His Father, whose will He had come to do. Ever in addressing Him He speaks in all the joy of the glorious relationship which was His. We hear Him say, “He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him” (John viii. 29). “Father I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me” (John xi. 41). “Even so Father for so it seemed good in Thy sight” (Matt. xi. 26). We see Him as “the Son

of the Father " (2 John 3), finding all His joy in doing His good pleasure.

And as it was during His ministry of grace, so it was at its close in dark Gethsemane when the cross with all its woe unspeakable was to be His. With strong crying and tears He exclaimed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt." We know that that cup could not pass from Him if the Father were to be glorified about sin or if we were to be blessed and brought nigh in righteousness. Thus it was that at Calvary the judgment of God in all its terribleness fell upon Him.

He had presented Himself as the Spotless One to be the sin offering and was made sin, He "who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21), and He "who did no sin neither was guile found in His mouth...bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 22, 24).

Then it was that when He had taken our place we find Him crying, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

That hour of unspeakable anguish stands alone in the annals of eternity. As another has said, "It baffles thought that most solemn lonely hour, which stands aloof from all before or after."

The repetition of the cry, "My God," may awaken thought. "My strong One, My strong One, why hast Thou forsaken me?" The One in whom He had found His joy, the One whom He knew had abandoned Him. Never had He forsaken God. Never had He swerved one hairsbreadth from the path of God's will for Him. Now in the time of unspeakable woe, when all others have left Him, how is it that God, His God, has abandoned Him?

But in the midst of the fires His perfection shines out, He glorifies God saying, "Thou art holy."

Apart from the fact that we know that our Lord was enduring the judgment of God suffering "for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. iii. 18), all would be wrapped in mystery inexplicable. But knowing this, with adoring hearts we look back and cry, "The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me."

The next occasion on which the Lord uses the expression, "My God," is in resurrection. The sorrows and sufferings are past, the victory is won, and the Victor hastens to share the spoils with His own for whom He has fought the fight.

By Mary Magdalene He sends the message to His disciples telling of the place He has won for them. "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father

and your Father; and to my God and your God" (John xx. 17). He had been alone at Calvary in the hour of death in order that He might have them with Him in the sunshine of everlasting relationship before the Father and in everlasting righteousness in the presence of God. "The Corn of Wheat" had fallen "into the ground" and died that He might not abide alone but bring forth "much fruit"—a harvest of glory for God His Father and a harvest of blessing for us (John xii. 24).

"My God, my God," it was at the cross. Now it is "My God and your God." He is no more isolated, He has companions to enjoy with Himself the delights He has as the Risen Man before His Father and His God.

Blessed indeed is the portion He has and which His own now share with Him. His nearness is ours. His dearness is ours. Christ's place is our place. He liveth unto God and we are alive to God in Him. Christ is our life. Christ is our righteousness. He is the measure of our acceptance. If we wish to learn what our place is, we must learn it in the position which He has now in the glory of God. "Because I live ye shall live also." And we are to enjoy this now while we are on the earth. "As He is so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17). Henceforth we who believe are bound up inseparably with Christ, and

it is His joy to share with us this place. He has gone forth weeping, bearing precious seed. Now He comes again with rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him. He sowed in tears. He reaps in joy. As has been said, "Christianity was sown in the tears of the Son of God."

If the first occasion on which the expression, "My God," was heard from our Lord's lips was in atonement, and the second was in resurrection, the third time is in the glory of God. In Revelation iii. 12, we hear Him encouraging the overcomer with the promise, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name."

Four times over the title, "My God," is found in this promise. He will identify the faithful with Himself in the glories of the coming kingdom. Whether in the innermost shrine or in the city of displayed glory, that holy name shall be seen upon His loved and loyal followers. And this written with His own hand as a mark of His own personal approval and delight.

Surely we who believe may covet such a distinction, and seek to be here for His pleasure in the world where He suffered.

I. FLEMING.



## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

*1 Peter v. 1-14.*

You must open your Bible at the passage indicated and follow this article with the Scripture before you, if you would get any real help. Space forbids quotations of any length from the passage so, as you read, refer to the Scripture *and* THINK.

If consequently fresh light begins to break in upon you, do not lightly turn from it, but lifting up your heart in thanksgiving to God, pursue your searching of the Word on the point. It may open up to you a fruitful field of truth and you can resume your reading of the article on another occasion.

**W**HEN Christians are passing through times of persecution and suffering, so much depends upon there being a right and happy condition amongst themselves. The Apostle Peter, therefore, supplements his warnings as to the persecution with some words of admonition addressed respectively to the elder and the younger amongst the disciples. Between such friction may easily develop, as we know right well.

The tendency to develop friction has always existed but never more so than now, inasmuch as the rapidity with which world changes have occurred has never been as pronounced as in the last few decades. The consequence of this is that great changes in thought and habits and outlook have supervened within the limits of a single generation; and hence children look upon their parents as behind the times and their

grandparents as thoroughly antique, and the older people look upon the younger as revolutionary in their ideas. If verses 1—7 of our chapter be observed and obeyed, all friction would cease and harmony reign inside the Church of God whatever conditions prevail without.

Peter addresses himself first to the elders as being the more responsible. These were men recognized as holding the office of an elder, and not merely Christian men advanced in years. He claims a right to exhort them as being an elder and more than an elder—a witness of Christ's sufferings. To those sufferings he could render testimony since he had seen them, having been with Him in the days of His flesh. Once he thought that he could easily share in those sufferings, even to prison and death, and we all know the painful breakdown in which his self-confidence involved him. If, however, he then failed, the Lord in His grace indicated to him that he should partake in some measure before his course was finished (see, John xxi. 18, 19). Here he simply speaks of himself as a partaker of the coming glories as the fruit of grace.

His one exhortation to the elders is, "Feed," or "Shepherd the flock of God." The Holy Ghost thus gives exactly the same injunction to the elders by the lips of Paul in Acts xx. 28, and by the pen of Peter here. The elders should extend towards their

younger brethren all the care which a shepherd takes of his sheep. Nothing but the outflow of divine love in their hearts will produce the watchful oversight which such care demands, and it is well for the younger believers to see in the care of their older brethren an expression of the love of Christ the Chief Shepherd, which He will richly reward at His appearing.

It is most important that the "elder" should exert his spiritual authority in the right way and spirit, hence the three things stipulated in verses 2 and 3. He is to take up his service *willingly, readily*, and as himself a *model* to the flock. The Holy Ghost who inspired these words foresaw what a tendency there would be to take up such work, either from *compulsion*, or for *love of gain*, or for *desire for power and influence*. How much these words were needed is borne witness to by church history, which tells us how the simple "elders" or "bishops" of apostolic days were gradually magnified into "princes of the church," who lorded it over God's people as though they were their own possessions. It is, indeed, remarkable with verse 3 before us, that anyone professing to be a Christian "bishop" should call himself, or suffer himself to be called, "lord."

Those of us who rank amongst the younger believers, have to pay special attention to verse 5. The elder may indeed be

willing and ready in the exercise of oversight, and also may himself carry out what he enjoins on others, so as to be an example himself; all will be in vain if the younger are not prepared to listen to him and be subject. We beg every young Christian to remember that though there may be much advance in certain branches of human discovery and knowledge, so that the older generation may in these things easily fall behind the times, there is no such advance in the revealed truth of God. Consequently, spiritual maturity is still only to be gained as the fruit of years well spent in the school of God—and by that we mean, the study of His Word, supplemented by Christian life, experience and service. The younger Christian may indeed have superior zeal, energy, endurance, and possibly superior mental equipment, even so he will more effectually serve his Master if he is subject to the mature and wise guidance of the “elder,” who may be in most other respects decidedly his inferior.

All this will be easy if the humble spirit prevails. *All* are to be clothed with humility in their dealings with each other. The person of humble mind is not uppish, and hence does not readily come into collision with others. Better still, he does not come into collision with God; for God sets Himself against the proud, whilst He gives grace to the humble. The mighty hand of God

is upon His people in the way of training, and often in very painful dealings, as was the case in the persecutions of these early Christians, yet under it we are to bow and in due time we shall be exalted. Meanwhile, we are to cast all the cares, which this painful state of things might produce, upon Him in the full assurance that He cares for us.

Although as believers we are privileged to take all our trials, even our persecutions, as connected with "the mighty hand of God," yet we are not to overlook the fact that the devil has a hand in them. The case of Job in the Old Testament illustrates this, and the fact is recognised here. In the persecution of saints the devil moves about as a roaring lion, aiming thereby at breaking down our faith. If faith be a mere matter of mental enlightenment, mere head-conviction and not heart-trust, it fails and he devours us. We are therefore to be sober and watchful. We must recognize that the devil is our adversary, and that he is to be resisted in the energy of a live faith which cleaves to the faith made known to us in Christ, remembering also, that if we taste suffering we are only sharing what is the common lot of our brethren in the world.

The "But" that opens verse 10 lifts us in the most glorious way out of the murky atmosphere of the world with its persecu-

tions and trials and the power of Satan. We are suddenly transported in thought into the presence of "the God of all grace." Are we conscious of needing grace in an infinite variety of ways? Well, He is the God of *all* grace. The powers of the world and the devil may be against us, but He has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, and nothing shall frustrate His purpose. He will permit us to suffer for a little while, but even that He will overrule. He will, as it were, take up the suffering and use it as material which He weaves into the pattern and design of His own choice as regards our characters and lives; and thus make it contributory to the perfecting, the establishing, the strengthening, the settlement of our souls.

As to His purpose for us, He has called us to His eternal glory. As to His disciplinary ways with us, He overrules even the activities of the adversary against us, for our spiritual perfecting and establishment. Grace, *all* grace, shines out in both His purposes and His ways. Who would not ascribe glory and dominion to the ages of ages to such an One as this?

The last three verses give us Peter's closing words. It is interesting to find Silvanus (or, Silas) and Mark mentioned, both of them brethren who had intimate relations with the Apostle Paul, since the

latter part of verse 12 is evidently an allusion to the Apostle Paul's labours.

These scattered Jewish Christians had been evangelised, be it remembered, by Paul and his companions. If they stood in grace it was the fruit of his labours, and the grace in which they stood had been opened out to them through his ministry. Now Peter is led to write to them, in fulfilment of his commission as Apostle to the Jews, testifying as to the grace of God, and thus confirming that the grace in which they stood was the "true grace of God." When we remember how once at Antioch, Peter and Paul came into pretty sharp collision over questions concerning law and grace, and how Paul had to exclaim, "I do not frustrate the grace of God" (Gal. ii. 21), for Peter was committing himself to a line of action which threatened to do this very thing, we can rejoice in noting how thoroughly now they are in accord. We find a similar happy spirit of accord at the close of the second epistle (iii. 15, 16).

Let us never forget that we stand in grace *the true grace of God*. All our relations with God are on the basis of grace. He began with us in grace at our conversion to Himself. He continues with us on the footing of grace through all the vicissitudes of our Christian life and service. With grace He will end—only, there is no end—

for we shall enter His eternal glory as called to it and brought into it by the "God of all grace," as verse 10 has told us.

We are not so likely to overlook the start and the finish as we are the course between. It is *now*, amidst the failures and difficulties of our pilgrimage that we need an abiding sense of the grace that carries us through, the grace in which we stand. Soon, as we sometimes sing,

"Grace all the work shall crown,  
Through everlasting days;  
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,  
And well deserves the praise.

F. B. HOLE

## STANDING AND STATE

**T**HERE may be a vast difference in knowledge, in experience, in capacity, in attainment, in zeal, in devotedness, but the ground of atonement is alike to all. The great apostle of the Gentiles, and the feeblest lamb in all the flock of Christ, stand on the same level, as regards atonement. This is a very simple and a very blessed truth. All may not be alike devoted and fruitful; but "the precious blood of Christ," and not devotedness or fruitfulness, is the solid and everlasting ground of the believer's rest. The more we enter into the truth and power of this, the more fruitful shall we be.



Let our range of intellect be ever so wide, our fund of experience ever so rich, our tone of devotion ever so elevated, we shall always have to fall back upon the one simple, divine, unalterable, soul-sustaining doctrine of *the Blood*.

C. H. M.

## ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT.

PLAISTOW.—I love the Lord Jesus, and desire to walk well-pleasing to him. I read His precious word, and books that will help, yet I make no spiritual progress and I feel there is something lacking in my life. My prayers do not seem to be answered and I am so constantly falling, which makes my testimony before the unconverted a failure.

**R**EAD the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, particularly noticing verses 7 to 24, and you will find an inspired description of the kind of experience through which you are passing. The apostle Paul could say "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (verse 22) just as you can say "I love the Lord Jesus and desire to walk well-pleasing to Him." Yet Paul had to say, "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (verse 19) just as you tell us that your prayers do not seem to be answered, your Bible reading is apparently fruitless, and you constantly fall. Here then is the Scripture that will help in your case. We want you to notice two things:—the *remedy* and the *reason why*.

I. **THE REMEDY.** This may be seen in the last verse of chapter vii. and the first four verses

of chapter viii. It is, in few words, to find in the energy of the indwelling Spirit your heart's object and delight in the risen Lord Jesus Christ. What is troubling you is the terrible inward power of sin in your flesh. But "sin in the flesh" has been condemned by God in the death of His own Son who came and offered Himself as a Sacrifice for sin. The believer now has his life in Christ Jesus and possesses the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of that life, so that Christ Himself may be made a living bright Reality to him. God's plan is to lift the believer out of himself and out of the old way of living by the attractive power of Christ.

Millions of tons of grey Atlantic water fling themselves against the rock-bound cliffs of our western coasts and get no nearer to the heavens in spite of all their restless efforts. Three thousand miles to the southward they lie quiet and still under the warm rays of the tropical sun and millions of tons rise as vapour into the blue dome of heaven to float as fleecy clouds and presently pour down their water as a blessing to the thirsty earth.

Do you see the point of this little illustration? Are you not striving and breaking yourself to no effect like the Atlantic billows, when the remedy would be to give up your fruitless *efforts* for holiness and settle yourself to *enjoy* the divine warmth of the love and glory of Christ? Do we then mean that you should stop reading your Bible and helpful books and cease to pray? By no means. You will do well to read and pray,

more rather than less. Only you will do both not as a kind of struggle towards holiness, not as turning them into levers wherewith to lift yourself out of the slough into which you have sunk, but rather as putting you into touch with the Lord that by them you may the more effectually know Him and be conscious of His love.

2. **THE REASON WHY.** The trouble and exercise through which you are passing is not needless and fruitless. There are very definite reasons for it, as there were in the case of Paul. Romans vii. 18 reveals one of the main reasons. Each of us has to learn the lesson "that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing."

Now this is not an easy thing to learn and it is only really learned by experience. We may *believe* it just because Scripture says it in the verse quoted—and it is good and right to believe it like this. You probably quite *believe* it but do you really *know* it? The apostle says in verse 18, not "I believe" but "I know." He knew it by bitter experience and thus it is that we all have to know it in our turn.

Now the almost certain reason why you are still in the sad plight you have described is that you have as yet not properly learned this lesson. You may know that you are a sinner and bad, but you have not yet really learned that in your flesh there is *not one particle of good*. Thank God, if you are learning it. When you have learned it with all its humbling discoveries you will learn to condemn your flesh as utterly worthless, even as God has condemned it (viii. 3) and you will turn away to Christ to find your all in Him.

Then if we inquire of you:—and who delivered you from this body of death?—you will joyfully be able to say “I thank God, *through Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

### DESIRES WHICH DROWN MEN.

“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”—1 Tim. 6, 9.

**I**F you should see a man that had a large pond of water, yet living in *continual thirst*, not suffering himself to drink half a draft for fear of lessening his pond; if you should see him wasting his time and strength in fetching more water to his pond, *always thirsty*, yet always carrying a bucket in his hand; watching early and late to catch the drops of rain; gaping after every cloud, and running greedily into every mire and mud in hopes of water; and always studying how to make every ditch empty itself into his pond;—if you should see him grow gray and old in these anxious labors, and at last end a careful *thirsty* life by *falling into his own pond*, would you not say that such a one was not only the author of all his own disquiets, but was foolish enough to be reckoned amongst idiots and madmen? But yet foolish and absurd as this character is, it does not represent half the follies and absurd disquiets of the covetous man.

Note it is “They that *will* [desire to] be rich,” not “they that *are* rich.” I Timothy 6, 11 gives warning: “O man of God, flee these things.”

“Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Tim. 6, 14.)

## THE SEVEN-FOLD GLORIES OF CHRIST.

**I**N the first chapter of John's Gospel we have a prologue fully in keeping with this wonderful book. It brings before us a seven-fold view of the Lord Jesus Christ. Beginning with Him in a past eternity as the eternal "Word" it stretches forward into a future eternity when as "Son of Man" all creatures will own His sway, and the earth will be filled with His glory.

### *THE WORD.* (Verses 1-2).

The essential deity of our blessed Lord is first brought before the vision of our souls. Ere time began He was the eternal self-existent One, He was with God, showing His separate existence, and this blessed person was in very truth GOD. The truth enshrined in this unique title is exceedingly precious. The normal mode of expressing our thoughts is by words, so the Lord Jesus Christ is the true expression of the mind and thoughts of God, and, blessed be God, He in His infinite grace "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." (Heb. i. 2). How fitting it is indeed that this wondrous book commences with the Lord as "The Word," the only and eternal utterance of all that God is.

*THE TRUE LIGHT.* (Verse 9).

The next vision that is given of the blessed Lord is as the "True Light." This would naturally seem necessary because of the complete moral and spiritual darkness in which man was groping. Surely it calls forth the deepest praise of our hearts to see Him taking this stupendous step from Heaven's brightest glory to this dark benighted scene where sin o'er all seemed to reign. In sovereign grace this true light was not only for the Jews but was for all men. Thus we have grace and truth come in a divine Person, and the test to all men is whether they will receive Him (verse 12) or refuse Him (verses 10-11).

*THE LAMB OF GOD.* (Verse 29).

This is the first time this title of the eternal Son is mentioned. What a moment in this world's history when the privileged forerunner as taught of God, could say "Behold the Lamb of God," and the glorious Person of whom all the prophets had foretold, and testified, actually stood before them ("God will provide Himself a lamb." Gen. xxii. 8). and was so very near that He could be seen, and heard, and handled—"The Word of life" (1 John ii); not announcing Himself, but in keeping with His character and royal dignity, being announced by another. Surely this wondrous title takes our memories back to the memorable passover night—the lamb with-

out blemish—not a bone of whose body should be broken. (Exod. xii. 46).

This unique and glorious title indicates that :—

(a) His death was divinely pre-ordained.

(b) His death was vicarious, *i.e.*, as a Substitute for others.

(c) Through it all question of sin would be forever settled, for He “taketh away the sin of the world.” Praise God ! His cross is an accomplished fact, and what the blood of bulls and goats could not do (*i.e.* take away sins) His precious blood can do. Now it can be said “the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin” (1 John i. 7). Whichever way we look everything is divinely secure and serene because of His work. We know too, that throughout eternal ages this title, ever speaking of His redeeming love and His lowliness and meekness, will never be dissociated from His blessed Person. How unspeakably blessed too to look on to that time of eternal bliss when “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev. xxii. 3) will be forever exalted and the curse removed.

*THE MESSIAH.* (Verse 41).

“We have found the Messiah.” Not the Messiah in pomp and power come to redeem Israel but a suffering One come to bleed and die, and thus accomplish redemption and lay a basis whereby every other blessing could be freely given by a God of love to a ruined

race. "Christ" which is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew "Messiah," is the official name of the Son of God, and this connects Him with all the wondrous types and glowing prophecies of the old Testament. The name signifies "Anointed One," and now we can ponder over the time and manner in which this anointing was brought about. See this lowly sinless Stranger stepping down into the waters of Jordan with the sinful and repentant remnant of Israel, because "it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." See how God chooses this fitting occasion to manifest His unbounded pleasure in His beloved Son. At this wondrous moment the Trinity, so often foreshadowed in the Old Testament, was fully manifested—the voice of God from the open heaven declaring the Father's pleasure in the Son; the incarnate Son about to step out on His mission of redemption; the Spirit of God descending upon Him like a dove, anointing Him and declaring Him to be the Christ of God the Messiah of Israel. Now we know Him as both Lord and Christ, risen and victorious, and every Messianic prophecy will yet be fulfilled in Him to God's eternal pleasure and glory.

### *JESUS OF NAZARETH* (verse 45).

From the lips of Philip we have the first mention of this lovely title in John's Gospel.

It speaks of immeasurable grace. JESUS the personal name of our blessed Lord



signifies "Jehovah Saviour"—the sweetest name on mortal tongue.

Moses the great lawgiver spoke of this One, and right on to Malachi every prophet of God spoke of Him. Their visions were filled with His humiliation, and His glory to follow. They foretold in minute detail all that He would do from the manger to the cross.

Surely this proves beyond all doubt that our God never fails to perform all that He promises. May we again

"Praise Him for all that is past,  
And trust Him for all that's to come."

### *THE SON OF GOD—KING OF ISRAEL* (verse 49).

This double name as found here appears to connect itself with Israel. Nathaniel is here a figure of the spared remnant of the Jews in the last days. Zechariah xii. 10 tells us "they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for His *only Son*" Then they will confess Him and receive Him as the Son of God, the King of Israel, in fulfilment of Psalm ii. Then as the root of David, God's Eternal Son, and the Offspring of David, the King of Israel, He will ascend the Hill of Zion and to Him every knee will bow. In that day, in His divine character He will vanquish every foe. His glory shall cover the earth "as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. ii. 14).

*SON OF MAN.* (Verse 51).

In response to the confession of Nathaniel (verse 49) the Lord had announced this lovely title. He says "Greater things than these thou shalt see." He then draws aside the veil and privileges us to look into a future day, and we can already see by faith that One who will yet be the centre of attraction both in heaven and in earth.

The Son of Man is His racial name. It tells that He is a real man, and consequently the supreme Man. The heavenly Representative in contrast to the first man Adam and in accordance with 1 Corinthians xv. 45 "a life-giving spirit"—a heavenly Man. The blessed Lord is to His earthly people the King of Israel. To the Father He is the only begotten Son. But God's plans and purposes in connection with Him as Son of Man will overflow the limits of Israel, and will outflow to the remotest bounds of the universe of God.

In previous ages God had promised through His prophets a "Man" and in the Lord Jesus Christ is fulfilled all those bright and blessed promises. As Son of Man He must suffer, bleed and die, but also it is in this name that God has delegated Him to be the Judge of the living and the dead—the universal Judge (see John v. 22-27).

We can even now by faith gaze into an open heaven and see that blessed One—"the Son of Man" whom God has made

“strong” for Himself (Psalm lxxx. 17). We know Him now seated at God’s right hand, a Prince and a Saviour, crowned with glory and honour, and as we apprehend a little of His infinite worth and His perfect glory our hearts with one accord exclaim “He alone is worthy.”

J. GILLFILLAN.

## WHERE ARE THE YOUNG MEN?

THE following extract from a missionary’s letter makes truly serious reading.

He says:—

“During the year of our recent furlough, I visited 75 towns in England and America, and in each spoke of the great need for labourers in this part of Africa. So far as I know the result was NIL.”

“In 1925 two companies invited applicants for 882 situations in Belgian Congo as clerks, traders, mechanics, &c, and 15,000 young men immediately applied for the situations.”

“In view of the fact that the Lord’s return is imminent, and that Christians know it, it does seem strange that there should be no young men ready to come to the Congo to serve the Lord. It would seem that when they read pas-

sages like John iii. 16 they appropriate them and say, 'That's for me.' But when they come to a verse like Matthew xxviii. 19 they say, 'That's not for *me*, let somebody else go.' We wonder what the Lord will have to say to such unfairness."

There is no doubt but that we have arrived at days of lukewarmness and indifference as foretold in what is said of the Laodicean church in Rev. iii. 14-22. Such a challenge as our missionary friend has flung out is very arresting. It haunts one with its vivid contrast. His appeal for helpers in Belgian Congo in 75 towns in two continents and no response—the call for 882 secular situations to be filled in the same unhealthy part of the world and 15,000 applicants. The contrast is startling and illuminating.

On the other hand it would not do if all young men believing in John iii. 16, were to come to the conclusion that they must be missionaries to the heathen. That would in our judgment be disastrous. The commission in Matthew xxviii. 19 was given to picked men and men with apostolic gift, men who had had the inestimable privilege of seeing how the great Master did the work.

All the same there is plenty and to spare in the challenge to set us thinking and—*acting*. All are not fitted for this foreign field. Many a young man and woman under

the spell of an earnest missionary address, when the imagination has been fired and the feelings stirred, has volunteered for the foreign field and afterwards wished they had not. When faced with "things as they are"—the arresting title of a well-known missionary book—the romance has been dispelled and the enthusiasm has evaporated. We believe missionaries need many qualities to be successful.

They need deep earnestness and spirituality, fervent love for souls, immense determination and common sense, the ability to get on with others. They must not be thin-skinned, jealous, quick to see a slight, and be ready to plod on and on, endure privation sickness, weariness, thirst, and esteem their service to God and the poor heathen more than a recompense for all these things.

All are not called to this service. The call, when it comes, will be inward and irresistible. It will assert itself more in the privacy of one's heart than in public.

Further, the missionary who goes abroad will first be the missionary at home. Zeal does not grow by reason of taking a sea voyage and finding oneself under palm trees amid semi-nude savages. There must be that zeal that seizes the present moment, the present surroundings, the present opportunity.

Not all are called to be foreign missionaries. Some are needed at home. Unless

the home fires are kept burning the foreign field will languish.

But when God calls the call is imperative, and if the Lord of the harvest thrusts forth labourers all will be well.

But in face of our missionary friend's challenge we may well be exercised, and shall the response be NIL for the Lord in face of the 15,000 applicants for 882 secular situations in needy Africa ?

Whilst all cannot be missionaries to the heathen, we can and do appeal for earnestness, devotedness and surrender on the part of *every* young man. If *these* things characterized our young men there would be no lack of gift of home missionaries or foreign missionaries. *All* would be missionaries. If there were this spirit of the constraining love of Christ about our young men we should have no lack. Thank God, many of our young men are devoted, but we plead for all to be devoted and for a deeper devotedness where devotion exists. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). Let our motto be,

*"Not unto ourselves, but UNTO HIM."*

We owe everything to our Lord and Master,

What examples of young men we have in Scripture:—Daniel, Samuel, David, Joseph, Moses, Paul, Peter, John, Timothy Titus and a host of others.

God has ever used young men, taking up their physical strength and endurance, their brightness and zeal.

Daniel was but a youth in the Babylonian court when he purposed in his heart not to be defiled by the King's meat and drink.

Samuel was but a boy when he got those wonderful communications direct from God.

David was but a ruddy youth when he was anointed to be King over Israel.

Joseph was about 17 years old when he was sold into Egypt, and stood for God when exiled from country and father and friends.

Moses when he came to years made the great decision and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

And so we might range through Scripture and find a cloud of witnesses among the young men of Scripture. Above all we have the supreme example of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith . . . let us run with patience the race set before us" (Heb. xii. 1, 2). The reward is coming, the goal is already in sight. Let us seek grace to answer to all that God is for us in Christ.

A. J. POLLOCK.

## “SLEEP ON”—“RISE.”

**T**HERE is an apparent contradiction in verses 45 and 46 of Matthew xxvi.

In the same breath the Lord bids His disciples sleep and rise, rest and journey.

What is the explanation? How can the commands be reconciled?

Is it not that underneath the apparent physical meaning there lay a spiritual meaning which the Lord desired them and ourselves to apprehend?

Our Lord was about to suffer. He had taken from His Father's hand the cup of sorrow which could not pass from Him if the will of God were to be done, or if sinners were to be saved. From that cup He had shrunk. In His perfection He drew back from its awfulness. In His perfection He accepted it and carrying it to the cross drained it there. Then anguish must be His if the blessing were to be ours. The storm must be His if the calm were to be ours. In view of the work He was about to accomplish He could say—even to those who could not watch with Him one hour,

*“Sleep on now and take your rest.”*

Blessed Master! Gracious Saviour! Thou wouldst endure the judgment that we might repose in the love of God, in righteousness,



And we rejoice that

“The storm that bowed Thy blessed head,  
Is hushed for ever now;  
And rest divine is ours instead,  
Whilst glory crowns Thy brow.”

Unending rest is ours now in the knowledge of eternal redemption effected, of everlasting righteousness introduced and of unchanging relationship established. The Father's will has been fulfilled and we are placed before Himself in the company of His Son. The Son of God has found His delight in declaring the Father's name to His brethren and in surrounding Himself with those who can join the singing which He leads now that redemption is accomplished and that He is risen from the dead.

The hour when all this should be brought to pass being about to strike, the Lord said “Behold the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.” That was the hour towards which eternity had looked forward in that the Lamb had been “forordained before the foundation of the world.” That was the hour on which eternity shall look back wonderingly as “the Lamb as it had been slain” is seen in the midst of the throne while worshippers cast their crowns at His feet.

But we, who rest now in conscience because of the one sacrifice of Calvary, we, who have peace with God “through our Lord Jesus Christ,” are called to follow the steps

of the Rejected One. We listen as He says

*"Rise, let us be going,"*

and again we find reference to His being betrayed, "Behold he is at hand that doth betray me."

Judas—foul Judas, was near with his band. One who had been privileged to be associated with Him during the years of His ministry and who had been honoured in being numbered among His servants was about to give Him up into the hands of His foes. "One of *you* shall betray Me" had been the sorrowful utterance of the Son of God. Little did the apostles know who that one would be proved to be. Each asked "Is it I?" Did they fear that in some way they knew not of that dastardly act might be done by them? We know not. But let us remember that the "flesh" in them then and the "flesh" in us now is just the same evil "flesh" in its nature as it was in Judas the betrayer. But for grace any one of them or any one of us might have done the darksome deed. And which of us has not found that "the flesh profiteth nothing" and that "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God.

The Lord has not forgotten that this is the world of His refusal. In giving, through His servant Paul, directions as to His holy Supper of remembrance we hear Him say "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord

Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread.”

Let us not forget that that night of the world, the night of His betrayal is still running its course, though the last sand grains are falling in the glass. But we are not “of the night,” we are “of the day.”

Let us rise then and be going. Let us shake off all lethargy and go, in His company, apart from the world to which we do not belong even as He does not belong to it. And we may mark His words “Let *us* be going.” We have not to tread the way in strength of our own, He will be with us in every step of the path. We hear Him say “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” So taking courage we may face every foe.

We need the word of exhortation, do we not? The world around us would attract us, the flesh within would deceive us, the devil behind would beguile us; but in His presence known and enjoyed, we shall be safe and able to serve Him who has called us to be for Him here, as He has called us to be with Him in the Father’s house to which He has gone.

And soon the world of hatred where He has been betrayed will be exchanged for the world of love where He has been welcomed. He Himself will come and His words will sound in our ears, “Rise up my love my fair one and come away” and we

shall be "caught up" and be for ever with the Lord. Can we say from our hearts

"We welcome still Thy faithful word,—  
 The cross shall meet its sure reward,  
 For soon must pass the little while,  
 Then joy shall crown Thy servant's toil:  
 And we shall hear Thee, Saviour, say:  
 'Arise my love and come away;—  
 Look up, for thou shalt weep no more,  
 But rest on heaven's eternal shore.'"

I. FLEMING.

## ONE HUNDRED, SIXTY, AND THIRTY.

"He that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (Matt. xiii. 23).

**T**HE parable of the Sower is divided into four parts, the first three giving the causes of the failure to produce fruit, and the fourth drawing attention to the unequal productiveness of the good seed.

The parable itself does not let us directly into the secret of this difference, but the causes of it are not far to seek. It is evident that the ground had in some way or other been rendered less fertile, or had become less responsive to the care of the farmer, or that some hindrances had been permitted to interfere with the wished for result.

The sunshine and the rain and the seed were all alike, the soil too was good, hence there must have been other factors at work

that nullified their influence, and led to a diminishing return from the work of the sower. May it not be that the same influences that resulted in the barrenness in the first three instances were in a certain measure asserting themselves later on; that the once soft earth had become here and there trodden down so that the early shoot of the upspringing life had difficulty in penetrating it; or that the cold stones had been allowed to accumulate and bury the seed; or that the birds of the air or the winds had carried seeds of noisome plants which springing up had usurped the place of the good?

It is quite common to see in the country a footpath quite destitute of verdure running across a field of rich corn, yet in the spring time there was not the least trace of a path, all the field had been equally ploughed up and carefully prepared for the seed, which had been sown with equal care on all parts of the field. But as the corn sprang up, first one person walked over it, then another, then a third till the surface became so gradually hardened that every sign of life was crushed out of existence.

Thus it is with many a child of God. The slight but repeated friendships with these who are unfriendly to the work of the Holy Spirit, gradually stifles all devotion to the Lord in the young believer, so that the yield of the field is considerably reduced.

Unless the work of these interferers is quickly undone by a restirring of the soil there will be lasting loss.

Then there are the stones. Fruitful soil is well known to be chiefly the result of the pulverization of the natural rock by the forces of heat and cold, wind and rain, etc., and that the stones found therein have either escaped these activities or have been brought there by outside agencies.

In every one born of the Spirit the flesh is found, for it is not eradicated by the new birth. If the flesh works there is manifested the hardness and deadness that are irresponsive to the influences of the Spirit, bringing forth no fruit that is pleasing to Him. All such hindrances must be removed ere there can be a full measure of return to the work of God in the heart. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" and again, "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" are exhortations of which all stand in the greatest need.

Lastly there are the weeds, and to get rid of these weeding and hoeing are essential, for they are remarkably quick in reproduction, if left alone.

But what is a weed? it may be asked.

A weed is merely a plant in the wrong

place ! Many weeds are most beautiful in colour and in perfume, and delightful to look at. But they are out of place in the corn field. They are taking up the room and the nourishment that are meant for the crop ; hence the careful farmer roots them up as soon as they show their heads. There is no room for both ; the more weeds the poorer the crop.

With the increase of knowledge, the opening up of many new fields of scientific and artistic interest, the increased facilities for travel and amusement, it is not surprising that the birds of the air (compared to the evil one in Matthew xiii. 19) and the winds (likened to agents for the spread of bad doctrines in Ephesians iv. 14) should sow many of these seeds in the ground prepared for the reception of the good seed. Hence it is that light literature (sometimes of considerable literary merit, and dealing with topics of an interesting character) that sports (and vigorous bodily exercise is highly beneficial for youths who have sedentary occupations) that smoking (sometimes recommended as a sedative for tired nerves) that study (necessary for the passing of many professional examinations) and even diligence in one's daily occupations *may* easily become baneful weeds and reduce the productivity of the good soil from a hundred to sixty, or from sixty to thirty fold.

In one of the remote parts of the American continent there is a little creature

that delights to feed on a particular plant that grows in the same locality. It is so fond of this particular plant that it will not allow any other plant to grow within reach, for no sooner does another show its head than it is at once destroyed, the result being that the favourite has no hindrance whatever to its full and perfect development. It is only by following such an interesting and useful example that the heart that is true to the Lord can yield a full measure of fruit to His praise and glory.

For it is to this end that we have been chosen. Did not the Lord say to His own "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit" (John xv. 16), and this fruit should be "unto holiness" (Romans vi. 22) and to "the glory and praise of God" (Phil. i. 11). Such will be the product of the unhindered work of the Spirit of God in the soul. The working of the old and assertive nature that is so displeasing to Him will be kept in abeyance, there will be no tolerance of worldly influences, nor will the weeds of self gratification however harmless in themselves be permitted, so that there shall be no restraining influences to the hundred-fold yield of the "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," which form "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. v. 22) in each one that would live in a way that is pleasing to the Lord of the harvest.

S. SCOTT.



## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(2 *Peter* i. 1-8).

You must open your Bible at the passage indicated and follow this article with the Scripture before you, if you would get any real help. Space forbids quotations of any length from the passage so, as you read, refer to the Scripture *and* THINK.

If consequently fresh light begins to break in upon you, do not lightly turn from it, but lifting up your heart in thanksgiving to God, pursue your searching of the Word on the point. It may open up to you a fruitful field of truth and you can resume your reading of the article on another occasion.

**I**N his second Epistle the apostle Peter addressed himself to the same believers—Christian Jews scattered throughout Asia Minor—as in his first. This fact is not directly stated in the opening verses, but the first verse of chapter iii. makes it quite apparent. In the salutation 'with which the Epistle opens he simply describes them as those who had received a like precious faith to himself "through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

They had believed the gospel just as he had believed it, and such faith wherever found in the heart is indeed precious. Still the reference here is to the faith of Christianity which is precious beyond all words. The Jews religion could not be called a *faith*. It began with *sight* at Sinai. It consisted in a law of demand coupled with a *visible* system—"ordinances of divine ser-

vice and a worldly sanctuary" (Heb. ix. 1)—which was a shadow of good things to come. They had turned from this, which looked like the substance but was only the shadow, to embrace the precious faith of Christ which looks to unbelievers like a shadow, but which is really the substance.

This precious faith has only come to us by the advent of the Lord Jesus as Saviour, and He came as the demonstration of the righteousness of *our* God. The word "*our*" should be inserted as the margin of a reference Bible will show, and it is worthy of being noted. Writing as a converted Jew to converted Jews "*our* God" would signify "Israel's God" who had displayed His righteousness in His faithfulness to His ancient promises and intervened on their behalf, and on ours, by the sending of the Saviour, as the result of which so precious a faith is ours.

Now the Lord Jesus who came as our Saviour, according to verse 1, also is the Revealer by whom we have the true knowledge of God, as verse 2 indicates and all grace and peace is enjoyed by us in proportion as we really know God Himself and the Lord Jesus. Indeed it is through the knowledge of our Saviour God that all things relating to life and godliness are ours.

It will help to the understanding of this passage if you begin by noting that:—

1. Verse 3 and the first part of verse 4 speak of things which are given by the power of God to each and every believer.

2. The latter part of verse 4 gives us the object God had in view in what He has given.

3. Verses 5 to 7 indicate the way in which we are responsible to work out into practical effect that which we have received, so that God's object is reached. We are to be marked by expansion and growth. That which "divine power" (verse 3) has given, our "diligence" (verse 5) is to expand.

What has divine power given to us? All things relating to life and godliness. We have not merely received life but with it all these things necessary that the new life may be manifested in practical Christian living and godly behaviour. The Apostle does not stop to specify the things given save to remind us that we have promises of an exceedingly great and precious kind. He really uses in fact the superlative word "greatest," for nothing could surpass the hopes of the Christian which centre in the coming of the Lord. Still a few moments reflection might serve to remind us of *some* of the gifts that divine power has conferred upon us:—the Holy Spirit indwelling us, the Word of God written for us, the throne of Grace opened to us, to name but three. We have received however, not *some* but ALL things that have to do with life and

godliness. Hence we are sent forth thoroughly furnished. Nothing is lacking upon God's part.

All these things have reached us through the knowledge of God as the One who has called us "to" or "by glory and virtue" (See margin). We are of course called *to* glory (See 1 Pet. v. 10). Here the point is that both glory and virtue characterize our call. We are called to live in the energy of that glory which is our destiny and end, and of that virtue or courage which will carry us through to the end.

These things, one and all, are ours that by them we might be "partakers of the divine nature." Every true believer is "born of God" and in that sense partakes of the divine nature (See 1 John iii. 9); consequently he does righteousness and walks in love (See 1 John ii. 29, iii. 10). The meaning of our passage however is not that by the things given to us we might be born again, for Peter was writing to those who were already "born again" (1 Pet. i. 23). It is rather that by these things we might be led into a practical and experimental partaking of the divine nature. In one word, *love* is the divine nature and hence verses 5 to 7 depict the growth of the believer as culminating in love. "Charity" or *love*, the divine nature, is the ultimate thing. The believer whose heart is full of the love of God is truly partaker of the divine nature, in the sense of this passage.

All the corruption that is in the world is the fruit of lust. The word "lust" covers all the desires which spring from man's fallen nature. The law of Moses came in and imposed its restraint upon man's fallen desires, but instead of the law really restraining lust the lusts of men broke through the restraints of law and continued to spread their corruption around. All the corruptions of the world originate in man's fallen nature. We, believers, are brought to partake in the divine nature, whence springs holiness, and hence we are lifted out of and escape the corruption. In the strength of what is divine we are lifted out of what is natural to us as sinners, and there is no other way of escape than this.

Now note the words with which verse 5 begins. "*And beside this.*" That is to say, beside all that is freely conferred upon us by "His divine power" there is needed something on our side. And that something is "*all diligence.*"

The work, even in our hearts and lives as believers, is all God's work, yet we must not because of that drop into a kind of fatalism as though there were nothing for us to do. We must rather remember that it pleases God to use human means in correction with much of His working, and that He has ordained that the way to spiritual prosperity for each individual believer should be by means of that believer's own spiritual

diligence. This is not surprising for it is quite in accord with what we see in natural things. In the book of Proverbs we have divine wisdom applied to natural things and there we read, "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men." (xxii 29).

Hence with all diligence we are to add to our faith virtue and all the other things enumerated in verses 5 to 7. Another version renders it, "In your faith have also virtue, in virtue knowledge" &c. If the former translation gives the idea of building, as though one were adding brick to brick, the latter gives the idea of growth. The bud upon the apple tree in the spring has within it in germ the luscious apple that hangs in autumn time in the same spot. Yet in the production of the apple many things have played their part, the sunshine and the rain, and the life energies of the tree which have enabled it to suck up from the soil the required moisture and other matter. Without the life energy of the tree all else would have been in vain as far as the production of an apple was concerned.

Now we are to be marked by diligent energy after this fashion. The beautiful traits of Christian character which lie in germ in every Christian are then expanded in us and in our faith is found virtue or courage. If there be not virtue which en-

ables us to stand out clear and distinct from the world our faith becomes itself a very sickly thing.

In virtue we are to have knowledge. Virtue imparts great strength to one's character, but except strength is used according to knowledge, and that knowledge the highest and best of all—the knowledge of God and His will—it may become a dangerous thing.

In knowledge we must have temperance, or moderation. If ruled by knowledge only we may very easily become creatures of extremes. The believer of great intellectual clearness may easily so act as to imperil the welfare of his less discerning brethren, as Romans xiv. and 1 Corinthians viii. show us. Hence the need of temperance.

In temperance we are to have patience, or endurance. We are bound to be tried and tested. The believer of endurance wins through.

In patience, godliness, or piety. We learn to live in the consciousness of the presence of God. We see God in our circumstances and act as beneath His eye.

In godliness, brotherly kindness; for we are now able to adjust ourselves fittingly in regard to our fellow-believers. We view them too in relation to Christ and as begotten of God, and not according to our whims and fancies, our own partialities, our likes or dislikes.

In brotherly kindness we are to have

charity, or love; that is divine love, the love that goes on loving the naturally unlovely, since now the fountain of love is within and hence love has not to be excited by the presentation without of what may appeal to one personally. The believer who by diligent spiritual growth loves after this fashion is a partaker of the divine nature in a very practical manner, and is fruitful as verse 8 plainly declares.

These things, you notice, are to be *in* us and abound. They are not like garments to be put *on* us for then they might be put *off* on occasions. Like fruit they are the product and expansion of the divine life within, and if they abound in us they prove us to be neither "barren"—or "idle"—"nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Idleness is the opposite to diligence. Which are we, idle or diligent? Some Christians are very diligent in money-making and even diligent in pleasure-seeking, but idle in the things of God. Is it any wonder they spiritually languish? Others while paying the necessary heed to their business or work are diligent in the things of God. No one need be surprised that they spiritually flourish.

F. B. HOLE.



## DELIVERED AND ENDOWED.

### *Romans viii.*

WE can well understand with what a sense of relief the man whose experience is recorded in *Romans vii* would exclaim:—"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" He was not out of the wood however. He had learned of the Deliverer, but he had yet to tell the story of deliverance. Most people in this favoured land have heard of the Saviour, but myriads have not got salvation. It may be that is the case with some one reading these lines. If so, let us say to you, dear friend, you must take your place as a lost sinner, come to Him, trust in Him, accept Him as your very own personal Saviour, and then salvation will be yours. Delay doing so no longer, we beseech you.

In chapter eight we at once meet an altogether new and a remarkable expression:—"in Christ Jesus." In the early chapters we have had described, a man in his sins. At the close of chapter five we have the description of a man in Adam; while chapter seven gives us a view of a man with sin in him. For all such there could be nothing but condemnation or judgment. We have seen how God has dealt with the *sins* question, and also with the *sin* question. The death of Christ has secured justification as to our *sins*, deliverance from

the power of *sin* and freedom from every claim of law. Now we find that the erstwhile sinner who could do nothing but sin (chapter iii.); who, as in Adam, was under condemnation (chapter v.); under the mastery of sin (chapter vi.); and under the dominion of the law (chapter vii.); has reached the Deliverer, has obtained deliverance, is now taken account of by God as being "in Christ Jesus," and is therefore free from all condemnation. It could not be otherwise, to condemn "them that are in Christ Jesus" would be to condemn Him, and that could not possibly be. If we are *in Him* there is nothing to condemn. The second half of verse one appears to be in interpolation, and belongs, as is quite apparent, to verse four.

Apprehending this, the man, whose experience we have in chapter seven, can say:—"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus *hath made me free* from the law of sin and death." Now he has got deliverance. It will be observed that this is a very individual matter he says "*hath made me free.*" It is equally true *for* every believer, but it is true *in* him as, and when, he has learned a similar lesson and can take these words into his lips.

Verse three shows us how much this meant for God and for His beloved Son—"His *own* Son." How touching are the words:—"God sending His own Son in

the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." The lowly Son of God came into Manhood, went to the Cross, and He of whom as Man, it is written that He "*knew no sin*;" (2 Cor. v. 21); He "*did no sin*;" (1 Peter ii. 22); and "*in Him is no sin*;" (1 John iii. 5); was made that hateful thing, was forsaken by God, endured sin's awful judgment; settled the *sin* question and glorified God in the settling of it, in order that in Him as He now is, and where He now is, we might be before God free from condemnation; fulfilling the righteous requirements of the law; and walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit (verse 4).

This introduces us to something else that is new. Only once in the early chapters has the Holy Spirit been mentioned (v. 5). In this chapter He is spoken of eighteen times. He it is who produces the sense of the need of deliverance. He it is who leads to the Deliverer. Indwelling, as He does, every true believer, this real, divine Person seeks to maintain us in the joy of the new-found liberty, and to give us to know something of the illimitable wealth of blessing that belongs to us and to all those who are "in Christ Jesus." The result is that it is now not "the things of the flesh" but "the things of the Spirit" that occupy us. Having learned that "they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God" (verse 8), and being under the control of the Spirit it is

that which is pleasurable to God that is now manifest.

The power of the Spirit is infinite. He is "the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead"—that is past. So "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (verse 11). That is future. The change of title seems to suggest Christ in association with His saints, and to point forward to that which shall take place when He comes for them. (Compare 1 Cor. xv. 51-57. Phil iii. 20-21. 1 Thess. iv. 13-17). For the present He exercises His power on our behalf. He leads us into the knowledge of sonship, the liberty of children, and the reality and delight of knowing God as Father.

This has nothing to do with the popular but quite false theory of the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. It is peculiar to Christianity and is known *only* by those who having been "born of God" (John i. 12, 13) are His children, and who having received the Spirit of adoption enjoy the position and the privileges of sons and are enabled to cry "Abba Father" (verses 14, 15).

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. iii. 16). The Holy Spirit has chosen various penmen whom He has inspired to present the precious truth in

different ways, and there are points where the writers meet and dovetail their respective presentations of divine teaching thus making one complete whole. Thus the Apostle John has been used to write of our relationship as children (in every instance whether in the Gospel or in the Epistles that bear his name, "sons" should be rendered "children"); whereas Paul dwells more on our position as sons. John shows that we become children by new birth. Paul indicates that we become sons by adoption. In our chapter they meet and how perfect is the result.

Sonship speaks of position and dignity, and looks on to the day of manifestation (v. 19). "Children" conveys the thought of relationship, intimacy, liberty and confidence. The eldest son of a ruling Monarch is heir to the throne. He lives now in view of a future day in the dignity with which that unique position invests him, and his entire career is coloured by it. He is also a child however, no matter what his age may be, and in his relations with his father, in the secret of his home life, he takes free advantage of the liberty which belongs to him as a child, and which the knowledge of his father's love for him and interest in him begets.

May we be permitted a word of practical application here? We want—do we not?—to be living as sons, conscious of the dignity

and revelling in the riches of that position, looking on to the coming day of display, and meanwhile declining the very best that the world offers as being beneath our dignity to accept, and considering any suffering that that may entail as not worthy of mention when compared with that glory which is and which shall be ours.

As to the circumstances of our pathway we take advantage of the children's privilege. We come to the Father at all times. We tell into His ever-listening ear the story of our joys and trials, our triumphs and defeats, we keep back nothing, there is no reserve, we bring to Him our every burden, and knowing all about us, as He does, intensely interested in us, as He is, and loving us with an unwearied, unbounded, unchanging, ever-watchful, faithful love, He always seeks our greatest good, our greatest blessing, our greatest happiness.

Here again the Holy Spirit is prominent as verse twenty six so beautifully sets forth. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." Oh ye heavy laden, tempest-tossed, sorrowing saints! Ye who are crushed with burdens known only to yourselves and to the Lord; ye who fall

down before Him and can only groan; Be of good cheer! The Holy Spirit interprets your groan. "He maketh intercession for the saints." God knows the mind of the Spirit, the Spirit knows the mind of God (verse 27); you, your concerns, your cares, are the subject of divine interest and intercourse, and the result is that if you are very conscious that you "know not what ye should pray for as ye ought," ye *do* know that "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (verse 28).

How richly endowed are we! The sunshine of the Father's love streams down upon us, our adorable Lord makes intercession for us before God, (verse 34), the Holy Spirit is ceaselessly in communication with Heaven on our behalf, and our safe, happy, triumphant conduct to the home-land has been undertaken for us by God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, so that we have only to leave ourselves in the keeping of divine love and divine power—in the keeping of God who is for us (verse 31)—assured that all is, all must be, all will be well.

We must leave a brief consideration of the remainder of this chapter, as well as a general summing up of the epistle for our concluding paper (D.V.).

# “LEAD ME . . . GUIDE ME.”

“For Thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for Thy Name’s sake lead me, and guide me,” Psa. xxi. 3.

**S**PEAK to me Saviour, Master, Lord  
 In gracious words and clear,  
 In tender accents or in grave,  
 But make Thy servant hear.

‘Tis not in man, O! Lord, to guide  
 Or to direct his way;  
 I need Thy wisdom and Thy light  
 Instructing day by day.

The path is difficult and dark  
 If Thou be not with me  
 Give me Thy presence, darkness then  
 And difficulties flee.

Thy will is right whate’er it be,  
 Wherever it may lead;  
 Teach me to tread the way that’s best,  
 By mountain or by mead.

‘Tis not for long, the toilsome road  
 Leads to Thy peaceful rest,  
 The home of love and light and song  
 The mansions of the blest.

Keep Thou my hand in Thine, until  
 The Father’s house, I see;  
 Till like Thee, with Thee there I dwell  
 For all eternity.

INGLIS FLEMING.



## PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY.

**S**TORMS, difficulties, trials, tempests and rough seas are often allowed to bring out the qualities of the traveller or the spiritual mariner.

Many are awakened, and deep desires to make progress in the things of God have arisen in their souls. They seek prosperity in that which is far more important than any earthly concerns.

And this is right, for the Lord Jesus showed that being "rich toward God" was the chief thing; and the Holy Spirit said by the apostle John that "beloved Gaius" experienced prosperity of soul, and, along with that, He desired for him health and prosperity in other things (3 John 2). Only soul prosperity is given the first place, the rest is to follow.

We read however of one who has desires but fails to attain what is desired. He makes no progress,—“the soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing!” On the other hand, so earnest was another in his quest, that he exclaimed, “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple” (Psalm xxvii. 4). So to-day, the Spirit of

God leads on those in whom are divine desires after Christ, to behold the glory of the Lord, and thus to become more like Him.

“Like Him in faith, in meekness, love,  
In every beauteous grace;  
From glory into glory changed  
Till we behold His face.”

But we do not reach this all at once. A beginning has to be made, and thank God, the start and the finish are ours through no efforts on our part, but solely through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered and died to redeem us eternally, and is coming again to take us to be with Himself and like Himself in the glory of God. Rough seas, as we have said, may intervene, but even these shall but further our highest good.

#### PARDON AND POWER.

Matthew, who once taxed the true King's earthly people on behalf of the Romans, is nevertheless used of the Spirit to show us Israel's King—"the Son of David" (i. 1)—Jesus - Jehovah - Saviour—Emmanuel. Royal, as well as Divine grace, becomes such an One. In this way we find Him acting therefore; and, though some opposed, yet He caused others to glorify God, by the way He met the need of one who was entirely helpless (ix. 1-8). So helpless was he, that others, relying on the grace and power of the Lord, brought him on a bed to Jesus. What rich and gracious

words reached his ears! The Saviour said, "Son, *be of good cheer*; thy sins be forgiven thee," and again, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." He rose up, and went home.

That was a good start, good progress, and a good finish. Others had the faith, the Lord had the power, and the man received the blessing. Beginning with pardon, he received power to walk right home, and on the way he had the Lord's own word,— "Be of good cheer!" or "Be of good courage!"—ringing in his ears.

It is said of believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, "Your sins are forgiven you for His Name's sake" (1 John i. 12); and "Ye have an Unction from the Holy One" (20). Both pardon and power are ours: forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit. We are also on the road to the Father's House, and that is sure. Let us not lose meanwhile "the happiness of the man . . . whose sins are forgiven . . . to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. iv. 6-8, N.Tr.), for we are justified *eternally* on the principle of faith; but let us "serve the Lord with gladness," whatever difficulties may assail our passage. May we make true progress, always remembering His word, "*Son, be of good cheer!*"

#### JESUS HIMSELF.

Now although each individual believer receives forgiveness and the power of the

Holy Spirit, yet, as he seeks to answer to the present mind of God for those who call on the Name of the Lord, he necessarily finds himself in the company of others. Indeed, after the Lord had used his disciples to feed the five thousand, He constrained them to go on board ship to cross to the other side (Matt. xiv. 22). He went up into a mountain apart to pray. He was there alone, a beautiful picture of the Son of God, our high Priest at the right hand of God to-day; for, though none were with Him, His thoughts and sympathies were with those He had compelled to voyage across the sea. He knew all about the contrary winds and the raging waves which beset the ship and tested their faith; nor did He leave them to struggle on alone. Jesus Himself came to them walking on the sea.

He knows those who seek to do God's will: "The Lord knoweth them that are His;" and, as they call on the Lord Himself together, following righteousness, faith, love and peace, He succours and encourages them when they pass through various trials, making Himself increasingly precious in their hearts, as they prosper in the excellent knowledge of their Saviour and Lord.

The disciples, at first, thought it was an apparition which appeared to them in the storm, and they cried out for fear, but Jesus said, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not

afraid." And, at the word of the Lord, Peter received power, and "*walked on the water to go to Jesus.*" Truly he failed after, by withdrawing the eyes from the Lord to look at the boisterous elements; but the Saviour lifted the doubting one into the ship, and the storm ceased. Yes, that is what many are distracted with to-day, they look at the stormy winds! and, to do that, the look of faith is taken off the Saviour, who, nevertheless makes Himself better known to us through the tempest.

The disciples came and "worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the SON OF GOD." He accepted their homage. He was their Lord and their God. No testings which we pass through are wasted upon us when Jesus Himself is better known to our glad hearts, and responsively, we worship Him, singing,

"Son of God our souls adore Thee,  
While upon Thy face we gaze."

Once again then His voice of good cheer was heard, not as before in relation to pardon, but in reference to Himself. We surely can better understand now the spiritual prosperity the apostle Paul sought, when he said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. iii. 8).

No one loves us like our Saviour. He gave Himself for us. "Christ loved the assembly and gave Himself for it," and He

looks forward to the day when He will come again and present it to Himself holy, blameless and all glorious. The waters of judgment and of death could not quench His love. Through all He passed, and, for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, having despised the shame. His love is not lessened now He is risen and triumphant, rather is it free (now that His work for us upon the cross is completed) to lavish itself upon its objects, comforting and cheering them till He takes them to be for ever with Himself.

“ ALL HAIL ! ”

When He rose from among the dead, and met the women who had been at the tomb, our risen, victorious Saviour greeted them with the glad words ALL HAIL! (Matt. xxviii. 9). Again we find Him accepting worship, which, no *creature* true to God, could do (see Rev. xix. 10), much less Jesus if He were only Man. His very perfection as Man would refuse it. Truly He was David's Son, the King of Israel, but He was also David's Lord. He was truly Man. He was also truly God, and therefore we see Him receiving worship without question. “ They came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him.” Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, how worthy Thou art of the deep homage of our hearts! Oh, that free from distraction, we might prosper in soul by taking in more of Thine own love and glory, and so respond more fully.

Yes, our living Lord delights in bringing us into the joys of His victory over sin, death and the tomb, hailing us in resurrection life as His own, that we may know we are His brethren. However little our spiritual prosperity may have been, He is not ashamed to call us brethren (Heb. ii. 12). Thus He sends His resurrection message by the women,—“*Go tell My brethren!*” To Mary of Magdala He said on the first day of the week, “Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.” When He afterwards stood in their midst, then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

What good cheer was theirs, and what good cheer is ours when our souls learn that Jesus has ascended to the Father, and that not only are we accepted in Him the beloved One, but we are in the same relationship with Himself to our God and Father. It is surely a sign of real soul prosperity when we can truly sing

“His Father, and our Father,  
His God and ours Thou art;  
And He is Thy Belovèd,  
The gladness of Thy heart.”

Moreover, not only has He ascended, but He is coming again to receive us to Himself, that where He is there we may be also. What a joyful prospect lies before us! He said, “*I will come again,*” and He will not fail to keep His word. Oh, the joy of seeing

His face! Oh, the joy of His own heart when He takes home His own, for whom He shed His life's blood! Every moment brings us nearer to that glorious goal. The One we have learned to know in the storms of earth, we shall see in the calm of heaven, and then,

"In heavenly songs this note shall swell,  
That Jesus hath done all things well."

H. J. VINE.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

*2 Peter i. 9-18.*

You must open your Bible at the passage indicated and follow this article with the Scripture before you, if you would get any real help. Space forbids quotations of any length from the passage so, as you read, refer to the Scripture *and* THINK.

If consequently fresh light begins to break in upon you, do not lightly turn from it, but lifting up your heart in thanksgiving to God, pursue your searching of the Word on the point. It may open up to you a fruitful field of truth and you can resume your reading of the article on another occasion.

**V**ERSES 8 and 9 of our chapter present to us a strong contrast. The diligent believer who grows spiritually, and in whom consequently the fruit of the Spirit is found abundantly, is neither idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. On the other hand, it is, alas! possible for a believer to be, temporarily at least, both idle and unfruitful and to be



consequently in the sad plight that verse 9 portrays. Such are blind and short-sighted, and their spiritual memory is decayed.

The backslider of verse 9 is evidently a true believer. It does not say that he *never was* purged from his old sins; much less does it say that having been once saved he is *now no longer purged* from his sins; but that he has forgotten the purging of his former sins. *Purged* he was, but he has forgotten it. We must distinguish, therefore, between the backsliding of this verse and the backsliding referred to in Hebrews vi., and in the parable of the sower (See, Luke viii. 13).

In Hebrews, the backslider is an apostate who falls away from the Christian faith into such a repudiation of it as involves the crucifying *to himself* of the Son of God afresh, and his case is altogether hopeless.

In the parable of the sower, the backslider is one who receives the word in the mind and emotions, without it ever penetrating to the conscience. Such profess conversion, but without reality, and presently fall away. Their case, though difficult, is not hopeless, for they may subsequently be really and truly converted to God.

Here, however, it is the true believer, and, if any were disposed to question whether these things could ever be true of such, we can point to a sad episode in Peter's own history where he illustrated what

he states in this verse. Had we seen Peter's *blindness* as to his own weakness on the night of the betrayal, had we seen him *short-sightedly* running into the most perilous position as he warmed himself by the fire amid the enemies of the Lord, and then when entrapped by the maidservant, breaking out into a painful exhibition of his former sins of cursing and swearing, we should have seen how, for the moment at least, he had *forgotten how he had been purged*.

And we certainly are no better nor stronger than Peter. How often have we each sadly illustrated verse 9?

Our preservation from it lies, of course, in that diligence to which Peter exhorts us. The way not to go back is to go on. Having these things abounding *in* us (verse 8) and *doing* them (verse 10) we shall be preserved from falling, and thus it will be manifest that we are indeed the called and chosen of God.

How did the other disciples regard Peter after his disastrous backsliding? Probably they feared for a moment that he might prove himself to be a second Judas. Evidently they questioned if, indeed, he were really one of themselves. Hence the special message, "Tell His disciples *and Peter*" (Mark xvi. 7). They were not at all sure of his "calling and election."

To the earnest simple-hearted Thessalonian Christians, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." How did he so confidently *know*? Read the first chapter of the 1st Epistle and see what amazing progress they had made in the short time since their conversion. It was impossible, therefore, to doubt their election. They had made it sure.

The vitality and fruitfulness which mark the diligent believer not only give demonstration of his calling and election in the present, but also are full of promise for the future. Ahead of us lies "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and though every Christian will enter that kingdom, it is the fruitful Christian who will have an abundant entrance, as verse 11 makes plain.

The "everlasting kingdom" is not heaven. No one gains heaven as the result of diligence or fruitfulness; nor do some gain an abundant and others a meagre entrance there. *There is no entrance into heaven save through the work of Christ—a work perfect and available alike for all who believe—so that all who enter at all enter in the same way and on the same footing without distinction.*

The everlasting kingdom will be established when Jesus comes again, and in connection with it rewards will be given as the parable of Luke xix. 12-27 teaches us,

There will consequently be great differences as to the places that believers will occupy in the kingdom, and our entrance into it may be abundant or the reverse. All will depend upon our diligence and faithfulness. The remembrance of this will certainly stir us to zeal and devotedness.

Knowing this, and knowing also how very easily and quickly we forget even the things that we are well acquainted with, the Apostle Peter, as a diligent shepherd of souls, reminded them of these things again and again. They knew these things; indeed they were established in the truth that had come to light in Christ—the *present* truth—yet what they needed was to be “put in remembrance.” How much more do we need these reminders, the object being as Peter said, “*to stir you up.*”

Take note of this! We may listen to addresses or read articles which contain no truth that is new to us. Let us not therefore despise them. The main function of a teacher may be to instruct in the truth of Christianity, truth which however old in itself, is largely new to those whom he instructs. The main function of a pastor or shepherd is to get at the hearts and consciences of believers, applying to them the things in which they have been instructed, stirring them up and keeping them in an exercised and watchful condition. Do not most of us need the latter ministry more than the former? To practice more

consistently what we do know is probably for us a more urgent necessity than to enlarge the area of our knowledge.

Now Peter looked on to the hour of his death. The Lord Jesus had hinted at his death and the manner of it, as recorded in John xxi. 18, 19. By this time he knew that it was to take place shortly. Is it not striking that Peter should *need* to be told that he is going to die? What a testimony to the fact that not death but the coming of the Lord is really the hope of the Christian.

But see what use Peter made of this knowledge, and how he practised the diligence which in this chapter he has pressed upon others. Verse 18 more literally translated runs:—"But I will use diligence, that after my departure ye should have also, at any time [in your power] to call to mind these things"-and then he goes on to enforce the reality and certainty of the coming kingdom of which he began to speak in verse 11, without stopping to indicate just what he purposed to do. It is very evident, however that what he purposed and accomplished under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was the writing of the Epistle that we are now reading. By means of it we can now at any time call to mind these things, though Peter's voice is long since silent.

Observe that there is here no mention of the rising up of a further race of apostles

or inspired men, no apostolic succession. What is indicated as taking the place of the apostles is *Scripture*—particularly the apostolic writings, in other words, *The New Testament*. No teacher can possibly speak with the inspired authority of Scripture. If we neglect our Bibles, we shall listen to the best of men in vain.

We have just had our minds stirred up by the fact that diligence is to have its reward when the day of the everlasting kingdom of our Lord is come. Peter, however, was writing to people who had from the days of their fathers cherished the hope of Messiah's kingdom, and who had lived to see Him rejected and crucified. Were they tempted then to wonder if after all the prophecies of His glorious and actual kingdom embracing both earth and heaven were to be interpreted as but figures of speech—glowing and poetic descriptions of what was after all but a spiritual and invisible estate in heaven? It may well have been so, for we are naturally creatures of extremes. People who once thought everthing of Messiah's promised advent in public glory and nothing of His advent in humiliation, are likely, when convinced of His coming to suffer, to think everything of that and nothing of His kingdom and glory.

The power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ so long foretold in prophetic testimony, is, however, no "cunningly devised fable," and Peter is able to bear such a wit-

ness to its substantial reality as is conclusive. In verses 16 to 18 he says to us, in effect, "The prophetic testimony is true and the kingdom foretold is a substantial reality to be displayed in its season, *for we have seen it already in sample form.* He alluded, of course, to the transfiguration scene recorded in three out of the four gospels, and witnessed by himself, James and John.

Not many years ago a few men began to talk of a new kind of silky fabric produced not from the cocoons of a caterpillar, but from *wood*—of all things in the world! Folk were incredulous, it sounded like a fable. Proof was soon forthcoming though, of a quite conclusive sort. The stuff was produced in sample; not tons of it but ounces only. The substantial reality of artificial silk was as fully proved then by those ounces as it is now by the countless thousands of stockings displayed in shop windows all over the world.

The glorious kingdom of our Lord Jesus has long ago been seen in sample form by chosen witnesses. Indeed, the manifestation of it appeared not only to their eyes, but to their ears also. They were "*eyewitnesses* of His majesty," and also "*this voice which came from heaven we heard*"—the voice *which came from the "excellent glory"* saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Some may, however, wish to enquire in what way the transfiguration scene was a

sample of the "power and coming" of the Lord, and thus confirmatory of His glorious kingdom? It was so, inasmuch as He was the central and glorified Object of all. Saints enjoying a heavenly portion were represented in Moses and Elijah. Saints upon earth were represented by Peter, James and John. The heavenly saints associated with Him, and entering intelligently into His thoughts in conversation. The earthly saints blessed by His presence, though dazzled by His glory. It was a sight of "the Son of man coming in His kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 28); a sight of "the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark ix. 1); a sight of "the kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 27).

The glorious and everlasting kingdom of the Lord Jesus is then a blessed and substantial reality. It is certainly coming. We shall enter into it as called of God to its "heavenly" side (2 Tim. iv. 18). The question that remains to be settled is—in what way shall we enter it? Will your entrance and mine be an abundant entrance? Shall we enter like a trim and well-appointed ship entering port in full sail? Shall we enter rather as a battered and tattered wreck? The answer to that is going to be given by us each in the spiritual diligence or spiritual sloth and carelessness that marks us day by day.



## SEPARATION.

**A**FTER the Israelites had set up the golden calf, God could no longer own the people in their corporate character. The assembly had become entirely defiled, having set up an idol of their own making, in the place of God—a calf instead of Jehovah. “And Moses took the tabernacle and pitched it *without the camp*, afar off from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation.” Thus the camp was disowned as the place of the divine presence. God was not, could not, be there. . . . A new gathering point was therefore set up. “And it came to pass that everyone which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.” There is here a fine principle of truth, which the spiritual mind will readily apprehend. The place which Christ now occupies is “without the camp,” and we are called upon to “go forth unto Him.” It demands much subjection to the word to be able, with accuracy, to know what “the camp” really is, and much spiritual power to be able to go forth from it; and still more to be able, while “far off from it,” to act toward those in it, in the combined power of holiness and grace. Holiness which separates from the defilement of the camp; grace, which enables us to act toward those who are involved therein. . . . It is much easier to assume a position of separation from the camp, than to act aright toward those within.

C. H. M.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LINCOLNSHIRE.—Would you kindly explain Galatians ii. 20 ?

"*I* am crucified with Christ": what "*I*" is that ?

"Nevertheless *I* live": what "*I*" is that ?

"Yet not *I*" : what "*I*" is that ?

"But Christ liveth in *me*" : who is the "*me*" ?

"And the life which *I* now live in the flesh": what "*I*" is that ?

"*I* live by the faith of the Son of God": what "*I*" is that ?

"Who loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*" : who is the "*me*" ?

THE difficulty of this verse is occasioned by the fact that we believers are at present in a mixed condition. We are born of God and therefore possess a new nature, but we have not yet had the old Adamic nature eradicated. It is still in us and will be for so long as we are in our present mortal bodies. We therefore possess an old nature and a new; and further we each of us know well that conversion has not changed our personality, our individuality. After all you are the same "*you*" and I am the same "*I*" as before, though now, thank God, we have each the new nature with its new instincts and desires, which are altogether of God and sinless, as 1 John iii. 9 so forcefully puts it. God identifies us now with the new nature and we should learn to think likewise though we know that the old nature is there.

Now to your seven subsidiary questions—we take them in order:—

1 "*I*"—the individual as identified with the old nature. I, as a fallen child of Adam.

2 "*I*"—the person, the individual. I personally live, though if I consider myself as

identified with my old nature I recognise myself as crucified with Christ.

3 "I"—again as identified with the old nature. I live, but not to express and display myself according to the character of my old nature, but

4 Christ is to be livingly manifested in His gracious character. But He is to live in "me"—myself, as identified with my new nature.

5 and 6 "I"—the individual, but as still identified with the new nature.

7 "Me"—Just the individual myself. It was not that Christ loved and gave Himself for the new nature, much less for the old. He loved and gave Himself for me—the personal individual *me*. Wonderful fact!

INSEIN, BURMA. Please explain the following:—

(1) John i. 17. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Was there grace and truth before Jesus Christ came? Does the Old Testament contain God's grace and truth?

(2) Luke xvi. 16. "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached."

What is meant by the law and the prophets were until John?

(3) If the Holy Ghost is the third person of the Godhead, what is meant by "full of the Holy Ghost" in Luke iv. 1? Also what is meant by "giveth not the Spirit by measure" in John iii. 34?

Your first and second questions both hinge on the change of dispensation brought about by the coming of the Lord Jesus. The law was given by Moses and it demanded works. "Grace" is not of works. If it were it would not be grace as Romans xi. 6 tells us. Hence law and grace are in direct contrast. "Truth" is connected with the revelation of God. When the knowledge of God was lost through the fall,

truth was lost; and truth only came again into full evidence when God was perfectly revealed in Christ.

We see traces of grace in the Old Testament as for instance Exodus xxxiii. 17; and certain parts of the truth were plainly seen, but neither grace nor truth came fully and perfectly into view until Christ appeared.

John the Baptist was the herald and forerunner of Christ. With his ministry the new dispensation dawned, and until then the law and prophets provided such light and knowledge of God as was available, and the law was the measure of man's responsibility towards God. From that point onwards the kingdom was preached and a new order of things began to come into view.

As to your third question:—The Holy Ghost is indeed the third Person of the Godhead. He is a Person and, as such He fills with His presence and influence. Luke's gospel is the one that specially presents the Lord Jesus to us as the perfect Man. Having become a Man, He fulfilled man's proper place in all perfection. If He acted in ministry it was as led by and filled with the Holy Spirit, and in all this He is the pattern for us, though we do receive the Holy Spirit by measure, that is, we share in His presence, and He indwells us in common with others. He has given to us "of His Spirit" (1 John iv. 13). But God did not thus give the Spirit to the One whom He sent to speak His words. The whole fulness of the Spirit was present there in Christ, as the fulness of the Father also (See, Col. i. 19).

## DO YOU READ YOUR BIBLE?

“**W**HY, of course I I am a Christian, so it surely is hardly needful to ask that question.”

On the contrary, it is unfortunately only too necessary. All too many Christians only use their Bibles in a most fitful way and when they do take them up it is only to glance at texts or favourite portions here and there. They do not give the sacred volume a steady consecutive reading as they certainly would were it any ordinary book.

“Well, but I do read consecutively. Every day I read a passage, though I have not much time.”

That is good. But there is another question—having read your portion do you pause a moment to mentally visualize, to formulate in your mind, what it is that you have read; and thus retain some definite impression, some residue of truth that may abide with you for ever?

To add point to our question we print below an extract from an American magazine, *Record of Christian Work*, which furnishes a rather pertinent illustration. The story comes, we believe, from the report of the American Bible Society.

“A sensational crime had been committed. The police drag-net brought in scores of vagrants and suspicious characters. Among the throng was a young chap, who instantly attracted the officers' attention. His general appearance, his size, even the dark blue suit he wore, answered the description given by one who had gotten a glimpse of the fleeing criminal.

The young man was closely questioned. He could produce witnesses to verify most of his statements, but when it came to accounting for his whereabouts during the time the crime was committed he claimed to have been alone in his cold and cheerless room. The fact that he had just arrived in the city a few days previous, had no employment and was without funds increased the suspicion of the officers. Unable to get evidence to charge him with the crime, he was brought before the police judge and charged with vagrancy, with the expectation of holding him in jail until they could complete their case against him.

The judge began to question the young man, but could not get him to change his original story. Finally the judge asked what he was doing in his room during the hour in question.

The young man replied: 'I was reading my Bible.'

A ripple of derisive laughter went through the crowded courtroom. The judge said that he himself had been 'floored' by that answer, but deciding to follow it up he demanded to know exactly what part of the Bible the boy had read.

The young man replied that he had read the Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. At the judge's request the young man stated the subject matter of his reading, 'but,' said the judge as he related the incident, '"Your Honour" knew so little about the Bible that I was uncertain whether the young man was really telling the truth or not. I asked if anyone present knew whether these things were in the Bible, but no one could answer. I then called for a Bible, but, alas, there was not a copy to be found, so an officer was sent out to buy one. When it came I confidently opened it at Genesis, and after leafing through to Psalms or Proverbs without finding Corinthians, I asked the young man to find the place. He in-

stantly turned to the right chapter, and handed the Bible back to me. After scanning several pages I knew the young man had told the truth.'

So impressed was the judge that he personally followed the case. Within a few days the young man had fully established his innocence, the judge had found him employment, and at last reports he was advancing from one position of trust to another.

In that court to-day one will find a Bible, and as the judge told me, with a twinkle in his eye, 'If ever another man wishes to establish an *alibi* based on having read a certain book of the Bible, I'll not look for Corinthians in the Old Testament; for I have nearly finished reading the Book from cover to cover.' "

There is really appalling ignorance of the contents of the Bible even in English speaking lands where it is freely circulated as the above extract shows; but we have not cited it in connection with this but rather to draw attention to a young man who having read in Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians was able when challenged to state the subject matter of his reading. The summary of what he had read given by word of mouth was evidently of sufficient clearness and accuracy to convince the judge on re-



ferring to the Scripture itself that he had told the truth. A remarkable young man that !

It is said that millions of people, habitual novel readers, have formed the pernicious habit of reading without any real exercise of mind. Their eyes rapidly flit from line to line, page after page and the story flows like a torrent *over* their mind, inducing certain pleasing sensations in their nervous systems. Their emotions are touched, they shed, if necessary, a few sentimental tears, and then—nothing more ! It is like a river rolling in a bed with an asphalt surface, where not enough water penetrates to maintain life in even a blade of grass. It is very easy to read the Bible in just this fashion and we need to watch against the habit.

The habit itself is an old one and portrayed for us in the pages of Scripture itself. The Lord warned Ezekiel on the subject as he tells us in verses 30 to 33 of his thirty-third chapter. The people came to listen to him saying, "Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord." Having arrived they sat before him and heard his words but would not do them. The word of the Lord through Ezekiel's lips was to them what the word of the Lord in the Bible is to many in our days—"a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument."

How accurate a simile is this ! The skilful pianist and sweet singer seats herself at the instrument. "Now we are in for a treat" is your mental observation as you subside into an armchair. Closing your eyes and leaning back you let the sweet strains float in at your ears and over your brain. Yet if at the end of the performance you were asked to formulate what it had conveyed to you, the request would seem unreasonable. It conveyed nothing and was intended to minister nothing but a few moments of exceedingly pleasurable sensation.

You enjoy your morning Bible reading perhaps. You enjoy that pleasing and well-phrased address to Christians, but what has it conveyed to you ? It is certainly intended that something shall be conveyed to you. It is not "a very lovely song" merely for your passing entertainment and enjoyment.

The fact is, you really must THINK, both as you read and after you read. You must also *pray*, of course. "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things" must again and again be your petition. But when the Lord has opened your eyes you must *use* them. You possess thinking faculties, and you must use them. Then it is that you will begin to intelligently *retain* the truth of God.

## YOUNG MEN AND THEIR DANGER.

"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John ii. 14, 15).

**T**HE young men hold a middle place in the family of God, the fathers are above them, and the babes below. These distinctions, of course, relate to growth, not to the soul's acceptance with God, nor to its standing or relationship. In these great privileges all are equal and there is no difference. Whether babes, young men, or fathers, all are forgiven (ver. 12), all are God's children (chap. iii. 2), all have received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Eph. i. 13), and all have eternal life (chap. v. 11). Here there is no above nor below. We cannot be too clear as to that. The babe in the family of God holds as near and dear a place as a father, though the latter be richer in experience and in the knowledge of Christ.

The three classes have their distinguishing marks. The babes know the Father. Not only are they assured of the forgiveness of sins, but they know Him whose grace has

made them His children. This does not necessarily suppose that the babes are able *to talk* about these things intelligently. A little child knows his parents, long before its infant lips can plainly speak. What the soul of a babe in the family of God may be conscious of and deeply enjoy he may be unable to express in words. The talking time will come by and by.

Of the fathers it is said that they "have known Him that is from the beginning." Twice over the same witness is borne, and nothing more can be added. To know Him whom no one knows but the Father (Matt. xi. 27), to be daily growing in the knowledge of Him, this marks a point beyond which none can go. Here our ship is sailing on a boundless sea, whose uttermost shores no eye shall ever behold; they stretch away into the vast infinitude, unreachd and unreachdable. This knowledge is not like the babbling brooks or shallow mountain streams which laugh and sing and clap their hands as little children do. It is deep and tranquil like the waters of a great lake.

The young men are said to be strong, the Word of God abides in them, and they have overcome the wicked one. Precious testimony! They are not novices, though they be not fathers. They are strong through divinely-given strength, the Word of God is cherished and understood, and they have not fallen before the seducing words of the

wicked one, the great antagonist of Christ, and the defamer of the glory of His Person, against whose emissaries the babes are warned and put upon their guard in verse 18 and onward.

But the danger of the young men is the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." For what the heart loves it will go after, and love is the most powerful of all forces, and will sweep aside, if it can, every impediment that stands in the way of its desires. *Let the young men then be wary of the world.* It is their great foe. It will mar their Christian life and make their arms as weak as Samson's after he had laid his head in the lap of Delilah. Poor Samson! once strong when "the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times," strong enough to rend the lion, to carry away the gates of Gaza, and to smite the Philistines with the jaw-bone of an ass, but afterwards bound, blinded, and brought forth to make sport for the enemies of the Lord when their hearts were merry. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," is written in blazing letters all across the history of that young man.

Strong in another sense are the young men. They are strong in physical strength. And this must have play, and so the football club, the tennis court, the cricket field, the running match suggest themselves as

innocent outlets. Is there any evil, then, in following the ball over the field, in standing at the wicket, or engaging in other forms of athletics? Are not these harmless and healthful pursuits? Perhaps so, though harm often comes of them. Into what associations do they sometimes lead, into what friendships, into what entanglements! We knew a young man some years ago, an earnest Christian, an open-air preacher, and a diligent labourer among the young; seldom was he away from the meeting for prayer, and often was his voice heard, leading us to the throne of grace. Full of promise was that young man's life, like a tree in an orchard covered with the beautiful blossoms of spring. But in an evil hour he entered the tennis court, fell gradually into worldly associations, and little by little gave up everything of a Christian character, till he became a hopeless wreck—ruined, utterly ruined, through love of the world and the things that are of it. Young men, beware of the *first step* in that direction. It is a road that leads away from Christ. Think of Samson, think of his end, and take warning.

Not in one heart, at one and the same time, can the love of the world and the love of the Father dwell. There is not room for both. No man can serve two masters. If he honours one he will despise the other. God and Mammon cannot sit on the same throne. And the world passes away with

its pride and pomp and glory, and the soul that has loved it is left like a man, who, having flung away fortune and friends, finds himself at last a homeless wanderer in the city streets. Such was Lot, whose possessions perished in the overthrow of Sodom, and whose sun went down in the evening of his life in dark and gloomy clouds—himself saved, yet so as by fire (1 Cor. iii. 15). And Lot, being dead, yet speaketh. Across the intervening centuries he cries in loud and stirring tones, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." "The fashion of this world passeth away."

The babes, as we have already said, are warned against the many antichrists. Their danger lay there. Simple and unsuspecting, they might lend their ears too readily to doctrines that dishonour Christ. And all the more so since Satan assumes the character of an angel of light, and his servants profess to be the servants of righteousness, and talk as if they were (2 Cor. xi. 14). Specious indeed would the words of such be, and the babes in the family of God, who are ignorant of Satan's devices, might be easily deceived. These many antichrists were once in the Christian assembly, bearing Christ's name. But they went out from us, says the Apostle, because they were not of us. And they went out speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them (Acts xx. 30). Their teaching was antichristian, a denial of the true deity and of the proper relationship of

the Son to the Father. "He that denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." It is a liar and an antichrist. And these words of warning are needed now, Never in the lifetime of the reader has the truth as to the Person of Christ been so bitterly assailed even by men who pose as Christian teachers. Let us turn away from every voice that does not uphold the true deity of Christ, His perfect manhood, and the necessity and all-sufficiency of His atonement. Not for nothing were these warnings given to the young men and babes in the heavenly family. May we heed them well. W.B.

## THE PEACE OF GOD.

**P**EACE *with* God and the peace *of* God are entirely different things. The former is the result of the atoning work of Christ which we know has settled once and for ever every question between us, as sinners, and a holy God. The resurrection of Christ is deeply important in this connection. It demonstrates God's satisfaction with the work of Christ done for His glory, as also the clearance of the believing sinner, for in accepting and glorifying the One who has done the work He clearly accepts the work done. But as that work was not done for Himself, but for others, it follows that those who receive the benefit of that work, viz. those who believe on the Lord Jesus



Christ, stand in all the acceptance of that work and of the Person who performed it. So we read of Christ "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace *with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. iv. 25, v. 1).

*The peace of God* is rest of heart and mind in connection with the wilderness circumstances which we pass through. For the description of it, and the way to possess it, you must turn to Philipians iv. 4-7. There you find three things necessary for its enjoyment.

1. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (v. 4).
2. "Let your moderation [gentleness, yieldingness] be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand" (v. 5).
3. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (v. 6).

And the blessed result is, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (v. 7).

To recapitulate:—

1. Right relation to the Lord.
2. Right relation to all men.
3. Right relation to God.

And this in connection with our circumstances here.

1. To begin with, our joy must be in the Lord. "*The joy of the Lord is your strength.*" Not rejoicing in our circumstances, but in the Lord. If we rejoice in our circumstances we shall lean on a broken reed; for circumstances change, but the Lord does not. He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

The circumstances of the inspired writer were such as to give great weight to his exhortation, for they certainly yielded no joy. Four years in prison, chained to a soldier, such was Paul's lot and certainly this was not calculated to make a man cheerful. Yet the letter written by him to the Philippians is filled with joy and rejoicing. Joy in circumstances, after all, would only be natural joy, whereas rejoicing in the Lord is *spiritual*. May the reader keep this exhortation ever before him, as much, if not more, on bright days as cloudy days, for dark days drive us to the Lord, whilst bright ones may allure us from Him. It is easier to carry an empty cup than a full one.

2. Then in our relation to all men we are to show a gentle, yielding spirit. If I am for ever standing on my dignity and rights, I shall be continually getting ruffled; whereas if I seek to show to all the grace and gentleness of Him who had right and title to everything and who claimed nothing, I

shall walk through this world in the serenity that marked Him.

Moreover, "*the Lord is at hand.*" His coming draws near. Then all the wrongs will be put right. At present the believer is not of this world, as his Master was not of it. He has been rejected and cast out. He waits for His rights. We wait for our portion with Him.

3. Then in relation to God we are exhorted to two things.

First, "*Be careful for nothing.*" That does not mean being careless as to anything. We are expected to exercise sufficient, proper, and sensible foresight; but it means we are not to be unduly weighed down with care in the attempt to carry what God would carry for us. There are circumstances beyond our control. The way out is a difficulty we cannot overcome in our own strength. Then leave it with God. He will undertake if we leave all with Him in the sense of His interest and care. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you," is written in another place.

Second, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." "*In everything.*" This covers all the circumstances of our path. It takes in the greatest anxiety as well as the smallest detail. It embraces circumstances over which

we have no control and those into which we have been brought by our own folly and sin. Now God's government must stand. But even here a repentant child may bring his prayer and supplication, and obtain an answer of grace. We are encouraged to make known our requests to God. "Our requests." We are to do it by prayer. Aye, and even if pressure is great and a request much desired, we are exhorted to supplication—something more intense and importunate than prayer.

Further, we are directed to let it all be "with thanksgiving"—thanks before the answer is given. Why? We may not always get our requests granted, but we shall always have an answer of wisdom and grace. The request may be granted, or modified, or altered, or refused. In each case love is equally at work with wisdom to give us an answer that suits us best. We may not think so. God knows best.

And what will be the issue to those who are thus exercised?

1. Rejoicing in the Lord but not in circumstances.
2. Gentle to all men. "The Lord is at hand."
3. Resting in a sense of God's tender care, making known our requests with thanksgiving.

What will be the happy outcome of all this ?

*"The peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*

This peace passes all understanding. The child of God will often wonder how his heart is kept in perfect serenity amid circumstances calculated to harass the worldling into his grave.

"Shall keep your hearts and minds." It has been well translated—" *Shall guard your hearts and thoughts.*" It is as if you were besieged and straitly shut up in some walled city by a powerful and vindictive foe; but the garrison that surrounds the wall is so vigilant and capable that you are as much at rest as if there were no enemy at all. That would surpass all understanding.

Christianity is a triumph from start to finish. Would that we practised it more!

A. J. POLLOCK

## A FRAGMENT.

THE Lord's answers to prayer are infinitely perfect, and eternity will show that often when we were asking for a stone that *looked like bread*, He was giving us *bread* that to our shortsightedness *looked like stone*.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(*2 Peter i. 19—ii. 10*).

You must open your Bible at the passage indicated and follow this article with the Scripture before you, if you would get any real help. Space forbids quotations of any length from the passage so, as you read, refer to the Scripture *and* THINK.

If consequently fresh light begins to break in upon you, do not lightly turn from it, but lifting up your heart in thanksgiving to God, pursue your searching of the Word on the point. It may open up to you a fruitful field of truth and you can resume your reading of the article on another occasion.

THE transfiguration of the Lord Jesus was not only a special and particular confirmation of the reality of His coming kingdom, but it also in a general way was a confirmation of the whole prophetic testimony of the Old Testament. This is what the opening words of verse 19 state, "and we have the prophetic word made surer" (N.Tr.). This is not difficult to understand if we search the Old Testament and observe how all its glowing predictions centre in the Messiah's Kingdom on earth, so that to establish the reality of His glorious coming Kingdom, was to establish the whole prophetic witness of the Old Testament.

These early Jewish Christians were perhaps somewhat inclined to ignore Old Testament prophecy, as though it were superseded by the developments as to the sufferings of Christ, so unexpected by them. The Apostle Peter here assures them of its value and importance for it is as "a light [or, lamp] that shineth in a dark place." The word in the original translated "dark" is one which means "squalid" or "filthy." This world with all its clever inventions and elegant splendour is only a squalid place in God's estimation, as also in the estimation of every Christian who is taught of Him. The only real light shed in the squalor is that which comes from the lamp of prophecy. Men indulge in vain imaginings as to the "millennium" which they will evolve from the present filth. Such imaginings are just a Will-o'-the-wisp. The lamp of prophecy brings us into the light of God's purpose and God's coming work of both judgment and salvation, and it enables us to see the squalor of the world that is, as well as the glory of the world to come.

We are to take heed to the light of the prophetic lamp "until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." "The day" is of course *Christ's day*—the day of His glory—then the lamp will be no longer needed. Before the day dawns however the day star arises, and before it actually arises, it is to arise in our hearts.

The "day" or "morning" star is an allusion to Christ coming for His own, who wait for Him, before He appears publicly to the world as "the Sun of righteousness." As the day star He is distinctively the Christian's hope, and when the day star arises in a believer's heart, that believer is in the joyful expectation of the coming of his heavenly Saviour. We are to take heed then to the word of prophecy until the day of Christ's glory dawns, and until we are led thereby into the full enjoyment of our proper Christian hope, for New Testament prophecy has brought into view that which was never mentioned in the Old Testament. To put the matter into other words, the end of prophecy is twofold:—First, to shed its beams in the darkness until the day of Christ's glory actually arrives. Second, to conduct the believer's heart meanwhile into the full realization and enjoyment of his proper hope.

As a matter of fact many Christians fight shy of prophecy altogether because, they say, it has become a mere battleground of rival schools of interpretation amongst true Christians, and too often a kind of hunting ground to the leaders of false religious systems, wherein they pursue their heretical notions. There is all too much truth in this, but the remedy is not to ignore prophecy but rather to take heed to it well, paying all attention to the first rule for its proper use as given in verse 20.



“No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation” or, more literally, “of its own interpretation.” This does not mean as the Romanists pretend that no private person has any right to concern themselves as to what Scripture means, but only to trustfully accept what the Romish “church,” as represented by Pope or council, declares its meaning to be. It is rather a warning against treating each individual prophetic utterance as though it were by itself, a kind of self-contained saying to be interpreted apart from the mass of prophetic teaching. All prophecy is connected and inter-related and to be understood only in connection with the whole. It was never uttered by the will of man but by inspiration of the Spirit of God. He used different men in different ages, but His one mind pervades it all. Each individual prophetic utterance will only therefore be properly understood and interpreted as it is seen in relation to the whole, of which it forms a part.

If an artist in furniture designed an exceptionally fine wardrobe and entrusted the work in twelve sections to twelve different joiners, anybody who endeavoured to “interpret” any one of the resulted pieces of joinery *by itself* would surely reach some strange conclusions. No reliable or satisfactory interpretation would be found until it was seen as related to the whole design.

Thus it is with every prophecy of the Scripture, and here is found the reason of the many opinions and even heresies which we have to deplore.

Notice how inspiration is spoken of in verse 21. "Holy men of God" spake and wrote "moved by" or "borne along by" the Holy Ghost. They put their pens to paper under His power, hence He is the real Author of what they thus wrote.

Yet everything of God, and therefore good, is counterfeited by Satanic power, consequently chapter ii. begins with a warning. When in old time the Holy Ghost was moving holy men to give us utterances from God the great adversary moved and brought in among the people false prophets. We have many examples of this in the Scripture. In the days of Ahab things had reached such a pass that Elijah could say, "I, even I only remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men" (1 Kings xviii. 22), and even after the destruction of the prophets of Baal there were about four hundred prophets luring Ahab to his death against one prophet, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, who told him the truth; and all these prophets spoke not in the name of Baal but said, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper; for the LORD shall deliver it unto the king's hand" (1 Kings xxii. 12).

Now once again God was giving prophetic testimony by inspired utterances through the apostle and others, and the adversary was preparing to repeat his tactics. Peter therefore warned these early Christians that they must be on their guard against false teachers who would bring in privily "damnable" or "destructive" heresies. Satan is never more dangerous than when he works privily or by stealth; when instead of delivering a frontal attack, boldly denying truth, he creeps in on the flank, making merchandise of the people of God with feigned words, as verse 3 puts it. Indeed the very word translated "privily shall bring in" means literally "shall lead in sideways."

The flank attack invariably succeeds in much larger measure than the frontal attack. Illustrations of this are common. Many years ago, a bold, direct attack on the Deity of Christ was launched, and a Unitarian body was formed. It remains to this day a comparatively insignificant movement. Of more recent years unitarian doctrine has been brought sideways into professedly orthodox denominations and the plague has spread like wildfire.

Be on your guard then against these false teachers. They will have a wholly pleasing exterior and their words will be "feigned" or "well-turned"—cleverly adapted to throw the simple believer off his guard. They will

tell you how they believe in "the divinity of Christ"—but then of course they hold every man to be more or less divine. They accept the truth of "the atonement"—as long as you permit them to print it, "at-one-ment." They can juggle marvellously with the word "eternal" and show you that it merely means "age-long" when it stands in connection with punishment. And so on.

They go even to the length of "denying the Lord that bought them." He *bought* them for by His death He bought the whole of the world for the sake of the treasure hid therein (see, Matt. xiii. 44). It does not say that He *redeemed* them, for redemption applies only to the true believer. Revealing thus their true character they bring upon themselves swift destruction—which means, not that destruction will reach them in a very short time, but that when it comes it will fall upon them swiftly for their guilt admits of no question, and no lengthy judgment process will be necessary to establish it. Their judgment will not slumber, Yet alas! many will follow them, as we see; and the effect of their heresies is not merely the ruin of themselves and of their dupes but the bringing of the way of God into disrepute so that it is blasphemed. This is ever Satan's way. In his blind hatred he may desire to ruin souls, but he even more ardently desires to discredit God and His truth.

God, however, is more than equal to dealing with the situation thus created. He is perfectly able to disentangle all the confusion, as verses 4 to 10 tell us. Read those seven verses, and notice that not one full stop comes until the last word of verse 10 is completed. They are one tremendous sentence. "If God spared not the angels . . . and spared not the old world . . . and . . . condemned with an overthrow [the cities] . . . and delivered just Lot . . . the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly . . . and to reserve the unjust . . . to be punished." A most consoling fact this for the believer, however fearful it may be for the ungodly.

The "god" created mentally by "modern theology" who being too weak or too indifferent, spares everybody and everything, that thereby he may show himself to be "love," is no more the God of the New Testament than he is of the Old. The God of the New Testament is the God of the Old as this Scripture emphasizes. When of old the angels sinned He did not spare them, but holds them in chains reserved for judgment. When the antediluvian world had filled up the cup of its iniquity God did not spare them though He saved a little remnant of eight souls in the ark. Later He overthrew Sodom and Gomorrha yet He delivered righteous Lot. So it shall be again. He will deliver the godly and reserve the unjust to judgment, and this specially when

they are marked by licentiousness and the despising of authority.

However much destructive heresies are brought in, and consequently people are deceived and the way of truth blasphemed, the Lord will know how to disentangle His people and judge the ungodly. We usually find it impossible even to discern, and much less can we disentangle. Who of us, reading only the story of Lot as unfolded in Genesis could discern with any certainty what was his true state before God? He shared Abraham's path for a while, but did he at all share in Abraham's faith? His subsequent history did not look like it, so who of us could tell? Our Scripture however, sets all questions at rest. He is pronounced to have been a righteous man, though sadly enmeshed by the world and living a life of continual vexation in consequence. God knew him and delivered him by angelic hands.

What a voice this has for us. How pitiful for us if we get so entangled that, though true believers, it would not be possible for our fellows to decide that we were such except God Himself made a pronouncement on the point. It is intended on the contrary that we stand out from the world clear and distinct as epistles of Christ, "known and read of all men" (2 Cor. iii. 2, 3). This

will be profitable for us in the day that is coming. It will deliver us too at the present time from much of that vexation of soul, that mental torment, that Lot suffered. The worldly believer is well nigh the most miserable of all men.

F. B. HOLE.

## ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT

BURMA.—Please explain—(1) Colossians i. 15, "the Firstborn of every creature." (2) Hebrews i. 9, "God Thy God," also who are "thy fellows?"

**I**T will help you to understand the first expression to which you refer if you notice the way in which the word "firstborn" is used in the Scriptures. It may of course be used in the strict literal sense of the eldest child of the family, but frequently it is used in a figurative sense, denoting one who holds the rights of the firstborn's place, one who is heir. If you refer to Deuteronomy xxi. 16 you will find in that one verse the word used both figuratively and literally.

A Scripture which also is very much to the point is Psalm lxxxix. 27, where God is represented as saying of David "I will make him My firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." David then was raised up of God and earthly sovereignty deputed to him as God's firstborn

or heir. In this he was a type of Christ. When we come to the New Testament we find however that the position is vastly expanded. The heirship of the Lord Jesus not only extends over the kings of the earth but to the remotest bounds of creation. He is the Firstborn of all creation. Every right connected with all created things is vested in Him. And why? Because, "By Him were all things created," as the next verse goes on to say. He holds the Creator's rights in His own creation. How strong a proof is this of the absolute deity of the Lord Jesus.

Your second question is as to a Scripture which also most strongly asserts His deity and yet uses terms which most plainly declare the reality of His manhood. "Unto the Son He saith, Thy throne O GOD . . ." Yet before the quotation from Psalm xlv. is finished we read the words to which you have called attention. *He is God yet God is His God.* How can this be explained? Only by the recognition of His true and complete manhood. Having become Man, He is so really Man that God is His God, and also He has others associated with Himself as His fellows or companions. To find out who these companions are we have to read on into chapter ii. and there we find Him acknowledging as His brethren the "many sons" whom He is leading to glory. They are "all of one" with Himself. This would have been impossible indeed had He remained as He was before His incarnation. Only by becoming Man and accomplishing redemption was it possible for us, redeemed men, to be so wonderfully associated with Him.



## SPIRITUAL RICHES.

*Romans viii.*

**W**E have now reached what is undoubtedly the grand climax of this remarkable portion of God's holy Word. Many of our readers may not have read this chapter, with those that precede it, eight times *consecutively*; but we feel sure that a few have perused it much more frequently and that with ever increasing delight.

Suppose however that on this occasion we approach our study as if we had never looked at this Epistle till we decided to read, re-read, and read again this section, and that we were only now beginning to grasp its structure, significance and sublimity.

If this is agreeable to our fellow students, we will rapidly travel over the ground that we have already covered and thus seek to advance a little further toward the unscalable heights of chapter eight.

We commenced then with the gospel. We learned that its source was God and its subject the Son of God. We were prepared therefore to admit at once the claim made for it, viz:—that “it is the power of God

unto salvation to everyone that believeth." As we had portrayed to us the sort of people with whom the gospel has to deal, whether religious or profligate, on the top-rung of of the social ladder or at the foot, all alike guilty sinners, irretrievably lost; as we saw also the evil traced to its origin, it became perfectly obvious that nothing but the mighty power of God as displayed in the gospel could be of any avail.

We have been taught how the sin-question has been settled. God's righteousness has been maintained yet His grace flows forth. Such is the efficacy of Christ's finished work, so great His triumph over death, that the sinner who believes is (*a*) justified, (*b*) has peace with God, (*c*) stands in the favour of God, (*d*) rejoices in hope of the glory of God, (*e*) is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, who (*f*) sheds abroad in his heart the love of God, (*g*) is reconciled to God, and (*h*) joys in God.

Having reached such a pinnacle in verse eleven of chapter five we might be disposed to write *finis* to the story if we did not discover that there were yet two and a half chapters to be read and much more to be told therein. We have found that the sin-problem has been solved, the believer is no longer viewed as in Adam but in Christ, free from condemnation, and set up in this world by divine power to walk "not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

So amazing is all this that we are prepared for still more wonderful disclosures of the great plan of the blessed God. Not satisfied with our being delivered from our sins, ourselves, and condemnation, and brought into the wonderful blessing described in chapter five, verses one to eleven, He has purposed that we should be introduced into the relationship of children, the position of sons, the dignity of "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus," and that ultimately we should be "conformed to the image of His Son." All is before Him now just as it was when the great scheme was devised in the council-chamber of eternity, so that He takes account of us at the present time as foreknown—predestinated—called—justified—glorified.

Here indeed we have reached the *ne plus ultra* of divine counsel. Can we recognize in those described in chapters two and three the persons who will be conformed to the image of God's Son—His brethren, amongst whom He will be firstborn? Can we measure the distance from the abysmal depths of the former to the inconceivable heights of the latter? Can we overestimate the grandeur of the gospel that has revealed all this to us? Can we sufficiently magnify the grace that has led us into the knowledge, the appropriation and the enjoyment of it?

Shall we consider this passage a little more in detail?

(i) We are "sons of God" (v. 14, 19). That speaks of position, dignity, glory, and we are introduced into it by adoption' (v. 15)

(ii) We are "the children of God" (v. 16). From John's writings we find that this is the result of new birth. The very mention of children suggests relationship, dependence, simplicity, joy.

(iii) We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus" (v. 17). The riches of Heaven, yea the wealth of God is ours. Do we realize this? Alas! How many professing Christians are living in spiritual beggary. They want a better position, more money, a share of the world's fare such as its novels and its pictures. They go to concerts or "listen in" to them in the seclusion of their homes, and yet, if they are believers, they are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus."

(iv) We have got the Holy Spirit to lead us into the still unexplored realm of blessing and to be to us individually all that we need while passing through this world. He "helpeth our infirmities;" He translates our unuttered petitions; He interprets our groans (v. 26). He works in unison with God, for He knows our desire and God's will, while God knows our need and the Holy Spirit's mind. In this way our prayers are divinely censored, and those that are according to God are divinely endorsed

(v. 27). Apprehending this we can say "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose" (v. 28). Nor can we doubt it when we discover that God is working in us and for us here and now just that which He designed in past eternal ages, when He foreknew us and predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son (v. 29).

(v.) The secret of all is that God is for us (v. 31). He has proved that by giving "His own Son;" He is daily demonstrating it by freely giving us all things (v. 32). Who can accuse us when God has justified us? (v. 33). Who dare condemn us when Christ has died, risen, and now at the right hand of God makes intercession for us? (v. 34). How richly provided for are we! The Holy Spirit down here and Christ enthroned up there alike are making intercession for us (vv. 27, 34). Just at this point, dear fellow-believer, as you read once again that last sentence, say: "*FOR ME!*"

(vi.) Christ and love are practically synonymous for they are never divided. Nothing can separate us from Him, therefore nothing can separate us from His love (v. 35). Tribulation we shall have, persecution we may expect, privation may be our portion, to die for Him our privilege, but when the enemy has done his worst, Christ remains.

His love abides, and from that *NOTHING* can separate us.

Nor is this the whole story. (vii.) Across these eight chapters we may write "the love of God." We enter what we have called the council chamber of eternity (vv. 29, 30), the whole atmosphere is fragrant with love, the source of the gospel is love for "God is love," the Son of God has come to us with the message of love, He has died to express it, He lives to lead us into the present knowledge and enjoyment of it, and here we are assured (vv. 38, 39), that no power in heaven, nor on earth, nor in hell, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Thank God for the very little we know of it now. We trust we know a little more than we did when we commenced our study. We look on to the coming day of glory when in the Father's house, "conformed to the image of His Son," we shall revel in the shoreless, fathomless ocean of "the love of God" and shall praise His glorious Name for ever and ever.

We had intended that this should be our concluding paper, but if we might claim the kind indulgence of the Editor and readers just a little farther we should like in next month's issue (*D.V.*), to consider the practical application of the precious portion that has been under review.

May we find our delight in discovering, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, these priceless treasures, may we make them our very own, and with worshipping hearts may we extol the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

W. BRAMWELL-DICK.

### THREE PARALLEL LINES,

**T**HERE are *three* of them. They are as follows:—

1st. *The line of fact*—God's facts. In the cross of Christ certain things have become accomplished facts before God.

2nd. *The line of experience*. Every Christian has an experience, good, bad, or indifferent. It is a secret thing, hid from the eyes of his fellows, but very real to the individual himself.

3rd. *The line of behaviour*. This is more or less public—scanned by the eyes of all.

In an ideal Christian life these three lines are exactly parallel. In every life the third runs approximately parallel to the second, that is, our behaviour is largely controlled by our experience. We write in our public behaviour the secret history of our experience within.

It may be that every Christian who reads these lines is prepared to confess that our life and witness for Christ is not what it should be. We want it more in accordance with God's facts—the Cross and its results—more controlled by the Spirit, more fragrant of Christ. How shall this be produced ?

It will never be produced by self-occupation, though many Christians think so, and spend weary months and years in the vain effort to work themselves into a more satisfactory state. You will not succeed in drawing a line parallel to another by concentrating all your attention upon the line you propose to draw. No! Fix your eye upon the line which serves as guide, adjust your rule in accordance with that, and the thing is done. To make progress we must maintain the divine order. Our behaviour is regulated by our experience, and our experience should be regulated by the knowledge of divinely accomplished facts.

The sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters of the epistle to the Romans are largely occupied with both experience and behaviour, and yet the line of fact runs through each of them like a golden thread.

Permit us now to inquire after your spiritual health. How are you getting on ? and do you find the joy in your Christianity that you were led to expect when you first



trusted the Lord ? Perhaps not. It may be, like many others, you have defeat and not victory, gloom and not gladness. But you may take comfort from the fact that in Romans vii. an individual testifies concerning himself, and you could hardly sink lower than he. His experience was wretchedness itself; he sums it up thus: " I am carnal, sold under sin " (v. 14). His behaviour was, as it is to be expected, no better: " The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do " (v. 19).

What helped this wretched man ? Why, just that which will help you—the knowledge of divinely accomplished facts. In each of these chapters there is one verse which states a fact. These facts are in no way dependent upon us. Be our experiences what they may, their truth stands unchanged. They are as follows:—

" Our old man is crucified with Him " (vi. 6).

" Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ " (vii. 4).

" God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh " (viii. 3).

In one thing these verses coincide, viz. they all refer to what God accomplished for Himself at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then and there our old man was

crucified; we were made dead to the law, and sin in the flesh was condemned.

*Make your reckoning with these facts.* If our old man—the apostle personifies all that we were as children of Adam—was crucified with Christ, then God has done with it, and there is no reason why you should mope over its delinquencies any longer. If we have been made dead to the law, then you need not lash yourself with legal scorpions every time you fail, but rather judge yourself in the light of God's grace. If sin in the flesh has been condemned, then it is evident that God has in the Cross gone down to the root of things, and executed His judgment upon sin, the root of the mischief; so why not now spend your moments considering the great love which His death expressed, rather than the sin which His death condemned?

Do not run away with the idea that the mere knowledge of these facts, valuable as that is, will of itself do anything. No; unless your knowledge of them leads to this—that you give up all hope of more satisfactory experience or behaviour in yourself, and fix your eye upon Christ by the Spirit's power, it will avail you nothing. As you are prepared to allow the blessed Spirit of God to fill your heart with the excellence and glory of Christ, the scene will change, and both experience and behaviour will be elevated to an altogether different level.

An electric tram aptly illustrates this. It runs by the aid of three parallel lines, two beneath and one charged with electricity above. Everything depends upon its being, by means of its long arm, kept in contact with the live wire above. You see one upon a dark night. How swiftly it runs! How brightly it shines! Lo! it vanishes. What has happened? The contact is broken, and when contact is broken its motive power is gone and its lights go out. So long, and only so long, as the blessed Spirit of God keeps us in contact with the line of divine facts, shall we run our heavenly race and brightly shine for Christ.

In conclusion, notice that all the three lines appear in these chapters in Romans. If through grace we are kept in touch with God's facts, we shall taste the blessedness of the experience thus described:—

“The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (viii. 2).

We shall breathe the air of the liberty of an enjoyed Christ, and as for our behaviour, we shall act in keeping with this injunction:—

“Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (vi. 13).

F. B. HOLE.

## "I HAVE OVERCOME,"

**T**HOSE who believe on the Son of God have something to overcome. Eternal life is theirs through faith in Him and they can never perish, but there is that which is antagonistic, and it is dangerous to be indifferent in regard to the matter, lest we be overcome instead of being overcomers. In various forms, the Holy Spirit shows us in Scripture, it is the world which has to be overcome.

We have not to look far to see many being overcome by the world, but we may seek rather to learn of the Son how we may be preserved, and 'in soul-rest with rejoicing, overcome with triumph, notwithstanding the subtle snares of the world-system. The Lord Jesus said, "Be of good cheer! I have overcome the world!"

We must be careful not to mistake what is to be overcome, namely, the world in its moral or immoral character and nature. There is (1) the world as a place, (2) the people in it, (3) the moral world of which we have spoken. As regards the first it is said, "The world was made by Him," and "I came into the world." The

world in this sense is the earth which is " the Lord's and the fulness thereof," which, when He returns (after taking the assembly up from earth to heaven to be with Himself) He will fill with glory as the waters cover the sea. The second is the people in the world rather than the place, and, it is said, God gave His Son in view of their eternal blessedness,—“ God so loved the world.” God sent His Son “ not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” Nevertheless, the world (i.e. the people) “ knew Him not.”

It is not therefore (1) the place, or (2) the people, but rather (3) the moral system which is to be overcome. This is important since well-known religious leaders teach that the world, which the Lord warns us of, is only that portion of it where the faith is not owned. The inspired writings however emphasize the very opposite; and it is said especially to the strong, who have overcome the wicked one, “ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever ” (1 John ii. 15-17). The third therefore is a permeating system of

'lust' and 'pride,' which spreads everywhere in the race of fallen Adam, showing the nature and character of sin in its diverse subtleties. Thank God, it has been overcome, and it may still be overcome.

### THE WORLD IN JUDAISM.

Fulfilling the long-foretold coming of the Messiah to suffer, the Lord Jesus appeared primarily to Israel: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Judaism rejected and crucified Him. Its character and nature were thus exposed. He was "meek and lowly;" lust and pride had captured the Jews' religion. To its then leaders the Son of God said, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world" (John 8, 23). The world had overcome the place and people where profession of the true God was made. Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, ye would love Me. . . Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." What a condition for those to be in who said, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man!" This shows how the world deceives its votaries.

The Lord Jesus perceived its snares, and, amidst the Judaism of that day, He found pleasure in always doing what pleased the

Father. He said, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John xvi. 28). The Son of God found in that fallen dignitary, Satan, His great antagonist; the Father and the Father's love found the world in opposition; and the Holy Spirit the flesh. We are told that Satan,—the prince or "*ruler* of this world"—is judged (11); nevertheless, as "the *god* of this world" (2 Cor. iv. 4) he blinds the thoughts of the unbelieving that "the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth for them." In both a governmental and religious way therefore his activities have the world in view. The Son of God however has brought about his just overthrow, and has also overcome the world in every form. He has kept His Father's commandments and abode in His love through every trial, yet the world hated Him. They crucified the Lord of Glory. That exposed the awful condition of Judaism. There is however for faith another side to the Saviour's death,—to His going away from the world to the Father,—even as He said, "Be of good cheer! I have overcome the world!"

When Jesus said, "I leave the world and go to the Father" (John xvi. 28), the disciples,—to whom He had spoken of the Father's love,—and in whom desires had been awakened as to the Father,—replied,

"Now we are sure that Thou knowest all things." That was true, and He forewarned them of the trials which awaited them, adding, "These things I have spoken unto you, that IN ME *ye might have peace.*" Therefore they were not to be despondent, but to rejoice. In John xvii, the words are recorded by the Holy Spirit, which they were allowed to hear Him speak to the Father, that they might have His own joy fulfilled in themselves. Twice they heard Him say, "*They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*" (14-16); and in one form or another the world is mentioned in the Lord's prayer not less than eighteen times!

The Lord Jesus had called His loved disciples out of Judaism, and out of the world which characterized it, for He said to the Father, "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me *out of the world*" (6); but dark and dense indeed was its ignorance of God, even if the disciples' divinely imparted knowledge was superlatively blessed. This is shown in verses 25 and 26 (N.Tr), "RIGHTEOUS FATHER,—and the world has not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have made known to them Thy Name, and will make it known; that the love with which Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them." Herein lies the secret, not simply of overcoming the world, but



of being preserved in fulness of joy and blessing apart from its lust and pride, whether in Judaism or elsewhere.

# THE WORLD IN CHRISTENDOM.

Now if our Lord Jesus Christ came to Israel, He likewise came from the Father in view of all nations. The Roman empire came immediately into *responsible* contact with the Son of God (for it held imperial rights even over the nation of Israel) as we see in the governor Pilate. Jesus "was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." He was "the Lord of glory" whom none of the princes of this age knew; and, having been handed over by the Jewish leaders, to the Gentile governor, they united in crucifying Him, though Pilate emphasized the guilt of this action by declaring that Jesus was faultless. After the actual resurrection of our Lord Jesus, and after His bodily ascension to the Father's throne, the Spirit was sent in His Name to proclaim forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation for all who believe,—thus calling them out to be the assembly. This was divinely initiated by various acts of power from God which introduced "God's dispensation which is in faith" (1 Tim. i. 4, N.Tr).

We read often of "the faith" in the New Testament. It was delivered once and for all by God to the saints, with unimpeachable

witness, needing neither repetition nor continuation. The inspired writings abundantly show this. We have spoken above of "CHRISTENDOM," not indeed as rightly representing "*the faith*," which is true and real, but as that great sphere which is marked by the outward profession of our Lord Jesus Christ, and yet is permeated by the world-system that has to be overcome. Here again the words of the Son of God come for our encouragement,—“Be of good cheer! I have overcome the world!”

We have seen the way He victoriously overcame in the midst of defiled Judaism, and though we are called to overcome in the midst of corrupt Christendom, it is the same moral or immoral world of lust and pride that has been largely dominant in both. *The church*, or, more correctly, *the assembly*, is apart from the world, but both the teaching of Scripture and actual fact show the rise and spread of worldly influences in the assemblies as early as the apostolic days. Indeed, in the symbolic and prophetic history of the assemblies, recorded for us in Revelation ii. and iii., we see the departure from first love at *Ephesus*, the first of the seven, ending at *Laodicea*, which has become so blind, shameless, self-satisfied, in a Christless profession of worldly religion, that the Faithful and True Witness stands outside the door knocking, before He spues it out of His mouth (iii. 16). When this state of things prevails,—even as it does

to-day,—a Voice is heard saying, " He that overcomes, to him will I give to sit with Me in My throne; as I also overcame, and have sat down with My Father in His throne " (21). The One who speaks here in regard to Christendom is the same who said in the midst of Judaism, " Be of good cheer! I have overcome the world! "

We see in the epistle to the Galatians that it was the Judaistic form of worldly-religion which endangered the Spirit's work of grace among them. They were therefore reminded in chapter i. 4, that our Lord Jesus Christ " gave Himself for our sins, so that He should deliver us out of the present evil world according to the will of our God and Father." Again the apostle says to them, " God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world " (vi. 14). In 2 Timothy iii. we are told on the other hand of heathen characteristics prospering in Christendom, similar to those described at the end of Romans i. Because of this, times of peculiar difficulty obtain. This is to be '*known*' by us. Self-love and money-love head the list of these ungodly traits, and while love for what is good disappears, love of pleasures instead of love for God becomes rife. In both lists the beautiful *natural affections* (which are nourished and developed where God's love is known) not only become withered, but are altogether lost (Rom. i.

31; 2 Tim. iii. 3). Moreover, disobedience to parents, boasting and slander also mark both; yet, awful to contemplate, when "*lovers of pleasures*" complete Christendom's list, rather than Heathendom's, we are told, they will have "*a form of piety*," from whom those who remain loyal to their rejected Lord are to "turn away."

Overcomers are to "*know*" what is to be overcome. Being forewarned they are also forearmed! Let this stimulate faith in Him who foretold us all before it came to pass, because His fore-knowledge was perfect. Let this cheer us in the One who told us to be of good courage, for He Himself has overcome. HE educates His own to-day to be overcomers. He also shows us where true rest is found, and fullness of joy also, for the overcoming is a prelude to the in-filling, the conflict of faith to rest divine, the victory over opposition to rejoicing in the Son of God, to delight in the riches of the Father's love.

"Brought to rest within the circle,  
Where love's treasures are displayed.  
There we drink the living waters,  
Taste the joys that never fade."

Overcoming, is as we have seen, a necessity, because of the antagonism which at all times exists against what is of faith. Furthermore, overcoming is not in itself the final object in view, but rather something beyond: the victory in a severe battle is followed by honour and rejoicing, the

labours of the toiler yield pleasant fruits afterwards, and the crossings of difficult mountains and raging forrents bring the traveller home to rest and joy. "Who is He that gets the victory over the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John v. 5, N.Tr.).

H. J. VINE.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(2 *Peter* ii. 11—iii. 2).

You must open your Bible at the passage indicated and follow this article with the Scripture before you, if you would get any real help. Space forbids quotations of any length from the passage so, as you read, refer to the Scripture and THINK.

If consequently fresh light begins to break in upon you, do not lightly turn from it, but lifting up your heart in thanksgiving to God, pursue your searching of the Word on the point. It may open up to you a fruitful field of truth and you can resume your reading of the article on another occasion.

THE two evils mentioned in verse 10 seems always to accompany "damnable heresies" as their natural result. The flesh finds an attraction in the heresies, because it loves to gratify itself and to do its own will and to despise and speak against all that would hold it in check. The truth puts the sentence of condemnation on the flesh; the heresy on the contrary fosters it.

These twin evils—*self-gratification* and that of the lowest character, and *insubordination* under the plea of obtaining a larger liberty—are very prominent in the latter part of this second chapter. The contrast between verses 11 and 12 is very striking. These false teachers are but men. Angels who are greater than man in their power and might would never impeach those in dignity or authority, however much they might deserve censure, in the reckless way these men do. But as a matter of fact these teachers, who speak of dignities in a way that would suggest that they themselves were greater than the angels, are really just like—not angels—but “natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed.” The poor animal *without reason*—for that is what the word “brute” means—may heedlessly destroy what it is not capable of understanding, like the proverbial bull in a china shop. These men are like that; they violently attack and destroy, as far as words can do it, what they do not understand.

Many teachers there are of “modernist” persuasion who exactly exemplify this. How trenchantly they attack the old foundations of the faith. What is the authority of a Paul, a Peter, a John or even indeed of Jesus Himself before their slashing words and pens? As a matter of fact however the simplest person, who being born again has become a child of God, is conscious that the

have not the least comprehension of that which they attack. The most costly china is to a bull just what the truth of the Scriptures is to them.

Are some of us, who are old-fashioned believers in Christ, to tremble and be intimidated by these assaults? There is really no need for it. It may look as if nothing can stand before them in their mad career, but it is only so because God is very patient and has plenty of time in which to settle accounts. We remember a nursery picture and rhyme book which amused us in childhood's days. There was the story of the bad dog who ran amuck and bit a large slice out of a man's leg. The last words of the rhyme however were,—

The man recovered from the bite  
The dog it was who died!

We are irresistibly reminded of this by the closing words of verse 12. The faith of God survives in unbroken health; the false teachers "perish in their own corruption," and receive the due reward of their unrighteousness.

How terrible is the indictment laid against them in verses 13 and 14! The adultery laid to their door may not be *literal* in all cases, but in its *spiritual* significance it certainly applies to all false teachers, for they all either teach or sanction *unholy alliance with the world*. Hence not only do they sport themselves in their own

deceits—the foolish ideas engendered in their own minds—but they beguile unstable and unestablished souls. They destroy themselves, but they also bring themselves under the curse of destroying others.

In verse 15 their secret motives are unmasked. They have followed the way of Balaam. There is then nothing original about their performances. They follow in a well beaten track first trodden by Balaam of infamous memory, who sold his prophetic gifts for money. He was not the first person to prophesy for hire, for this has always been a custom in idolatrous religions, but he appears to have been the first to offer to prophesy *in the name of the Lord* for hire. With Balaam the supreme question was "Will it pay?" If a paying proposition he would prophesy to order—as far as he could. This was terrible madness involving terrible moral degradation. In verse 12, notice, the false prophets are *on a level* with the "natural brute beasts"; in verse 15 Balaam is *below* them. A dumb ass was able to rebuke him.

What then is the secret motive behind the many and various onslaughts of the modern false teachers? It is the same old story. The real drive behind them is in this—IT PAYS.

Generally it pays *financially*. When years ago the late "Pastor" Russell conducted a great campaign in London, hiring the most



expensive halls and advertising on lavish scale, he was reported by a daily paper to have said, that he really did not know what to do with the money that poured in upon him.

It always pays if *fame and notoriety* is the desired thing. The sensational newspaper always patronizes the man retailing a false novelty. Thorough-going modernism is alas! a high road to preferment in ecclesiastical circles.

And when preferred and in high office, what have they to give? Just, *nothing*. They are "wells without water" and so no spiritual thirst can ever be slaked by them. They are as "clouds carried by a tempest" which deposit little or nothing to refresh the weary earth.

Do they accomplish anything? Yes, alas! they do. They speak "great swelling [or, high-flown] words of vanity" to the ensnaring of many souls. Oh! with what deadly accuracy are the inspired words of Scripture aimed. Certain secular papers have recently been making merry over the amusing medley of scientific jargon used at the recent meetings of the British Association. "Great high-flown words" were in plenty of evidence; and ("words of vanity" they were also, wherever they touched upon "the things of God" known by no man "but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. ii. 11). By these vain words they capture some "who

have just fled those who walk in error " (N.Tr.), promising them liberty.

*Liberty!* That word has a very familiar sound. Has not someone said to you in effect.—“Why be enslaved by blind adherence to a Bible which you imagine to be inspired? Why not adopt the enlightened modern view? Treat it as an ordinary book, classical and interesting of course, but of no supernatural authority. Thus you will emancipate your mind from its trammels and begin to move with full *liberty* in the vast fields of modern speculation.” Oh, how enticing the proposition! How fatally it works amongst well-meaning folk of unsettled minds, just fled from those walking in error and from the gross pollutions of the world, yet though thus reformed not born again. It opens up before them a way, quite high-class and scientific, right back into the old corruption from which they had just emerged.

The poor victims of these false teachers, who are thus freshly and finally entangled in the world's pollution so that their latter end is worse than their beginning, are not truly converted souls, but merely people who through a certain knowledge gained of the Lord are outwardly reformed in their ways. They are consequently likened to the dog and the sow, both unclean animals. Such is dog nature that it has the unpleasant habit of returning to its own vomit. Such

is sow nature that however well washed it loves the mire and plunges into it at the first opportunity. The person who may be intellectually enlightened and consequently reformed in outward actions, yet without that fundamental change of nature produced by the new birth, falls an easy victim. The false teacher promises him liberty and by his 'great high-sounding words of vanity cuts the slight mental leash that held him in restraint, and there he is back again in the old ways of sin, whether vomit—uncleanness generated from within, or mire,—uncleanness from without.

They had a "knowledge of the Lord and Saviour," they knew "the way of righteousness," they "escaped from them who live in error," yet back they went to their own eternal loss. Sad, sad for them, but what pen can portray the judgment that will overtake the false teachers who have encompassed their ruin? In due season it will not slumber, as verse 3 states.

Chapter ii. then, is a very dark one. It introduces by way of parenthesis a very necessary warning. With the third chapter the apostle Peter returns to his main theme, the immense importance of *true* prophecy. The true believer, being born again, has a *pure* mind. Yet though pure it needs to be stirred up to constant mindfulness of what God has said whether by the holy prophets of Old Testament days or by the apostles and

prophets of the Lord Jesus in New Testament Scripture. The chapter plainly shows us what is the effect of bringing prophetic truth to bear upon the pure mind of the believer; he is thereby separated in heart and life from the world that must come not only spiritually but also materially under judgment and so disappear (see, verses 10-14).

This, be it noted, is exactly the opposite of what is found in chapter ii. There it is the iniquitous teaching of the false prophet with the inevitable effect of *entangling* its votaries in the world and its corruptions. Here it is the light of truth given through the prophet raised up of God, which has the effect of *separating* those who receive it from the world and its corruptions.

This distinction stands true everywhere and always. So much so, indeed, that we may be able to judge of the truth and soundness of any teaching set before us by asking ourselves this simple question,—if I receive this teaching as truth will it have the effect in my mind of separating me from the world or of confirming me in it? There are other tests, of course, which we must not ignore, but this one alone is quite conclusive.

F. B. HOLE.

## THE PRACTICAL OUTCOME OF THE GOSPEL.

(Romans vi. 13).

**I**N an earlier paper we sought to emphasize four words in this verse and indicated that we might revert to them before bringing our study to a conclusion. The words are

“YIELD YOURSELVES UNTO GOD!”

and as we read them once more they cannot but arrest our attention.

Whether we consider them in relation to that which has gone before or that which follows after in the Epistle we must be greatly impressed by their significance. Romans xii. 1 might be said to be twin-sister to this verse, for there, after the complete unfolding of the precious teaching addressed to this Assembly, we have the appealing word. “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.” As this however is outside the scope of that which has come before us we shall confine ourselves to our text, taking it as the centre of

the whole. Before turning our attention to it, shall we rapidly go over the ground that we have already covered?

We have seen that in chapter one we have a summary of the Gospel:—its source, its subject, and its supremacy. In the latter part of that chapter and down to the close of chapter three we have noted the sort of material upon which the gospel works and the mighty transformation that it effects. We have also made the astonishing discovery that the just God has found a righteous means by which He can justify ungodly sinners. Chapter four has shown us that we are justified by faith, whilst chapter five sets forth the marvellous blessing that follows, commencing with peace with God in verse one, and mounting up to the great height of joy in God in verse eleven.

From this point down to the close of chapter eight we surveyed a wide range. Deliverance from the headship of Adam, the mastery of sin, the dominion of the law, from verse twelve of chapter five to the close of chapter seven, and reaching the Deliverer at the beginning of chapter eight. Then we were introduced to the new Power, a divine Person, the Holy Spirit of God, who gives us to know not only that *from* which we have been delivered, but that *for* which this deliverance has been effected. We have got sonship, we are children of God, heirs

of God and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. We were in the purpose, plan and mind of God, aye! and in His heart, in the past ages of eternity, that in the coming ages we should be conformed to the image of His Son. From the lowest point of degradation in chapter one to this pinnacle in chapter eight there is a distance that could only be covered by divine love as manifested in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then our hearts rejoiced to know that from that love no power could ever separate us. We again contemplate all this with utter amazement, and we can only relieve our overflowing hearts in worship to Him who is the Spring and Source of it all,

"Worship, honour, praise and glory,  
Would we render unto Thee;  
Heights unsearched and depths unfathomed  
In Thy wondrous love we see."

In the light of all this we proceed now to inquire the significance of the words in chapter six. In the first place we wish to look at the setting of our text. We have already remarked that in this chapter we are viewed as having died with Christ (v. 8), and that our baptism is the witness to that fact. Now the words for us are:—

"WALK"—"RECKON"—"YIELD."

Obviously we do not, we could not, "walk" and "yield" in the energy of that which is

dead and buried, but as we "reckon" ourselves to be "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," we are called in the power of a new life, ("Newness of life." v. 4), to "walk" and to "yield." We call special attention to this because we feel there is such danger on the part of some, as the result of a misconception of this important truth, to miss the mark and to reap a harvest of disappointment and sorrow.

To speak of seeking power over sin, surrendering all that we have, etc., may sound very attractive but we fear it frequently leads to spiritual disaster. A dead man cannot have any power over sin nor can sin have any power over a dead man, hence the scriptural exhortation is:—"RECKON ye yourselves also to be dead indeed unto sin." Similarly a dead man has nothing to surrender, but as those who have died with Christ, who have been "buried with Him by baptism into death," and who are left here that we should "WALK in Newness of life," we now "YIELD" ourselves "unto God." Our bodies are not changed, they will be later, (See Philippians iii. 20, 21), but in those bodies in which we once disgraced ourselves and dishonoured God, it is ours to live now as "being made free from sin, and become servants to God, having our fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life" (v. 22).



Let us urge it once more, these Christians in Rome were intreated:—"YIELD yourselves unto God, *as those that are alive from the dead.*" This admits of no smug complacency on the one hand nor grievous disappointment on the other. This will be the practical outcome and the only possible result of a right apprehension of the truth.

Now let us see the importance of this, to exaggerate it would be impossible. We yield ourselves unto God, every member of our body is at His disposal. Think of it! We are here in this world "as those that are alive from the dead," (v. 13), "Alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 11) that "we should WALK in newness of life" (v. 4). This does not mean that we will move about in some peculiar fashion, imagine that a halo surrounds our heads, talk in unnatural tones or anything of that sort. We will discharge our duty, whether in kitchen, drawing-room, school or college, office or workshop in a proper way, and we will do these things as those who are "alive unto God," no matter how humble or exalted our position, how menial or how distinguished our work, how obscure or how prominent our service we will have only one thing before us and that to please God.

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Our study of these chapters will have been in vain if it does not produce this result. A knowledge of the precious doc-

trine of Holy Scripture is indispensable for every true believer, but flowing from that there must be the "Manner of Life," (2 Timothy iii. 10), and our apprehension of doctrine is no greater than that which is expressed in our walk and ways. We trust we have derived profit from the divine presentation of the truth as we have perused this sacred portion. Now there comes the call:—

*"YIELD YOURSELVES UNTO GOD."*

What a difference it would make if this were the case with every true believer in the world to-day. What a difference it might make, dear fellow Christian, if in our home, our business, the local circle where we enjoy fellowship and carry on our activities in His service, this were true of us.

Shall we once more read and ponder over Romans i.-viii., turn back to chapter six, verse thirteen, drop on our knees, ask God by His Holy Spirit to burn these four words into our souls, then go forth "as those that are alive from the dead," to "walk in newness of life," and as alive unto Him, until that day when this privilege and honour will, in the same way, be no longer ours but when we shall be "conformed to the image of His Son."

## THE OVERCOMER'S RICHES, REWARD AND REST.

**E**ARNEST religionists, in their endeavours to flee from the flagrant corruptions of the world, have often fallen into worse forms of lust and pride by entering monasteries and nunneries. The true believer in the Son of God, on the other hand, is to be "in the world" and yet "not of the world." The place of the children of God, as regards the world, is the same as Christ's "the world knoweth *us* not because it knew *Him* not." They are known in the matters of everyday life, but in their true nature and relationship with the Father the world is incapable of rightly knowing them. It is because of this nature and the faith which belongs to their new relationship that overcoming the world marks them. "For all that has been begotten of God gets the victory over the world; and this is the victory which has gotten the victory over the world, our faith" (1 John v. 4: N.Tr.). This is the one place where the Spirit uses the word "*faith*" by John. It is "*our*" faith, and it is centred in the Son of God.

While the world remains in ignorance of the children of God in their new relationship, it has its religious leaders and teachers to-day just as distinctly as it had in Judaism. Of them we are told in 1 John iv. 5, "They are of the world, for this reason they speak

as of the world, and the world hears them;" and in v. 19 an arresting contrast is given, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the wicked one;" but this need not cause despondency to God's children, for we read "Ye are of God, children, and have overcome them, because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (iv. 4). The nature, the faith, the Son of God on whom they believe, and the Spirit given, all unite in securing victory for them, through the water and the blood which flowed from the Saviour's side. And what a present abiding place is theirs in the Father's love! "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God" (iii. 1).

Seven times the overcomer is addressed in the prophetic verses of Revelation ii. and iii. He is encouraged by divine grace and wisdom to be loyal amidst the varied phases of danger which beset the assemblies! Great are the riches and rewards the Lord holds out for the stimulation of faith and faithfulness!

1. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (ii. 7).

2. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (ii. 11).

3. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (ii. 17).

These first three were all preceded by a word to each one who had an "ear to hear" telling him to hear, not what the churches say, but "What the spirit saith to the churches" or "assemblies." In the last four (where the return of Christ is immediately in view) this word follows instead of preceding as in the first three. In view of the soon coming of Christ how we use the ear is of the last importance!

4. "And he that overcometh and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power [authority] over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father. And I will give him the morning star" (ii. 26-28).

5. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels" (iii. 5).

6. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the Name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem,

which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new Name " (iii. 12).

7. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I ALSO OVERCAME, AND AM SET DOWN WITH MY FATHER IN HIS THRONE " (iii. 21). What a glorious climax!

Let the Lord's own possessive pronoun "MY " be observed in these final four words of encouragement!—"MY works "; "MY Father"—three times; "MY God"—four times; "MY new Name "; and "MY throne." How great are the riches and rewards of the one who overcomes! How infinitely blessed his rest! What a wealth of splendour, what a divine abiding place is opened for him!

The perfect Overcomer is no less an One than the Son of God Himself. He is now seated on high with His Father on His throne. He cheers on the overcomer through the deceptions or direct attacks of the world with the promise of sitting with Him in His throne. "Press faithfully forward and upward!" He seems to say to us, "Overcome evil with good." "Follow that which is good." As we respond to this exhortation, present peace within and power without will mark us all the way. And how exceedingly stimulating is the word of Revelation xxi. 7,—“He that overcometh shall inherit all things.”

Those who are born of God—the children of God—are encouraged by the Lord, and they avoid what is said of some who only outwardly take up the path; “for if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world . . . they are again entangled therein, *and overcome*, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.” Such however, are illustrated by the Spirit as unclean animals,—the dog and the sow (2 Peter ii. 20-22), and not as the sheep of Christ. The children of God overcome, as we have seen, by reason of their nature, faith and object,—the Son of God.

Jeremiah shows that even Israel shall at last be enriched, and be rested gloriously through Christ, in the two glowing prophecies which directly designate Him (xxiii. 5-8; xxxiii. 14-16). Israel shall dwell safely in their own land. Jerusalem shall dwell safely also; while both she and her Saviour, her Messiah, shall be called JEHOVAH TSIDKENU.

If this shall soon be the rich and restful portion of the earthly nation, what of the heavenly family—the children of God? After Jesus had uttered the words, —“Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world!”—He lifted up His eyes to *heaven* and addressed His Father! HEAVEN, and not earth, is where ineffable blessedness and glory await those who are called according to God’s eternal purpose. Said the Son of God, “In My Father’s house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you.”

‘High, in the Father’s house above,  
 Our mansion is prepared,  
 There is the home, the rest we love,  
 And there our bright reward.”

Words must necessarily fail to describe the rest and rejoicing of that glorious home where Jesus is. Fully conformed to the very image of God’s Son, we shall dwell with Him for ever. Where He abides we shall abide eternally, for he said, “I will . . . receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

All taint of sin shall be removed,  
 All evil done away;  
 And we shall dwell with God’s Beloved,  
 Through God’s eternal day.”

The prophet said, “His rest shall be glorious,” and ours will be likewise, along with Him. Indeed, to behold His glory will be the crowning of all glory. We shall be like Him. We shall see Him as He is. The riches and rewards of the overcomer in the Kingdom will be wonderfully great, as types, prophecies and promises so truly declare; but, ah, to be with Jesus, who bled and died to redeem us,—who gave Himself for us,—who loves us with a quenchless love—to be with Him in His Father’s house of changeless love, rejoicing, holiness and beauty, surpasses all telling, exceeding our highest thought.



Yet even here the great Overcomer had peace and rest which naught could disturb; and He gave rest to others. The Father's bosom was well-known to Him. He kept His Father's commandments and abode uninterruptedly in His Father's love, and He said to the Father in regard to His own, "I have declared unto them Thy Name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." Here is the love which fills His Father's house, made ours *now*. The glory we shall share soon. The love is ours to rest in already. Eternal praise be to our God and Father!

The snares or onslaughts of the world,—of its "god," "ruler" and "deceiver,"—of Satan, who even appears "as an angel of light,"—would turn us away from our Lord Jesus Christ, and thus spoil our being like Him as overcomers. Therefore it is repeated in 1 John ii.,—"ABIDE IN HIM." In verse 27 this is said to the babes among the children of God, and in verse 28 it is reiterated to the oldest as well as to the youngest,—"The same Anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall ABIDE IN HIM. And now, children [*i.e.*, the whole family], ABIDE IN HIM!" As we abide in Christ all is well.

## A VOICE FROM A PRISON.

**E**VERY now and again we come across something that makes us thoroughly ashamed of our lukewarmness and lack of zeal for the Lord.

One such instance is the following.

A servant of the Lord, who labours for Him in Lisbon, especially in prison work, tells a touching tale. One of the prisoners, Guilherme Vila Nova, has been converted and is letting his light shine in the prison. The result has been that seven fellow-prisoners have been converted through his efforts.

We then get a touching spectacle. These seven believers with Vila Nova gathered round a table in a corner of the jail one Lord's Day morning. With prayer and the reading of Scripture the prisoners partook of the loaf and cup, and remembered the Lord in His death according to His own desire expressed at the night of His betrayal.

Is this not a voice to some young Christian, who has the opportunity of remembering the Lord week by week, and who hitherto has not responded to the Lord's desire?

Think of these eight men, not one of whom had ever been at a gospel meeting

in that land of Portugal, where gospel meetings, at any rate, are few and far between. Yet in simplicity they remembered the Lord in the very prison, whose walls reminded them of the crimes for which they were imprisoned.

Some say, "I cannot take the Lord's supper, for I feel so unworthy." Did not our Lord say, when He handed the cup to His disciples, "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28)? And we are reminded of that verse, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). Surely as these poor prisoners pressed the cup to their lips they must have had a deep sense of the value of the precious blood, of which that cup spoke, which had cleansed away all sin. Ah! our place there is a question of His worthiness and His work and not our worthiness.

Shall not this voice from a prison be heard in some young heart and beget in it a response to the Lord's own request, "This do in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. xi. 24). Surely He is worthy. Shall you, shall I, be indifferent? The Lord comes quickly and then our opportunity for responding to His wish will be over for ever.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(2 *Peter* iii. 3-18).

You must open your Bible at the passage indicated and follow this article with the Scripture before you, if you would get any real help. Space forbids quotations of any length from the passage so, as you read, refer to the Scripture *and* THINK.

If consequently fresh light begins to break in upon you, do not lightly turn from it, but lifting up your heart in thanksgiving to God, pursue your searching of the Word on the point. It may open up to you a fruitful field of truth and you can resume your reading of the article on another occasion.

**I**T would seem that immediately the apostle Peter returned to the subject of true prophecy he was conscious of the fierce antagonism to it on the part of adversaries. Hence first of all he issues a warning and that especially as to the opposition to be expected in the last days from scoffers, walking after their own lusts. Wishing to give free rein to their carnal desires they deride that which most would put a check upon them.

There have always been scoffers of this sort. Verse 4 however predicts that in the last days they will base their scoffing upon the steady continuity of all things from time immemorial, which, they will assert, makes any sudden catastrophe, in days to come, such as the coming of the Lord, an unthinkable thing. Verse 5 follows this up by

stating that to fortify their denial they will also deny that such a catastrophic intervention as the flood could ever have taken place in times past. They "willingly [*i.e.*, *wilfully*] are ignorant" of it. The thing is hid from them because they will to have it so.

This prediction of verses 3 to 6 is really most cheering for us. Here is a prophecy of the Scripture the fulfilment of which is being dinned into our ears almost every day. During the last century there has been a greatly revived expectation of the coming of the Lord amongst true Christians, and during at least the last half century the idea of His coming has been resisted with increasing scorn, for it cuts right across the evolutionary theories which are all the rage. To a mind obsessed with evolution the flood of the past, as recorded in Genesis, and the personal coming of Christ in the future are equally unbelievable. They remain wilfully ignorant of the one and they scoffingly deny the other. For over nineteen centuries scoffers have scoffed. Only during the last half century have they scoffed *on these grounds*. But the scoffers are to scoff on these grounds *in the last days*. Therefore the conclusion is definite and unmistakeable: *we are in the last days*. This is indeed most cheering. We may well praise God! This day is this Scripture fulfilled in our ears (see, Luke iv. 21).

How did the flood take place? The answer is, "by the Word of God." By "the same Word" the existing heavens and earth are reserved unto fire in the coming day of judgment. The Word of God overthrew the flimsy unbelief of men in the past and it will do so again. The eye of faith sees written upon the finest construction of men's hands, the ominous words, "RESERVED UNTO FIRE."

The mocking question of the scoffer springs of course out of the fact that many centuries have elapsed since the Lord left this earth with the promise that He would come again quickly. We have therefore to recognise the fact, stated in verse 8, that God's ideas of time are very different to ours. A thousand years are as one day to Him, as indeed Psalm xc. 4 had told us; one day is also as a thousand years, as is illustrated in verse 10 of our chapter. We must not therefore count Him slack if much time has elapsed to our way of thinking.

The reason for the long waiting time is not slackness but long-suffering. The second advent will mean the striking of a tremendous blow in judgment. This though necessary is no joy to God. He does not desire that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. The alternative is very clearly stated in these words. It is *repent or perish*.

Yet the judgment blow *will* be struck when the time arrives. The Lord *will* come when men do not expect Him, as a thief in the night, and thus usher in His day. That "day" will comprise a thousand years as other Scriptures show. It will commence with His coming and not close until the passing away of the earth and its surrounding heavens, dissolved by fire. This will not take place until the end of His thousand years reign is reached, as stated in Revelation xx. 7-11. That same destruction of the heavens and the earth will usher in the "day of God" of which Revelation xxi. 1-8 speaks,—the eternal state. The "day of the Lord" and the "day of God" are like two circles touching each other and just overlapping at the point where the heavens and earth are destroyed, so that their destruction may be said to be in both of them.

The day of the Lord is the period especially characterized by the exaltation of Christ, as Lord and Administrator of the will of God, when righteousness will reign. It lasts for 1000 years. The day of God is the succeeding eternal state in which God shall dwell with men in a new heaven and new earth and there righteousness shall dwell without a solitary foe to challenge its peace.

These things are plainly declared in the prophetic Word and we know them. But to what end are they made known to us?

The answer to this question is found in verse 11 and in verses 14 to 18. All is designed to have a present effect upon our characters and lives.

We know that the dissolution of the earth and all its works is decreed by the Word of God. Then we shall be marked by "holy conversation"—*i.e.*, a separate manner of life—and godliness. We shall be as those who expect and hasten the coming day. The Christian who spends all his energies in making the best of *this* world may affirm that he knows these things, but he hardly *believes* them in the true sense of the term. Lot struck his roots deeply into the soil of Sodom but it was because he did not know its doom was decreed. What would he have done had he known it? In very deed the light of true prophecy has a separating and sanctifying effect.

We know too that we shall enter into the blessedness of the eternal state in the new heavens and the new earth. Then we shall be *diligent*—here Peter returns to the word he had used in chapter i. 5—to walk now in peace, spotless and unblameable. The eternal state will be a scene of peace because no spot nor blame shall be there. Well, we shall aim at the characteristics of the new heavens and new earth before they actually arrive.



Further, we shall account that the present longsuffering of our Lord is salvation, consequently we shall not chafe under the waiting time it imposes upon us. We shall know that every day of waiting and perhaps suffering which is entailed for us means the salvation of multitudes. And not only this—for the “accounting” will not stop with a mere mental recognition of the fact but express itself in action—we shall bend our energies to the setting before men of that which is ordained for their salvation, until the Lord comes. The gospel of God is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. i. 16).

As Peter closed his first epistle (v. 12) it appears as if he referred to Paul's labours amongst these dispersed Jews. Now at the close of the second Epistle he specifically names him and not only “all his epistles” in a general way but also some special writing or epistle which he had addressed to them, according to the wisdom given him from on high. So evidently Paul wrote to the Hebrews. It *may* of course have been a writing not intended for preservation as part as the Scriptures, and hence not extant to-day. It is much more likely to be that wonderful Epistle to the Hebrews that we possess for our soul's rejoicing. In that Epistle he does indeed “speak of these things.” See particularly chapter xii. 25 to 29. He speaks of them in his other epistles too.

Notice how Peter writes of Paul, the man who had to withstand and rebuke him once at Antioch (See Gal. ii. 11). Not a trace of bitterness is there, nor a trace of that Judaizing spirit which Paul had to withstand. Martyrdom was approaching for both of them, and it is, "*our beloved brother Paul.*" Delightful—is it not? The freest flowing forth of Christian affection and the fullest acknowledgment of the grace and gift bestowed upon another than himself. We can see the warm and loving heart that beat in Peter without the taint of egotism, which marred it when he was young, and thought he loved more than all the other apostles.

Yet he had to say that in Paul's epistles there were things "hard to be understood." In so saying he wrote doubtless as the apostle to the circumcision identifying himself with the believers of his own nation. All the truth concerning the church, its place in the purposes of God, its privileges, its composition of an election gathered from Gentiles as well as Jews, all that which Paul speaks of, in short, as "the mystery of of Christ" (Eph. iii. 4) was bound to be "hard" to a Jew. It cut across every fibre of their national feeling which had been fostered for centuries. The truth was simple enough from an intellectual point of view but the eyes of their *hearts* needed opening to see it. This was recognized by Paul in Ephesians i. 18, where the word "under-

standing " should be " hearts." Except we too have the eyes of our hearts opened we have to sadly confess when we read God's Word it is hard to be understood.

Scripture too may be wrested or distorted to the destruction of those who so treat it. Those who do so are "unlearned and unstable." "Unlearned," or "untaught," means of course untaught, not in the wisdom of the world, but in the things of God. Here Peter may have been especially referring to a Gentile danger, the sort of thing that Paul himself warns Gentiles against in Romans xi. 13 to 29. If Gentiles misunderstand and misuse God's truth so as to become "wise in their own conceits" they are very near destruction. Still even if Peter did especially refer to this his words are capable of a much wider application. Let us all beware of twisting the Word of God!

Now, we have been forewarned. Thus we are forearmed against the error of the wicked, lest we should fall. The error of the wicked was fully exposed in chapter ii. It is not enough however to be warned against evil; we must be in the positive enjoyment of truth. The way not to go back is to go on. Like a man on a bicycle, the Christian must go on if he would avoid falling off. Hence we must "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

This word just summarizes the main teaching of the Epistle. Spiritual growth was the great theme of chapter i. and to it the apostle returns in his closing words. All true growth is in grace, *the grace of God*. Then as we expand in grace we grow in graciousness of spirit. All true growth too is in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, in whom the grace of God has reached us.

Who shall set a limit to our expansion in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord? Both are alike illimitable. Planted here, we are like trees that have struck their roots down into a subsoil of fertile richness that is without a bottom!

"To Him be glory both now and for ever, Amen."

F. B. HOLE.

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"I have met many young converts who have fallen into the snare of getting more occupied with service than with Christ. They have allowed their work to get between their hearts and the Master, and, in this way, have fallen into darkness and depression. Keep your eye on the Master—cling to Christ—abide in Him, and then you will be found in service of the right kind. It is only as we abide in the Vine that we bring forth fruit. We do not get to Christ by being in service, but we get to service by abiding in Christ. 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me.' For what? To draw for others? Nay, but to drink for himself. And what then? 'Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' This is the true principle—this is service in the right place—testimony flowing out of communion."