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EDIFICATION

A MONTHLY
MAGAZINE

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

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD.

"The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ"
(2 Thess. iii. 5. Margin).

THE Christian attitude is that of expectancy. The coming again of the Lord Jesus is our hope. Yet as year after year slips away nothing is easier than for the hope to fade in our hearts, and for us to settle down to a comfortable slumber amongst those who are dead in trespasses and sins. As we open another year we are wondering how many of our readers there are in whose hearts the flame of this hope has never been kindled, and how many there are in whose hearts the flame once kindled is burning low and perhaps is even well-nigh extinguished.

We are well aware that serious discredit has been cast upon this great truth by the pertinacious way in which various people—some of them very sincere and earnest believers—have endeavoured to forecast the actual time of the Lord's return, in spite of His own statement that the time is not revealed. Figures, dates and mathematical calculations seem to have an irresistible attraction for some minds. The Scriptures

are ransacked, all possible numbers relating to days, months and years are pressed into service, and sometimes impossible numbers also. The resultant calculations look feasible enough; yet they all rest upon certain assumptions, such as, for instance, that a day must always mean a year in the prophetic scheme of things.

What if the assumption be unwarranted? Why, the whole of the elaborate edifice crumbles into nothing! And that is what a number of these prophetic schemes have already done, and others are tottering at the moment of writing. True, their authors may be hastily endeavouring to repair them, but this alone is sufficient to condemn them. Never did the real prophets of God so act. They spoke in the Lord's name and without the smallest modification their words came true.

The year 1927 was to have witnessed the coming of the Lord Jesus for His saints, so we understood, according to one scheme. According to another, 1928 was to have seen the start of a terrific world war, and in this case the very day was named at the end of May. The day quietly passed, marked by the usual collection of minor happenings, some of which have been selected and we are asked to believe that they fulfilled the blood-curdling predictions issued to the press a year or so before.

This latter prediction was not however based upon the Scriptures but upon certain measurements made in the Great Pyramid in Egypt. Certain Old Testament texts, torn from their surroundings, are quoted in the hope of proving that Scripture itself refers us to the Pyramid as having some mystic and prophetic meaning; as being, in short, a further revelation from God. In this way an attempt is made to obtain Scriptural sanction for whatever may be deduced from the Pyramid. Apart from the misuse of these texts the whole idea stands condemned by the Lord's own words in Matthew xi. 25. The things of God are hidden from "the wise and prudent" but "revealed unto babes." The things supposed to be expressed in the pyramid are most effectually hidden from "the babes" and can only be discerned by "the wise and prudent." The measurements on which all is based cannot be checked by one man in a million. The articles expounding the theories are beyond the mental grasp of most. The "babe" must take everything on trust from very un-inspired men. We may be quite sure the things they proclaim are not the sure sayings of God.

Let us not be shaken in mind by these things. We must learn to say as did the Apostle Paul in other connections, "None of these things move me." We may indeed on the contrary have our hope confirmed by

them, for conditions were very similar just before the first Advent. Then Satan endeavoured to becloud men's minds by raising up false Christs, two of whom were mentioned by Gamaliel, in Acts vi. A state of general confusion was thereby created, and as Luke iii. 15 tells us, "the people were in expectation [or, in suspense] and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not." Satan's tactics appear to be very similar in our day. Once more, before the second Advent, men's minds are being beclouded by false issues and theories. We must not be surprised.

He is coming. His Advent draws near, though we know not the hour, for the signs of the end of the age lie thick around us. And if the end of the age be near then His coming into the air for His saints and "our gathering together unto Him" must be nearer still. If this be the bright hope of our hearts then we shall be careful to "purify ourselves even as He is pure," and be diligent in "serving the living and true God" while we wait.

May it be thus with us all—whether readers or writers. And to this end may our hearts be led by Him into the love of God and into the patience of Christ. If we enter into the patience of Christ we shall be delivered from the impatience and feverish hurry so natural to us as creatures of few days and restricted outlook. We shall share

Christ's thoughts and desires towards His church and yet enter into His patient waiting for the full accomplishment of the purpose of God; accounting meanwhile that, "the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation."

If we enter into the love of God we shall find therein the motive power to keep us moving onwards according to His will. It will become the mainspring of our lives, while the patience of Christ will act as a regulator preventing our going either too fast or too slow.

While we wait, we shall aim at the promotion of these things in the pages of our magazine, and may God graciously add His blessing.

ON REMEMBERING THE LORD.

IN two former numbers of *Edification* we have meditated on trusting Christ and on following Christ; let us now think a little about remembering Him.

The late beloved Mr. Wilson Smith once told me the following affecting story. Being on his way, one Sunday morning, to assemble with a few, who, after the manner of the first disciples, came together on the first day of the week to break bread, he saw far ahead of him a person who seemed wearied, for she constantly had to sit down and rest. When

he overtook her he saw she was a girl whom he knew, who was dying of consumption. He said to her, "My poor lassie, I do not think you are fit to be out this morning." She replied that she had started early, to rest by the way as she desired to remember the Lord in His death once more. "You know, He said it," she explained. She had her wish, she remembered Him that day on earth and very soon afterwards departed to be with Him in heaven. Our friend was deeply moved as he told me and said what an appeal her simple words had made to his heart.

I have ventured to repeat his story trusting the Lord may speak by it to our hearts, leading us to ask ourselves if we are as eager to respond to His desire as was this poor Scotch girl. When we look back we remember that the Lord instituted the supper on the night in which He was betrayed, and when He knew all that He was about to pass through. It comes down to us through the long centuries, fresh from His loving hands, and we hear His voice to us ever and again, "This do in remembrance of Me" (Luke xxii. 19). It forms a never-to-be-broken link with Him, going back to that night wherein He gathered His own around Him in His sorrow, and going on to the day of His coming when He will call them to surround Him in His joy—joy that He waits to share with them.

Oh! let His love touch us afresh; we look forward with joy to His coming, let us treasure now the remembrance of Him in His death, so that nothing shall keep us away, nothing but the things, such as needful duties or sickness, which cannot be altered, which we accept as of His allowing.

But there is more. Do we consider what the Lord planned for His people when He bade them come together that He might be in their midst? He knew the world He was leaving them in, He knew its enmity and the wiles of the devil, He knew how forgetful were their foolish hearts and He desired to have a place where He might ever come to them recalling them to Himself in His death, shewing them again His hands and His side. He would make a green spot for them in the barren desert of this world, a place where all who loved His Name might find their joy and rest. Where He comes peace dwells; love is there, grace reigns through righteousness, holiness is there, prayer and praise are there; where He comes are all the elements of God's house; where He is there is already the atmosphere of heaven.

I know well how little we apprehend these things and how many hindrances arise; perhaps in its fulness all this may never be realized in this world, but it is very precious to respond in any measure to the Lord's desire and to remember what it cost Him to put into our hands "the bread which we

break." "the cup of blessing which we bless"
(1 Cor. x. 16).

L. R.

REWARDS.

"**B**EHOLD, I come quickly; and My
reward is with Me" (Rev. xxii. 12).

What sort of reward would you like the Lord to give *you*? If the Lord allowed you to choose the kind of reward you were to have, what would you ask for?

A touching story is told of Queen Victoria when she was once visiting wounded soldiers in Netley Hospital. One poor fellow was frightfully wounded; he was mutilated almost beyond recognition. As her Majesty stood by his bedside she seemed greatly moved with pity, as though her heart went out with real compassion, and she longed to say something that should really comfort the sufferer. Taking one of his hands in both of her own, she bent over him, saying gently, "Thank you so much for all you have done for me."

Personally, I could wish for no other reward than this, just to be able to hear His own dear voice saying to me, "Thank you so much for what you did for ME."

"Why should the King recompense it me with such a reward?" (2 Sam. xix 36).



“SANCTIFYING DOUBTS.”

A PREACHER of the gospel called to see an old Scotch lady who had been a constant attendant at some meetings that he had held. She spoke of the pleasure and profit she had derived. “But for a’ that,” she added, “I’ll nae gi’e up my sanctifeen’ doots!”

Evidently she imagined that her doubts helped to keep her humble and promoted her sanctification. In this she is by no means alone. There are many who seem to think that there is some virtue in entertaining fears as to their salvation, even though they be true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. To be certain in their security, would, in their opinion, be a mark of spiritual conceit; to speak with assurance of their acceptance with God would be the most unwarrantable presumption.

In dealing with certain men it is perhaps wise to be not too sanguine as to the fulfilment of mere promises. It is often necessary to bind the parties to an agreement by written documents, couched in language of unmistakable clearness.

But in dealing with a person of proved integrity, who has gained the respect and confidence of all who know him, and of whom it is currently said that, “his word is as good as his bond,” we should have no misgivings. And if, in addition to his word, he were to give us a written undertaking,

duly signed, promising to do a certain thing, surely we should have every ground for complete confidence. We should have no hesitation in speaking with perfect assurance as to the engagement being carried out.

Would this be presumption on our part? Would it be taking any credit to ourselves? Should we be better advised were we still to entertain doubt as to whether our friend would fulfil the obligation into which he had entered?

May it not be truly said that to mistrust a man of unimpeachable honour when he gives his word is to cast a slur upon him, and that to doubt a statement that is set forth in writing, above his signature, is presumptuous folly?

"Sanctifying doubts" foresooth! With whom is it that we have to do? With an unreliable person who will take advantage of any quibble in order to evade the fulfilment of his promise? No, indeed. The God upon whose word we are invited to rely is One who cannot lie. His desire is for our eternal good. He came in the Person of His Son to seek and save the lost, thus proving His longing wish to have us happy in His presence for ever. The way He has taken to secure our blessing, the way of the cross, will be the wonder-inspiring theme of the redemption song.

Can any one doubt, in view of love that has manifested itself thus, that God desires to have us at perfect peace with Himself?

Then where is the difficulty when He assures us that believing in Christ we are freely forgiven, justified from all things, made heirs of eternal life and children of God? May we not rest with assurance upon His plain, unmistakable Word? Is it reasonable that we should hug our doubts, imagining that they have a “ sanctifying ” effect upon our hearts, whereas in reality they are an insult to our God?

R. W.

“ NO EVIL.”

“ **T** HERE shall no evil happen to the just ” (Prov. xii. 21). Wonderful words of comfort to the tried and tested and troubled one, who walks in the fear of the Lord.

“ NO EVIL.” How comprehensive are the words! How inclusive! How exclusive!

How inclusive! No evil of any kind or character whatsoever, in any time or in any place.

How exclusive! The just is surrounded by God Himself who is ever compassing His people. All evil is shut out. That which appears evil to us at first He can turn to our ultimate good. Out of the eater He brings forth meat and out of the strong He extracts sweetness.

Of old the alchemists sought to turn the base metals into gold. They spent time and travail, life and fortune in the vain endeavour.

But this is the very way of our God. He turns the curse into the blessing. He makes "the wrath of man to praise Him" and the remainder He restrains.

So it was in the case of Job of whose patience we "have heard," and in whose history we learn "that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

"The end of the Lord," in all that through which the patriarch passed, was his ultimate good. And it is interesting to see that the enemy—Satan—defeated himself in all his assaults against this great man of the east. And it is ever so.

It is evident that Satan had considered God's servant well. He had studied the position with care. When challenged by God he answers, "Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?"

Examining particularly, and scrutinizing closely the circumstances in which Job was found, he had been able to discover no point of attack.

A triple fortification was about the patriarch and his belongings. Three God-made hedges.

A hedge about *him*.

c A hedge about *his house*.

A hedge about *all that he hath on every side*.

He was well protected. His person, his family, his possessions.

What comfort is here for the believer! The care of God is about every one of His children.

The enemy has full knowledge of all about us and our concerns. But it is only as permitted of God, for His glory and for our good, that he can force a way through the fences set about us, in the wisdom and power and love of our God. Only just as far as it shall prove for our blessing in the end, will God permit any intrusion within the hedges He has made.

" No evil! " The day is nearing when we shall see how all has been wrought together in our lives according to the pattern determined upon by our God and Father. He " is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working " and He controls everything.

In His ceaseless, changeless love He makes all things work together for good to them that love Him. Little we understand now the why and the wherefore, of much that may happen to us. But the day is coming when we shall know even as we are known. Then we shall see how every detail of our life's pathway has been ruled or overruled by the skilfulness of His hand of infinite power, and according to the integrity of His heart of infinite love.

Often did I watch my aged mother knitting and I wondered what she had in

mind. One knitting pin would seem to get all the wool and then another would get it back again. At first the mimic warfare seemed incessant and without profitable result. But little by little the plan was developed and I began to see that there was some "rhyme and reason" in her labour. At last the work took definite shape and I beheld some article of use and comfort being produced. Then I saw what she had been after all the time. But *she* knew from the first stitch.

And so it is with the working together of the materials which make up our lives. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning." This is true of the great dispensations in the ages. It is true in the little details of the believer's pathway. God has His thought and plan and patiently carries them into execution.

As in Joseph's case, God was above all the ill-treatment he received. "As for you," he said to his brethren, "Ye thought evil against me, *but God meant it unto good.*" God knew from the commencement what the end would be and "there shall no evil happen to the just."

In my mother's case, with her knitting, she would at times drop a stitch, or put in a wrong one, and I would see her undo her work in part, pulling out the result of her careful movements.

Not so with God. No human weakness or imperfection is with Him.

“ As for God, His way is perfect ” (Psa. xviii. 30). He never has to recall a word. He never has to undo any of His work. All from His hands is excellent indeed, and He never drops a stitch. Much should we like, at the time they are made that some stitches were dropped, for we see not why it is thus with us in our circumstances. But *every* stitch is necessary to the carrying out of His bright and blessed design for our ultimate good and blessing; “ for our profit,” on the one hand, as on the other hand “ that we may be partakers of His holiness.”

Let us go on without a misgiving, saying with the Psalmist of old, “ I will fear no evil for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.” His presence, His guidance, His omnipotence are on our part.

Thus we may take up the words of the hymn and say,

“ My spirit on Thy care,
 Blest Saviour, I recline;
 Thou wilt not leave me to despair,
 For Thou art love divine.

In Thee I place my trust,
 On Thee I calmly rest;
 I know Thee good, I know Thee just,
 And count Thy choice the best.

Let good or ill betide,
 All must be good for me;
 Secure of having Thee in all,
 Of having all in Thee.”

Thus shall we be kept in peace knowing that no evil shall come nigh unto our dwelling or to the dwellers therein.

INGLIS FLEMING.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(1 *Thessalonians i*).

Please read the passage indicated above before reading this article, and then keep your Bible open so that you may refer to it as may be necessary from time to time.

The writer takes it for granted that you will comply with this request, and hence he addresses you in the terms he would employ if giving a homely "Bible-talk."

IT seems to be generally admitted that this was the first of all Paul's inspired epistles to be written. If any desire confirmation of this they will do well to read the third chapter of the Epistle and then compare it with Acts xvii. The Epistle was written just after Timothy had returned from his visit to Thessalonica, paid while Paul was at Athens; and hence when he wrote it the Apostle's labours at Corinth had barely begun and he had not even visited Ephesus. In any event read the early verses of Acts xvii. for the historic details there found give much point to various details in the Epistle.

The fact that the Thessalonians were believers of not many months standing—just young converts—imparts a peculiar interest to this epistle. It is most encouraging to see how many things are true of even the

youngest believers in Christ, and also how much grace and devotedness may mark them if their simplicity be unspoiled.

Paul's labours at Thessalonica were very brief; at the end of about three weeks they were cut short by a riot. Very solid work was done however, as this first chapter bears witness. We may take it as certain that intense Satanic opposition is always a sign that a real work of God is proceeding. The rioters called Paul and his friends, "These that have turned the world upside down," and this designation was not far from the truth. The truth was that the world itself was completely upside down, and the labours of Paul and others were setting men right side up before God. The world itself was left in its upside down condition, but many in Thessalonica were converted out of the world and set in right relations with God. These converts became the church, or assembly, of the Thessalonians.

They were not formally incorporated as "a church." Had some ceremony been usual the sudden and violent ending of Paul's work in their midst would have precluded it. No, they became the church, that is, the "called-out-ones," of God by the very act of God in calling them out of the world through the Gospel. The Apostle can own them, young converts though they were, as an assembly of God, gathered in the happy

knowledge of God as Father, and in subjection to Jesus as their Lord. To know the Father is the characteristic feature of the babe in Christ, according to 1 John ii. 13. To acknowledge Jesus as Lord is the way into salvation, according to Romans x. 9, 10.

Paul looked back with much thankfulness to his brief sojourn in their midst, and now absent from them he remembered them continually in prayer. From verse 3 to the end of the chapter he recounts that which he had seen in them of the working of the power of God, and thus there is furnished for us a striking picture of the wonderful effects produced in character and in life when men are soundly converted.

It is worthy of note that the first place is given to the character that was produced IN them, a character summed up in three words, faith, hope, love. Character however can only be discerned by us as it expresses itself in our actions and ways, hence their work and labour and patience (or endurance) are referred to. Their "work of faith" was evident to all, in keeping with that which James writes in his epistle, "I will shew thee my faith by my works." Note that both here and in James ii. the works spoken of are the works of faith, whereas in Romans iv., a chapter erroneously supposed by many to be in conflict with James, the works spoken of are "the works of the law"—an entirely different thing.

If faith comes to light in its works, love is expressed in labour. It is characteristic of love to labour unsparingly for the good of its object, as we all know. Hope too, expresses itself in patient endurance. Only when men become hopeless do they readily give up: they endure as long as hope is like a star shining before their eyes.

These things were clear and distinct in the Thessalonian believers, and led Paul to the confident conclusion that they were amongst the elect of God. It was not that, when he stood up in the synagogue at Thessalonica those three Sabbath days, he could have put a mark on the back of each who would believe before he began to preach, as having private access to the Lamb's book of life and knowing in advance the names of those who were chosen of God. Paul's knowledge was arrived at from the opposite direction. Knowing the powerful way in which the Gospel reached them and the results produced in them by the Spirit of God he had no doubt in his conclusion that they were chosen of God.

In this connection notice the opening words of the Apostle in his first epistle to the Corinthians. In their case he can only thank God that grace had visited them by Christ and that they were a gifted people. The possession of gift does not however of necessity mean that its possessor is a true believer, as witness the case of Judas Iscariot.

Hence the searching words of warning he utters in the latter part of his ninth and the opening of his tenth chapter. To them he spoke of being "a castaway," because of the element of doubt there was in his mind as to some of them, in spite of their gifts. The Thessalonians were in happy contrast to this.

There are "things that accompany salvation" (Heb. vi. 9), and the "labour of love" is specified directly after as one of them. In our passage three things are mentioned and the labour of love is one of them. No gifts may be manifested, but if these things are present we can be sure that salvation is possessed, and that the people in question are the elect of God.

If verse 3 gives us the fruit produced in these believers and verse 4 the Apostle's confidence on beholding this fruit, verse 5 indicated the way in which the fruit was produced. Firstly, the Gospel reached them in word: it was boldly preached by Paul. Secondly, his preaching was supported by his devoted and holy life. Thirdly, and largely as a consequence, the Gospel came in power and in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit wrought mightily through the Word. The Apostle alludes in much detail to what manner of man he was amongst them in his second chapter.

The Gospel also came to them "in much assurance." This is very significant when

we turn back to Acts xvii. and note that the particular form that Paul's preaching took in their city was that of reasoning with them out of the Scriptures; showing them that when the true Christ of God appeared He must die and rise again, and that these predictions had been so perfectly fulfilled in Jesus that the conclusion was irresistible—Jesus is the Christ! In other words, amongst these people he had very specially based his gospel proclamation and appeal upon THE WORD OF GOD; hence the MUCH ASSURANCE in the converts.

Let us take good note of this. If an Apostle, able himself to give forth inspired utterances, appealed to the Scriptures with such solid and lasting result, we, who have only the Scripture to appeal to, may well make it the basis of all we preach. "Preach the Word," is the great word for us. There is no assurance outside it. The preacher may persuade us that things are as he states, upon the strength of his personal assurances. The converts may tell us that they have every assurance because of the happy feelings that they experience. But there is as little real assurance in the one as in the other. We can only really be assured of anything as we have the Word of God for it.

In verses 6-8 we find what the Gospel made of these who received it. We saw in the first place the three-fold character it produced *in* them. Now we see the three-

fold character it stamped UPON them. They had been made into "followers . . . of the Lord," "ensamples [or patterns] to all that believe," and they "sounded out," like trumpeters or heralds, thus advertizing the Word of the Lord.

Paul himself was a pattern man (see, 1 Tim. i. 16), hence he could rightly ask believers to follow him. Even so, it was only because of the fact that he followed Christ; so that it was indeed the Lord whom they followed. In this connection it is recorded that, though they now followed with joy begotten of the Holy Spirit, they had first known the power of the Word piercing into the conscience and producing repentance toward God with its accompanying affliction of heart. It is ever thus. The deeper the work of repentance the brighter the joy and the more sincere the discipleship of the convert. Let those who preach the Word aim at a deep work in heart and conscience rather than at showy and superficial results and they will not fail of their reward in the day of Christ.

Following the Lord comes first; it was because of their discipleship that they became examples to their fellow-believers in surrounding provinces. Paul could point to them and say, "That is the kind of thing that the grace of God produces where it is received as the fruit of a deep work of

repentance towards God." This is indicated by the words, "so that," at the beginning of verse 7. The little word "for" which opens verse 8 shows us that what follows is also connected with this matter. Their evangelistic fervour also made them an example to others. They not only received the Word to their own blessing but they sounded it forth to others, so much so that their faith in God became notorious not only in the nearer districts but further afield. The whole work of God was so effectually advertized by its wonderful effects in these people that there was no need for the Apostle himself to say a word.

Nothing so effectually advertizes the Gospel as the transformed lives of those who have received it. This fact has been often noted by careful observers, but here we find that Scripture itself recognizes it. Conversely nothing so effectually stultifies the proclamation of the Gospel as breakdown and sin on the part of those who profess to have believed it. In the light of this, and of the sad conditions prevailing in the Christianized nations, can we wonder that the evangelist in these lands finds himself confronted by hard and difficult conditions to-day? May God give help to each one of us so that our lives may tell in favour of the Gospel and not against it.

In the closing verses we find a third thing. Not now the character wrought in

them, nor the features stamped upon them, but that which was being done BY them. Their conversion was in view of service to God and patient waiting for Christ.

“Ye turned to God from idols.” Here we have a Scriptural definition of conversion, which is not only a turning, but a turning to God and consequently from idols. Idols are not only the ugly images venerated and feared by the heathen, but also anything, whether elegant or ugly, *which usurps in the heart of man that place of supremacy and dominance which belongs of right to God alone.* Idols are before the face of every fallen sinner, charming his heart, and God is behind his back. Conversion takes place and lo, God is before his face and idols are behind his back!

Converted to God our lives are to be now spent in His service. Has it ever occurred to you what an extraordinary favour it is, and what a tribute to the power of the Gospel, that we should be permitted to serve Him at all? An earnest worker in a slum district notices very definite signs of repentance in one of the worst occupants of a thieves' kitchen one Sunday evening. He very greatly rejoices, though with trembling. Yes, but how would he feel if early on Monday morning the poor thing arrived on his doorstep and with many tears avowed her thankfulness for the blessing received and announced her desire to express her

gratitude by entering his service—cooking his meals and dusting his house? Stamped upon her he sees disease, dirt, degradation and, until yesterday, drink. What would he say? What would you say?

We have not overdrawn the picture. What we were morally and spiritually just answered to the case supposed. And yet we have been brought into the service of the thrice-holy God as redeemed and born again. But then how mighty must be the moral renovation which the Gospel effects! And even so, remembering that we still have the flesh in us and are consequently very liable to sin, how great a favour it is that we should be taken into the high and holy service of God. We are actually permitted to serve His interests, His purposes and plans made before the world began. If we realized this there would be no desire to shirk His work. We should eagerly and joyfully run to fulfil it.

While we serve we wait. We are saved in hope of the fulness of blessing which is yet to be introduced. We are not left to await death, which is our departure to be with Christ, but to await His coming for us. We await God's Son from the heavens. This is as far as the Apostle goes for the moment: when we reach chapter iv, we shall find disclosed what is involved in this statement.

However we will not anticipate; for the moment we will only note that it is God's

Son who is coming, that He is coming from the heavens where now He is seated, and that His name is Jesus, whom we know as our Deliverer from the coming wrath. The verb is not in the past tense—"delivered"—as in our Authorised Version. It is rather, "Jesus, who delivers us" or "Jesus, our Deliverer." The point is that Jesus who is coming from heaven will deliver us from the wrath that is coming.

Again and again in both Testaments the word wrath is used to denote the heavy judgments of God which are coming upon this earth. We do not for one moment deny that in several New Testament passages the meaning of the word is enlarged to take in the penal judgment of God which stretches out into and embraces eternity. Still the main use of the word is as we have indicated, as may be seen if the book of Revelation be attentively read. Men and nations are heaping up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the opened eye can see that day of wrath approaching with silent and stealthy tread.

What a joy it is for the believer to know that though wrath is coming Jesus also is coming, and coming as Deliverer! Before wrath swoops like an eagle upon its prey Jesus will come and we shall be delivered out of the very spot where the wrath is going to fall. For the details of this wonderful

event we must wait. Meanwhile we can rejoice that the event itself is a glorious certainty and fast approaching.

F. B. HOLE.

ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT.

Will you please say a few words on 2 Corinthians i. 21, 22 in your magazine.—BIRMINGHAM.

YOU do not indicate what special point is before your mind in making this request, so the few words we say can only be of a general nature.

In these verses the Apostle is showing that one great mark of the Christian is stability. He had thought of visiting Corinth some time before writing this letter, but had not done so. Certain adversaries took advantage of this change of plans to insinuate that he was a man marked by vacillation and insincerity or lightness (verses 15-17). This charge he rebuts. He was not a man vacillating between yea and nay, even as the Son of God, who was the theme of his Gospel, was not yea and nay. In Christ the whole will of God is accomplished and stands fast, even as ultimately He will put the finishing touch, the Amen, to it all (verses 18-20). Paul, the herald of the Gospel, shared in the stability which the Gospel announces.

But not only so, the Gospel imparts its stability to all who receive it. *We* it is, who have believed, for faith is that which springs up in the hearts of men, yet behind our faith lies the work of *God*, for He it is who has "established us in Christ," or "connected us firmly with Christ."

Intimately connected with this is the gift of the Spirit which we have of God. There is but one Spirit, and but one giving of the Spirit to the believer, yet the Spirit when given may be viewed in three different ways, according to the various capacities and offices which He fills.

First, He is the anointing. There is here a little play upon words in the original which is lost in our translations. If we could say in English, "He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath 'christed' us, is God" we should see it. The Lord Jesus is the Anointed One and we, as established in Him, are anointed ones. It is the anointing of the Spirit which gives us capacity and power to understand and handle the things of God.

Secondly, the same Spirit is the seal of God placed upon us, and in us. Thus we are marked out as God's, and secured for the day of glory that is coming. Our place in that coming world is secure for we are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Thirdly, the Spirit is the earnest of all that is coming. He conveys to our hearts a foretaste. The things themselves lie in the future though already revealed to faith, yet we may know even now something of their reality and blessedness by the Spirit, given as the earnest of them all.

Thus established in Christ, anointed and sealed with the Spirit and possessing the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts, we too are marked by stability in a world of instability and change. Thus it is that there can be "the glory of God by us" as is stated in verse 20.

FORGIVENESS—AND MORE.

“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are. . . . Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is. And every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself even as He is pure”—1 John iii. 1-3 (R.V.).

DO not let us limit our thoughts of God's grace to the forgiveness of sins. We shall be great losers if we do. No doubt it is an immense thing to be forgiven. Everybody feels it to be so who knows the sorrow that always attends true repentance. Forgiveness is the first need of the soul. David speaks of the blessedness of it in Psalm xxxii., and Paul quotes David's words in Romans iv., saying, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” And “this blessedness” both of them had experienced, and they were therefore well able to speak of it.

Does the reader shrink from taking the same ground? Is forgiveness a thing *hoped for* rather than enjoyed? It ought not to be so. The gospel gives certainty and not a doubtful hope.

Observe the argument in Romans iv. The Apostle contends that "this blessedness" is not received as *wages* from a master's hand. Now the common creed of multitudes is this: "Serve God all your life and you may hope to be forgiven when you die." It thus becomes a question of wages. You have worked and you reap your reward. Now the gospel runs on wholly opposite lines. The forgiveness that it brings is a free gift "to him that worketh not." It comes on another principle altogether. The God who forgives is the Justifier of *the ungodly*—not of the pious, the good, the diligent user of the means of grace—but of the ungodly. And if we believe the glad tidings concerning Christ who died for the ungodly (Rom. v. 6) and on God "who justifies the ungodly" (Rom. iv. 5), then we are indeed forgiven. This blessedness is ours. It is as sure as that the sun shines in the heavens. Who can read the passages we have quoted and doubt it?

But do not let us stop there as if "this blessedness" were the summit and crown of all that could be ever hoped for. It is the beginning and not the end. The prodigal was certainly forgiven when his father fell on his neck and covered him with kisses. But did not the best robe, the ring, the shoes, the fatted calf, the music and the dancing in the father's house tell a further story? Is there no such thing as "*the riches of His grace*"? (Eph. i. 7).

Our passage speaks in a style and tone that arrests attention. Look! See! Behold! It is as if the writer had fallen into a joyous ecstasy. "See," says he, "the manner of the Father's love! He calls us His children—children of God!" Could there be anything more blessed either in heaven or on earth? Angels, in the Old Testament, are sometimes called "sons of God"—it is a title of dignity, but nowhere are they ever said to be children of God. This amazing privilege is ours! The Father's love has set us in this relationship, so that we might look up to Him as Father and know that He loves us as only such a Father could.

But for the enjoyment of this we need the faith of a little child. That no one is worthy of such a favour is true enough. But if our worthiness is the purchase-price of blessing, then we shall never be blessed at all. No one is worthy, and we may at once abandon all hope and fling ourselves into the black and surging sea of despair. Thank God, there is no need to do that. The atoning work of our Lord Jesus on the Cross has removed every barrier to the outflowing of God's great love. The blessing He gives is not now measured by our meagre thoughts, still less is our worthiness the ground of it. No; He blesses because of what Christ is, and according to the riches of His grace.

The hopes and expectations of the repen-

tant prodigal, in Luke xv., never went beyond the place of a hired servant. He felt that to be much more than he deserved. And so it was. But he had yet to learn the riches of his father's grace. And that is where so many are in the thought of their heart. A place just inside heaven's door marks the boundaries of their hopes. Oh, Christian, shake off these unworthy thoughts! Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us! Not a hired servant's place does His love assign to you. You are His child, dear unto Him, and loved as Jesus is loved (John xvii. 23).

And as if to confirm our hearts in this amazing grace the Apostle is led to say, "Beloved, *now* are we the children of God." Were it a state of future blessedness it would be a matter of hope. But the word NOW brings it right into the present moment. Here on earth, compassed about with failures and infirmities, God calls us His children. We shall not be more so even when we are in our eternal home and perfectly conformed to the image of our Saviour. His own love has formed this relationship, and the Spirit of His Son, sent forth into our hearts, gives us the consciousness of it and leads us to cry, "Abba, Father." It is the sense of this amazing grace that bows our hearts in worship. We adore Him who deals with us thus, and who finds the motive for doing so not in our deserving, but in His own great love.

Nor is this all. Our passage speaks of the future as well as the present. Here, too, there is no uncertainty. As surely as we know that we are now the children of God so do we know what God has purposed for us. It is not, says the Apostle, yet made manifest what we shall be. The hour for that is not yet come. But we are not in the dark as to what God's counsel about His children is. They are to be conformed to the image of His Son. They are to be like Him—the many brethren of whom He will be First-born. This is our calling and high destiny. And it will be realized when Jesus comes again. Then we shall be like Him. Oh, blessed hope!

Finally, the Apostle shows the practical effect of this hope. It sanctifies, it separates in heart, in life, in ways from all that is inconsistent with such a calling. Christ, for whose return we wait, becomes the Object of the heart, and thus we grow more like Him even now.

Christ is our hope. Dark, dark indeed is the night; but we wait and we watch for "the bright and morning Star"—the harbinger of an endless and cloudless day. How rich the grace that gives us our present portion, the children's place, and as to the future, the sure and certain hope of being like Him.

“NARROWED DOWN.”

A WELL-KNOWN evangelist once had a request sent him with these words:—
 “Will you in prayer give God thanks for lives newly consecrated and **NARROWED DOWN** from the harmless amusements of the world? I am a woman and afraid of my own voice.”

The wording of the request is peculiar, but an explanation will enable the reader to understand what this lady meant.

The evangelist had been pressing upon the Christians the happiness of living really devoted lives to the Lord, and showing how real devotion to Him often meant the giving up of many things, which the world would call quite legitimate. He pressed that they should not ask the question whether a thing was right or wrong, but whether it was helpful or harmful.

The illustration he used was the following. For many years the navigation of the mighty Mississippi at its mouth was a great difficulty. The silt that accumulated rendered the river very shallow, and hindered even Mississippi steamers from crossing the bar.

Dredging was of no avail, for as soon as the silt was removed, it was deposited again by the river coming down from above. At last the authorities were in despair, and did not know what to do. They offered a handsome reward to any person, who could solve the problem.

A sailor, Captain Eades, gained the prize. He promised that if he were given the contract he would rectify matters. He was given the contract. He built a stone pier out from the bank on the one side, and another stone pier from the opposite bank until the water was confined to a narrow space and hence the current was greatly increased. The rush of water accomplished automatically what was desired. It dug a deep channel in which steamers could safely cross the bar.

The application of the illustration is obvious. To be really useful for the Lord it may be necessary to deliberately "NARROW DOWN" one's life, not in the sense of the heart being narrow, but of concentrating on one thing, and refusing many other things that no one could say were wrong.

Take the athlete. When he runs a race he certainly "NARROWS DOWN" his clothing. Off goes his heavy ulster, off goes this garment and then another, and perhaps with but a singlet and shorts and a pair of light shoes he is ready for the race.

Take an explorer. He has to "NARROW DOWN" his luggage. Many a useful article, perfectly right to use, he leaves behind, for he must travel light.

An earnest Christian, a dear friend, said to me as we chatted in friendly confidence,

"I could allow myself many luxuries. I have the means to do so, but I prefer to live plainly and simply, so that I have more with which to serve the Lord." He knows what it is to "NARROW DOWN."

It may be the work of the Lord will tie one, and one so tied may have to refuse many a pleasant invitation, because if the invitation were accepted, this bit of service would have to be neglected.

Take a Sunday School teacher. He or she is tied every Lord's day afternoon, and has to refuse many tempting pleasures. Is it worth while to "NARROW DOWN" like that?

A thousand times, Yes. To deny oneself for the Lord is infinitely better than pleasing oneself.

A young Christian may have to ask himself or herself whether this association is helpful, or that friendship is helpful, and as the heart decides to follow the Lord there is sure to be a "NARROWING DOWN." Indeed I doubt if there is one earnest Christian, but has had this experience in greater or lesser degree.

How true are the Master's words, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel's the same shall save it" (Mark viii. 35). There is the secret of discipleship.

Shall we live for the life that is passing away, or shall we lay hold of eternal life in a practical sense? Shall we care merely for those things that minister to our present life, or are we ready to spend and be spent in the service of the Lord?

Young Christian, on the threshold of life, with strength of mind and body, you have a right royal opportunity. Seize it, and you will never regret it, especially when you stand before the Lord, and life is reviewed at His seat of manifestation.

A. J. POLLOCK.

THE POWER OF PRAYER.

(Daniel vi.).

“But they could find none occasion nor fault” (verse 4). *“But maketh his petition three times a day”* (verse 13).

THE great battle in this chapter is about prayer. To whom shall prayer be made? If we look at chapter ix. 1 and xi. 1, we shall get help in the study of chapter vi. The reference to “the first year of Darius” in both those Scriptures seems to point to the time of this chapter, and to connect Daniel’s prayer in chapter ix. with his prayer in chapter vi. It stirred up the

malice of Satan against him. If the angel had not "stood to confirm and strengthen" Darius, Satan would have used his love of flattery to make him remove this man, who had power with God, from the earth. We see in chapter x. that Satan has his "wicked spirits in high places," who fight for his diabolical ends in the affairs of nations, and especially those nations that have power and influence in the things of God and his people.

There had been this evil influence at work in Babylon, preparing a furnace for those who would not bow to a false god; now there was a "prince of the kingdom of Persia" preparing the lions' den for those who would not cease to pray. Such a prayer as the one recorded in chapter ix. raised a war in heaven, and such a man could not be tolerated in Persia, the world empire of the moment. True, the jealous malice of the princes, and the wicked, thoughtless vanity of the king were the second causes; but the angels of God and the angels of the devil were in deadly conflict about God's servant, and His earthly centre, Jerusalem.

The mercy of God makes great distinctions in His judgment. The king was not the originator of the trouble, and did not expect his folly to have such disastrous consequences: he spent the night fasting, and was spared the full result of his wicked vanity. Daniel spent his night in the company of

God's angel, and "no hurt was found in him because he believed in His God." "The devil fought and prevailed not." God's servants in chapter iii. found "the Son of God" in the fire; Daniel found the "angel of God" in the lions' den.

Does not this wonderful story show how God values prayer, and how Satan hates prayer? Does it not throw light on the persistent and determined opposition to prayer in private and in public? The empty prayer meetings, the unlooked for interruptions, the unaccountable outbreaks of ill-feeling, are due to evil power behind the scenes, where the value of prayer is known. Daniel was in a position of public trust and responsibility, his work was very important, but he found time to pray "in his house," "upon his knees," and with a view to the centre of God's interests upon earth. The devil has the lions' den for the man of prayer; but he is "a man greatly beloved" and angels are "caused to fly swiftly" (ix. 21), for his words. The fault that the devil found in him was that he "made his petition three times a day."

The empire of Persia was inferior to that of Babylon. It is represented in the image of chapter ii. by the "breast and arms of silver;" in the beasts of chapter vii. as a bear; in the beasts of chapter viii. as a ram. It was not derived directly from God; the

power of the king was not absolute, and there was not the food and protection for those who submitted to its authority as with Nebuchadnezzar. The bear is merely allowed to "arise and devour," to gratify its bestial appetite; there is no "excellent majesty" or divinely given dominion over all things. The ram merely "pushes" and "becomes great" until another power removes it.

Daniel proved the precious promise made to God's scattered remnant: "I will be to them a little Sanctuary in all places." Even his earthly wisdom he received from and attributed to his God,—he "did the King's business" and he "served his God continually"; so that even the eye of jealousy could not find a fault on which to throw the blame of its malice. But "jealousy is cruel as the grave," and it will find a cloke if even it has to be in the undeniable devotedness of its victim. And in this form of suffering the Lord Himself, of whom Daniel is such a striking type, shared to the full, and so touchingly identified Himself with His people in it that He could say, "They have now compassed us in our steps; they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as a young lion lurking in secret places" (Psalm xvii. 11, 12). The masterpiece of devilish wisdom is seen in placing "the powers that be" in the position described in the words: "If thou let this Man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." How many an unhappy

representative of the power, both temporal and spiritual has, in that "hour of the power of darkness," decided that it is expedient for "this man" to be sacrificed! Daniel has long since gone to his rest, the Lord Jesus is gone to the Father, but "the God of Daniel is the living God, and stedfast for ever."

The princes had no angel to "stand to confirm and strengthen" them that night; and when the morning came, they found no angel in the lions' den. They thought they had put a seal upon Daniel's fate, just as the chief priests asked for a seal to be put upon the sepulchre, receiving the sarcastic reply, "Make it as sure as ye can." "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision" (Psalm ii. 4).

An inferior part of the image may remain, the bear may satisfy its greed, the ram may "push" and "become great," and even the worldly-minded among the people of God may do the same, but God's Daniels go their way, for they shall "rest, and stand in their lot at the end of the days." Their visions, too, they "seal up," a precious secret between God and those who fear Him (xii. 4, 13).

God's abundant answer to Daniel's prayer is seen in Ezra i. "He did according to His will" when He sent Nebuchadnezzar to destroy the city and sanctuary, and to take the vessels of the temple and lock them up in

secret in the house of his god; but He also could and would, in answer to Daniel's prayer, cause the head of the next empire to command the restoration of the city and sanctuary; He would also give to that chosen man of His purpose "the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places" (Isaiah xlv. 1-3) in order that *they might be restored* to their people and place! Little did Belshazzar think that so soon he himself would fall by the hand of God whom he blasphemously derided, and those vessels, in which he and his drunken company were drinking, would be restored to their place by the same God who had for His own purposes allowed them to be taken for a time! "Prayer changes things."

But even all this was not enough for Daniel's God to shower upon him. It might be enough, and was truly wonderful, for a happy party of repentant Jews to return to their land with permission and material to rebuild, and with the precious vessels committed again to their trust; but the angel who "flew swiftly" to touch the beloved man had secrets to impart which were for his ear alone as God's friend. The future, "from the going forth of the commandment to restore Jerusalem" down to the downfall of the fourth beast, was made known to him. And, sorrow of all sorrows, a grief that was yet in store for the heart of God, He made known to His beloved Daniel, viz., that after all His pleadings with His chosen people,

“Having yet one Son, His well-beloved,” He would “send Him last unto them, saying, They will reverence My Son,” with the only result: “After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off and shall have nothing”—Could it be possible that Daniel’s people would thus requite the Lord? Would their wonderful return from captivity in answer to Daniel’s prayer end *thus*? What an honour for him to be told this solemn, stupendous secret all those years before. To anticipate the suffering Messiah, “taken away in the midst of His days,” saying, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death”; to, as it were, watch with Him beforehand, and see the “Hope of Israel” dashed to the ground!

This helps to account for the otherwise surprising fact that Daniel did not return to Jerusalem with the rest. He kept God’s solemn secret in his heart and mourned and fasted and confessed, even as his people will in the coming day, as predicted in Zechariah xii. 10.

We have necessarily anticipated a good deal of what follows in the later chapters in order to see how abundantly Daniel’s prayer was answered and honoured. From that time he held a position of remarkable intimacy with God, and was permitted to have fellowship with Him in His greatest sorrow, viz., the murder of His beloved Son. Others had similar privileges though perhaps

not so great. Ezekiel lost "the desire of his eyes" because God's beloved sanctuary was destroyed and His people taken away. Hosea knew the shame of a defiled house and the grief of unrequited affection, because the Lord's house was defiled and His love spurned. Baruch was to be contented with little things because the Lord was having little things. (See Ezek. xxiv.; Hosea iii.; Jer. xlv.).

J. B.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(1 *Thessalonians ii.* 1—*iii.* 13).

Please read the passage indicated above before reading this article, and then keep your Bible open so that you may refer to it as *may be necessary from time to time.*

The writer takes it for granted that you will comply with this request, and hence he addresses you in the terms he would employ if giving a homely "Bible-talk."

IN his first chapter the Apostle had alluded to "what manner of men" he and his fellow-workers were among the Thessalonians when they first arrived amongst them with the Gospel, and intimated that the power which had accompanied the message was largely connected with the unblameable character of the messengers. He returns to this subject at the opening of chapter ii.

Paul and his friends found at Thessalonica a door opened of the Lord, and they consequently gained a most effectual entrance into their midst. This was the more striking

as they had just come from suffering and shameful treatment at Philippi as recorded in Acts xvi. However far from being cowed by this they had such confidence in God that again they boldly spoke forth the Word. The power of it was such that some even of the Jews believed, "and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few" (Acts xvii. 4). Thus did God grant to His faithful servants a time of much encouragement after severe suffering and before they were plunged into further troubles in Thessalonica itself. We must remember of course that the violence at Philippi did not mean that but little was accomplished in that city. On the contrary, Paul's Philippian converts were among the brightest trophies of grace.

The Apostle puts it on record in verse 2 that he preached the gospel "with much contention." By contention we must not understand heated argument. The expression is literally, "in much agony," or "conflict." The New Translation renders it, "with much earnest striving." Paul preached in an agony of spiritual conflict that the truth might be effectual in his hearers! No "take it or leave it" gospel was his! He was not the mere theologian or Christian philosopher contented with the truth correctly stated in his lectures; nor was he the dreamy mystic wrapped up in himself and in his own impressions and experiences. He was a man

with a message, and burning with zeal, and in agony of mind to effectually convey it to others.

What amazing power this must have given him! He may have been weak as to bodily presence and contemptible as to his powers of utterance—"rude in speech" as he elsewhere says—yet the inward agony of spirit with which he spoke must have made his "rude" words like a whirlwind. Multitudes were converted under them, and still greater multitudes were lashed into fury against him! Where do we see power like this to-day? We hear Gospel addresses that may be characterized as good, clear, sound, striking, intelligent, eloquent, sweet. But they do not achieve much either in conversions or in stirring up the powers of darkness. Yet the need is as great and the energy of the Holy Spirit is the same. The difference lies in the character and calibre of the messengers.

In verses 3 to 6 we are given a glimpse of what Paul and his helpers were NOT, and thereby we may learn the things that are to be studiously avoided by every servant of God. First of all every element of deceit and unreality must be put away. It has been very rightly said that,

"Thou must be true thyself,
If thou the truth would'st teach."

Not only so but all thought of pleasing men

must be banished. Any service we have had committed to us, however small it be, has been given of God and not by man. Hence to God we are responsible and He tries not only our words and acts but also our hearts. Paul was put in trust with the Gospel in an altogether exceptional measure, but the three words, "PUT IN TRUST" may well be written upon all our hearts. We must never forget that we are trustees.

If we bear it in mind we shall of course avoid the use of flattering words, and the cloak of covetousness, and the seeking of glory from men, of which verses 5 and 6 speak. These three things are exceedingly common in the world. Men naturally seek their own things and hence are ruled by covetousness, though they may disguise it under some kind of cloak. Glory from man is also very dear to the human heart; and, whether they pursue possessions or glory, they find flattering words a useful weapon, for by them they can often curry favour with the influential. All these things were utterly refused by Paul. As a servant of God, with God for his Judge and God for his Witness, they were altogether beneath him.

The positive characteristics of Paul's ministry come before us in verses 7 to 12, and it is worthy of note that he begins by comparing himself to a nursing mother and ends by comparing himself to a father. We

may find it difficult to imagine how this exceedingly forcible man could have been gentle, "as a nurse would cherish her own children," but so it was. Physical force is usually brutal. Spiritual force is gentle. There was plenty of the former to be seen in Thessalonica when "the Jews which believed not, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort . . . and set all the city on an uproar," yet it all ended in nothing. Paul's gentleness, on the contrary, left lasting results. It was the gentleness begotten of an ardent love for these young converts. He cherished them; that is, he kept them warm, and how could he do this except his own love was warm. It was so warm that he was ready to impart to them not the Gospel only but also his own soul or life. He would have laid down his life for them.

However he was not called upon to do that. What he did was to labour with his own hands by night as well as by day in order that, being self-supporting, he might not be any charge upon them. He refers to this again in his second epistle, and from Acts xx 34 we glean the astonishing information that he not only met his own needs in this way but also the needs of those that were with him. Elsewhere he speaks of "night and day praying exceedingly," and we know how abundant were his labours in the gospel. Under these circumstances we

may well marvel that this extraordinary man could find any time for his tent-making, but somehow the thing was done and thus he made the Gospel of Christ without charge, although the Lord had ordained as a general rule that those who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. It is very evident that manual labour is honourable in the sight of God.

To all this the Thessalonians were witnesses. Himself marked by holiness and practical righteousness he had been able to charge them that they should follow in his steps and walk in a way that was worthy of God—the God who had called them that they should be under His authority and enter into His glory.

What has occupied us thus far has been the manner of life that characterized Paul and his fellow-labourers: with verse 13 we turn again to that which marked their converts in Thessalonica. Receiving the Word of God through channels such as these men were, they received it as the Word of God. This verse plainly indicates that the Word of God may be received as the word of men, and that it is not one whit less the Word of God if it be so received. If you happened to get hold of a camera with a defective lense you would find the subjects of your films strangely, and often grotesquely, distorted. You must not however blame the

objects which you photographed. The objects were all right though your subjects proved all wrong. We must learn to distinguish between the objective and the subjective, as the Apostle does here. The objective Word of God was presented to the Thessalonians and the subjective impression made in them was according to truth. Had they received it as the word of men its effect upon them would have been but transitory. Receiving it as the Word of God it operated in them powerfully and produced in them just those effects that had been seen when first the Gospel had been preached in Judæa. Though tested by persecution they stood firm.

617 The seventeenth of Acts shows us how quickly the storm of persecution burst in Thessalonica. The house of Jason was assaulted and Jason himself and certain other brethren haled before the magistrates; the instigators of the riotous behaviour being Jews. The Apostle here shows them that they had only been called upon to suffer like things to the earlier converts in Judæa, and that the Jewish instigators of their troubles were true to type. This leads him to sum up the indictment which now was laid against them.

Of old God's great controversy with the Jews was on account of their persistent idolatry. Of this the Old Testament prophets are full. The New Testament adds the even greater charge that they "killed

the Lord Jesus." Added to this they drove out the Apostle by their persecutions and, as far as in them lay, forbad the going forth of the Gospel to the Gentiles. They refused to enter the door of salvation themselves and as far as possible they hindered others doing so. How striking is the description of this unhappy people, "They please not God, and are contrary to all men."!

It is pretty evident that the nations generally are contrary to the Jew. Verse 16 of our chapter shows us the reason why. They themselves are contrary and nationally they lie under the Divine displeasure, hence nothing is right with them, though of course God is still saving out of them "a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. xi. 5). Earlier they had been under trial. Even after the death of Christ an offer of mercy had been made to them consequent upon the coming of the Holy Spirit, as recorded in Acts iii. 17-26. Their official answer was given by the martyrdom of Stephen and by the persecution of Paul who was raised up directly after Stephen's death to carry the light of salvation to the Gentiles. They would have slain Paul also had not God intervened in His providence to prevent it. (See, Acts ix. 23 and 29). As a consequence the wrath long withheld had been definitely loosed against them. They will not have paid, as a nation, the last farthing, till the great tribulation has rolled over their

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heads. But nothing now can stay God's dealings against them in wrath.

Against this dark background how beautiful is the picture which verses 17 to 20 present. The Apostle, who was hurried out of their midst under cover of night, was filled with ardent longings towards them. As his spiritual children, begotten of the Gospel, he looked upon them as his hope, and joy and crown of rejoicing. The links that bound them to him were of the tenderest, most spiritual nature. If he looked on, he anticipated having them as his glory and joy at the coming of the Lord. Looking back he recognized how Satan had worked to keep them sundered on earth, as to bodily presence.

This passage plainly indicates that Satan is permitted to harass and hinder the servants of the Lord; yet comparing the story with the history recorded in Acts it is very evident that God knows well how to overrule Satan's hindering work for good. Satan hindered Paul from returning just then to Thessalonica, but God led him to Corinth; and He had much people in that city!

Notice also how happily Paul looked forward to reunion with his beloved Thessalonian converts in heaven. His words would have been meaningless had he not expected to know them each and all in that day. The saints of God will know one another when

they meet at the coming of Christ and in His presence.

But if Paul had been hindered from coming personally—very likely by the violence of the persecution raised against him by Satan—he had sent Timothy to comfort and encourage them. Here again, in opening chapter iii., we see in Paul the marks of a true father in Christ. He was at Athens, a peculiarly hard and difficult city, a place where more urgently than in most he felt the need of the support and encouragement afforded by like-minded fellow-labourers, yet would he sacrifice himself and be left alone in order that Timothy might shepherd the souls of these young believers, and establish them just when Satan was aiming at their overthrow by means of afflictions. The trial of their faith had not come as a surprise for he had forewarned them about it, even though his stay amongst them had been so short.

From this let us learn that it is not right nor wise to hide from the youngest convert that tribulation from the world is the normal lot of the Christian while on earth. There are abundant joys in Christianity, but not of a worldly order. In the world we are to have tribulation, so let us not misrepresent the case, thinking thereby to get more converts. Let the truth be faced and we shall thereby not lose one true convert, though plenty of make-believe ones may be checked

—to their own good and our good also. As to tribulation, we all of us have to say in our turn, "it came to pass, and ye know."

In raising persecution against believers Satan is always aiming at their faith. He would weaken it and destroy it if possible. Notice how, as a consequence, faith is emphasized by Paul in this passage. He sent Timothy to comfort "concerning your faith." He sent to "know your faith." Timothy returned and brought "good tidings of your faith," and as a consequence he was comforted "by your faith." Faith is the eye of the soul. It gives spiritual vision." Paul knew that, as long as the unseen things of faith were real to them, the persecution would only produce spiritual enrichment and invigoration, just as a cold douche which would be hurtful to an invalid is invigorating to a man in full health. Faith is a vital link between the soul and God and if it be weakened, everything about the believer is weakened. Satan knows this right well.

When faith is maintained in the hearts of believers they "stand fast in the Lord," and this was a great joy to the apostle. It comforted him in all his afflictions. So deeply did he feel about the Thessalonians, exposed as they were to such trials so soon after their conversion, that until he knew how they had been sustained in them he was like a

man at the point of death. The good news he got through Timothy brought him back to life. This is the figure he uses when he says, "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."

Though faith was so brightly maintained in these Christians, yet there was need that it be perfected, as verse 10 shows. Something was lacking as to it in this sense—that as yet they were unacquainted with the whole circle of truth that had been revealed. What they did see by faith, they saw very clearly; but they did not as yet see all there was to see. The apostle earnestly longed to meet them again and bring before them those parts of God's truth which as yet they knew not. In this Epistle he reveals to them something of which as yet they were in ignorance, as we shall see when considering chapter iv.

While as yet he was hindered, his desire was that they should increase and abound in love one toward another. God alone is the Object of faith. He is also the Object of love, but love to Him can best be practically expressed by love to those born of Him, as we are reminded in John's Epistle. Moreover the Christian should be an overflowing fountain of love toward all men. The Thessalonians were this, and it explains how they became such effectual advertisements of the gospel, as we saw when considering

chapter i. Only they were to increase more and more.

Thus would they be established unblameable in holiness in view of the coming of the Lord. Holiness and love are evidently closely connected. As love is operative in our hearts towards God and His people, so we hate what He hates and are preserved unblameable before Him. The grand goal before us is the coming of the Lord Jesus with all His saints. Mark that preposition "with." When He comes in His glory we are to be with Him. How we reach His presence above, so as to come forth from heaven in His company when He appears, is not yet plainly indicated in the Epistle; but this verse alone should have assured the Thessalonians, and should assure us, that when He comes not one will be missing. It will be with ALL His saints.

F. B. HOLE.

SPIRITUAL DECLINE.

The symptoms of spiritual decline are like those which attend the decay of bodily health. It generally commences with loss of appetite and a disrelish of wholesome food, prayer, reading the Scriptures and devotional books. Whenever you perceive these symptoms, be alarmed, for your spiritual health is in danger: apply immediately to the great Physician for a cure.

AN UNBREAKABLE CHAIN.

THE first link in this chain you will find in the end of Romans viii. 28. It is called Purpose—a word that carries our thoughts back to the far-off past. It tells us that God had counsels and plans of His own, and that from the wreck of sinful humanity He would gather out a people in due time that should be conformed to the image of His Son, to share His home and His glory—joint heirs with Christ.

They were "pre-destined," to this great end. "Pre" simply means before, and "destined" refers to the end in view. This word, which has needlessly troubled so many Christians, ought to be a great comfort to them. It very preciously assures us that God's purpose is to conform us to the image of His Son. We are to have a body of glory like His, and then our every thought, feeling, and desire will be in perfect harmony with the mind of God. This is God's gracious thought for us. We are not only to see Jesus, and to be with Him, but we shall be like Him. He is the Firstborn, we are the many brethren. Just as in an earthly family we perceive a family likeness, so, in the heavenly family, all will be in the image of Christ.

The first link is connected with Eternity, and the second with Time. It is named Calling.

Those who are "called" are destined to share in this purpose when it receives its full and blessed accomplishment. God has many ways of calling us. Some are called suddenly, like Saul of Tarsus, and arrested in their mad career by a mighty hand. Others, like Timothy, nurtured in Christian homes, cannot remember any moment when they were thus powerfully affected. But they trust in Jesus, rest in His finished work and are occupied with Him in glory. This is sufficient to assure them that they are among the "called." It is through no works or merit of their own that they have heard this call. They attribute it (and rightly so) to the gracious action of God's Spirit, and know it to be the fruit of God's great love and rich mercy.

The proof that we are among the "called ones" lies in our having heard and believed. We have *heard* the *voice* of Jesus. "My sheep hear My voice." We have *believed* that God sent His Son, the Saviour of the world. We rejoice that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). We thus know that we have everlasting life through believing in Him and we enjoy and enter into it by the Holy Spirit.

Then, if we love Him that begat, we love those also who are begotten of Him. Our souls are purified in obeying the truth, and we love the brethren—"the brethren" meaning all God's children.

Love is the second mark of one who belongs to God's family.

Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and *love* to all saints are the two qualities which mark those who are called.

The third link is *Justification*. "Whom He called, them He also justified" (v. 30). This and the calling go together, and are the two links in this matchless chain formed on earth. A justified man is not merely cleared of all charges, but one who has been righteously cleared. How can this be true of a guilty sinner? First, because there is grace in God; we are justified freely by His *grace*. But God is holy, and He cannot be gracious at the expense of righteousness. So it is through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. We are justified by blood—the precious blood of Christ shed at Calvary, when with pierced hands and feet and thorn-clad brow He gave up His life in death. We appropriate this by faith, and believe in the grand facts of the death and resurrection of Christ. He was delivered for *our* offences, raised again for *our* justification; therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with

God. Moreover, it is God Himself who provided this Saviour, according to His determinate counsel, and when complete atonement for our sins had been made, He raised Him from the dead *without them!*

God is our Justifier. He challenges the whole universe to bring a charge against one whom He has cleared. He is the Supreme Judge, the final court of appeal is His, and there is no setting aside the verdict He gives. He justifies all who believe in Jesus. Do you believe in Jesus? If so you are justified. If Satan harasses you or doubts beset you, turn to verse 34 and read, "It is Christ that died, *yea, rather,* that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." The "*us*" are the called ones. He died. He lives. He intercedes. These are the three great facts our souls are to rest in.

He *died*—our sins, then, have been visited with the judgment they deserved. He *lives.* Not one of those sins remains to be atoned for. He left them all behind, so to speak, in His grave. He *intercedes.* He is our Advocate and Great High Priest, who is saving to the uttermost all who come to God by Him. We are not left to travel through earth and get to heaven the best way we can; we have a loving Saviour! Turn your eye to Him, rely on His love to bring you safely through. Look only, and ever, to

Jesus; rest solely and wholly in His power to carry you over the most stormy sea. He will never let you go, you shall never perish, for "whom He justified, them He also glorified.

Our last link is in the glory. God, who purposed our blessing, called us by His grace, justified us in full accord with His righteousness, will never give us up. He will bring us safely to glory. This should be a great joy to us. We are to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We are to anticipate, with happy, believing hearts, the glory which we shall share with Christ in the near future.

There is glory upon glory, as there has been grace upon grace. Who can conceive what it will be, when, no longer viewed darkly, as through a glass, we behold, face to face, every precious trait of divine excellence in Jesus. The glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ. In Him we shall see all perfection. And we shall behold His glory according to that gracious word: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24). This will be our supreme joy.

Then, too, all the Father's glory will be displayed. He "who only hath immortality,

dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see," will be seen in the Person of our Saviour. He is the image of the invisible God, the exact expression of His substance, the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him.

Then, during the thousand years of Christ's reign over the earth, when He comes in His own glory, His Father's, and that of the holy angels, He will be displayed as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Hosannas shall yet rend the air to Israel's glorious King. The Son of Man shall have universal dominion, the glory of the Lord shall fill the earth. He shall indeed be declared to be the Son of God by resurrection when those unnumbered "called ones" shall have shaken off corruption at His mighty voice, and come forth from their graves witnesses of His glorious power.

What a prospect is before us! What a glorious hope! It is God's settled purpose to have many sons in glory. For this, God's gracious call has gone forth, and every one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is justified, and is fitted to share in the glory that is to come. Any moment we may find ourselves there, where neither disease nor death, sorrow nor sin, shall ever enter. Yes, we *shall* be glorified as surely as we have been called and justified.

“THEM THAT LOVE GOD.”

“*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*” (Deut. vi. 5).

“*And we know that all things work together for good to THEM THAT LOVE GOD, to them who are the called according to His purpose*” (Rom. viii. 28).

“*As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for THEM THAT LOVE HIM. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God*” (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10).

THERE are no contradictions between God's words in the Old Testament and in the New. His critics and those who hate His Holy Book say there are, but they are wrong, and as blind as bats in the summer sunshine as far as these things go: they do not understand the things of God. But there are others who are not enemies who are puzzled when they consider the contrast between law and grace, and they ask, Can it be the same God who gave the law in the Old Testament who has revealed His grace in the New? Yes, the very same.

God is the Creator, and Revelation iv. 11 tells us that He made all things for His

own pleasure, and Man is amongst these things, the chiefest and the best of His work in this lower creation. Great pains did God take with this creation when He made him in His own image and likeness, and He made him for His own pleasure, for "His delights were with the sons of men." But how could He find pleasure in anyone who did not love Him? That were impossible, and when man listened to the devil's lie, he ceased to love God, whatever he may have done before, and he hid away from God for fear of Him. We do not hide from those we love, neither do we love those whose presence fills us with fear.

What was God to do? It was right that He should tell man what was right. And nothing else than this could be right, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart.*" Every reasonable person will acknowledge that if God be God, and our Creator, we owe this at least to Him that we love Him and honour Him as God. Then for His own glory and for the good of man it was right that God should give to man this command.

But does not the command reveal a stern and uncompromising Judge, hence One from whom we must shrink? No, we think not; on the contrary it reveals surely that there was a yearning in the heart of God that was not satisfied. Would He have commanded men to love Him if He had not loved them?

If He had hated men and found pleasure in their misery and destruction as the devil does, would He have talked of love at all? No, He would not. From the darkness and clouds of Sinai there breaks forth light, and a yearning note of love is heard amid the thunderings there. God wants the love of the people; He commands them to love Him because nothing else could be right, but He wants their love because nothing else can satisfy Him.

But the law produced no response in the hearts of men; they loved themselves and hated God, and so do all to this very day who have not been born again. “*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*” (Rom. viii. 7). Then what was God to do? Having given a command, He must see to it that the command is fulfilled, or the devil would laugh Him to scorn and gloat over His defeat. Further, if no men ever do love God His nature in regard to them will remain unsatisfied, and that must not be. What then must He do? Can He find a way? Yes. He can and He has, and the New Testament reveals to us His way.

We cannot love a person whom we do not know and men did not know God, hence it was necessary that He should take steps to make Himself known to them. He has done it and that in the only possible way. He

has sent His Son. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18). "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8), for "God is love."

How wonderful is God's way. The Son, co-equal with the Father in eternal Deity, has become a Man to *reveal to us what God is*, and so dispel our darkness and ignorance as to Him—and He could not have done this if He were not God—and *to redeem us* from Satan's power and death and all iniquity—and He could not have done it if He had not become a Man. It is a wonderful story! The advance has been from God's own side. His love has broken through all the barriers. Our suspicion and hatred of Him has not prevented Him from pouring forth His love in a stream of light through His beloved Son. We have much to marvel at. We do not marvel that we must be born again, when we realize our own sinfulness, but we do marvel when we behold the Son of God lifted up upon a cross that we might have a new life which is eternal life.

Yes, there are two great necessities. The first is that we must be born again, the second is that the Son of Man must be lifted up. He **MUST!** for otherwise the love of God would have remained unsatisfied for

ever, for the only way in which it could find expression to sinful men was by the lifting up of His beloved Son—the Son of Man: only in this way could it be effectual in winning the hearts of men. If there were to be those who could be called "them that love God," then His love had first to reach them and this was the only way. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10), and "In this was manifested the love of God toward us because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John iv. 9).

God has triumphed, His great love has gained the victory and now He can speak in His word of "them that love God." Happy indeed are all these. The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them. The law that God gave at Sinai has not fallen to the ground as a useless thing, but God is vindicated in having given it. What a wonderful change has been accomplished in us! Once we were enmity against God and alienated from His life, now we are brought nigh to Him and rejoice in Him through our Lord Jesus Christ; and it is our persuasion and boast that nothing can separate us from His love.

But we love God; in this is His triumph and the devil's defeat, and what will God do

for us? We may be assured that no weapon forged against us by the devil, who has lost us and who hates us, can prosper, for all things work together for good to them that love God. His eye watches us and all our circumstances with the keenness of love, and come weal or woe, good or ill, as we speak, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword, God will make them all bend to His will and blend for our blessing. What confidence this gives! God surrounds us, North, South, East, West. Above, below, wherever we turn, God is for us,

"God is round about me,
And can I be dismayed?"

Oh! that we understood it better, then would we greet every new circumstance as a friend, and wait keenly interested to discover how God in His minute and personal care for us will turn it to our good.

"Working together," it is a wonderful thought. Here are a thousand threads, but see, they are working together into a beautiful fabric. How is that accomplished? Every thread is part of the designer's scheme, every thread is controlled by the weaver and they work together to one end. So every thing, all things, have their part in God's bright design for them that love Him. Here we rest in our present trials and though we groan we do not grumble, nay, "we glory in tribulation" and give thanks

and in all these things we are more than conquerors *through Him that loved us.*

So much for the present. What of the future? "It is written, Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him." Well, that is just what we should expect from God. His is a love that knows no limit, and it can act without restraint for His resources are as limitless as His love. Oh, it is wonderful to be loved by Him, but see how He appreciates those who respond to His love and love Him in return.

The highest imaginations of man fail here, his range is limited and he cannot soar beyond the desires of His own heart, but here we are brought to the lavishment of God's heart, and we learn that He will satisfy His love in beholding us enjoy what He has prepared for us. He reveals these things to us now by His Spirit. We have entered into a community of life with God, a life of love, and that life is eternal life and as we rejoice in it, in the knowledge of the only true God and Jesus Christ, His sent One, by His Spirit that is given unto us, we realize that God had nothing but blessing in His heart for man when He commanded, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."

“THESE THREE MIGHTIEST.”

DEVOTEDNESS is not a question of the head but of the heart, not of the intellect but of the affections. The intellect may see clearly what one ought to do, but that gives no power to accomplish it.

Suppose the case of a husband and wife, who are not compatible in temperament. The husband sees clearly the duties that ought to mark a husband. The wife, on her part, sees clearly the duties that ought to mark a wife. They both set out to perform these duties. Outward acts are done with punctiliousness, but they lack warmth, life, reality, satisfaction. They are like synthetic foods that have all the ingredients and proportions of natural food, but lack the mysterious vitamins that carry with them life and vigour. Scientists have manufactured synthetic milk, and babies fed on it fade and wither, and would die, if the food were persisted in.

But if heart, love, affection that should mark the relationship of husband and wife, are present, then duties become pleasures, and punctiliousness vanishes in the warmth of responsive affection.

Apply this illustration to spiritual things. What is the great lack with us all, writer and reader? Surely it is devotedness to the Lord. The wise man in the Proverbs

pleads for the affections of his son, for if he gets that he knows that he gets everything that goes with affection—devotedness, desire to carry out the slightest wish of the one on whom the affections are placed.

A wonderful illustration of devotedness is given in the list of David's mighty men in 1 Chronicles xi. The choice lay between Saul and David—Saul an illustration of the carnal man and David a type of Christ. Saul is in the palace. He sits on the throne. The kingdom is at his feet. David is in the cave of Adullam with a band of men gathered round him, who are drawn by affection, and are devoted to his cause.

These men did valiant feats on David's behalf. We read of ¹Jashobeam, an ²Hachmonite, who slew three hundred men of the enemy with his spear at one time; of Eleazer, who fought on the piece of barley field till the Lord gave “a great deliverance”; of ³Abishai, who slew three hundred with his spear; of ⁴Benaiah, who slew two lion-like men of Moab, who killed a lion in a pit on a snowy day, who slew an Egyptian giant; of over forty names that are mentioned with great honour in despatches from the front.

But none of these, greatly distinguished though they were, earned the title of

“THESE THREE MIGHTIEST.”

(1 Chronicles xi. 19).

What did these three men do to earn such approbation? What wonderful feat of arms did they perform? What prodigies of valour covered them with immortal glory?

None of these spectacular things did they aim at. They simply procured a drink of water for David. How was it that such a simple bit of service carried with it such appreciation?

The answer is that it was an act of supreme devotedness to David. He lay in the hold. The hosts of the Philistines were encamped in Bethlehem, the place of his birth and bringing up, every bit of it known and loved by him. As he lay in the hold tired and thirsty, these three devoted men heard David say, "Oh! that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate."

Now prudence would have said that water procured from some other spot would have done equally well to satisfy David's thirst. That would have been perfectly true. Water is water wherever it is, and there were no special virtues in the water of the well of Bethlehem.

The hosts of the Philistines were encamped in serried rank between the hold and the well. These three devoted men did not count the cost of the simple act of gratifying David's desire. They wanted to please David. Nothing pleased them so much as

pleasing him. Devotedness nerved their right arms that day as these men broke through the astonished ranks of the Philistines, and procured the water for David.

Little wonder that David's heart was strangely moved by this simple act. Little wonder that he poured out the water, secured at the risk of their lives, to the Lord as a drink offering, setting forth, as it did, the devotedness of these dear men. It was the spring of the action, which transmuted that simple act into one that placed those three men at the very top of the glory roll of the kingdom, when the fighting was all done, when power was established, and the day of rewards had come.

And shall there be no voice in this for us to-day? Our Lord is now rejected, but “*The crowning day is coming by-and-by.*” Now is the time to show which side we are on. Now is the time to prize the cross as great reward. Devotedness is not seen in waiting for tasks that will bring us into publicity, into work that is spectacular, but a readiness to do the humblest, most menial work that needs to be done in the service of the Lord.

There is an urge in some men's minds for work of a public nature, that is lacking in deeds of humble and unseen nature. It may be in the coming day of manifestation that the reading of the Scriptures to a blind person may receive a higher appreciation

than that of a popular preacher, who can attract the crowds.

We are not responsible for the gift that may be given to us, but we are responsible for the use of it. Every Christian has some grace "according to the measure of the gift of Christ." It is devotedness that will lead to the full use of what has been given.

Let us remember and be stimulated by the example of

"THESE THREE MIGHTIEST."

A. J. POLLOCK.

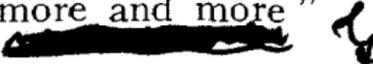
OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(1 *Thessalonians iv.*).

Please read the passage indicated above before reading this article, and then keep your Bible open so that you may refer to it as may be necessary from time to time.

The writer takes it for granted that you will comply with this request, and hence he addresses you in the terms he would employ if giving a homely "Bible-talk."

AS we open the fourth chapter of this epistle we find the Apostle turning to exhortation and instruction. The earlier chapters had been largely occupied with reminiscences both as regards the work of God, wrought in the Thessalonians, and also the behaviour and service of Paul and his fellow-workers in their midst. Now the Apostle addresses himself to the present needs of his much-loved converts.

In the first chapter he had been able to say about them much that was highly commendatory, but this did not mean that there were no dangers and difficulties confronting them, nor that they were beyond the need of further advancement in the things of God. On the contrary they were as yet but babes. There was much they had yet to learn as to the truth and much they needed to know as regards the will of God for them. A great word for them, and for all of us, is that with which verse 1 closes—"more and more" 

In the first place they were to abound more and more in all those practical details of life and behaviour which are pleasing to God. During his short stay in their midst Paul had succeeded in conveying to them an outline of the walk that pleases God though of course there was much to be filled in as to detail. It is one thing however to know and quite another to do, and we are set here to please God in all our activities and ways. The will of God is our sanctification, that is, that we should be set apart from all that defiles in order that we may be wholly for God, and the Apostle had given them definite commandments as from the Lord in keeping with this.

Do we pay sufficient attention to the commandments of the Lord Jesus and of His Apostles which we find so plentifully in the New Testament? We fear that the

answer to this question is that *we do not*. There are indeed some believers who have a rooted objection to the idea that any commandment has application to a Christian. The very word they will have none of. It has, they feel, so exclusive a connection with the law of Moses that to bring any kind of commandment to bear upon a Christian is to at once put him under law; and we Christians are, as they rightly remind us, "not under law but under grace."

In this however they are mistaken. Under grace we have been brought into the kingdom of God. The Divine authority has been established in our hearts, if indeed we have been truly converted; and though love is the ruling force in that blessed kingdom yet love has its commandments no less than law. The law issued its commands without furnishing either the motive or the power that would ensure obedience. Only love can furnish the compelling force that is needed. Still the commands of love are there. "This is the love of God that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" (1 John v. 3). Under law men were given commandments on the keeping of which depended their life and position before God. Under grace the believer's life and position are assured in Christ, and the commandments he receives are to shape and direct that new life in a way that will be pleasing to God.

In the New Testament we have, thank God, many plain commandments of the Lord covering all the major matters of life and service. There are however many minor matters as to which the Lord has not issued any definite instructions. (A comparison of three verses, viz., 1 Corinthians vii. 6 and 25; xiv. 37, might be helpful at this point). These omissions are not by oversight but of set purpose. It is evidently the Lord's purpose to leave many things to the prayerful exercises of His saints; they must search the Scriptures to discover what pleases Him and judge by analogies drawn from His dealings of past days. This is in order that they may be spiritually developed and have "their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." As to such matters each of us must seek to ascertain God's will and be fully persuaded in our own minds.

This we fully admit; but let us not therefore overlook the plain commandments of the Lord where He has spoken. Some Christians are, we fear, rather apt to practice self-deception in this matter. They seem much exercised about a certain point. They seek light. They pray very piously. Yet all the while if they opened their Bibles there would stare them in the face a plain commandment from the Lord upon the very point in question. Somehow they manage to ignore it. In that case all their prayers and exercises are of but little worth, and indeed savour of hypocrisy.

We have enlarged a little upon this point because of its importance. Turning again to our Scripture we notice that having stated that God's will for His people is, in a general way, their sanctification, the Apostle specifies one sin which is the deadly enemy of any such thing. This particular sin was exceedingly common among the Gentile nations, so common that it was thought nothing of at all, and it was only when the light of Christianity was shed upon it that the real evil of it became manifest. Amongst the Christianized nations of to-day it is looked upon with far less abhorrence than it was fifty years ago; a definite witness this to how far they have turned aside from even the outward profession of Christ. Verses 3 to 7 are all concerned with this particular sin. Let us each carefully read these verses and take home to our hearts the Apostle's pungent words.

The word *sanctification* really occurs three times in these verses, but it has been translated "holiness" in verse 7, where it is put in contrast with uncleanness. To sanctification we have been called and if we ignore this we shall find serious consequences in three directions.

In the first place we have to reckon with the Lord, who will deal with us in His righteous government of His saints. If another has been wronged He will constitute Himself the Avenger of their cause. Secondly

there is God to be reckoned with. It may seem as if the wrongdoer is merely despising or disregarding the rights of a man, but in reality he is disregarding the rights of God. Thirdly, there is the Spirit of God to be considered, and He is the Holy Spirit—the word for holy coming from the same root as the words for sanctification in the verses above. The Spirit being given, He sets us apart for God.

With verse 9 Paul turns from this sin which so often masquerades falsely 'under the name of love, to brotherly love, which is the real article as found among the people of God. As to this he gladly acknowledges there was no need of his exhortations for they had been taught of God to do it. It was the very instinct of the divine life in their souls. The only thing he has to say to them is that they should "increase more and more." Here again we meet with these words. There is to be more and more happy obedience to the commands of the Lord, and more and more brotherly love amongst the people of God. LOVE and OBEDIENCE—these are the things! And more and more of them! How happy shall we be if thus we are characterized!

It is very significant how we pass from brotherly love to the very homely instructions of verses 11 and 12. Before now brotherly love has been known to degenerate into unbrotherly interference with one's brethren.

Well, here we have the wholesome corrective. "Seek earnestly to be quiet, and mind your own affairs and work with your own hands," as one translation renders it.

The Apostle now (verse 13) approaches the matter which was apparently the main reason for the writing of the epistle. They were at that moment in a good deal of sorrow and difficulty as to certain of their number who had died. They were well aware that the Lord Jesus was coming again, indeed they were expecting Him very soon, and this made these unexpected deaths very mysterious to their minds. They felt that in some way or other these dear brethren of theirs would be losers. The Saviour would come and the glory would shine without them! It was a very real grief to them, but it was a grief founded upon ignorance and it only needed the light of the truth to dispel it for ever.

~~"I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren,"~~ says the Apostle, and he forthwith instructs them in the very details which they needed to know, perfecting in that particular matter that which was lacking in their faith.

The first thing he assures them is that God will bring these departed saints with Jesus when He comes again. In the last verse of chapter iii. he had spoken of "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with ALL

His saints" and here he fortifies this assurance. The "all" includes those who "sleep in Jesus" for it is as certain that such will be brought with Christ as that Jesus Himself died and rose again. The death and resurrection of Christ are to faith the standard of absolute truth and reality and certainty. All parts of the truth are equally certain and the Apostle desired them to realize this.

This most definite assurance, comforting as it must have been, would not solve the difficulty existing to their minds as to how it was to be accomplished. How were these departed saints to be found in Christ's glory so as to come with Him at His advent? In what way would this great change be accomplished? This question is answered in the succeeding verses, and the Apostle prefaces his explanation with the words, "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord." By this he indicated that he was conveying to them something as a direct and fresh revelation from the Lord, and not merely restating something that had been previously revealed. The item of truth which he makes known to them was just that which they needed to complete their understanding of the coming of the Lord.

When the Lord comes the saints will be divided into two classes—(1) "we which are alive and remain" (2) "them which are asleep." Evidently the Thessalonians to

begin with had not contemplated the possibility of there being this second class at all. Even later they probably imagined that the first class would form the majority and the second the minority; and hence there would be the tendency to treat the second class as a negligible factor. Verse 15 corrects this tendency. The fact was, as the Apostle assures them, that the saints in class one would not "prevent"—that is, "go before" or "have precedence over"—those in class two. If there was to be any precedence given at all it would be accorded to class two as verse 16 shows, for there it is stated that "the dead in Christ shall rise first."

Verses 16 and 17 then speak of the coming of the Lord Jesus for His saints. They reveal to us just how He is going to gather them to Himself so that subsequently He may come with all of them as the last verse of chapter iii. stated. Unless the distinction between the coming for and the coming with is seen no clear view of the Lord's coming is possible.

How emphatic is that statement:—"The Lord Himself shall descend." In that supreme hour He will not act by proxy but come Himself! He will descend with an assembling shout. Myriads of angels will serve, for the archangel's voice will be heard. The hosts of God will be on the move, for the trumpets of God shall sound. Yet all

these will be subsidiary to the mighty action of the Lord Himself. Verse 16 gives us His sudden descension from heaven into the air, and the exertion of His power, the utterance of the voice that wakes the dead.

The last clause of verse 16 and verse 17 give us the response that will be at once found in the saints. The first effect of His power will be seen in the resurrection of the dead saints. Then they, with those of us who are alive and remain until that hour, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and so be for ever with Him. How simple it all is; and, thank God, as certain of accomplishment as simple.

We notice of course that this Scripture does not give us all the details connected with this blessed hope. We might wish to enquire for instance in just what condition the dead in Christ are raised? This we find answered very fully in 1 Corinthians xv. That chapter also informs us of the change that must take place as to the bodies of all saints who are alive when He comes. We must be changed into a spiritual and incorruptible condition ere we are "caught up." That chapter also tells us that all will take place "in a moment in the twinkling of an eye," which assures us that though the dead in Christ shall rise first, the precedence they are granted will be a matter of but just a moment.

In verse 17 observe the word "together." The Thessalonians sorrowed and so often do we. Being taught of God to love one another their hearts were torn when death snatched some from their midst. We too know what these wrenches are. We do not sorrow as those who have no hope, nor did they. The life-giving voice of the Son of God is going to reunite us. We shall meet Him, but not in ones or twos or in isolated detachments. We shall be caught up TOGETHER.

"What a chorus, what a meeting,
With the family complete!"

Notice also that we are going to meet the Lord. The word used here only occurs thrice elsewhere in the New Testament, viz., in Matthew xxv. 1 and 6, and Acts xxviii. 15. In each case it has the meaning of "going forth and returning with." When the brethren from Rome "met" Paul that was exactly what happened. They went forth as far as Appii Forum and having met him they joined his company and returned with him to Rome. Just so shall we all meet our Lord in the air. Joining His company—never to part from Him—we shall subsequently return with Him when He is manifested to the world in His glory.

Are not "these words" enough to comfort all our hearts; enough indeed to fill them with abiding joy?

ON WITNESSING FOR CHRIST.

IN former numbers of *Edification* we have sought to trace the way of the young Christian from his first step of trusting Christ; we have seen him going on to follow Christ, perhaps with halting steps, but nevertheless in the pathway; we have pictured him with those who come together on the first day of the week to break bread in remembrance of the Lord, and have rejoiced with him in his joy in being in the Lord's presence, with all that He brings of peace and love.

Now we are to think of him in very different circumstances. He must needs go forth into a hostile world and will desire as every true-hearted believer must do, to witness for Christ there. How cheering for him to know that One has been there before him! We read in Revelation i. 5, "Jesus Christ . . . the faithful Witness," and in Revelation iii. 14, "The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God," and in 1 Timothy vi. 13, "Christ Jesus who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession." His own words

are "To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth." (John xviii. 37) In all His beautiful, lowly life, in all His mighty works, in all His acts of healing and mercy He bore witness to the truth. When He stood before Pilate, deserted by His own, mocked, scorned, scourged He witnessed a good confession, even unto death.

Now come forth in resurrection, He is the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God. The first creation had come from His hand, very good, though so soon marred by man; now He comes as the Redeemer, the beginning of a new creation in which we have our part, and He allows us to be His witnesses.

Nor does He leave us unaided in this. He is on high for us, but His Spirit is here to testify of Him. When He first put His disciples into the place of witnesses He told them in John xv. 26, 27, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceeded from the Father, He shall testify of Me, and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning." How almighty is this Holy Spirit! The same disciples who forsook and denied their Lord, are found with great power giving witness to Him and with great grace upon them all. The apostle Paul too, who had been a persecutor and injurious, was con-

verted and brought into this goodly company of witnesses and says, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great; saying . . . that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead" (Acts xxvi. 22, 23).

It may be remarked here, that all *witness*, as Scripture speaks of it, is to Christ, not to ourselves, nor to our doings, nor to our feelings. It is a solemn and serious matter; as is well known, our word martyr, comes from the same Greek word which is used for witness.

The story of the Tabernacle in the wilderness may help us, as recorded in Exodus xxv.-xl. It is constantly called the "Tabernacle of witness." God had designed to have a sanctuary that He might dwell among them and thus His people carried His Name through the desert. Let us consider however, how many different offices and services were needed—workers in metals, workers in wood, those who could spin, those who could compound holy ointment; how many different materials were used—gold, silver, precious stones, shittim wood, badgers' skins, rams' skins dyed red, goats' hair, fine twined linen, blue and purple and scarlet, oil for the light, sweet spices for frankincense. Think of the provision for transport, oxen and waggons and bearers who should carry holy vessels on their shoulders. All was to be as the

Lord commanded Moses, all was put under the hand of Ithamar the priest, and two men Bezaleel and Aholiab were set apart by God for the work; nothing was left to man's opinion or direction.

So must it be with us, beloved young Christian, the witnessing for Christ in the world is such a very great thing, it would take all the Christians in the world to witness to Him, and even so, their testimony would be wholly inadequate; therefore let us diligently enquire of the Lord, in order to know what is the little share in it He has entrusted to us each one, and having obtained help from Him find it our joy and delight to witness for Him.

To some is given the public ministry of the Gospel, some are to be labourers in the word and doctrine; some may tell the little children of Him, to some may be committed His own most precious gift—to speak a word in season to him that is weary. Some perhaps can only bear witness to His Name, by quiet deeds of love and kindness, and some may even lay down their lives as martyrs for His Name. What really matters is, that our witness should be according to His plan, and that it should always be “unto Him.”

May the Lord grant His grace for it until He come—Amen.

L. R.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.

“**H**AVE you any *fear* as to your place in heaven when you think of appearing before the judgment seat?”

“None whatever,” replies the intelligent Christian. But let me give you my reasons.

I. Every believer is justified from all things and accounted righteous before God. No one can lay anything to his charge. (Rom. viii. 33). The righteousness in which he stands is of God. It is “unto all and upon all them that believe” (Rom. iii. 22).

II. He is “a new creature” in Christ (2 Cor. v. 17), a vessel fashioned by God’s own hand—His workmanship (Eph. ii. 10).

III. He is now “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. i. 6). The favour which rests upon Christ rests also upon him.

IV. The precious blood of Christ’s atonement has completely met all the holy claims of God. Christ has borne the judgment due to our sins, so that it can be said, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. viii. 1). *They* shall never come into judgment, for God’s Word cannot be broken, and Christ’s work can never lose its value.

Moreover, “as He is, so are we in this world” (1 John iv. 17). This is written in order that all fear might be taken away

from us. The perfect love of God casts it out now, and that love will know no change. We shall have "boldness in the day of judgment," not fear.

But you say, "If the believer is made the righteousness of God in Christ, if he be God's workmanship, why does it say in 2 Corinthians v. 10, 'We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad'? Will not what he has *done* determine his future destiny?"

Our manifestation before the judgment seat is not to settle the question of our fitness for heaven, for we shall be in heaven before it takes place. But our works will be reviewed there, and if bad they will be burned; if good, we shall receive a reward in the then coming kingdom (1 Cor. iii. 14, 15).

"But," you reply, "I cannot even now quite understand why it says in Romans xiv. 12, 'Every one of us shall give account of himself to God'; and in 2 Corinthians v., 'We must all appear,' or, as I understand the words to mean, be 'manifested before the judgment seat of Christ.'"

Let me, then, by way of illustration, try to show you how an account may be rendered, and also all work done be manifested.

Suppose a man to be on the verge of

bankruptcy. A friend hastens to his relief, and asks what sum will be needed to clear him of his embarrassments. The unfortunate man cannot tell, for he has been afraid to search and see the true state of his affairs. All he knows is that he is ruined and has nothing wherewith to pay.

His friend then tells him he will liquidate every claim. Not only so, he will lodge in the bank a certain sum of money for him to trade with. On leaving he says, "I shall return later, and let you know how much I have paid for you, and then you must give me an account of the way you have used the sum now placed to your credit."

The man is relieved. He knows that all his debts, no matter what their amount, will be paid. But were you to call the next day and ask to what extent he is indebted to his friend, he would reply, "I cannot tell how far my friend's kindness has gone, for I do not know what my liabilities were."

Nor can any believer tell you the sum of his obligations which Christ met for him on the Cross. But he can say:—

*"All my sins, so great, so many,
In His blood are washed away,"*

though the number of them he knows not.

After a while his friend returns and gives him a detailed account of the various amounts he has paid. Then for the first time he knows the extent of his indebtedness, and exclaims, "What a friend you have been

to me! I had no idea how greatly I was indebted to you until now. How can I ever thank you enough? ”

The judgment seat will reveal how much each believer owes to Christ. So McCheyne sang:—

“When I stand with Christ in glory,
Looking o'er life's finished story,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe.”

And then we shall also know what God's ways of grace with us have been, and how His love was occupied with us all our pilgrim days. All will be brought into the light. We shall see how He preserved us in times of peril, sent a sorrow to save us from dangers to which our course was tending; and how needful every bit of discipline was! Many things that are now unexplained will then be understood. What an unfolding it will be! In His light we shall see light. And in result we shall the more adore and render fuller praise to that blessed Saviour who loved us so greatly and cared for us so tenderly and patiently through all our earthly days.

Nor is it only to make us acquainted with the fulness of Christ's work, the greatness of His redeeming love, and all the Father's care and goodness in our earthly journey that we shall be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. Every action will then be weighed and the motive which prompted it.

To revert to our illustration. The friend who relieved the debtor of his anxieties left him money wherewith to trade in his absence. After giving him proof of the way he had cleared him, he minutely goes through each subsequent transaction. Sometimes he finds a thing to blame and sometimes to praise. For that in which the debtor had done ill he suffers loss and receives no reward. But this does not alter his friend's kindness in paying his debts and providing money wherewith to trade. It is his "works" which are now in question, and rewards for faithful service.

The Christian's works are to be weighed in the balances. He is a responsible steward, and must render an account of the way he has traded with his Master's goods. He is *saved to serve*; he knows very well that he is saved *apart from works*, for it is "to him that *worketh not*, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly," that righteousness is imputed (Rom. iv . 5). But having been saved, he labours to be *acceptable* to his Master. Labour shall have its reward. Nothing done to Him will be forgotten. Every cup of cold water given in His Name will be remembered, and every act appraised at its true value. Christ will confess his name to His Father, and say to him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Let us ever remember we are both sons

and servants. Saved by pure sovereign grace, we are responsible to the One who has saved us. His word is to instruct us in every difficulty, and His Spirit to strengthen us to do His will. In all things we are called to set aside our own will, and in every good work to do what is pleasing in God's sight.

The judgment seat will precede the glorious manifestation of Christ in His kingdom, and will determine the various rewards of that day. Some will wear crowns indicative of Christ's approval. Some will have honours and dignities, and be made rulers over ten cities. Some will have a white stone with a "new name" engraven thereon known only to the receiver (Rev. ii. 17). But these rewards are not to be mixed up with our acceptance in Christ. For we are saved by grace—without works. *Rewards* depend upon the character of our labour. Paul thought so seriously of this matter that he tells us his whole life was spent in the light of the judgment seat. He always viewed his actions as they would appear in that day (2 Cor. v. 9).

Good for us if we ask ourselves, "How will what I am now doing, or what I purpose to do, look in the light of the day when both motives and actions will be weighed?"

Let us, then, well understand that it is our *works* and not our *persons*, our *service* and not our *salvation*, which will be in question then. Scripture is emphatic. The

person of the believer will not come into judgment. "Verily, verily I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (John v. 24, R.V.).

This Scripture cannot be broken. Its statements are clear and plain. Let us seek to grasp the difference between the judgment of works and that of persons.

Suppose your son is also your servant, and he is to be paid according to the quantity and quality of his work. Should he fail to produce a carving of which you can approve he will suffer loss. You cannot reward him for poor work, but he still remains your son. Your love to him is unchanged, and his place in the family is the same. It is purely a question of his work, not of his person or relationship.

Keep this distinction in mind, and you will readily see that a person's *work* might be judged, and he receive the things done in his body, whether good or bad, without judging and condemning him personally.

We are now the children of God, and shall be sons in the Father's house before the judgment seat of Christ is set up. However our work may be appraised there, it will not alter—blessed be God!—either our place or relationship. But it will make a difference to the rewards we shall receive, and the place we shall have, in the coming

kingdom. What Christian's heart does not value Christ's approval? Shall we not labour to be agreeable to Him, and live now so as to earn His commendation then? Let us do this not because we fear condemnation, but because of His great love to us. However misunderstood we may be by the world around us, or even by our fellow-Christians, if we are sure a thing is according to His will, let us do it, being confident that the day will declare it. So we need not be troubled about the verdict of "Man's day."

H. N.

"THROUGH HIS POVERTY."

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9).

HIS POVERTY." Whose? That of our Lord Jesus Christ. He, the Son of God, Creator of the worlds, Upholder of all things by the word of His power, Heir of all things, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

He for the glory of God His Father and for our salvation and enrichment stooped to POVERTY, to become a Man and die. Stooped to Bethlehem's manger, to the Nazareth workshop, to the homeless strangership of the Galilean hills, to the shades

of Gethsemane and the deeper shades of Calvary's cross, to the judgment of a thrice holy God on our behalf, the judgment which would have sunk us into the depths of everlasting woe.

HIS POVERTY. Never can we measure the depths of this. There on Golgotha's tree the waters entered into His soul, there "deep called to deep" at the noise of the waterspouts of wrath, there all the waves and billows rolled relentlessly over Him. The human mind in its finiteness cannot penetrate the depths of all His sorrow, or the distance He knew when He cried, in the bitterness of His abandonment in righteousness by God, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Wonderful poverty indeed!

"Though He was rich"! Riches had been His eternally. The angels were His ministers doing His pleasure. All things were His in His everlasting glory.

That sentence carries us into the recesses of the past. *There* He was rich. Not below in this world. *Here* He was ever poor. Laid in the manger of the stable at His birth, the King of glory amid the cattle in their stalls. The Nazarene in the despised Nazareth of Galilee of the Gentiles. His creatures had their burrows or their roosting places but He, the Creator, had not where to lay His head.

“The foxes found rest, and the birds had their nest,
 In the shade of the cedar tree;
 But Thy couch was the sod, O Thou Son of God,
 In the deserts of Galilee.”

His riches were in glory eternal. His poverty was here, as we have seen. Never can the creature estimate His Godhead riches in glory. Never can the creature measure the poverty to which He stooped at Calvary.

“We may not know, we cannot tell
 The pains He had to bear;
 But we believe it was for us
 He hung and suffered there.”

“THROUGH HIS POVERTY.” What accrues to us from that which He endured when “poor” for our sakes? *Something* of this we know now, the *fulness* awaits us in the Father’s house when we shall be with and like our Lord—for His glory conformed to His image.

We are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ.” But every blessing is hall-marked with the words, “Through His poverty.”

All that which we enjoy now comes to us through that channel.

All that which we shall enjoy for ever on high flows through that channel also.

Forgiveness is “through His poverty.”

Redemption and justification, and peace with God are “through His poverty.”

Sonship, everlasting life and the Father's house and eternal glory for us are "through His poverty."

Wonderful poverty—His. Wonderful riches—ours.

"Rich in glory Thou didst stoop,
Thence is all Thy people's hope;
Thou wast poor that we might be
Rich in glory, Lord with Thee."

And we know His grace, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, He who is now honoured and glorified—made Lord and Christ at God's right hand.

Yes! we know that grace and yet can never know it fully. We think of the glory of Him who showed it. We think of the cross of Calvary where it was expressed. We think of the deep need in which we were plunged. We think of the heights of present blessing which are ours. We think of the glory of God into which He will introduce us at His coming. And as we think of these things we wonder and we worship, amazed at His grace which passeth knowledge. But in that grace we boast and delight now and shall boast and delight eternally.

And when the glory is gained and we surround the throne with our praises how gladly shall we sing, "Thou art worthy . . . for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred

and tongue and people and nation and hast made us unto our God kings and priests and we shall reign on the earth." And all that we have and are in that glad day of glory we shall delight to own is "Through His poverty."

INGLIS FLEMING.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(1 *Thessalonians v.*).

Please read the passage indicated above before reading this article, and then keep your Bible open so that you may refer to it as may be necessary from time to time.

The writer takes it for granted that you will comply with this request, and hence he addresses you in the terms he would employ if giving a homely "Bible-talk."

THE first and second verses of chapter v. stand in very direct contrast to verses 13 and 15 of chapter iv. As to the coming of the Lord Jesus for His saints—that which is commonly spoken of as "the rapture"—they had been ignorant, and consequently they were in needless difficulty and sorrow, and the Apostle wrote to them "by the word of the Lord" to enlighten them. But as to "the times and the seasons" they were not at all ignorant and there was no need for Paul to write to them on that subject.

We must not fail to notice the distinction which is thus made between these two parts of prophetic truth. It is possible to be quite

ignorant as to the rapture while being well informed as to the times and the seasons. Plainly then they are two different things, quite distinct from each other. Were the rapture an essential part of the times and seasons, then to be wholly ignorant of it would mean partial ignorance as to them. The Thessalonians however were quite ignorant as to it, while being so well instructed as to them that the apostle could say you "know perfectly" and "have no need that I write unto you."

The times and seasons have to do with the earth and not heaven, as Genesis i. 14 shows us. The term is used in Thessalonians to indicate not the various divisions of earth's history as regulated by the heavenly bodies but those larger divisions, each characterized by its own special features, as regulated by God's moral government of the earth. In the past fresh seasons have been introduced by such events as the flood, the redemption of Israel from Egypt and the giving of the law, the overthrow of David's line of kings and the passing of dominion into Gentile hands. Another season yet to come is to be introduced by the Lord Jesus assuming His great power that He may reign. That will be "the day of the Lord."

The rapture of the saints is however disconnected from these earthly seasons. It is not just an item on the programme of earthly happenings. It will be the Lord

calling up His saints to heaven for the enjoyment of their heavenly portion. The church—composed of all the called-out saints of the present dispensation—is heavenly in its calling and destiny. It does not belong to the earth, which is the reason why its translation from earth to heaven is not included in the programme of earthly events. There is no hint consequently of the rapture in Old Testament Scripture. A right understanding of this matter furnishes us with a key that unlocks much dispensational truth, which otherwise must remain closed to our minds.

The day when the Lord shall have His rights and dominate the whole situation is certainly coming. Its arrival will be unexpected, sudden, inevitable, and unerring in its effects. It will come, as all God's dealings have come, in the most appropriate time and manner possible, and it will mean destruction for the ungodly. Just when men are saying "Peace and Safety" then the judgment will fall. Conditions amongst the nations are such that peace is an urgent necessity. Modern teachings, both scientific and religious, are such that men feel increasingly secure from supernatural happenings. In the minds of the people God has been reduced to a nonentity by the popular doctrine of evolution; so they fear nothing from that quarter. To their minds the only danger that threatens is from man. Man,

wonderful man, has sought out many inventions, but unfortunately his marvellous discoveries in chemistry coupled with researches in other directions are capable of being turned to the most diabolical uses. Now if only peace can be maintained amongst men safety is assured.

When men congratulate themselves on having achieved this desirable end then God will assert Himself and the day of the Lord arrive. The world will be overtaken by it like those who are asleep in the dark; but not thus is it going to be with believers. To-day the world is asleep in the dark; to-day the believer is a child of light, and in the light.

The contrast between the believer and the world, as given to us in verses 4 to 8, is very striking, and we do well to ponder it. The world is in darkness. The world is asleep. The world is even "drunken, intoxicated with influences that are from beneath". This was never more apparent than it is to-day when multiplied means of inter-communication spread new ideas and influences with great rapidity. Think of the potency with which the one word "evolution" has drugged the *minds* of men! No opiate for the *body* ever yet discovered can compare with it!

The believer is not in darkness nor is he of the darkness. He is a child of light and

of the day. He has been begotten, so to speak, of the light which reached him in the Gospel, and he partakes of the character of that which gave him birth. Hence, though he is in the world, which is in darkness, he is not in darkness himself; rather light divine surrounds his going. He is a child of the coming day and hence he knows where he is going and what is coming.

Upon this is based the exhortation to shake off anything like sleep that we may, watch and be sober. As a means to this sober watching we are to be characterized by faith, love and hope. These virtues, if in active exercise, will be to us like breast-plate and helmet, protecting both heart and head in this day of conflict. Though children of light we are surrounded by the darkness of the world and ugly blows may fall upon us, struck from out the darkness.

The hope which is ours is the "hope of salvation." The Christian is *never* spoken of in Scripture as hoping for forgiveness of sins, but he is as hoping for salvation, for salvation is a word of large meaning, embracing the final deliverance which shall reach us at the coming of the Lord. For that we hope; that is, we await it with expectation. It is certain to arrive in its due season for there is no element of uncertainty in hopes which are founded on God and His word.

The Christ-rejecting world is appointed to wrath when the vials of His judgment will be outpoured on earth. Details as to this solemn time we find in the book of Revelation. We however have been appointed to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. God's appointments are always kept to time. They never fail. Wrath for the world and salvation for the saints are alike sure.

That salvation is going to reach us by our Lord Jesus Christ acting as described in chapter iv. 16, 17. His people shall be taken by Him out of the place where the judgment is going to fall, just as of old God removed Enoch before death reached him or the flood came. In more places than one the Old Testament bears witness to the way in which God shelters his people from judgment. He may do it by safely housing them and carrying them through it, as once he did with Noah, and as He will do with a godly remnant of His people Israel when soon His judgments are abroad in the earth. He may do it by removing them from the very scene of judgment, so that they never see it, as with Enoch in the past and the church in the future. But He always does it.

When we thus "obtain salvation," it will reach us righteously for the One who will bring it to us has died for us, as we are reminded in verse 10. The object He had before Him in dying for us was that we might "live together with Him." How full

of comfort and edification is this wonderful truth.

From chapter iv. 13, to chapter v. 11 is one long paragraph, and the close of it brings us back to where it started. Jesus died for us that He might have us with Him. He will put the finishing touches to His design when He raptures the saints into His presence whether they are awake on earth or sleeping in their graves.

Let us all ponder the words that "we should live together with Him," so that their sweetness may deeply penetrate our souls. He died that we might live. But not only is life before us, but life together with Christ. We noticed the word "together" at the end of chapter iv. It was delightful to discover that in the resurrection day we should be united with all the saints—and reunited with those we knew on earth—in order to meet the Lord. It is more delightful still to know that as one united company we shall for eternity enjoy life together with Him. All that life means, its pursuits and joys, we are to share with Him. We shall have His life so that we may be 'capacitated to share His life in that day. Even to-day we may share His thoughts, His joys, though not in the wonderful fulness of this glad to-morrow.

• With verse 12 the closing exhortations begin. There were evidently no officially appointed elders at Thessalonica. Hence the

apostle's desire that they should *know*—in sense of *recognizing*—those in their midst who were qualified as such and doing the work of elders. They were not only to know them but to listen to their admonitions and esteem them in love. The carnal mind, which is by nature insubordinate, would take advantage of the absence of any official appointment to flout their spiritual authority; but thus it was not to be.

How clearly this shows that the thing of all importance is *moral qualification* and *authority* as given of God, and *not official sanction and appointment*, even when such can be ministered through an apostle. The latter without the former is but an empty husk. What is it when even the official appointment has nothing apostolic about it? And Scripture is quite silent as to apostolic powers and authority being transmitted from generation to generation.

If the Lord raises up godly men with shepherd instincts to care for the spiritual welfare of His people we should *thankfully recognize and profit by them*, even though apostolic power to appoint them be lacking. This, we believe, is just our position to-day. Let us beware of *spurning such spiritual guides*. It is not difficult after all to discern between those who are but tiresome meddlers with other people's affairs and those who care lovingly for our spiritual welfare in the fear of God.

In verses 14 to 22 we have a series of important exhortations couched in very brief terms. It is very evident that the church of God is not intended to be a community wherein everyone may go as they please. It is rather a place where spiritual order under divine authority is maintained. This is as we should expect, remembering that it is God's house. Warning, comfort and support are to be administered as occasion arises. Patience is to be exercised. Good is to be pursued. Joy, prayer and thanksgiving are to be the happy occupations of the saints, and that abidingly.

Nothing is to quench the believer's joy for it is occasioned by that which is eternal. Prayer is to be unceasing for the need is continuous, and access to the throne of grace is never closed on God's side. Prayer, and that attitude of soul of which prayer is the expression, is to be habitual. As for thanksgiving it should be rendered to God "in everything," inasmuch as we know that "all things work together for good to them that love God." Moreover it is God's will that we should be a thankful people, so that He may "inhabit" our praises, according to the spirit of Psalm xxii. 3. These things are all intensely individual.

verses 19 to 22 refer more to matters which concerned the assembly of God's saints, where the Spirit of God operated and

made known the mind of God. There, in those early days, He was accustomed sometimes to speak and act in supernatural ways,—see Acts xiii. 2; 1 Corinthians xii. 7-11; 1 Timothy iv. 1. He also, in a more general way, made His voice heard in the ministry of the prophets, as contemplated in 1 Corinthians xiv. The Thessalonians were not to attempt to regulate the action of the Spirit in the assembly or they would quench His action. It is not for us to control the Spirit, but for Him to control us. Prophecyings were to be given their due place of importance and yet, seeing that such a thing as prophecy of a spurious sort was not unknown, everything they heard was to be “proved”; i.e., tested, for though they had not as yet the written New Testament, they had the Old Testament and the verbal instructions of the apostle. Having tested what they heard they were to “hold fast” all that was good and “abstain from” or “hold aloof from” evil in all its forms.

Reading the exhortations do we not feel that a very lofty standard is set before us? It is so indeed, and that it may be reached we need to be set apart for God; and God Himself, the God of peace, must be the Author of our sanctification. The Apostle's desire was that God might work to this end; the whole man, spirit, soul and body being brought under His power. Thus they would be sanctified wholly.

In as far as we are really set apart for God, in spirit, in soul and in body we shall be preserved blameless. At the coming of the Lord Jesus we shall be removed altogether from the scene of defilement and we shall no longer have the flesh within us. But how cheering is verse 24! In spite of all the breakdowns and defections upon our side God has called us to this blameless condition in glory and He will not fail to achieve His purpose with us. He will do it!

To this end what is needed but that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ should be with us? With a benediction to this effect the epistle closes.

F. B. HOLE.

THE MISSING NAMES.

Ezra ii. 61-63.

HOW came these names to be omitted? Was it in consequence of any neglect of these men or of their ancestors? We do not know all the particulars of the history, but the facts actually recorded are sufficient to raise some very useful reflections, even if they do not enable us to point to the real cause of the omission.

It appears that five hundred years before an ancestor of these children of Koz had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite. This was the same Barzillai who entertained David and his retinue when he fled from

Absalom. He was a wealthy man, "a very great man," as the sacred history tells us.

Now, was there no connection between this wealthy marriage and the disappearance of the names of his descendants from the roll of the priests? The children of Koz, we read, were called after Barzillai. They might have been at first registered on the roll of the sons of Aaron, and probably not have ceased to be reckoned amongst the descendants of Barzillai, but it seems probable that they gradually came to regard descent from Aaron as of less importance than their position as descendants of a wealthy landowner.

The first ancestor, perhaps, loved the peaceful retirement of Gilead, and delighted to "abide among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleating of the flocks," more than to frequent the courts of the house of the Lord.

There is but little wisdom in affecting to despise riches; they are God's gifts, and should excite thankfulness as well as humility. They have their dangers too—the rich enter "hardly," that is, with difficulty, into the kingdom of heaven. The man who becomes rich acquires new thoughts and feelings and prejudices, and his children are quick to catch his spirit. They are careful to maintain their position, and have their names enrolled among the wealthy, with corresponding carelessness as to being iden-

tified with those whom God has made kings and priests to Himself!

Perhaps the neglect may have occurred in Babylon, where the captives found it as hard to believe that Jerusalem would be rebuilt as their fathers to credit the prophecies of its destruction.

Jeremiah himself needed distinct encouragement to buy a field from his uncle. And the Temple! Was it ever to rise, and would the priests ever minister there?

But the appointed years of captivity come to an end—the Temple is about to be rebuilt, and the priesthood is once more in honour; and now we see the consequences of the way in which the names had been registered. The sons of Habaiah are, as polluted, put from the priesthood.

How many a one who has begun well, of Christian parentage and associations, has gradually preferred that which comes from a position in the world to the honour which comes from God only, until it can with difficulty be said where they are in their souls or what they really possess of divine things! The priest with Urim and Thummim alone can judge. “The Lord knoweth them that are His.” Meantime they lose that which is typified by eating of the most holy things.

IS THERE A STAIN?

THERE is a rigorous order in force in connection with lighthouse inspection in the United States of America. When the inspector arrives, it is the duty of the head keeper to hand him a white linen napkin. With this the inspector wipes the lens of the searchlight, the lamp, and even the inside of the kitchen utensils.

If the cloth remains unsoiled, the inspector enters in the lighthouse log-book the entry, "Service napkin not soiled." On the other hand the slightest stain on the napkin means a black mark for the keeper.

Could we, as Christians, stand such a rigorous test in spiritual things? The inspection day will come. The judgment seat of Christ is a reality. Not only will our outward actions come under review, but our inner thoughts, our secret desires will come under His searching scrutiny. "God shall judge the SECRETS of men by Jesus Christ." (Romans ii. 16.) "The Lord . . . will bring to light the HIDDEN things of darkness, and will make manifest the COUNSELS of the hearts." (1 Corinthians iv. 5). "Every one of us shall

give account of himself to God." (Romans xiv. 12.).

Some of us were speaking about the Sermon on the Mount as found in Matthew v—vii. We noticed how the Lord puts His hand on the desires of the heart. It is not sufficient to have strength not to commit the sins of the flesh, but the desire of the heart, as the flesh works, must not be encouraged. Though shame would forbid the outward acts of the flesh, yet if carnal desires are cherished in any way, then the Lord looks upon that as gravely as if the act were committed.

It is not the first step that leads to a public fall. There must be the secret encouragement before things get to the point of open scandal. In the Sermon on the Mount it is "the PURE in heart" that will see God. It is well to be exercised about the thoughts of the heart, for if they are kept in captivity to the Lord actions will be right. Spurgeon said, "You cannot forbid unclean birds flying over your head, but you can hinder their making a nest in your hair."

Thoughts unbidden come into the mind that clearly are not of the Spirit of God, but of the flesh. We need not trouble about them, unless we are so foolish as to willingly give them a lodging place in our hearts. The wise man knew full well where the citadel of life is situated, when he wrote to

his son, "Keep thy HEART with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Proverbs iv. 23).

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD." (James i. 27).

If that be carried out the napkin will not be soiled. Without becoming legal in the matter may we all have the desire to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. Its principles. maxims. aims. pursuits are all opposed to God and what He is working for.

A. J. POLLOCK.

~~Good~~ PURPOSE OF HEART.

JUST as he was nearing the end of a strenuous race, Paul earnestly encouraged Timothy to keep the straight track—to "strive lawfully," for Paul was finishing his course, he had kept the faith. "Continue thou," he said to the younger runner. "in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of." And, reminding him of his own energies, he said, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose" (2 Timothy iii. 10).

Many younger believers set off with definite purpose to be devoted to the One

who has redeemed them at the cost of His own life's blood. "I am His doubly!" they rightly exclaim. "I am His by creation right and by redemption right. It is only my reasonable service to be altogether for Him." That is good and true, but devotedness must run in the way of the will of God, made known in the inspired Writings, to be acceptable to Him.

It is easy to be sidetracked! It has often been said of Paul, he entered a street called *Straight* at his conversion, and he kept in it till the end of his life. To do that, it is necessary to give heed to what God says to us in the written Word; and by means of striking types, stirring examples, sound doctrines, along with infallible proofs, divine encouragement is ministered to this end. The God-breathed Scriptures are competent to "*fully fit*" us, just as we are told at the close of 2 Timothy iii.

First of all, look at the Moabites who returned with Naomi to be among God's people. Some might say that a Moabites had no right according to the law to be among the chosen people of God. But mark her firm purpose! "Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee . . . whither thou goest I will go; . . . thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (i. 16). So Ruth and Naomi went on together until they came to Bethlehem. And that was not the end.

Ruth found a husband in the son of Rahab of Jericho—Boaz, the mighty man of wealth; and divine grace not only gave her a place among Jehovah's people, but put her in the line of the royal ancestors of King David, and of David's greater Son, (iv. 22; Matt. i. 5). Ruth began well, and would not be diverted; but she reached results which outstripped her highest thoughts, though not beyond the thought of the God in whom she came to trust. What poor sinner of the Gentiles, who has found forgiveness and salvation in Christ Jesus today, ever thought that he would be a son and heir of God and Christ's co-heir? Yet, through redeeming love, so it is. He is even a member of the body and bride of Christ.

We have seen what God did for a young woman. Now look at that ^{Saviour} young man, in the world's metropolis. He belonged to the Lord, but he was a captive in Babylon. We are told of Daniel's purpose when he was in the midst of that large worldly city. He "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" (i. 8) with the Gentile King's meat. That was a fine start!

The finish was better! God watched over faithful Daniel, and though he passed through many great trials, the victories of faith were all the more triumphant. He was honoured by Gentile kings and they owned the God of Daniel to be supreme. Moreover God himself honoured Daniel, not only

by giving victories of faith, but by making known to Him His mind and plan concerning the whole course of "the times of the Gentiles." Daniel, the captive, began by saying "NO" to the world's defilements! Who shall say what divine awards await those who say "No" to the world today, and "Yes" to the Son of God, who calls us to follow Him? "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God!" (1 John v. 5). In Acts xi. 23., we read of one who was glad when he saw the grace of God in the blessing of many young converts at Antioch, and he "exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart, they should cleave unto the Lord."

Now look at another woman in the New Testament. Behold Phebe furthering the good of the assembly at Cenchrea in the days of the apostles. We read of her in Romans xvi. She had been a helper of many, and was even privileged to help the apostle Paul himself. About to journey to the city of Rome, where business matters claimed her attention, this earnest soul saw something of greater importance in Rome than business. Those who belonged to the Lord were there, and with a word of commendation from Paul, inscribed in the epistle she seeks their company. Her steady purpose put the Lord's interests first. Business was not allowed to divert her. The apostle desired the brethren to "receive her in the

Lord as becometh saints," also to "assist her on whatsoever business she hath need of you." God saw to it that she should receive encouragement. Phebe's running was not in vain.

But what of the servant of Christ who was used to cheer her in the path? What of Paul, the aged, who exhorted and encouraged his son in the faith, Timothy, to diligence in the heavenward way? We have seen how he reminded the latter in 2 Timothy iii. 10 of his "doctrine, manner of life, *purpose*." He pressed forward himself to the heavenly goal—"One thing I do" said he to the brethren at Philippi, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He might be put into prison, but that did not stay his zeal. Nay, it only gave him greater opportunity to write inspired epistles that others might have the truth, and be instructed more fully in the way of the Lord.

In the chapter in Timothy he speaks of the difficulties and oppositions which would arise. He foretells what is patent to all in these days, just before the Lord's return. The faith, the truth, sound doctrine and divine power would all be denied or withstood by those who made a false profession or had but "*a form of godliness*." (2 Tim. iii. 5). Such are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. They lead astray

the weak. Heady, highminded, they are marked by boastful scholarship and learning, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." These sceptical professors of religion stand in sharp contrast to the true believer, who knows the inspired all-sufficient Scriptures, which make wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The false-named knowledge or science which young Timothy is told to avoid (1 Tim. vi. 20), like all the imaginations of modernism, rationalism and advanced ideas (apart from the revelation of God) yields no true benefit to anyone, and only awaits the foretold exposure of verse 9: "They shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men."

The Apostle shows that this kind of opposition to the truth of God was personified in the magicians of Egypt and their imitations which were used in the presence of King Pharaoh to withstand Moses, when he sought the salvation of God's people out of Egypt (see verse 8). Thus do these men resist the truth. They are worthless in regard to the faith, as Paul says; and, the fact is, these men who boast great mental attainments are in reality, "*corrupted in mind*," for so the words should read.

All these oppositions to the truth may appear to be formidable, but greater is He that is in the believer than he that is in the

world. Therefore, taking good heed to God's Word, we are to run with patience the race set before us, looking off to Jesus, who is now at God's right hand, having Himself gone through all the trials and testings on the way.

He did not turn away back when man and Satan raised the violent storm of hatred, persecution and opposition against Him; but as was foretold seven centuries before by Isaiah, He set His face 'like a flint' (1. 7), and as Luke says when the time was come, "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." His soul was troubled, but He would go through all "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." His whole course was according to the inspired Writings, according to the will of God. He said, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." In love and devotedness, our gracious Lord and Saviour went the whole way for God's glory, as it was written of Him.

That we might not grow weary nor faint in our minds, but rather be encouraged on the road, we are exhorted in Hebrews xii. 3 to "*consider well*" HIM who endured so great contradiction of sinners against Himself. He went through all victoriously, and is now set down upon the right hand of God's throne on high. No wonder Paul pressed

onward to the goal, looking forward to "that day," when Christ should shine supreme as Head over all; and it is not surprising therefore that he should urge young Timothy onward by reminding him of his "doctrine, manner of life, *PURPOSE*, faith longsuffering, love, patience, persecutions, afflictions" which came upon him because of those who resisted the truth. Like his Lord, he went through in triumph; for, with full purpose, he was careful to "*strive lawfully*." In this manner he desired Timothy to run the race set before him. In this way God desires us all to press forward to-day, in spite of the peculiar oppositions to the truth (so clearly foretold) in these "last days," just as Christ is about to come again.

The eternal purpose of God is in Christ Jesus, as Ephesians iii. 11 says. He will bring all to glorious fruition in scenes of rejoicing and praise, where love, holiness and righteousness shall dwell. Meanwhile, let those who are the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus rejoice greatly and let them know no faltering in their running, but with purpose of heart go forward. God has "saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but *according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*" (2 Tim. i. 9); therefore it is said for our encouragement, "We know

that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to *His purpose*."

May purpose of heart similar to Paul's mark us all.

H. J. VINE.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(2 *Thessalonians* i. 1—ii. 7.)

Please read the passage indicated above before reading this article, and then keep your Bible open so that you may refer to it as may be necessary from time to time.

The writer takes it for granted that you will comply with this request, and hence he addresses you in the terms he would employ if giving a homely "Bible-talk."

THE second letter to the Thessalonians was evidently written not long after the first, while still they were young in the faith and the more likely to be misled by false teachers, especially in matters pertaining to the coming of the Lord. The opening words are almost exactly the same as in the first letter; Paul again associating with himself the same two fellow-labourers.

The condition of this assembly still gave great joy and thankfulness to the Apostle. Their spiritual health was good, in spite of the persecutions and tribulations that were pressing upon them; we had almost said, because of their persecutions and troubles.

The world being actively antagonistic to them, they were not for the moment, being tested by its seductions. The very pressure that it was exerting against them had the effect of welding them together.

In verses 3 and 4, growing faith and abounding love are brought into intimate connection with persecution and tribulation, and not without good reason. Not only was their faith growing, but growing *exceedingly*; not only was love there, but love was *abounding*. In this the Apostle greatly rejoiced as being the sign of spiritual vitality and progress, though he had nothing to say in this epistle as to their knowledge or gifts. In contrast to this, he acknowledged the knowledge and gifts of the Corinthians in his first letter to them, whilst he had nothing favourable to say as to their faith and love; and in them he could not boast, for they were carnal. Have we all grasped the significance of this? To what do we look if we desire to see spiritual advancement in one another?

The scripture shows us that real faith is a living thing. It is like a living tree, with its roots striking down into the soil of the knowledge of God. Faith is spiritual eyesight, and as we proceed our sight should grow clearer and its range be increased. As we know God better we trust Him more.

We must notice that in this second epistle Paul makes no allusion to their hope, though he does mention their patience, which is one of its fruits. The reason for this is, apparently, that adversaries had made further attempts to confuse their minds as to things to come in a way calculated to impair their hope, and that for the moment they had succeeded. How they did it, and how the Apostle countered their efforts by this epistle, we shall see more clearly as we proceed. That which follows—verses 5 to 10 of this first chapter—was evidently penned with a view to setting matters rightly before their minds. The attempt had been made to delude them into thinking that their present troubles were a sign that the day of the Lord was already come. This will be seen, if verses 1 and 2 of chapter ii. be read. The word translated “at hand” at the end of verse 2 is really “present.”

In verses 5 to 10 the public appearing of the Lord Jesus is presented as being the reversal of previously existing conditions; a complete turning of the tables, we may say. The Thessalonians were suffering tribulation, the men of the world being their troublers. When the Lord Jesus appears, He will recompense the world with tribulation and His saints with rest. In so doing, He will be acting in righteousness.

It is not difficult to see that it will be an entirely righteous thing for God to presently

recompense the persecutors of His saints with tribulation. It is not quite so easy to see how the entrance of the saints into the coming kingdom can be connected with righteousness, for we should surely disclaim any thought of merit and protest that grace alone could bring us into the kingdom of God. The thought in verse 5 however, appears to be that though all is of grace yet God desires to put His saints in possession of His kingdom, as those who are counted worthy of it. Hence He permits the persecutions and tribulations, which produce in them the fortitude and patience which He loves and can righteously reward. In this patience and faith under trial was seen a manifest token that God's judgment was righteous in assigning them to the coming kingdom and its rest.

The description of the public appearing of the Lord Jesus, given in verses 7 to 9, is indeed terrible. When He is unveiled from the heavens, nothing will be lacking which is calculated to strike fear into the hearts of rebellious men. Vengeance will fall upon those who do not know God and who do not obey the Gospel. Everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, will be the penalty inflicted. Many attempts have been made to avoid the plain and evident force of the two words, "everlasting destruction," but when all is said and done the fact remains that, destruction does *not* mean



annihilation, and everlasting ~~does~~ mean lasting for ever, and this whether we consider the Greek original or the English translation.

Let us notice that the Gospel is a message from God which we are to OBEY. We are so apt to think of it as a kindly invitation which we are to accept, and to present it only in that light to others. Consequently, they think of it only as an invitation which they may decline, or at least defer indefinitely, without any very serious consequences; and that is to them a very fatal mistake. All who hear the Gospel, are responsible to render to it in response the obedience of faith.

Notice also that there can be no worse fate than to be consigned to eternal ruin away from the presence of the Lord. We saw in considering the first Epistle that to live together with the Lord is the very height of bliss. The converse holds true. There can be nothing worse than to be banished for ever from the presence of the One who is the Fountain-head of life and light and love.

The appearing of Christ will however have two sides. He will be glorified in taking vengeance on the ungodly. He will be also glorified and admired in all those who have believed in that day. The preposition here, you will notice, is not by but in. He will certainly be glorified and adored by us, but

the point here is that He will be glorified in us. In that day, the saints will shine forth in ~~His likeness as His handiwork~~. Men and angels will look at them and glorify Him, inasmuch as all that they are will be the fruit of His work.

Nowadays, all too often we are to His discredit. Of old, the accusation had to be laid against Israel that, "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." (Rom. ii. 24). and the same indictment has to be brought against those who profess to be the people of today. But in that day, what will be displayed, will not be our crookedness or our peculiarities but the grace and power of Christ reproduced in us. In us men will see the glorious effect of the mighty work of God.

What a wonderful calling this is! No wonder the Apostle earnestly desired that God would count them worthy of it, by fulfilling His good pleasure in them now, promoting the work of faith with power in their hearts and lives. In this way the name of the Lord Jesus would be glorified in them now and not only in the coming age. If He is to be glorified in us then, it is surely right that we should be concerned about it that He is glorified in us now.

The last verse of this first chapter emphasizes this, and adds the fact that not only is He to be glorified in us in the coming age but we are to be glorified in Him, for

we shall then be shining in a glory not our own but His. This will be "according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." Nothing but the grace of God could produce so wonderful a result as that.

With the opening verses of the second chapter we reach the matter which was the occasion of the writing of this epistle. Mischief-makers had been at work, endeavouring to persuade the Thessalonians that they had already passed into the day of the Lord, though they knew well that the day of the Lord brought heavy judgments with it, and that it would come as a thief in the night. (See, 1 Thess. v. 1-3). Those who were attempting to lead them astray evidently reasoned that the persecutions and trials into which they had been plunged were judgments, which proved that the day of the Lord was upon them.

Now all this was simple deception, as verse 3 states, and the methods to which these adversaries stooped, hoping thereby the more effectually to deceive, were in keeping with their false teaching. They pressed their ideas upon the Thessalonians, "by spirit" "by word" and even "by letter as from us." Not only did they assert it by word of mouth, but they gave out their teachings as having been received by inspiration of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God, did give inspired utterances in the early Christian assemblies, as the Acts of the

Apostles bears witness, but there were also to be found false utterances proceeding from a spirit or spirits, which were not the Spirit of God, as indicated in 1 John iv. 1-6. These deceivers might claim that they had received their teaching from a spirit. If so, it was from a spirit who was not the Spirit of God. They went however, one step further than this. They even sent a letter to the Thessalonians which purported to be from the Apostle Paul. By a species of forgery, they tried to make it appear that their erroneous ideas had his sanction. Satan is not at all careful as to the means he uses to attain his ends. Crooked teaching can be quite appropriately supported by crooked behaviour.

Some however, may wish to ask what was the importance of the point at issue? The persecution and trial were there. Did it after all matter so much whether it signified the arrival of the day of the Lord, or whether it did not? How often we find large issues of a practical sort hinging upon points of doctrine that look small enough! It did matter very much indeed. If the day of the Lord were really present then the truth that Paul had been led to reveal to them, in the latter part of chapter iv. and the opening of chapter v. of his first epistle was very evidently overturned. That day had stolen a march upon them, and overtaken them as a thief. Is it nothing to have the Word of God discredited?

Further, it would mean that here were believers left on earth to suffer tribulation, which came as retribution from the hand of God. Their heavenly hope would be dimmed, and they left to face the fearful things about to come on the earth. Was this a small matter? No, indeed.

How did the Apostle meet this deceptive teaching? He met it in two ways. First, by reminding them of the truth he had already established in his first Epistle. Second, by giving further clear instruction as to the day of the Lord, and the order of its events.

He besought them not to heed the error, by the coming of the Lord Jesus and by "our gathering together unto Him." To what does he refer in these words? Clearly to that, as to which he instructed them in verses 15 to 17 of the fourth chapter of His first epistle. If we are to gather together to Christ in the air, before the coming of the day of the Lord, how can we find ourselves on earth suffering its throes? In the light of the truth that had already reached them the Thessalonians ought never to have listened to these deceivers. But then of course, they were only recent converts—but babes in Christ—and consequently not yet much skilled in discerning the drift of the teachings they heard. Many of us may be like them, and if so it will help us to see that the truth is one consistent whole, so

that we must never be shaken by new teachings, if they are at variance with the foundations laid by God in our hearts at an earlier period.

the instruction

With verse 3 his further instruction begins. Not only is the Church to gather together to Christ in the air, before the day of the Lord arrives, but there are also two great events to first of all materialize upon the earth itself. They are both mentioned in verse 3. There is to be a "falling away" or, "an apostasy" first. Also "the man of sin" must be manifested. The former is a movement, the latter is a man.

All history teaches us how movements and men, are linked together, and in that order. First comes a movement, created all too frequently by the god of this world; then presently, a man appears who brings the movement to a head and in whom it reaches its highest expression and finality. Ancient imperialism reached its head in Nebuchadnezzar: the French republican movement in Napoleon; whilst the modern Fascist movement has been headed up in Mussolini. Thus history will repeat itself on a much grander scale before the day of the Lord arrives.

Let us be clear as to what apostasy means. It is not just a course of backsliding, a growing cold on the part of Christians, as a result of which the world invades the

church, dragging into its bosom a whole train of attendant evils. It is rather a complete forsaking of the truth of God, a total abandonment of the ancient foundations of the faith. There have been all too often in the history of the church distortions and perversions of truth, which might be compared to the transplanting of shrubs and the lopping of trees which largely spoil the effect of an otherwise beautiful and symmetrical garden. Apostasy is not like that. It is rather like a landslide of such dimensions that the whole garden is obliterated.

The idea is still quite widely held that the Lord will not return until the world has been prepared for His advent by the preaching of the Gospel and the conversion of most, if not all, its inhabitants. There is no support for this idea in the passage we are considering, but quite the contrary. The fact is, that what will precede His advent in glory is a total abandonment of the faith by those who formerly professed to hold it. This apostasy will pave the way for the revelation of a great personage, who will be the direct representative of Satan, called here "the man of sin," for in him sin will find its highest expression. This man will be marked by the most arrogant self-exaltation. He will oppose God by claiming himself to be God. A claim such as this would be impossible amongst people calling themselves Christian—it would merely excite ridicule—

were the way not prepared for it by the apostasy.

The apostasy then will be of such a nature that the minds of men will be prepared to accept such gigantic claims on the part of a mere man as quite possible and reasonable. The deification of man will be the logical and reasonable outcome of the movement. This throws a flood of light as to what the main drift of the apostasy will be. God will be dethroned and man will be enthroned!

Let us survey great Christendom today in the light of these facts. Without a doubt we see very ominous signs of the approach of the apostasy. The coming events cast their shadows before. The whole drift of "advanced" religious thinking and teaching is in the direction which this scripture indicates. If God be admitted at all into the scheme of their thinking, He is relegated to the far distance and evolution is made to entirely fill the foreground. Evolution is only the flimsy creation of their own minds, yet they have endowed it with wonderful powers and mankind is supposed to be the very crown and fruition of all its workings. Man therefore is to them of supreme importance and not God. Moreover, they expect that evolutionary processes will not stop with man as he is today, but continue until a super-man will be produced. How simple and natural then

it will be to acclaim the man of sin when he appears as the super-man long expected!

The Apostle had warned the Thessalonians of these things when he had been with them on that brief first visit, preaching the Gospel amongst them. We may wonder that he found time to speak of such a matter to them in so short a visit, and that he thought it appropriate to do so within not many days of their being converted; but so it was. Paul knew right well that "the mystery of iniquity" was already at work, as he tells us in verse 7. The meaning of this is that "iniquity" or "lawlessness" in its "mystery" or "secret" form was even then moving in men's hearts. The lawless self-assertion which is to blaze forth in the light of day at the end of the dispensation was there at the beginning, though hidden in the dark. Hence the warning was necessary.

It is much more necessary then for us upon whom the end of the age is come. Let us take heed to it.

Have we all got clearly fixed in our minds thus far that the apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin must precede the day of the Lord? Human evil must reach its flood-tide height before the Lord deals with it in judgment.

If we have this clear, we shall not have difficulty in seeing that the coming of the Lord for His saints and our gathering together unto Him in the air must precede

full-blown apostasy. The true saints of God never apostatize. As long as the true church of God is here a witness is maintained on earth in the energy of the Holy Spirit, and the apostasy in its fulness is hindered—its chariot wheels drive heavily, for the brake presses hard against them.

When the brake is suddenly taken off by the rapture of the saints to heaven, the chariot will bound forward to the final crash that awaits it.

F. B. HOLE.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

In John xiv. 12 we read of, "The works that I do." What are these? And what also are "the greater works than these"? Please also explain the words in verse 20 of that chapter, "I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you."—BURMA.

WHEN the Lord spoke of His works in this passage He did not in any way limit or qualify the word, so we must not limit it in our thoughts to the miraculous works which He did. It doubtless includes His miracles, because it embraces all His works. The thought of this passage may perhaps become clearer if we compare it with John viii. 38-44. Our works are according to our origin and nature. If any are Abraham's children, they do the works of Abraham. If any are the devil's children, they do the works of the devil. Now, directly after speaking those words, in John xiv., the Lord proceeded to show His disciples that

very soon, as a consequence of His redemption work, they should share His nature and possess His Spirit. Hence they should do His works. His works should characterize them.

Some of His works were miraculous in their nature. So should some of theirs be. Some of their works of power, should be greater even than His, for He was straitened until His death and resurrection, as He himself said in Luke xii. 50. When once however He was risen and acting from glory, through His people in the mighty energy of the Spirit given to them, there would be a fulness of power impossible before. We can see illustrations of this in the Acts of the Apostles, such as the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost when, in one day, 3000 were converted. No such mighty work as this was seen in connection with the preaching of our Lord.

In verse 20 the Lord was speaking of what the disciples should know in the day when the Spirit had been given, which is, as a matter of fact, the day in which we live. In the earlier day, the day of the Lord's sojourn on earth, they ought to have known, as verse 11 shows, that He was in the Father and the Father in Him—that is, that He was in the Father as to life and nature, as being absolutely one with Him, and that the Father, as being one with the Son, was in Him as to manifestation and display.

The Comforter being given more than this could be known. They would still know that the Son is in the Father, but further, they should know that they were in the Son, as now sharing

His life and nature. They should know also, that He was in them as to manifestation and display. Having the Spirit of Christ they should have the capacity to reproduce Christ, so that Christ should live in them.

What tremendous realities are these. Oh, that we had hearts to take them in!

Having received a tract with the title, "*Come.*" "*Tarry.*" "*Go.*" May I ask if you will explain these words, taken from John i. 39, Luke xxiv. 49, and Mark xvi. 35, respectively.—BRIDLINGTON.

We are not surprised that you find the Pentecostal literature which you have received rather confusing. We do not however think that you can have much difficulty as to the first and last of these words. "Come" is indeed the great Gospel word. To every awakened and enquiring soul, the Saviour says, "Come and see," whether long ago, in the days of His sojourn here, or at the present time when He is in glory. When risen from the dead, He said to His apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Carefully notice, that this was said to "the eleven" and not to all the disciples; though undoubtedly all believers, should have the missionary spirit, and carry forth the Gospel as much as in them lies, and as far as possible. These two things seem fairly plain.

The verse at the end of Luke's gospel is the one that presents a little difficulty, but that is only because of the curious and unjustifiable use that has been made of the instruction the Lord there gave. It certainly presented no

difficulty to the disciples who originally heard the words. The Holy Ghost, as coming from the Father, had been definitely promised by the Lord. He was the only adequate power for the service with which they had been entrusted. They were to wait in Jerusalem until He came. They were not to attempt to stir on their mission until He indwelt them. He duly came on the day of Pentecost, and their tarrying time was over. After this, we do not read of anyone being instructed to tarry for the reception of the Spirit.

All **this**, again we say, is really very plain and simple. It is also very important in its bearing upon all of us, teaching us that no power avails for the work of the Lord but that of the Spirit of God. Every other qualification, compared with this, is as nothing. Even apostles could not stir hand nor foot in this enterprise without Him. Where then lies the difficulty?

It lies in the making of unwarrantable assumptions and deductions from this verse. It is torn from its context. The fact is overlooked, that the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost was an epoch-making event, no more to be repeated than was the giving of the law at Sinai. It is thereupon assumed that every Christian should "tarry" for the Spirit, if not exactly for the gift of the Spirit at least for some "baptism of the Spirit," that phrase having in their minds a different force to that which it has in Scripture. The booklet you have been reading even assumes that at the beginning 380 disciples failed to tarry and "went to Egypt,"

and all the country round, preaching a limited Gospel." This extraordinary idea is reached by a process of deduction. The 120 of Acts i. 15 is subtracted from the 500 of 1 Corinthians xv. 6. That seems simple, does it not? Quite simple—yet quite fallacious. The author overlooks that great meeting of disciples in the mountain of Galilee, of which Matthew xxviii. tells us. It must have been there, that the 500 brethren saw Him, since there were only about 120 who believed in Jerusalem; most of the Lord's converts being in Galilee, which was the main theatre of His ministry. A few of that Galilean 500 besides the eleven apostles of course *may* have been amongst the 120 in Jerusalem; the bulk of them were not there, and any curiosity we may feel as to just exactly how these Galileans received the Spirit is not satisfied by the Scripture—the matter remains a blank as far as our knowledge is concerned. It is poor work to fill up the blank with unwarranted imaginations, as is done in this booklet.

The booklet however is an old one, and since the day when it was written the "Pentecostal" movement has gone forward with rapid strides into far greater extravagances. As you enquire concerning any literature reviewing the movement we are telling our publishers to send you Mr. Pollock's latest paper, *Modern Pentecostalism, Foursquare Gospel, "Healings" and "Tongues" are they of God?* This of course, takes up the movement in its later manifestations, still it throws much light incidentally upon earlier papers, such as the one you have read.

A PUBLICAN NAMED LEVI.

(*Luke v. 27-32*).

WAS this publican a Levite? If so his degradation was all the greater. But to whatever tribe he belonged he was an Israelite, and, by becoming a publican he dishonoured his name and nation, and cut himself adrift from his friends and possibly from his family, to be classed with heathen men and sinners. And for what? There can be but one answer. It must have been for gold. Gold dominated him, it was more to him than honour, fame, friends, national pride. It had hardened him also to the opinion of others, for he sat at the receipt of custom in the open market, heedless of the scorn of his fellow townfolk. A despised man was he and degraded. And Jesus saw him sitting there, and said to him, "Follow Me."

- 2 -

The command must have started those who stood by, and especially Peter, Andrew, James and John. They had heard the same command and had instantly obeyed it, leaving boats and nets and fishes and parents and

hired servants, but they were hard-working and respectable men; rough perhaps, and uncultured, but as far as was known there was nothing in their lives of which they needed to be publicly ashamed. And they had followed Him, for His call had been irresistible, and they had dimly glimpsed in Him the Redeemer of Israel, and for Israel's sake as much as for the power they had felt in His word, they had followed Him. But this publican! What cared he for Israel? He was no patriot, he was a traitor to his nation. And could the cause of Jesus prosper with such as he among His followers? Public opinion would be most definitely against Him for this choice, as indeed it was from that day onward, and would not these respectable disciples find this addition to their number most objectionable, and question their Master's wisdom and abandon Him? And would the man whose very soul had become withered by its greed for gold heed the call? The great question was, What would Levi do?

A miracle happened at that wayside booth. The publican LEFT ALL, ROSE UP, AND FOLLOWED HIM. It was not at an evening service, when all the gold possible had been gathered in and safely locked away, that this call came and this decision was made; it was during business hours, as he collected and counted the coveted coins. Then the voice of the Lord reached him, and the

chains that had held him fell away, and a new life quickened his dead soul, and he left all, rose up and followed Jesus. It may be that in his unsatisfied heart there was a secret yearning, and he could not tell it to Pharisees or scribes or priests, for they would have spurned him, and he would have been ashamed to tell it to the baser men who had become his companions. But it was there surely and he was a soul-sick sinner, with a sickness that was only aggravated by his covetousness, and when the great Physician passed by and looked upon him, there was an instant response to His gaze and an answer to His call. He realized that Jesus who was seeking him, was the One he had needed, the One in whom he could trust. Then what he had counted as gain he spurned as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus, the Lord. The gold had lost its hold upon him, and he forsook the old life once and for all, leaving the tax-gatherers revenue to whoever cared to claim it, for the glory of the King had broken into his dark life. Jesus was better than gold.

He answered to the divine claim, for Jesus is God. Who but God has a right to claim men before father, mother, wife, children, houses or lands? And who but God can so fill the heart that every right claim falls into a subordinate place, and every evil thing drops off like a broken fetter? And who but God can take up such men as Levi was

and save and transform them and mould them to His will and make them the happy servants of other's needs? Happy is the man who hears in the voice of Jesus the voice of God and answers it with an instant obedience.

The people had said, "We have seen strange things to-day," when they saw the impotent man take up his bed and depart on his own legs to his house glorifying God; but they saw a stranger thing when covetous Levi, delivered from his master passion, followed Jesus, and with a heart overflowing with new and generous feelings gathered into his house a great company of publicans and others to hear the voice that had set him free. He had ceased to collect the shekels and had begun to select souls. Yes, a greater miracle was wrought on Levi than upon his palsied neighbour, for it was a moral and spiritual miracle changing his very nature.

The Scribes and Pharisees murmured but the heart of the Saviour rejoiced and Levi's feast gave Him the opportunity of proclaiming His grace and announcing His mission. "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke v. 31, 32).

CHRIST'S PAST APPEARING.

*(Notes of an address.)**Scripture read:—Hebrews ix. 24-28.*

IN considering these five verses I know we are proposing to tread on very familiar ground. Yet I am on very safe ground in bringing before you the finished and the yet-to-be-finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The aspect of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ that we now propose to consider, is the *finished* work. When on the cross, with His dying breath our blessed Lord Jesus cried, "It is finished," that meant that the great work of sin-bearing was finished; finished to God's eternal glory and to His entire satisfaction; finished in such a way that every sinner who rests upon that work is as sure of being in heaven as if he were there now. Whilst, however, there is the work that the Lord Jesus has finished, there is the work that He is carrying on at the present time, and there is the work to which He is going to put His hand and which He will bring to fruition in a future day—of these we will speak another time if He permit. But let us be absolutely clear with regard to this, that everything that is being done to-day, and everything that will be done, is based upon the finished work of Calvary, so that you and I can never get

away from the cross. All that it means to God, all that it means to Christ, you and I will never know. The story of the cross is the story that moves the heart of God, and it may well move your heart and mine as we contemplate it.

Well now, we are going to speak of the work that the Lord Jesus has finished. The very words of the latter half of the 26th verse show how great, and marvellous, and far-reaching a work that is. You will observe that when the Spirit of God brings before us the work of Christ in this way there is another thing that He brings before us, and that is the greatness of the Person who has accomplished the work. It is perfectly obvious that if so great a work had to be accomplished only a great Person could accomplish it. There was no angel in heaven that could do it, there was no man upon earth that could do it. So in the first chapter of this epistle we have Him presented to us as the Brightness of God's glory, as the One who upholds all things by the word of His power, and yet He became Man, that by the finishing of that great work the way might be cleared so that God could come out to us in perfect grace, and you and I could go in to God in absolute righteousness, and have a standing before the throne of God, and find our home, our joy, our delight in the presence of God. In whatever way we look at it, it is indeed a great work.

Now let us observe the words, "by the sacrifice of Himself." Often we do not realize the fathomless depths of meaning that are in them. Think of how this little planet has become utterly defiled by the foul intruder, sin! Instead of sweeping this planet off altogether, or sweeping all the sinners off the planet, the Lord Jesus came, and not by the word of His power, not by the display of His greatness, not by the showing forth of His Majesty, but by "the sacrifice of Himself," He put away sin. Oh, may God burn the words into our souls! It meant His stooping from the throne eternal, divesting Himself of His insignia of glory as the eternal Son of the eternal God, coming down into this world, knowing and seeing the awful havoc wrought by sin. It meant His being made that hateful thing called sin, so that sin might be put away, that His heart's desire might be gratified, that you and I might be brought into the wonderful blessing that had been planned for us before the foundation of the world, that He might present to God a sinless world, a deathless world, a world where everything should be according to His heart, where everything should set forth His glory. In order that this might be accomplished, He sacrificed Himself.

Observe one thing more that we have in this chapter. It was His own voluntary act. We are told in the 14th verse that He "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself

without spot to God." The next chapter tells that He said, "Lo I come . . . to do Thy will, O God." What led Him to offer Himself? His unflinching devotedness to the will of God, His consuming desire for the glory of God, His determination that the creation should be cleared of everything that was contrary to God, and that an altogether new world should be brought in where everything should be according to His mind.

Now I want to consider very briefly what God has secured as the result of Christ's death, what Christ Himself has secured, and what we have secured. I think I will reverse the order and begin with the lesser first.

The first thing we wanted to know when the Spirit of God wrought conviction in our hearts was how to get rid of our sins, and how to be sure of escaping hell and spending eternity in Heaven. We realised that we were sinners under the judgment of God; and when we got rid of the burden of our sins we were uncommonly happy, and we probably thought that was the beginning and the end of everything. As we got on a little bit in the school of God, and as we studied the precious Word of God, we realised that there was a great deal more for us than that. Now just let us see what we have got.

In the first place we have got rid of our sins (verse 28). The word "many" is an

indication that the result of Christ's work was not by any means confined to the Jews; those to whom the epistle was addressed were converted Jews and they might have thought it was for Jews and no others. All who are resting upon this finished work are entitled to say that "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree," and this gives peace with God.

But then He has secured a great deal more for us than that. We have been introduced into a wealth of blessing that it is impossible to describe. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." This means that God has prepared blessing that is altogether beyond the ken of man, things that we shall never be able to enjoy to the full until we are in the likeness and in the company of Christ in the glory of God, and then it is going to take us all eternity to explore His greatness and to enjoy their richness and fulness. Meanwhile God reveals these things to us by His Spirit, and He seeks to lead us into the ever-increasing enjoyment of them now.

I wonder, my dear friends, to what extent you and I are in the practical daily enjoyment of these things now. Do we realize that we are children of God? We talk about being brought into the place of

closest intimacy to our Lord Jesus Christ, do we realize that? If we realized that we are children of God, that we are saints of God, that we are called with a heavenly calling, that we are connected with the One who is the Lord of Heaven and earth, that we may soon hear the voice of our blessed, adorable Lord and Saviour, do you not think that it all would have a revolutionizing effect on our lives?

How great the need of men and women who really believe what they profess! We profess that we are connected with One risen from the dead, whose cross separates us from this world, but is it not often the case that we are found very much in the world; engrossed with the things of the world, and following the practices of the world? What a mighty difference there *should* be. Our hearts should be where Christ lives in the home of God. Then we will find our joy, our delight, in the presence of God and in the company of Christ, and we will reflect the warmth, the light, and the delight of heaven wherever we go.

In the next place consider what Christ has got as the result of His death. The great crowning desire of His heart is to be gratified. Before the earth's foundations were laid He saw those who were to be His Bride, and upon that Bride His affections were set. But He could only have her "by the sacrifice

of Himself." Sin had come in, and threatened to rob Christ of that upon which His heart was set. But so fair was that Bride in His eye, and so unspeakable and so immeasurable was His love for her that He came into the world, went to the cross, and He sacrificed Himself.

When the Spirit of God wants to impress us with the greatness of the love of Christ, He uses over and over again two words, "*gave Himself.*" The apostle Paul, as he thought of the love of Christ for him personally, said, "The Son of God . . . loved me and *gave Himself* for me." Then as he took in the whole range of grace he said, "Christ also loved us and *has given Himself* for us." As he thought of the Bride, the object of Christ's love, he said, "Christ also loved the Church and *gave Himself* for it." We want that love to fill and flood and thrill our hearts, and if that be so we will not be able to contain ourselves. There will be the welling over of our hearts in praise and in worship to the Father; there will be the laying of ourselves, and of our all, at the feet of the One who loved us and who gave Himself for us; and the warmth of that love will radiate to others as we go about, though perhaps quite unconsciously to ourselves.

The Lord Jesus has secured for Himself that Bride, and to-day the great work of the

Holy Spirit of God in this world is in connection with her. The gospel is preached in order that men and women, hearing and answering to the call, may be taken out of the world to form part of the Bride of Christ. You dear Sunday-School teachers when you go to your classes a little later, just you look upon those boys and girls and say to yourself, "If Jack gets saved this afternoon, or if Mary gets saved, they are going to form part of the Bride of Christ." You gospel preachers when you go to preach to-night, say to yourselves, "When those unsaved souls in my audience get saved they will go to form part of the Bride of Christ." Then when souls are saved, you will share the joy of God that His purpose is being fulfilled; you will share the joy of Christ that the moment is drawing appreciably nearer when His Bride will be completed and when He will be able to present her to Himself in all His own loveliness, in all her spotless beauty, because His beauty will be her beauty. Keeping that great end in view, we shall be encouraged to go forward in His service.

The last thing we think of, but by no means the least, is what God has secured by the death of Christ. The Lord Jesus appeared "in the end of the world," or "in the consummation of the age," to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. This age-long problem of SIN has been settled once and

for ever by the offering of the Lord Jesus Christ. But it happened in the consummation of the ages.

This gives us a wonderful insight into God's gracious ways of working. He tried man in all sorts of ways, without law, under law, by sending the prophets, last of all by sending His own Son, and He allowed man no less than four thousand years in order to demonstrate to him the fact that sin was so absolutely rooted in his being, that it was an utter impossibility for him to get rid of it. There was more than that, man was such a poor, helpless, miserable, sin-sodden creature that not only could he do nothing to better himself, but he did not want anybody else to do it for him. Now the Lord Jesus has taken up and settled, once and for ever, this age-long, insoluble problem of sin. He did it because the intrusion of sin into this world was a challenge to the throne of God. He would clear God's creation of every trace of sin. That could not be done in any other way than "by the sacrifice of Himself," though He could bring worlds into existence by the power of His word. To the cross at Calvary He went, and there by the sacrifice of Himself He met every claim of God's throne. He glorified God and brought fullest satisfaction and joy to His heart. He laid the ground on which God is going to introduce a world where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor

crying ; neither shall there be any more pain," for there shall be no more sin ; a world from which—

“All taint of sin shall be removed,
All evil done away ;
And we shall dwell with God's Beloved,
Through God's eternal day.”

How much does this side of things occupy our thoughts and engage our hearts ? When the Lord Jesus calls us together around Himself in order that we may remember Him, and announce His death until He come, God desires that we should enter into His thoughts and get to His side, and if that be so we shall know what it is to be sharers of His joy. If I do not get beyond the fact that by His death my sins have been forgiven, I shall not have much power for worship though I may be there with a very thankful heart. But suppose we get away from ourselves, and even from the benefits that we have received and the blessing that has accrued to us, and enter in some measure into the wealth of glory that has been brought to God, His triumph over all the power of the enemy, the joy, the satisfaction and the delight that fill His heart ; what will the result be ? There will be thanksgiving and praise, and there will also be real Spirit-begotten worship rising from our hearts to the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us linger by that cross, and contemplating the great work that has been accomplished there, let us rejoice in the One who has accomplished it, through Him offering the sacrifice of praise to God the Father.

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

“**W**ILL you please speak to my sister? She is so low and unhappy, it makes me quite sad to see her.”

We inquired the cause of her unhappiness. In reply her sister answered for herself, and said, “Oh, sir, I have committed the unpardonable sin; I feel sure there is no forgiveness for me!”

“Please tell me what you mean by the unpardonable sin. Many use the expression without knowing what sin it refers to.”

“Well, sir, I feel sure I have committed it, because I enjoyed religion once; but those happy hours have fled, and now I am most miserable. I came to Christ, received the pardoning love of God into my heart; but it is all gone and I am wretched!”

“Let me ask you a question. When reading in the twelfth chapter of Matthew that they brought unto Jesus one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb, and He healed him, ‘insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw,’ did you charge Jesus

with working that miracle by Satanic power? Did you say, or think, that it was Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, who enabled Him to do it?"

"Say that? No, indeed! I should not think of saying such a thing!"

"Then most certainly *you* have not committed the unpardonable sin. If you read verse 28 of Matthew xii., you will see that Jesus healed this man by the power of the Holy Spirit. To attribute this miracle to Satan is to commit the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This is a sin which hath no forgiveness."

"Oh, if that is it, I never committed that sin!"

"I felt sure you had not. Had you done so, you would not experience the sorrow you now feel."

"Now note what Jesus says, '*All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven*' (v. 31). It is clear that among the sins you have committed you have never thus blasphemed. For every other kind of sin there is forgiveness, even for blasphemy, if it be not of the nature of which we have spoken. The grace expressed in those words, '*All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men,*' cannot be surpassed."

"Let us now inquire what has led to your present state of soul. What is the real

cause of your distress? Did it not begin by the neglect of prayer, of your Bible, and the society of God's dear people? You say you came to God as a lost sinner, felt His love in your heart, but afterwards you got right away from Him, and lost all your joy."

"Yes, that is just my case."

"Then you are a backslider, not a blasphemer. Now, there is free forgiveness for every repentant backslider.

"Open your Bible at the fourteenth chapter of Hosea. What is the charge? 'Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity' (v. 1). What is the remedy? 'Take with you words, and turn to the Lord' (v. 2). Tell God *how* you got wrong, *where* you got wrong, and how far you have *gone* wrong. Conceal nothing. 'If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John i. 9). This is promised to those who unbosom their guilt and tell God the whole truth.

"What will God's answer be?"

"'I WILL HEAL THEIR BACKSLIDING,

'I WILL LOVE THEM FREELY.'

"How simple, yet how blessed! You are to take with you words, and confess to God those sins which have drawn you away from Him. Having told Him all, listen to His answer. He tells the poor backslider, 'I will love you *freely*,' as freely, and fully, and

unreservedly as I did on the day when you first turned to Me as a poor lost sinner.

“*Love you freely* are words worthy of being written in gold. They tell of the infinite compassion, and profound depths of mercy, and restoring grace of our Saviour-God.

“How these words invite you to return and assure you of a gracious welcome. Ponder them. They are intended to teach you the gracious reception which awaits *you* and every repentant, self-judged backslider.

“Your part is to ‘take with you words.’ To confess what it was which led to your present unhappy state. Get right down to the bottom. Reach the point of departure in the presence of God your Father.

“Sins committed by a Christian are graver than those of an unconverted man. They are sins against light and love—the sad doings of a child against a loving parent. These sins snap the link of communion, but, thank God, they cannot break the link of relationship.”

“What do you mean? Am I not a lost sinner needing to be saved over again?”

“No; God never treats us as lost sinners after we have been once freely and fully forgiven, and brought into His family as a child. A sinner is like a man covered with a black robe. His sins envelop him from head to foot, but in repenting and believing he is cleansed by the precious blood of

Christ. Henceforth he is a saint, a holy one, and is clean every whit. If he should sin it is like a mud spot on a white robe; the spot must be dealt with and be removed. This is brought about by '*the water of the word,*' accompanied by confession. Confession ensures forgiveness and cleansing. 'If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' Faithful and just to the Saviour who once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, and thus fully and completely atoned for them. It is therefore due to Him we should be both forgiven and cleansed.

"This result will surely follow if we confess our sins."

Her sorrow vanished when she learned the true character of what is called "the unpardonable sin," and with a deep-drawn sigh of relief on her part, and a warm shake of the hand, we parted.

How much needless sorrow would be averted if Christians paid more heed to the plain statements of God's Word as to these things.

How much happier, if the special and particular cause of unhappiness were sought out and confessed the moment communion is interrupted. If you, dear reader, are not as happy as formerly, let us earnestly entreat you to get alone with God. Find out the root of your departure, confess all to God, and listen, in believing confidence, to those

precious words—

“I will heal their backsliding,
I will love them freely.”

H. N.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(2 *Thessalonians* ii. 8—iii. 18.)

Please read the passage indicated above before reading this article, and then keep your Bible open so that you may refer to it as may be necessary from time to time.

The writer takes it for granted that you will comply with this request, and hence he addresses you in the terms he would employ if giving a homely “Bible-talk.”

IN verse 8 the man of sin is referred to as “that Wicked,” or more literally, “the lawless one.” The phrase in verse 7, “the mystery of iniquity,” is more literally, “the mystery of lawlessness.” Reading it thus, it is more easy to catch the connection. Lawlessness is the very essence of sin. It is the refusal of all controlling authority and restraint, and therefore in deadly opposition to God. The lawlessness, which has long been at work in Christendom in a mysterious or hidden way like a suppressed fire, is going to blaze forth in the lawless one.

But this will only be when the saints of God are removed from the scene of conflict by the coming of the Lord for them. At present the forces of evil are under restraint—restraint is the meaning of the two words withholdeth and letteth in verses 6 and 7.

There is "He who restrains" and also "what restrains." The former doubtless refers to the Holy Spirit of God, who is at this time personally upon earth as He never was before and will not be again. The latter, we believe, refers to the presence of the church on earth; the church being the house of God wherein the Holy Ghost is dwelling.

We have probably but little conception of how great is the restraint placed upon the working of lawlessness by the presence of the saints of God. They may be poor and feeble but the Spirit of God who indwells them is almighty. Occasionally this restraint is manifested in quite unmistakable style, as when, for instance, a spiritist seance, has been a failure because of the presence in the building of some definite and earnest Christian. This we believe has happened more than once. Have not many of us noticed how the flow of ungodly conversation in a room or office is stopped by the sudden entrance of an out-and-out servant of Christ?

When the Church is raptured to heaven, and therefore the Holy Spirit no longer has a house on earth, the consequences will be very serious and very immediate. The repressed lawlessness will burst forth in the lawless one and for a brief moment the working of Satan will have full scope. This coming lawless man will be inspired

by Satan and exhibit his energy in every particular. Notice how sweeping are the expressions used. Satan will support him with ALL power, even to signs and wonders of falsehood, so that EVERY possible deceit of unrighteousness will be brought to bear upon men who have been left behind to perish.

This tremendous energy of Satan will continue but for a short time. The lawless one being revealed on earth, he will be speedily dealt with. The Lord Jesus being revealed from heaven, He will utterly destroy him, casting him alive into the lake of fire, as Revelation xix. 20 shows. How appropriate it is that this utterly lawless and disobedient man, the very personification of Satanic energy, shall be dealt with personally by the Lord Jesus, the wholly subject and obedient Man, the personification of the power and majesty of God. No intermediary shall be allowed to intervene in that conflict!

We must also notice how just are all the dealings of God with men. Those who will fall a prey to all this deceit of unrighteousness, are just those who when they heard the truth did not love it. Loving not the truth, they did not believe it, rather they had pleasure in unrighteousness. And now the deceit of unrighteousness captures them; they believe the lie, and they all fall under the judgment of God. Formerly God sent them the truth, the Gospel was sounded into

their ears by men who preached it "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." (1 Peter i. 12). Now God sends them a strong delusion. He does for them what of old He had to do for rebellious Israel, when He "blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart" (John xii. 40; and see Acts xxviii. 26, 27). Is God unrighteous in acting thus? On the contrary; He is acting in righteousness of the strictest and most exact kind.

These verses should act as a check upon those Christians who seem to be so very desirous of possessing miraculous powers, particularly in the directions of "healings" and "tongues." Let them note that though there were such miraculous displays in the energy of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the dispensation, it is predicted that at its close there shall be a great display of similar powers, but of a spurious and Satanic kind. We are now near its end and it is significant how there has been a revival of strange happenings which purport to be miraculous and divine. We do not assert that all these happenings have been spurious and Satanic, but we do say that many have been and that if we do not test them all in very exact fashion by all the Scriptures we may easily be woefully deceived.

If we review for a moment the first twelve verses of our chapter we shall see then that directly after the coming of the Lord for His saints there will be,

1. A great movement in the realm of HUMAN thought, resulting in the falling away or apostasy, and culminating in the man of sin.

2. A great movement in SATANIC realms, resulting in an intense concentration of the powers of darkness, and culminating in great displays of lying wonders, so artfully staged as to utterly deceive apostate men.

3. A great movement of GOD'S government and power, resulting in His shutting such men up in their delusion and unbelief, and culminating in His public intervention in judgment through the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus.

There will be first the *catching away* of the true saints of God. Then the *falling away* of corrupt and forsaken Christendom. Lastly the *sweeping away* of the whole nauseous thing in the judgment of God.

No hope is held out here for Gospel-rejectors. No second chance after the coming of the Lord for His people is hinted at. The solemn statement is, "that they ALL might be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

How delightful is the contrast of verse 13 with verse 12. The Thessalonian believers—and ourselves also—have been chosen of God to salvation, a salvation which will be

consummated when the Lord comes for us, and we obtain His glory. To this we were called by the Gospel. In believing that Gospel we believed the truth and so from the outset we have that which fortifies us against the lie which those who perish believe, deceived by Satan.

The "sanctification of the Spirit" does not refer to the progressive work of the Spirit in the hearts of believers, conforming them more and more to the will of God. It refers rather to that setting apart for God which is achieved by the initial operations of the Spirit of God in the souls of men, operations which have in view His indwelling us when once the Gospel is believed. By this sovereign work of the Spirit we have been sanctified.

In view of this the word to us is "stand fast." We are to hold the apostolic "traditions" or "instructions." The Thessalonian believers had these instructions in two ways—by word of mouth and by the written epistle. We have them in one way only. Let us take therefore the more earnest heed to the apostolic writings. We have indeed a good hope through grace, so we may well be comforted and established.

Finally, the Thessalonians were to pray for Paul himself, and that not only in regard to his personal safety but in regard to the

work with which he was entrusted. The history recorded in Acts xvii. shows us how greatly prayer for his safety was needed at this juncture, yet he gave the first place to the work. The word had had full course amongst the Thessalonians and consequently it had been glorified in the wonderful results it produced in them. Paul asked prayer that thus it might be wherever he went. He prayed unceasingly for his converts but he was also not ashamed to ask for their prayers for himself. The most advanced saint or servant may well be thankful for the prayers of the youngest convert or the humblest believer.

As to the Thessalonians themselves the Apostle had confidence in the Lord concerning them that they would be governed by his directions, only he desired that the Lord Himself might direct their hearts into the enjoyment of God's love and into the patience of Christ. This is what we all want, and especially so seeing that the end of the age is upon us. If our hearts enter into Christ's patience, as He waits at God's right hand, and are tuned into sympathy with Him, we shall not chafe at what to us may seem a long delay. God's love will meanwhile be our enjoyed portion and we shall be able to display it to others while passing through the world.

From verse 6 of this third chapter and the succeeding verses it is evident that the

erroneous ideas concerning the coming of the Lord, which had been pressed upon the Thessalonians, had already borne evil fruit. It is ever the way that evil communications corrupt good manners. Some amongst them had become fanatical in their minds, under the impression that the day of Christ was upon them, and had thrown up their ordinary employment. Having done this they began to expect support from others. They became disorderly busybodies, doing nothing themselves and preying upon others who quietly went on with their work.

As to this the Apostle was able to hold himself up as an example. He had laboured night and day for his own support, though he might justly have been chargeable to them. God had ordained that "they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel" (1 Cor. ix. 14). Yet he had not claimed this right. As to all others the divine rule is, "that if any would not work, neither should he eat."

In verse 12 we have Paul's word to these busybodies. He commands them to work for their own living. Then in verse 13 he turns to the rest of the assembly at Thessalonica and tells them not to be weary in well doing. We can well imagine how tired they must have got of these disorderly brethren who were continually trespassing on their kindness. If now they were to be relieved of this burden let them not cease their

benevolence but still be hearty and cheerful givers in the interests of the Lord.

Verses 14 and 15 give instructions in case any of the disorderly brethren were contumacious and refused obedience to God's word through the Apostle's letter. Such were to be disciplined. The displeasure of God was to be manifested in His people withdrawing their companionship. The offender would thereby be made to feel the unenviable notoriety of his isolation. His links with the world *without* were broken and now there would be no happy companionship *within* the Christian circle. This would be a well-nigh impossible position and calculated to bring him to his senses. He was not however to be put right outside the Christian circle as though he were an enemy, which was the dealing that had to be taken with the offender of whom we read in 1 Corinthians v.

All this should be done that peace might reign in their midst. Only the Lord Himself however could really give this. Paul desired that it might be theirs at all times and in every way.

As the Thessalonians had been troubled with an epistle falsely represented as coming from Paul, he was very careful that there should be no doubt about the authenticity of this epistle which really did come from him. This explains verse 17.

ON WAITING FOR CHRIST.

THE Christian has been called to tread "the upward way," and he who is trusting, following, remembering, witnessing for Christ, will count it his deepest joy to be waiting for Him. He who has so loved Him as to lay down His life, is absent from this world, which rejected Him when He was here and still desires Him not, and those who follow Him, in humble communion with His thoughts, wait for Him in the sure hope which His words bring, "I am coming again."

With the Lord's enabling we will consider waiting for Christ in two ways. First, the way of the saints who long to be with Him, and second, His way who desires to have His people with Him where He is.

The man who was called Legion may illustrate the first for us. "He besought Him that he might be with Him" (Luke viii. 38). The story of this man is one of unique interest. Fast held in the grip of a cruel remorseless power, a misery to himself, a terror to his friends, the Stronger One had come and set him free. Now

“sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind,” how great the contrast! “Delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son” (Col. i. 13). But now a new fear possesses him; his Benefactor is going away; he sees the ship on the seashore, and the Lord with His disciples about to embark. How will he do now? Who will keep him from the power of the evil one, from which he has been so newly delivered? *He prays that he may be with Jesus.*

Do you think the blessed Lord would be deaf to such a prayer as that? Ah! no, it should be, it has been, abundantly answered; but when he prayed the time was not yet, and the Lord gives him one small thing to do for Him—to go home and shew what great things God had done for him. We know how he went forth and told the story everywhere, himself a living example of the word he spoke. Eternity alone shall tell how many were brought to the Lord through his testimony, or how many were healed and saved from a bondage like his own.

For nearly 1,900 years he has been with the Lord. What lessons he must have learned of Him! What wonders of beauty and glory have been disclosed to his worshipping gaze! Does he regret the little interval between his prayer and its answer? One feels quite sure that he must treasure

for evermore the privilege of being sent to do that one thing for the glory of the One who did so much for him. May it be thus with ourselves! Not less may we desire to be with Him, and not less may we value the opportunity of serving Him here, remembering His own words, "Where I am there shall also My servant be" (John xii. 26).

Let us turn now to the second and far more wonderful part of our meditation. This man in the Gospel story had had no means of learning that **THE LORD DESIRED TO HAVE HIS PEOPLE WITH HIM**, yet so it was. In John xiv. He is going away again, going very far away, not only over the sea, but through the dark waters of death, and the disciples are perplexed about it, because He has had to tell Peter, "Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now"; but He explains to them, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. In John xvii. 24 He prays, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou **has** given Me, be with Me where I am."

Do our hearts really take this in? We **speak** of the Lord's coming, it is the hope of the Church, the only hope for the world; He is the Morning Star and the Sun of Righteousness. We, who have been called and saved by Him, long for Him more than words can say; but who shall describe the

sweetness of His assurance that He is coming because *He desires* to have us with Him? That we should pray to be with Him is little wonder, but it would take eternal days to make known the wonder that *He should pray to have us with Him.*

It is often said that we are told very little about the future (albeit there is much more than is generally supposed) but it is enough that we shall be with Him. Light undimmed is there, life in all its fulness, love unhindered.

"Glory supreme is there
Glory that shines through all."

Nevertheless, these are not our hope. All the heart's desire will be fulfilled in this "So shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 17).

Meantime, He bids us watch and wait for Him. Let us beware lest we are so occupied with the coming, with signs and portents perhaps, that we lose sight of Him who shall come. "We look for the Saviour" (Phil. iii. 20) the apostle Paul tells us, and in Luke xii. the servants are to be like unto men that wait for THEIR LORD (v. 36), they are to be watching (v. 37), and doing, (v. 43) and without these two latter there is no true waiting.

How shall we wait for Him? Not, as is said of Christians, as dreamers and stargazers, but that each day He might be our chief thought. That whether in the home, or in service for Him, whether in the

countless little tasks of daily life or in the wider fields of Gospel ministry "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. iii. 17) and that life's object may be increasingly to please Him and do His will. It gives an urgency to our witness for Christ, since we may have so few opportunities; it speaks imperatively as to all that may be done in His Name—a cup of cold water given, the sick, the prisoner visited, the poor, the fatherless comforted—let it be done to-day, for there may be no to-morrow.

It touches all our earthly path and relationships. Those who go forth to labour until even for daily bread; the man of affairs, professional, commercial, municipal; the young men and maidens, training in universities and colleges; the boys and girls at school; oh! may the Lord grant you His grace that every day may be spent as though it were the last, that everything in your lives may be in order as though you should one day leave and not return. What would you like the Lord to find you doing when He comes? Shall not your reply be, "Doing faithfully the little task He has given me, in the place where He has set me, and all *unto Him*"? This is the kind of **waiting** that will please Him.

This hope has a very sanctifying effect, and yet it is not bondage. Bondage is a word that love knows not. The eternal Lover of our souls says, "Surely I come

quickly. Amen," and love, begotten of love, answers gladly, "Even so, come Lord Jesus," and in the waiting time between "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." (Rev. xxii. 20, 21).

"A little while He'll come again,
 Let us the precious hours redeem;
 Our only grief to give Him pain,
 Our joy to serve and follow Him.
 Watching and ready may we be,
 As those that wait their Lord to see."

L. R.

NOT I, BUT CHRIST.

SOME people are very much concerned because they cannot point to any particular time when they were converted. For that reason they sometimes wonder whether they have ever been converted at all. We think they trouble themselves needlessly. There are those who are able to tell the very hour when this great transaction took place. They could show you the spot where God met with them, and tell you all the attendant circumstances. The Apostle Paul could have done this. So could the jailer at Philippi, and Lydia of Thyatira would remember that eventful Sabbath day when some stranger-men joined the little band of worshippers by the riverside and spake to them of Jesus and the resurrection.

And her heart was opened to receive the message (Acts xvi.). But it is not every one who can. Perhaps the reader cannot. After all, it does not much matter whether you were led to see yourself a sinner and to trust in Jesus, as such, months or years ago. That is not the prime point. This is it: Do you trust Jesus just now, at this very moment? Are all your hopes centred in Him *now*? Do you *now* see that apart from Him you must for ever perish, but trusting Him you are for ever saved?

“On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”

If that is our song, then we may be quite sure we belong to Christ and are among His loved ones, even though we cannot name the hour when this became true.

And let us also remember that no two conversions have ever been exactly alike. God's way of dealing with souls varies according to His manifold wisdom. With some it is an instant transition from night to day. With others it is gradual—first the silver streaks of the morning, afterwards the golden sheen in the eastern sky, and then the sunrise. Some pass through an agony of conscience about their sins and sinful state. The pains of hell get hold of them. They tremble on the edge of the dark abyss. Of such was John Bunyan, of Bedford. Others

are attracted by the grace of the Lord Jesus, and they are drawn to Him by a power which they neither can nor would resist. Of such was the one written about in Luke vii. 36-49). Let no one be unhappy because his conversion does not answer in every feature to that of somebody else. It is what we should expect. There are not two blades of grass alike, nor two leaves on all the forest trees, and could we put the sand of the sea-shore under a microscope we should not find a perfect resemblance between any two of its countless grains. So is it in the kingdom of grace.

There is another thing about which some souls anxiously inquire. *Have I accepted Christ?* Now that is not the thing to be inquired about at all. Such a question is apt to cast us in upon ourselves, and then we need not wonder if darkness and uncertainty ensue. Indeed, it may be doubted whether Christ is ever offered for *our* acceptance. The inquiry should rather be, Has God, against whom we have all sinned—has *He* accepted Christ? The Saviour's sacrifice, while offered on our behalf, was certainly presented for God's acceptance, not ours. If a man be heavily in debt, who is it that has to be satisfied—himself or his creditors? If we have sinned against God, who is it that has to be propitiated—the sinner or the One sinned against? Now we know of a surety that God has accepted Christ. He is much

more than satisfied with the atonement Christ has made. And if God is satisfied, ought not we to be ?

Have we not, then, to accept Christ ? asks some one. Nay, but we would not put it in that form. The acceptance is on God's side. To us the gospel is preached—glad tidings concerning Jesus, who died for our sins and has been raised from among the dead and is now in glory. This gospel we believe, and in believing we *are* forgiven, justified, saved, and have life through His name. The tendency of our wretched hearts is to turn from Christ to self in some shape or form. We shut ourselves up in a dark dungeon and then sorrow because the sun does not shine !

The gospel is a royal proclamation sent out to all the earth. Its terms are grandly simple. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii. 38, 39). Nothing could be plainer. Thus forgiveness of sins is announced and the assurance given that all who believe are justified from all things. These are blessed tidings indeed ! They are *God's* glad tidings—sent by Him to guilty, ruined, lost perishing men. They bear His signature and seal. Let us believe them. If not we

shall starve in the midst of plenty and perish from thirst with water all around.

And that is what so many are doing. Instead of believing the gospel, they are for ever thinking of themselves, of something *they* must do, or be, or feel in order to find peace. No wonder that doubts and fears beset them. Does the reader happen to know any of these unhappy folks? You may recognize them by their speech, for they have a dialect of their own. "*I*" and "*me*" are their favourite pronouns. They cannot say five words without them. In this respect they bear a striking likeness to the one whose experiences are described in Romans vii. Nearly forty times within as many moments does that dejected man talk of "*I*" and "*me*"! The great vision of his soul is full of self from one end of it to the other. So it is with them. And as in his case so in theirs, a harvest of wretchedness is the only result. What else could be expected? And so it must go on till, sick and tired of themselves, they cry out for a deliverer, and find one in Christ.

Oh, let us turn away from self—let us loathe it, hate it, and never listen to it more. Christ is rest to the weary. He is the Fountain of living waters where the thirsty may drink and be satisfied. He is bread for the hungry, clothing for the naked, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Here our souls, worn out by constant effort

to be other than they are, may lie down and be at rest. Not I, but Christ! *Not I, but Christ!* The lesson is learnt at last. May it never, *never* be forgotten more.

W. B.

“DANIEL PURPOSED IN HIS HEART.”

DANIEL is a most encouraging example for young Christians to consider. A captive at the court of the king of Babylon, when we first read of him, he must only have been a youth in his teens. The start he got was a good one, for the impetus of it carried him through a very long life, through changing dynasties, and amid many vicissitudes. Some seventy years he served the Lord, sometimes in positions of great prominence, sometimes for years in obscurity.

What then marked Daniel's start? He was soon put to the test. He and three companions were chosen to be taught the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans, and thus fitted to take positions of honour and trust in the kingdom. A portion of the *king's meat and drink was allowed to them for the three years of their study.*

Then we read,

“Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion

of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank" (Daniel i. 8).

Now the king's portion had doubtless been offered to the idols first, and as such Daniel would have none of it. It was a bold stand to make. A tyrannical monarch might easily have taken it into his head to slay the bold youth, who dared to insult his gods like that and to despise the very food that the king himself partook of.

What was the secret of his boldness? "Daniel purposed in his HEART." His *heart* was won for Jehovah. His soul revolted against the blind superstition of idolatry, and at all costs he would take his stand. No one can tell how the heart is thus won. We cannot whip ourselves into devotedness. Well is it if the young Christian deploras his lack of heart for the Lord and turns to Him in prayer that it may be otherwise. This is a day of great lukewarmness. Laodicea—nauseating lukewarmness—is the last stage in the history of the church of God on this earth, the full-blown result of the first declension in Ephesus, *the leaving of first love*.

Ah! it is the appreciation of the Lord's love to us that will alone bring the answering love to Him. "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John iv. 19) It is the love of Christ that alone can constrain us to live unto Him and not unto ourselves.

And see how God came in and supported Daniel. God was able to sustain the youthful Daniel in the presence of the proud monarch. We read that God had brought Daniel “into favour and tender love” with the prince of the eunuchs. When Daniel asked that he and his companions might be fed on pulse and water for ten days as an experiment, the prince of the eunuchs agreed to it. Ten days was not a long time for a food experiment, to have much result. But at the end of the ten days the faces of Daniel and his three companions were “fairer and fatter” than those who took of the king’s meat and drink.

Best of all when the three years’ study was completed, in matters of wisdom and understanding these four were ten times better than those who had partaken of the king’s meat and drink. Thus was Daniel justified.

But it all began with the *heart*. There is no doubt that the heart controls the man. The mind may tell you that such and such a course is not right, but it is the heart that carries the man.

It was Barnabas who exhorted the young converts at Antioch “that with PURPOSE OF HEART they would cleave unto the Lord.” (Acts xi, 23.) The wise man ex-

horted his son in memorable words, "Keep thy *heart* with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Proverbs iv, 23.) It is a terrible thing when the young believer allows his heart to run after the things of the world. How insidious these things are. How well is it when the heart of the young Christian, as of all of us, is set upon the Lord.

May He grant to each one of us "purpose of heart."

A. J. POLLOCK.

CONCERNING YOUNG CONVERTS.

I AM quite sure that we often make a great mistake in our treatment of young Christians. As soon as ever they are converted we put them to work, and expect them to engage in Christian warfare. This is not God's order. We have a beautiful model of the various stages of growth in Christian life, in the first epistle to the Thessalonians.

Chapter i. gives us Birth. "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve . . . and to wait." This was conversion. They passed from death unto life, and became "babes" in Christ.

Chapter ii. shows us Nursery days. Those young believers needed tending and care, and the great apostle to the Gen-

tiles says, "We were gentle as a nurse." In another place, how solicitous he was as to their diet, and he was full of maternal anxiety as to whether they needed "milk" or "meat."

Chapter iii. speaks of *standing*. "Now we live," says Paul "if ye stand fast in the Lord," the equivalent of which is "My greatest ambition is that you should be able to stand alone." It is the mothering instinct again in Paul, so anxious and so proud when the moment comes for her child to stand alone.

Chapter iv. *Walking*. "We exhort you how you ought to walk." How perfectly natural is the development of life, first standing, and now walking.

Chapter v. *Fighting*. And not until this last chapter does Paul mention warfare, and then he introduces the armour that is necessary for fighting. Verse 24 ends with victory. "Who also will do it."

Have patience brethren with young Christians, and don't hurry them along. They don't know everything at first. They must not fight till they are out of the nursery. They'll need strength in their feet before they can walk, and they'll need plenty of "strong meat" before they can fight.

J. H. (Notes of address)

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(James i. 1—18.)

Please read the passage indicated above before reading this article, and then keep your Bible open so that you may refer to it as may be necessary from time to time.

The writer takes it for granted that you will comply with this request, and hence he addresses you in the terms he would employ if giving a homely "Bible-talk."

WE incline to think that the Epistle of James is read less than any other of the Epistles. This is a pity, because it deals with matters of a very practical sort. There is in it hardly anything which could be called the unfolding of Christian doctrine, but a great deal which inculcates Christian practice. We might almost call it the Epistle of *works*, of everyday Christian behaviour. Its difficulty lies in the fact that the standpoint from which it is written differs from that of all the other Epistles. But we must not neglect it on that account.

The James who wrote it was not the brother of John. He was slain by Herod in very early years, as recorded in Acts xii. 2. The author of the Epistle was the James spoken of in Acts xv. 13, and xxi. 18. Paul calls him, "James, the Lord's brother," in Galatians i. 19, and he acknowledges him as one of the "pillars" of the Church in Jerusalem in Galatians ii. 9. He does not appear to have gone forth to Judea or Samaria or to the uttermost parts of the earth, but to

have remained in Jerusalem and there attained to a position of great authority.

The Epistle is not written to any particular assembly of believers, nor even to the whole church of God. It is addressed rather to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad," and it is this which accounts for its unusual character. Let us attempt to seize the view-point from which James speaks before we consider any of its details.

Although the Gospel began at Jerusalem and there won its earliest triumphs, the Christians of that city were slower than others in entering into the true character of the faith they had embraced. They clung with very great tenacity to the law of Moses and to the whole order of religion which they had received through him, as is evidenced by such passages as Acts xv, and xxi. 20—25. This is not surprising, for the Lord did not come to destroy the law and the prophets but rather to give their fulness, as He said. This they knew but what they were slow to see was that having now got the substance in Christ, the shadows of the law had lost their value. The enforcing of that fact is the main theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which tells us, "Now, that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." Shortly after those words were written the whole Jewish system,—temple, altar, sacrifices, priests,—did vanish away in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

Up to that point however, they viewed themselves as just a part of the Jewish people, only with new hopes centred in a Messiah who was risen from the dead. The same idea was common among the Jewish converts to Christ, wherever they were found and consequently their tendency was to still remain attached to their synagogues. An exception to this state of things was found where the Apostle Paul laboured and taught "all the counsel of God." In such cases the real character of Christianity was made manifest and the Jewish disciples were separated from their synagogues, as we see in Acts xix. 8 and 9. James, as we have seen, remained in Jerusalem and he wrote his Epistle from this Jerusalem standpoint, which was right as far as it went and at the time of his writing.

We might put the matter in another way by saying that the earliest years of Christianity covered a period of transition. The history of those years, revealing the transition, is given to us in the Acts, which begins with the incorporation of the church in Jerusalem, consisting exclusively of Jews, and ends with the sentence of blindness finally pronounced upon the Jews as a people and the Gospel specially sent to the Gentiles. James writes from the standpoint that was usual amongst Jewish Christians in the middle of that period. It is this which accounts for the peculiar features of his Epistle.

Although the Apostle addresses himself to the whole of his dispersed nation he does not for a moment hide his own position as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was still rejected by the majority of his people. Moreover, as we read on, we soon perceive that the believers amongst his people are really in his mind's eye and that what he has to say is mainly addressed to them. Here and there we shall find remarks specifically addressed to the unbelieving mass, as also other remarks which have the unbelievers in view, though not addressed directly to them.

Take, for instance, the opening words of verse 2. When he says, "My brethren," he was not thinking of them merely as his brethren according to the flesh, as fellow Jews, but as brethren in the faith of Christ. This is evident if we look at the next verse where their *faith* is mentioned. It was faith in Christ, and that alone, which at that moment differentiated between them and the unbelieving mass of the nation. To the casual observer all might look alike, for all were waiting on the same temple services in Jerusalem or attending the same synagogues in the many cities of their dispersion, yet this immense line of cleavage existed. The minority believed in Christ, the majority refused Him. This cleavage was manifested in the lifetime of the Lord Jesus for we read, "So there was a division among the people because of Him." (John vii. 43). It was

perpetuated and enlarged at the time when James wrote, and as ever the Christian minority was suffering persecution at the hands of the majority.

They had at this time "divers" or "various" temptations. From different quarters there came upon them trials and testings which, if they had succumbed to them, would have tempted them to turn aside from the simplicity of their faith in Christ. On the other hand, if instead of succumbing they went through them with God they would be made strong by enduring, and this would be great gain in which they might well rejoice. Hence when the trials came instead of being depressed by them they were to count it an occasion of joy. What a word this is for us to-day! A word amply corroborated by the apostles Paul and Peter: see, Romans v. 3-5, and 1 Peter i. 7.

These temptations were permitted of God for the testing of their faith and they resulted in the development of endurance. But endurance in its turn became operative in them, and if allowed to have its perfect work it would carry to completion the work of God in their hearts. The language is very strong, "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." In the light of these words we may safely say that temptation or trial plays a very large part in our spiritual education. It is like a tutor in the school of God, who is well able to instruct us and to develop

our minds to the point when we graduate as the finished product of the school. And yet how greatly we shrink from trial! What efforts we make to avoid it! In so doing we are like unto children who scheme with great ingenuity to play truant from school, and end up by becoming dunces. Are we not foolish? And have we not here an explanation of why so many of us make but little progress in the things of God?

Many of us would doubtless rejoin, "Yes, but these trials make such demands upon one. Again and again one is entangled in the most perplexing problems that need superhuman wisdom for their solution." That is so, and therefore it is that James next instructs as to what should be done in these perplexing situations. Lacking wisdom we are simply to ask it of God, and we may be assured of a liberal answer without a word of reproach; for we are not expected to have *in ourselves* that wisdom which is *in God*, and which comes from above. We may assuredly ask God for whatever we lack and expect a liberal answer, though whether we should always get it without a word of reproach is another matter. There were occasions when the disciples asked the Lord Jesus for things which they did not get without a gentle word of reproof: see, for instance, Luke viii. 24, 25, and xvii. 5-10. But then these were occasions when what was wanted was *faith*, and that, being believers, we certainly ought to possess.

How definite and certain is the word—"It shall be given him." Take note of it, for the more the assurance of it sinks down into our hearts the more ready we shall be to ask wisdom in faith without any "waving" or "doubting." This simple unquestioning faith, which takes God absolutely at His word, is most necessary. If we doubt we become double-minded, unsteady in all our ways. We become like sea-waves tossed about by every wind, driven first in this direction and then in that, sometimes up and sometimes down. First our hopes run high and then we are filled with forebodings and fears. If this be our condition we may ask for wisdom but we have no ground for expecting it, or anything else, from the Lord.

We rather think that verse 7 is also intended to convey to us this thought; that he who asks of God, and yet asks with a doubting mind, is not likely, whatever he may receive, to take it *as from the Lord*. Wisdom or guidance or anything else is asked of God. Instead of there being calm reliance upon His word the mind is full of questionings and tossed about between hopes and fears. How can real wisdom and guidance be received? And if any kind of help is granted how can it be received as from God? Does not this go far to explain why so many Christians are troubled over questions concerning guidance? And when

God's merciful providence is exercised towards them and things reach a happy issue, they do not see His hand in it and receive it as from Him. They attribute it to their good fortune: they say, as the world would say, "My luck was in!"

Verses 9 to 12 form a small paragraph by themselves and furnish us with an instructive example of the point of view that James takes. He contrasts "the brother of low degree" with "the rich," and not, as we might have expected, with "the brother of high degree." The rich, as James uses the term, mean the unbelieving rich, the leading men of wealth and influence and religious sanctity, who were almost to a man in deadly opposition to Christ, as is shown to us throughout the Acts of the Apostles. God had chosen the poor of this world and the rich played the part of their oppressors, as is stated in chapter ii. of our epistle, verses 5 and 6. How plainly does the Apostle warn the rich oppressors of his nation of what lay ahead of them! Great they might be in the eyes of their fellows but they were like grass in the sight of God. Grass produces flowers and the fashion of them has much grace about it, but under the burning heat of the sun all is speedily withered. So these great Jewish leaders might be most comely in the eyes of their contemporaries, yet soon they would fade away.

And when the rich fade away here is this "brother," this Christian, emerging from his trials and receiving a crown of life! Exaltation reached him even during his life of toil and testing, inasmuch as God considered him worthy of being tested. Men do not test mud, except it be that kind of blue clay in which diamonds are found. Base metals are not cast into the crucible of the refiner, but gold is. God picks up this poor brother of low degree, who would have been regarded by the rich of his nation as but the mud of the streets (see, John vii. 47-49) and exalted him by proclaiming him to be an object composed of gold. Consequently He permits him to be refined by trials. If we really understand this we shall be able to say with all our hearts, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." The testing process itself is not joyous but grievous, as the Apostle Peter tells us, yet by means of it room is made in our hearts for the in-shining of the love of God, and we become characterized as those that love the Lord. Consequently the trial issues in a crown of life when the glory appears. The tried saint may have lost his life in this world but he is crowned with life in the world to come.

Though the primary thought of this passage is the testing which God permits to come upon believers, yet we cannot rule out altogether the idea of temptation, since every test brings with it the temptation to succumb,

by gratifying ourselves rather than glorifying God. Hence when God tests us we might be so foolish as to charge Him with tempting us. This it is which leads to the next short paragraph, verses 13 to 15.

God Himself is above all evil. It is absolutely foreign to His nature. It is as impossible for Him to be tempted with evil as it is impossible for Him to lie. Equally so it is impossible for Him to tempt anyone with evil though He may permit His people to be tempted with evil, knowing well how to overrule even that for their ultimate good. The real root of all temptation lies within ourselves, in our own lusts. We may blame the enticing thing which from without was presented to us, but the trouble really lies in the desires of the flesh within.

Let us lay hold of this fact and honestly face it. When we sin the tendency is for us to lay a great deal of the blame on our circumstances, or at all events on things without, when if only we are honest before God we have no one and nothing to blame but ourselves. How important it is that we should thus be honest before God and judge ourselves rightly in His presence, for that is the high road to recovery of soul. Moreover it will help us to judge and refuse the lusts of our hearts, and thus sin will be nipped in the bud. Lust is the mother of sin. If it works it brings forth

sin, and sin carried to completion brings forth death.

Sin in this 15th verse is clearly sin in the act : for other scriptures, such, for instance as Romans vii. 7, show us that lust itself is sin in the nature. Only let sin in the nature conceive, and sin in the act is brought forth.

At this point we shall do well to think of our Lord Jesus and recall what is stated of Him in Hebrews iv. 15. He too was tempted, tempted in like manner to ourselves and not only this but tempted like us "in all things." And then comes that qualification of all importance, "yet without sin," or more accurately, "sin apart." There was no sin, no lust in Him. Things which to us had been most alluring found absolutely no response in Him, and yet He suffered being tempted" as Hebrews ii. 18 tells us.

It is easy to understand how temptation, if we refuse it, entails suffering for us. It is because we only turn from it at the cost of refusing the natural desires of our own hearts. We may not find it so easy to understand how temptation brought suffering to Him. The explanation lies in the fact that not only was there no sin in Him but He was full of holiness. Being God He was infinitely holy, and having become Man He was anointed by the Spirit of God, and He met all temptation full of the Spirit. Hence sin was infinitely abhorrent to Him, and the

mere presentation of it to Him, as a temptation from without, caused Him acute suffering. We, alas! having sin within us, and having become so accustomed to it, are very little able to feel it as He felt it.

God, then, far from originating temptation is the Source and Giver of every gift that is good and perfect. The Apostle is very emphatic on this point; he would by no means have us err as to it. Verses 16 to 18 are another short paragraph, in which God is presented to us in a very remarkable way. Not only is He the Source of every good and perfect gift but also of all that can be spoken of as light. The light of creation came from Him. Every ray of true light for the heart or conscience or intellect comes from Him. What we really *know* we know as the result of divine revelation, and He is the "Father" or "Source" of all such light. Man's lights are very uncertain. The light of "science" so-called is very variable. It burns brightly, it dies down, it re-appears, it flares up, it goes out, finally extinguished by an oncoming generation which feels sure it knows more than the **outgoing** generation. With the Father of **lights**, and hence with all light that really **comes** from Him, there is no variableness **neither** shadow of turning. Blessed be God for **that** !

There is a third thing in this short paragraph however. Not only is God the Source

of gifts that are good and perfect and lights that do not vary, but also of His people themselves. We too have sprung from Him as begotten of Him according to His own will. We are what we are according to His sovereign pleasure and not according to our thoughts or our wills, which by nature are fallen and debased, and also according to the "word of truth" by which we have been born of Him.

The devil is the father of lies. The world to-day is what he has made it, and he started it with the lie of Genesis iii. 4. In contradiction to this the Christian is one who has been begotten by the word of truth. By-and-by God is going to have a world of truth, but meanwhile we are to be a kind of firstfruits of that new creation.

Is not this wonderful? A thoughtful reader might have deduced the fact that a Christian must be a wonderful being, inasmuch as he is begotten of God. We might have said, "If God is the Source of gifts and those gifts are good and perfect; if He is the Source of lights and those lights are without variation or turning; then if He becomes the Source of beings those beings are sure to be equally wonderful. We are not however left to deduce it. We are plainly told; and very important results flow from it as we shall see.

CHRIST'S PRESENT APPEARING.

(Notes of an Address).

Scripture read:—(Hebrews ix. 24).

WE want now to look a little, the Lord helping us, at the present work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of God. I have read only a few words of Scripture but if we really gain an understanding of the meaning of the fact that Christ has entered into heaven and now appears in the presence of God for us, it will not be without profit.

In the first place let us ask, Who is it that has entered into heaven? It is the One who is none other than the eternal Son of God. His glories are brought before us in the first chapter; in fact in nearly every chapter in the Epistle His superlative glories are brought before us in a way that must bow our hearts in worship. But just as He **became** Man in order that He might accomplish the work of the cross so He has now entered into Heaven as Man.

Let us be quite clear as to this. He who is God became Man, but when He became Man He did not cease to be God, and therefore we have the holy mystery—a mystery that you and I will never never understand,

but in the presence of which we wonder and worship—of God and Man being here in one and the same Person. But He Who came into the world as Man has gone back into the presence of God as Man, and the great, wonderful, outstanding fact of Christianity is this, that there is a Man in the presence of God to-day and there is a divine Person in this world. The Holy Spirit is here because there is a Man in the presence of God. If He had not been glorified, the Spirit would not have been given, but the Spirit has been given as witness to the fact that there is a real Man in the presence of God.

Someone may ask, Why stress that so much? For this reason, He has entered into the presence of God *for us*, which means that you and I may enter in. Having accomplished the great work of redemption, He has made it possible for us to have a standing in the presence of God.

Now there is another thing we want to observe—that Christ has entered into Heaven. “Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands . . . but into Heaven itself.” His death as presented in this Epistle was His own voluntary act; He “through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God.” In the same way, because of the greatness and glory of His Person, as well as *on the ground of accomplished redemption*, He has entered into the presence of God for us. By His own act

He has gone in, because He has an indisputable right to be there.

That is a marvellous thing. The first man because of his sin put an immeasurable distance between himself and God, and, to all outward appearance, it looked as if God had been defeated. The second Man has gone right into the presence of God, and that for us, which is the pledge that you and I may appear there also. Not only that we may appear there in a coming day, but so that He conduct us in spirit into the divine presence—"the holiest"—here and now.

Christ, then, has entered into Heaven, and He now appears in the presence of God. That sums up in a very few words what is really the main subject matter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which is *priesthood*. The priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ has to do with God, and with our relation to God, and our appearing in the presence of God.

Here let us digress a little to observe the difference between the priesthood and the advocacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. His priesthood has to do with our relation to God, His advocacy has to do with our relation to the Father. His priesthood is a ceaseless service in regard to us each; there is not a moment in our history, by day or by night, when He is not exercising His priestly service on our behalf. His advocacy is a more occasional service. If we turn to the

first epistle of John we shall see that quite clearly.

At the end of the first chapter the inspired writer is dealing with the question of a believer sinning. I wonder if that sounds strange in some believer's ear. Do you say, "I thought after I was converted I should never sin again." ? Well I expect by now you have found out your mistake; and if not you will find that this chapter has something very serious to say to you. A young fellow came to me after a meeting and said he had a real desire to be saved. "But" said he, "there is one thing that troubles me, I can understand very clearly that if I come to Christ to-night every sin that I have committed up till to-night will be put away by the blood of Jesus, but supposing I sin afterwards, what then?" I read to him, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin," and said, "do you believe that?" "Yes" he replied. "Now" I said, "how many sins had you committed when the Lord Jesus shed His blood?" "None" he at once answered. "And how many sins does His blood wash away?" "All sin" "How many is that?" "That means all sin from the time I came into the world till the time I leave it, that's splendid" he exclaimed. All sin does indeed mean all sin from the time you came into the world until the time you leave the world.

Some person may say, "That does not quite solve the problem; supposing I do sin

after I am converted, what then?" Look at the 9th verse, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Confessing our sins is not simply a matter of asking to be forgiven. It means that, if I have sinned, I have judged and owned that sin before God, realizing what a serious thing it is in His sight.

Someone thinks, "If that is the case, then it seems to me it does not matter if I sin or not, I have only to confess my sins and that is all about it." Apparently there were such people in John's day and so he opens chapter ii. by saying, "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not." Supposing I do sin, I have got to be merciless in my judgment of myself and in my condemnation of my conduct; but, "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." If I sin it is not a question of my relationship with the Father being affected, but of the communion between the child and the Father being interrupted.

Supposing I drop into a house some day unawares, and the mother is giving her boy a right good scolding. She says, "He has been a very, very naughty boy." "Then," I say, "he is not your son any more." What would *she* say? He is her child all the same, and it is just because she loves her son

so much that she does scold him, and the communion, if I may use the word as between the mother and the child is lost. But the boy comes later and he says, "Mother I own I did a wrong thing, and I am very sorry for it," then the old happy relations are restored once more. Why do you and I feel so unhappy when we have sinned? Because we are children of God and because that delicate, fragile link of communion has been snapped, and we are made miserable. When there is confession we find that our Advocate has been there before us; and we may be assured that we are forgiven by the Father. Now you can quite see, I think, that the work of the Advocate is an occasional work, but the work of the Priest is a ceaseless work, as He appears in the presence of God for us.

Let us all take these words right home to ourselves individually, and say, "Christ has entered into heaven, and now appears in the presence of God for *me*." Can you imagine anything more wonderful than that? Think of what we are, poor, insignificant, little specks in God's great universe. Then think of all that the blessed Lord Jesus has to engage His attention; the interest of this world and other worlds, everything that goes on in this great universe, myriads of His people all over the world, and yet my brother, my sister, He appears in the presence of God for *you*. He knows your

name, He knows where you live, He knows your life, He knows every detail of your history, He knows your sorrows, He knows your temptations, and He is as interested in your little life as if you were the only person that He had to represent before God.

Let me remind you of a beautiful illustration in the Gospels of the present priestly work of the Lord Jesus. It is in Matthew xiv. The Lord Jesus had just fed the multitude, when He told His disciples to get into a boat and go to the other side, while He Himself went up into a mountain apart. The Lord Jesus had virtually left the world, He was alone on top of that mountain, and He was praying. Below there were His disciples in the ship in the midst of the sea, and the waves were contrary. Can you not see the analogy? Our blessed Lord Jesus has left us; He is on the mountain top. In other words, He now appears in the presence of God. You and I are below in the midst of the sea of tumult, opposition, difficulties, and the thousand and one things that we have to encounter in our pathway through this world, and we find that Satan's power, like the wind, is contrary.

Perhaps there is a young Christian, who lives in a home where there is nobody who knows the Saviour but herself, and they are all against her; sometimes she is almost tempted to give up. Perhaps there is a young fellow, and where he works he suffers

a tremendous lot from his workmates; there is not another Christian in the place except himself, and they do everything they can to side-track him and sometimes he feels sorely tempted to fling it all up and let go. Perhaps there is somebody who has got a heavy sorrow, somebody who has got a burden upon their heart of which they cannot speak to anybody but to God Himself. You have been finding the winds contrary in ever so many different ways, and there have been times when things were just at their worst, and Satan has whispered in your ear and said, "Before you were converted you did not have all this with which to contend; your unconverted friends seem to have a very much smoother time of it than you have—and yet you say that Jesus loves you and you love Him! Why should you have the afflictions and the opposition that you have?" Sometimes you give these thoughts a little room in your heart, and you ask yourself "I wonder why it is?" and it seems, when your burden becomes so great, that He is a long way off.

What happened that night? Jesus saw them toiling in rowing, and what was He doing? He was praying. For whom was He praying? I think to ask that question is to answer it. I have no doubt whatever He was praying for the disciples. Listen my brother, my sister, the Lord Jesus looks down upon you from the mountain top; He

sees these tears that nobody else knows anything about. He sees that burden that you have got to bear, He sees the trials that compass you, He sees the infirmities with which you have got to contend. He sees, He knows, He loves, He cares, and He prays. Why is He praying for you? He is praying for you in order that knowing His succour, His sympathy, and His support, He may render you superior to it all.

You may remember that when Aaron as High Priest first went into the presence of God, He entered with the names of the children of Israel on his shoulders and on his breast. Our High Priest now appears in the presence of God for us, and He appears there with your name and my name on His shoulders of strength, and on His heart of love.

Let us go on with our story. In the fourth watch of the night, when the night is at its darkest, Jesus came to them, and if they were so filled with terror that at first they failed to recognize Him, there came His well known gracious voice, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid." Thus does He come to us in our circumstances in order that He may conduct us into His circumstances. He comes right down to our side of things in order that He may conduct us to His side of things, and when we reach Him the storm ceases, and we are

able to take our place at His feet and worship Him as the Son of God.

Now notice another thing. We have already seen that His advocacy has to do with sins but His priesthood has not to do with sins. His priesthood has to do with *infirmities* and therefore we read in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Sins bring in distance between ourselves and the Father, and affect the tender, vital link of communion. Infirmities are things, not sinful in themselves, that encompass us in our weakness because of the mixed condition in which we find ourselves. Our High Priest supports us in our infirmities in order that He may render us superior to them all.

In all this He has a grand object in view. He does it not simply that you and I may feel a little happier because of His support or because He relieves us from our infirmities. In point of fact, it is not always His way to relieve. Paul had an infirmity, and His prayer was not answered in the way that he expected. He did not get deliverance from his infirmity though he was quite delighted with the answer he got. There is

often greater glory to the Lord Jesus, when His grace is magnified by His making us superior to the things that try and trouble us than when He delivers us from them. The point is this, He supports us in our infirmities, He makes us superior to them and enables us to rise altogether above them—for what? In order that He may conduct us into the presence of God. This we learn when we come to the climax of the epistle in the 19th verse of chapter x, where we read that we have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.”

We hardly appreciate these words as much as those to whom they were in the first place addressed, and I am afraid there is sometimes such familiarity with them that they are robbed of their freshness, sweetness and power. The Jews of old were well accustomed to the high priest entering in once every year; they knew that there was never any possibility of their entering in. When the inspired writer spoke of Christ having entered into heaven and now appearing for us, they would have seen what he alluded to and understood it, but I think as they read chapter x. they must have been positively staggered, that *they* had boldness to enter into the holiest.

Christ came into the world to represent God before man: He has gone into the presence of God to represent man before God. He has entered into the presence of

God with our names upon His heart: you and I are privileged to enter into the presence of God with His name upon our hearts. Is it not marvellous beyond all conception that we can now find an entrance into the presence of God, and find our home there ?

Jesus fills that holy place; Jesus, our precious Saviour, Jesus our Great High Priest, Jesus the object of God's supreme delight. God delights in Jesus and He shares that delight with us. In that holy place there is one voice only to be heard and that is the voice of God. "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." (Habakkuk ii. 20) We hear His voice as He tells us of the glories of Christ; of His delight in Christ; and there can be only one result from that, our chapter does not tell it, but it is a very clear inference, and that is that worship will go out from our hearts to God.

That is what He wants. He has been working with us for that; it is why He saved us to begin with. The Lord Jesus is exercising His priestly office for us in the presence of God to-day, in order that, set free from every hindrance, our hearts may overflow and rise to God the Father in that worship that is so grateful to His heart.

May we be in the power of these things more and more.

"THINGS ABOVE."

A large aeroplane was recently taking a flight over mountainous country. The pilot and his observer had not been travelling long, when they heard a noise on board that filled them with anxiety.

It is a far greater danger to have one rat on board a ship that sails in the air, than to have 100 rats on a sea-going vessel. An aeroplane is so easily damaged; the biting through of one wire, or the tearing of the fabric of a wing, might be enough to send the aeroplane crashing to the ground.

It was the sound of a rat gnawing away in some secret nook of the aeroplane that disturbed these men. What could they do? It was impossible at that height to search the plane, and if they attempted to land, the mischief might be complete before they could do so. Besides, they were travelling over a mountain range, and that is not suitable ground upon which to land an aeroplane. Suddenly the pilot thought of a good idea. He began to mount higher and higher into the already very keen mountain air. Higher and still higher he went, until the two men could scarcely breathe. Their ears felt like bursting, their breath came in tearing gasps, but up and up they went. Why? They were waiting for something they knew must happen. Difficult as it was for them to

breathe in the cold rare atmosphere of that mountain height, they knew that it must be much worse for their secret foe, the rat. He would have to give in first. Higher, still higher! And then their courage was rewarded, for with a feeble scamper and a dull thud, a large rat came out from its hiding place, and fell dying on the floor of the aeroplane. In a moment the observer had flung it overboard. He and His companion were safe from their secret foe.

Is not that the way for the Christian to triumph over the temptations of daily life? We need to "mount up with wings," or as the apostle Paul puts it, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth . . . set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. iii. 1-2).

A. D. B.

If I think of the world, I get *the impress of the world*.

If I think of the trials and sorrows, I get *the impress of my sorrow*.

If I think of my failures, I get *the impress of my failures*.

If I think of Christ, I get *the impress of Christ*.

“WHEN HE WAS COME TO YEARS.”

(Hebrews xi. 24).

THERE is no period more fraught with potentialities for good or evil than the time that is indicated in our title. While children we have others to decide for us, and ours is the place of obedience to parents and teachers. When we come to years we inevitably come to the time when responsibility lies on our own shoulders. It is the time when each one makes choice of that which either makes or mars life.

Doubtless the early training often helps the young person to make a right choice. Wise would it have been for Rehoboam, if he had listened to the counsels of his father, as given to us in the Book of Proverbs. He thought that he knew better than his father and made a fool of himself, and wrecked his kingdom. “Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment” (Job xxxii. 9). Neither are the young always wise, as in Rehoboam’s case. When a youth attains to mature age he often realizes that his father was wiser than once he thought. It has often been said that experience is a dear school to learn in, and frequently the young will learn

in none other. Experience never forgets to charge a fee, and sometimes it is an exorbitant one, loss of wealth, health and even life, as many a young man has found to his fearful cost.

Moses had the wonderful privilege of godly parents. Not only godly, but courageous were they, especially the mother. When the reward for their faithfulness took the unexpected turn of the doomed child being protected by the very daughter of the cruel monarch that had given out the decree, which the parents braved, the sister with the quick wit of her race, and doubtless under the overruling hand of the Lord, suggested that the mother of Moses might be chosen to be his nurse.

One can imagine how devotedly that mother would instil into the youthful mind of her son the fear of the Lord, which is "the beginning of wisdom." Amid all the splendour of that Eastern court, spite of the training that was given him in all the learning of the Egyptians, the mother's influence remained.

Then came the crucial time for Moses,

"WHEN HE WAS COME TO YEARS."

The time for choice had come. What use would he make of it? Put yourself in his shoes. Picture him walking in the palace of the Pharaohs far into the night. He

had an assured place which all might envy. The son of Pharaoh's daughter, affluence, learning, position, wealth, honour as the world counts honour—all were his.

The choice—on the one hand the favour of the mighty Pharaoh, on the other “the wrath of the king”; on the one side the smile of the world, on the other “the reproach of Christ.” Should he turn his back upon the position that he had, a position that perhaps no humbly born alien had ever before attained to, and take sides with alien slaves? Should he exchange his bed of roses for the howling wilderness, the drought to consume by day and the frost by night?

The young man was faced with a choice, the contrasts of which were more marked in his case than in other other.

But Moses had a wonderful vision. “He endured as seeing him that is invisible.” Altering the words without altering the sense in order to give a sharper definiteness to their meaning, “He endured as seeing Him that cannot be seen.” It sounds a paradox, a contradiction of words. Yet how true! He saw with the eye of faith what the eye of nature could not see. He saw with that divine quality what the keenest brain could have no knowledge of. So much so, that what is wisdom with God, is folly with man. Men might deplore that

the young Moses, with those grand qualities of mind and body that marked him early as a leader of men, should play the fool, throw away chances that every other young man in the kingdom would give both hands to possess.

But he was truly wise. His choice was sound. He had his eye on the future. The pleasures of sin were only for a season, and he chose affliction with the people of God. They were poor whip-driven slaves serving with rigour, but they were THE PEOPLE OF GOD. That settled it for Moses. His was folly indeed in the eyes of the world. It was in fact divine astuteness that marked him. "He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

It is a soul-stirring picture. We are moved to intense admiration for a young man of such grit and courage. We follow his after-career with increasing interest. What equipoise of character was his! We mark his meekness. His was no swelled head. Yet we see him in scenes of wonderful setting. On the mountain top with God receiving the law and the ordering of the tabernacle. Long years after we see him again on the mountain top with God, ever alone with God. He has had forty years at the backside of the desert. He has had forty years as leader of God's delivered

people through the wilderness. His natural force is unabated. His vision is as keen as ever. At the bidding of God he lays down his wonderful life. God buried him and was sole Mourner at his grave.

Had he chosen the palace, he might have been buried in the Egyptian “Westminster Abbey,” and that with the pomp of a mighty nation, with the pageantry pertaining to royalty.

But not one line concerning him would have been found in the Word of God. He might have made his mark upon the Egypt of his own time, and his mummy lain in some Museum to-day. But it would have stirred only a feeble interest, and to the question, Who was this Moses? only a very meagre answer would have been given.

But Moses with the choice he made has made his mark for the whole world and for all time.

There is a world of meaning in the words of our title and text,

“WHEN HE WAS COME TO YEARS.”

Perhaps some of our readers are arriving at such a stage. You have your choice to make. What shall it be? Look far ahead beyond this present life. Gaze on the invisible. Let your choice be truly wise. The Lord help you, for the issues are eternal, and a mistake may be irrevocable.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(James i. 19.—ii. 9.)

Please read the passage indicated above before reading this article, and then keep your Bible open so that you may refer to it as may be necessary from time to time.

The writer takes it for granted that you will comply with this request, and hence he addresses you in the terms he would employ if giving a homely "Bible-talk."

THE nineteenth verse begins with the word, "Wherefore" which indicates that we are now to be introduced to the results flowing from the truth of the previous verse. Because we are a kind of firstfruits of God's creatures, as begotten of Him by the Word of Truth, we are to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

Every intelligent unfallen creature is marked by obedience to the voice of the Creator. Fallen man, alas! shuts his ear to God's voice and insists upon talking. He would like to legislate for himself and for everybody else, and hence come the anger and strife which fill the earth. We were always creatures, but now, born of God, we are a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. What therefore should mark all creatures should be specially characteristic of us. Hearing God's word should attract us. We should run eagerly to it as those who delight to listen to God.

We only speak aright as our thoughts are controlled by God. If we think God's thoughts we shall be able to speak things

that are right. But, even if we are swift to hear God's thoughts, we shall only speak them when first we have assimilated them for ourselves and made them our own. We assimilate them but slowly and hence we should be slow to speak. A wholesome sense of how little we have as yet taken in God's mind will deliver us from that self-confidence and shallow self-assertiveness which makes men ready to speak at once on any and every matter.

Further we should be slow to wrath. The self-assertive man, who can hardly stop to listen to anything but must at once speak his own opinion is apt to get very angry when he finds that others do not accept his opinion at his own high valuation of it! On the other hand, here may be a believer of godly life who pays great heed to God's word and only speaks with consideration and prayer, and yet his opinion is equally turned aside! Well, let him be slow to wrath for if it be merely man's anger it accomplishes nothing that is right in God's sight. Divine anger will be made to serve His righteous cause, but not man's anger.

We must remember too that we are a first-fruit of God's creatures *as born of Him*. Hence not only should we be pattern creatures but we should though creatures exhibit the likeness of the One who is our Father. All evil should be laid aside and the word received with meekness. We are

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in the first place begotten of the Word; then with meekness we continue to receive it. These two things also appear in 1 Peter i. 23—ii. 2, where we are said to be “born again . . . by the word of God,” and also exhorted as new born babes to “desire the sincere milk of the Word.”

The Word is spoken of here as “engrafted” or “implanted.” This supposes that it has taken root in us and grown into a part of ourselves. It is the very opposite of “going in at one ear and coming out at the other.” If the Word merely flows through our minds it accomplishes for us little or nothing. If implanted in us it saves our souls. The primary thought here is the saving of our souls from the snares of the world, the flesh and the devil, a salvation which we all need moment by moment.

In verse 22 we get a third thing. Not only should we be swift to *hear* God's word, not only has it to be *implanted* in us, but we must become *doers* of it. First the *ear* for hearing. Then the *heart*, in which it is implanted. Then the *hand* governed by it, so that it comes into outward expression through us. And it is only when this third thing is reached that the Word is vitally operative in us. If our hearing does not result in doing our hearing is in vain.

To enforce this fact the apostle James uses a very graphic illustration. When a man stands before a mirror his image is re-

flected therein for just so long as there he stands. But there is nothing implanted in the mirror. His face is reflected in it, but without any subjective effect in the mirror, which is absolutely unchanged, even if ten thousand things are reflected in turn upon its face. The man departs, his image vanishes, and all is forgotten. It is just like this if a man merely hears the Word without any thought of rendering obedience to it. He gazes into the Word and then goes away and forgets. If on the other hand we not only look into truth but abide in it, and hence become doers of the work which is in accordance with truth, we shall be blessed in our doing. To this matter James refers more fully in the next chapter when he discusses faith and works.

We must not fail to notice the expression he uses to describe the revelation which had reached them in Christ. The revelation which the Jew had known through Moses was a law and writing to Jews, James uses the same term. Christianity too may be spoken of as *law*—the law of Christ—though it is much more than this. In contrast with the law of Moses however it is the *perfect* law of *liberty*. The law of Moses was *imperfect* and *bondage*.

The law of Moses was of course perfect *as far as it went*. It was imperfect in the sense that *it did not go all the way*. It set forth the bare *minimum*

of God's demands so that if man falls short in the smallest degree—offending in but “one point” (ii. 10)—he is wholly condemned. If we want the *maximum* of God's thoughts for man we have to turn to Christ, who fully displayed it in His matchless life and death, which went far beyond the bare demands of the law of Moses. In His earliest teachings too He plainly showed that the law of Moses was not the full and perfect thing. See Matthew v. 17 to 48.

In Christ we have the perfect law, even that of liberty. We might have imagined that if the setting forth of God's minimum produced bondage the revelation of His maximum would have meant greater bondage still. But no! The minimum reached us in what we may call the law of *demand*, and generated bondage. The maximum reached us in connection with the law of *supply* in Christ, and hence all here is liberty. The highest possible standards are set before us in Christianity but in connection with a power which subdues our hearts and gives us a nature which loves to do that which the revelation enjoins upon us. If a law were imposed upon a dog that it should eat hay it would prove to be to the poor animal a law of bondage. Impose the same law upon a horse and it is a law of liberty.

It is clear then, from verse 25, that we are to be doers of the work and not merely hearers of the word. Even our doings however need to be tested, for a man may seem to

be religious, zealous in all his works, and yet his religion be proved vain by the fact that he does not bridle his tongue. He has not learned to be "slow to speak" as verse 19 enjoined. In giving rein to his tongue he is giving rein to self.

Now pure and undefiled religion, which will stand in the presence of God, is of a sort which shuts self out. He who visits the fatherless and the widows in their affliction will not find much to minister to the importance or the convenience of self. He will have to be continually ministering instead of finding that which will minister to himself, if he moves amongst these afflicted and poor folk. The world might minister to self in him. Yes, but he keeps himself separate from the world so that he may not be spotted by its defilements.

"Unspotted from the world" is a strong way of putting it. The world is like a very miry place in which all too many love to disport themselves. (see 2 Peter ii. 22) The true Christian does not wallow in the mire. Quite true! But if he practices pure religion he goes further. He walks so apart from the miry place that not even splashes of the mud reach him.

Alas! for the feebleness of our religion. If it consisted in outward observances, in rites, in ceremonies, in sacraments in services, Christendom might yet make a fair show of it. Whereas it really consists in *the outflow*

of divine love which expresses itself in compassion towards and service to those who have no ability to recompense again, and a *holy separateness* from the defiling world-system that surrounds us.

Chapter ii. opens with a case in point. These early Jewish Christians were far too much controlled by the ordinary thoughts of the world, and as a consequence of being spotted by the world, they despised the poor. They should have been controlled by the faith of the Lord Jesus, and not by the standards and customs of the world. Though he was the Lord of Glory yet He ever stooped to the poor and the fatherless. Poverty and need may be incompatible with human glory, but they are quite compatible with Divine glory.

As a consequence when some rich Jew pompously entered their "assembly" or "synagogue"—this latter is the right word—attired in all his finery, he was met with servile attention, as much by the Christians as by the non-Christians apparently. When a poor man entered he was unceremoniously put in an obscure place. Quite natural of course according to the way of the world; but quite foreign this to the faith of Christ. They might constitute themselves judges of men in this way, but they only thereby proved themselves to be "judges of evil thoughts" or "judges having evil reasonings."

In verses 5 to 7 James recalls to his brethren what the situation really was. The rich Jews were in the main the proud opposers of Christ and His people, blasphemers of His worthy name. God's choice had in the main fallen on the poor; and with this agree the words of the Apostle to the Gentiles, in 1 Corinthians i. 26—31. These chosen poor ones—true Christians—were rich in faith and heirs of the coming kingdom. When servile attention was paid to the proud blasphemers and persecutors, because they were rich, and contempt was meted out to the followers of Christ because they were poor it only proved the blindness and folly of those who so acted. They viewed both rich and poor with the world's superficial gaze, and not with the penetrating eye of faith.

Notice that the Kingdom is said to be "promised to them that love Him." Most of those to whom James wrote would have stoutly contended that the kingdom was promised to the Jew nationally, and that in an exclusive way. This was now seen to be a mistake. It is promised to lovers of God, and that whether Jew or Gentile, as we find in Paul's writings.

Notice also the expression, "that worthy name by the which ye are called." The rich Jew blasphemed it but God pronounces it a *worthy* Name. By it they were called—this

seems to indicate that, when James wrote, the name *Christian* had travelled from Antioch where first it was coined (Acts xi. 26) to Jerusalem. The poor were the objects of persecution not so much because they were poor, as because they were identified with Christ, and He was the object of the world's hatred.

This having respect of persons is not only contrary to the faith of Christ, but even to the law itself which bids us love our neighbours as ourselves. This is called in verse 8 the "royal" or "kingly" law. It sums up in one word that which must be observed by every king who would reign righteously and govern according to God. To have respect of persons is to break that law and stand convicted as a transgressor.

If we stand before God on the ground of law-keeping and are convicted in one point of law-breaking, what is the effect?

F. B. HOLE.

What well-meaning physicians have failed to accomplish after long, long ages of endeavour, our Lord Jesus Christ will do in "*the twinkling of an eye.*" He will give us bodies of glory like unto His own body of glory, at His coming again!

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY.

IN the Holy Scriptures, which are given for our learning, the Spirit of God has been pleased in some cases to inspire for us extended histories of His people. Of Abraham, of Jacob, of Joseph, much is recorded to instruct us as to the dealings and discipline of God.

But of some we know little indeed, important though that little is. They come into view when we are not looking for them. In one case it may be as a type of our Lord Jesus—like Melchizedek in Genesis xiv. In another case to carry some valued lesson for our pathway as believers, as in that of Jabez in 1 Chronicles iv. 9-10. Let us engage our thoughts for a while with this latter instance.

It is in the midst of the names of the posterity of Judah that he is introduced unexpectedly. Was he connected with the tribe of Judah? It is probable but we cannot say. We are not informed as to his parents. We know not if he had a wife or a family. In his case, as it is so often, much that we might wish to know is withheld. It was

not necessary that mere curiosity should be gratified. But what is briefly narrated of his biography is full of blessing and teaching for us all.

“And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, [i.e., sorrowful] saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.”

Jabez is, “the sorrowful one.” He may bring to our thoughts this present world of men. For, “Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble.” In pain and sorrow he is brought into the world and in pain and sorrow he pursues his way through it. “Every man at his best state is altogether vanity,” said the Palmist. “For all his days are sorrows and his travail grief; yea his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.” So cried Solomon in Ecclesiastes, the book which has been described as “The funeral dirge of a dead world with its greatest prince as chiefest mourner.” The wisest of men had tested—had weighed in the balances—everything under the sun and had written “WANTING” on all.

He had proved what had been stated in Eden of old to our first mother, Eve, and to our first father, Adam. Sorrow was to be the portion of each and all outside of Paradise. There is the first mention of sorrow. The last mention is found in Revelation xxi. 4, where of the eternal state of happiness in which the redeemed are found it is said, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Tears, death, sorrow, crying, pain—what an epitome of the conditions which prevail, though men seek to hide the truth and ignore the facts and endeavour to be happy apart from God.

Blessed indeed are those who have seen a light above the brightness of the sun and who know also that all under the sun, is made to work together for their good.

It is to God—the God of Israel—that the sorrowful Jabez turns. "The God of Israel" is the One known in relationship and blessing. Crippled Jacob had clung in faith to the One who had wrestled with and crippled him. Crippled Jacob became clinging Jacob, and clinging Jacob became conquering Jacob. And there at Peniel he "had power . . . and prevailed, he wept, and made supplication" and so he obtained the name Israel, which means "A prince with God," and was

blessed. To Him who had cared for and blessed Jacob thus, Jabez made his supplication. Out of affliction we may raise the cry of earnest need to Him who hears prayer, and who delights to be put in remembrance. The Scripture says "Is *any* among you afflicted? let him pray."

For us in these glad Christian days the fullest revelation has been given. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit are made known. We "call on the Father." Through Christ we have "access by one Spirit unto the Father." And asking according to His will, we know that He hears us.

We may examine the details of the prayer of this Sorrowful one, and we shall find applications which suit ourselves.

1. "Oh! that Thou wouldest bless me indeed." He felt his dependence upon the God of Israel and his need of His intervention in blessing. Jehovah, the God of Israel had promised to bless His people and Jabez comes with his claim for a fulfilment of it in his own particular case. We Christians have been fully endowed. We *are* blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. But while all is ours we need the eyes of our hearts opened to know the breadth, and length, and depth and height of it all. Shall we ask ourselves whether we make the prayers of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians i. and iii. our prayers? We should do so.

2. *And enlarge my coast.*" He wished for a greater extent of territory—for more of the land on which God's eyes rested from one year's end to the other. It may be that there was much yet to be possessed—that he had not put his foot upon the portion assigned to him and that he was setting out to enter upon what was his in title and to do battle in order that he might "possess his possessions."

This should be our attitude and action. We are in danger ever of being content with that to which we have attained instead of energetically pressing forward to appropriate all that is ours.

3. "*And that Thine hand might be with me.*" He longed for the guidance and support of Him who had made Himself known to him. He had learned his need of divine succour and therefore petitions for the aid of the God of Israel, in that to which he was putting his hand.

And happy are we in knowing that the Hand outstretched for our blessing is Almighty, that there is always succour for us from on high and grace for seasonable help. So Paul could say when all human aid failed, "Nevertheless the Lord stood by me and strengthened me." Has not our Lord said "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth . . . and lo, I am with you always." So we may draw again and again upon His inexhaustible resources.

4. "*And that Thou wouldest keep me from evil that it may not grieve me.*" He longs that deliverance might be wrought for him or a shelter put about him, so that he,—the sorrowful one—might be without sorrow on account of evil.

What grace is with our God and Father, grace that can clear us as to our sins, blotting them out for ever, and can so command and control our circumstances that they shall become a source of good, and that the valley of tears may become a well-spring of richest profit; the sorrow being turned to singing as we journey through it.

How simple the added words! "*And God granted him that which he requested.*" Or as another translation has it "And God brought about that which he had requested." Everything was so ordered that the end desired was accomplished.

One is reminded of Psalm xxxvii. 5, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." He will act in the way which is best for our well-being. He will put into action that which will effect His own thoughts of good on our behalf

What encouragement to prayer and confidence we have in these two verses, written that we "through comfort and encouragement of the Scriptures" may repose our trust in our God, who is the Father of mercies and the God of all encouragement.

INGLIS FLEMING.

THE NEW TESTAMENT IN RELATION TO THE OLD.

A DIE is made up of two parts, the obverse and the reverse; the one fitting perfectly into the other, the two making a completed whole. It is thus with the Scriptures, made up of two parts, the Old and the New Testaments; both equally inspired, the one incomplete without the other.

It has often been said that the New Testament is hidden in the Old Testament, whilst the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament: that the New Testament is enfolded in the Old Testament, whilst the Old Testament is unfolded in the New Testament.

This is to a large extent true, nevertheless we shall see that the New Testament of necessity must go far beyond the Old Testament in revelation.

The Old Testament is a book of
UNFULFILLED PROPHECIES,
UNEXPLAINED RITUAL,
UNSATISFIED ASPIRATIONS.

A die maker would not be content to make the obverse and leave the reverse unmade. The one without the other would be useless. The two parts, making the whole, would alone justify his work. So with God. He will not leave His work half finished. The Old Testament demands a New Testament. Prophecy claims fulfilment; type, the Anti-

type; shadow, the Substance; aspirations cry aloud for the Satisfier.

In the main the Old Testament prophesies the coming into the world of the Messiah; a Divine Person, who should become Man, die an atoning death and bring in everlasting blessing for His people. All history in the Old Testament leads up to and circles around Israel, and Israel was chosen in view of Christ coming into the world. All indeed hinges upon Him. There is only One Person who has rightly claimed to be the fulfilment of all that the Old Testament held forth, and only one book that claims to be the complement of the Old Testament.

The subject we have chosen is a very interesting and vital one. The materials are so abundant that we must be content with a very partial presentation of the theme. We propose to accomplish this in the form of a dialogue between an unbelieving Jew and an earnest Christian.

J. It is all very well for you Christians to come along, and substitute your New Testament for our Old Testament. It is this that arouses our deep resentment. We want nothing to do with your Scriptures. We refuse to read them.

C. That refusal is just where you do yourselves a grievous wrong. If you would only read the New Testament, you would find that it does not supplant the Old Testa-

ment, but on the contrary it fulfils it. The Old Testament is quoted more than 350 times in the New Testament. My copy of the New Testament has 245 pages, so that over 350 quotations mean a very large number. These quotations are made as from an inspired volume with all the authority of God's name behind them, and in many cases are used to establish Christian doctrine. How can you say that the New Testament supplants the Old Testament, when you have ever opened its pages ?

Hear the words of the Messiah, whom your nation crucified, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew v. 17, 18).

J. You say that Christ came to fulfil the law and not to set it aside. I have heard it said that He put His authority above that of the law, that He tells His hearers that the law said so-and-so, but that "I say unto you;" thus putting what He said above the law.

C. There again you argue on hearsay. Why not read for yourself? What you object to comes in the very discourse where our Lord said that He had not come to destroy the law but to fulfil it. If you would study that most wonderful Sermon on

the Mount, you would find that the law is not set aside, but that the law brings in a deeper spirituality, a code of conduct that did not set aside the law, but went beyond it, yet upholding it in all its integrity.

Let one instance suffice out of the seven occasions in that discourse when our Lord said, "I say unto you." "Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matthew v. 27, 28). Where is there the setting aside of the law? Nay, He upheld it. The law was content to forbid the actual act, the Lord went further, and not only forbade the *outward* act, but the *inward* desire.

Nay more, if the Lord were to forgive sins, He must uphold the righteous requirements of the law by meeting its curse on the cross. Not one jot or tittle of the law but what He upheld it. We read, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." (Galatians iii. 13) Was there ever a greater proof that our Lord upheld the law than when He voluntarily submitted to its curse, knowing full well what that awful ordeal would mean, in order that "grace might reign through RIGHTEOUSNESS unto eternal life"? (Romans v. 21).

Oh! is a wonderful story, and you are missing the blessing of it. Does it not stir your heart to think that every Christian worships one of your race? He is infinitely more than a Man, even One, "who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Romans ix. 5), else worship would be impossible, for we may worship none but God? Our Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament, and He is the Fulfiller of all the prophecies concerning His sufferings, whilst we wait for Him to be the Fulfiller of "the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 11). All our Christian hopes centre in Him, whom the woman at Sychar's well recognized at first as a Jew, but in the end as the Messiah, David's Son truly, a Man but David's Lord, a Divine Person, God the Son.

J. Ah! there you are. You Christians take it for granted that your Christ was the Jehovah of the Old Testament. How can you prove that? Everything hangs on the answer to that question. If you can prove that the Jesus of the New Testament is the Jehovah of the Old Testament, then I must perforce to be a Christian.

C. That is a good question you ask. To settle that question will solve a thousand difficulties. The Lord turned to the Old Testament Scriptures in proof of His deity. When He demanded of the Pharisees, who were familiar with and professed to believe the Old Testament Scriptures, "What think

ye of Christ? whose Son is He?" they replied, "The Son of David." He then referred them to Psalm cx. 1, and asked a further question, "How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto My Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool? If David then call Him, Lord, how is He His Son?" (Matthew xxii. 41-46). The Lord, who, as a man, lived centuries after David's time, existed before him. He was therefore a Divine Person, and yet was David's Son. This Psalm conclusively proves that the Messiah would prove to be both God and Man, one person, David's Lord and David's Son. But that alone would not identify Jesus as the Messiah.

But examine the record of Christ, and it abundantly proves that He was David's Lord and David's Son. Did the Old Testament tell us that the Messiah, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah v. 2), should be born at Bethlehem? Christ was born at Bethlehem. Did the Scriptures not aver that He would be born of a virgin? (Isaiah vii. 14) Christ was born of a virgin. What meant all the blood that flowed on Jewish altars? Did not each sacrifice prophesy the great coming sacrifice of Christ on the Cross? Was not His public life marked by a constant stream of miracles, of a number and a kind that had never been seen before? Did He not read from Isaiah lxi. in the synagogue of Nazareth, "The

Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord"? (Luke iv. 18). Did He not add, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (verse 21)?

And above all, the resurrection of Christ proves Him to be the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Saviour of the New Testament. We read that the One, who was "made of the seed of David according to the flesh" was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, *by the resurrection from the dead.*" (Romans i. 3, 4.) Resurrection from the dead was an act of divine power, and could be nothing else. Again and again did the apostles testify that God raised Jesus from the dead. The resurrection was historically proved by irrefutable testimony, and itself proved that God put His seal upon all that Christ was and said and did, especially the great work of atonement on the cross.

The Lord said to the Pharisees, "Before Abraham was I am." If that affirmation were not true He was a deceiver and God would never have raised a deceiver from

the dead. The resurrection proves that that and all other statements of Christ were true. He constantly claimed to be divine, the only Source of blessing to the world. He affirmed His death to be a necessity if men were to be blessed; His resurrection, as bound to take place.

There have been many, who claimed to be the Messiah, but their course was meteoric and their followers few, and their pretensions soon found out. Not so with Christ. For near two thousand years He has been revered and trusted by millions.

J. You certainly have gone a long way to convince me of the truth of Christianity. You have given me a new view of the New Testament. I mean to study it carefully. I want the truth at all costs.

C. I am glad to hear you say this. But let me make a few general remarks on the subject. Take the summing up of the whole human race, where we are told in Romans iii. 23, that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." No Jew could consistently take exception to that statement for the condemnation is presented in a mosaic of texts culled from your own Old Testament Scriptures. You will find that Psalms v. 9; x. 7; xiv. 3; cxl. 3; Proverbs i. 16, are all quoted. You cannot say that the New Testament supplants the Old Testament. It is more like

storey upon storey in a building. The upper storey does not supplant the lower storey. It rests upon it. It continues the building to a more elevated position. That is an illustration of the relation between the two Testaments.

Take the famous Epistle to the Hebrews.

J. What is that? I have never heard it.

C. No, because in your folly you have hitherto refused to read the New Testament. Read the Epistle to the Hebrews and you will see that it is impossible to understand that book unless you understand a good deal of Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus, and something of the history of Judges and Samuel. Take the Old Testament characters, who are used in this Epistle to illustrate Christian doctrine, Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Melchisedec. Take the things,—the tabernacle, the holy place, the holiest of all, the vail, the golden candlestick, the shewbread table, the ark, the sacrifices of bulls and of goats. Take the men and women to illustrate the path of faith, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sara, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gedeon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, Samuel, the prophets. Take places to illustrate truth, Sinai, Sion. There is not time save to point these things out.

Take the Epistle to the Galatians. It is impossible to understand that epistle without a knowledge of Genesis and Exodus. In it the priority of grace is shown over the law in

that Abraham, received the covenant of promise, that in his seed all nations should be blessed, 430 years before the law was given; whilst in Romans it is said, "he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised." (Romans iv. 11.)

You can see that it was the Old Testament Scriptures that prepared the way for the proclamation of the gospel in the New Testament, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark xvi. 15.) Jehovah was not a mere tribal God to a little nation like Israel, but the God of the whole earth.

Perhaps we have said enough for the moment on this deeply interesting theme. We have merely scratched the surface, whilst below is a veritable mine of wealth. We shall have been well rewarded if you are encouraged to dig for hid treasure.

The Bible is not a mere collection of pamphlets, but an organism, a growth. We see prophecy after prophecy fulfilled; type after type meeting its more than fulfilment in the glorious Antitype, the Lord Jesus Christ; aspirations satisfied. Finality is found in Christ. He is your Countryman according to the flesh, but He is infinitely more, and in His resurrection and ascension has put things on the line of the new creation, so that

the Apostle Paul exclaims, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." (2 Corinthians v. 16.)

Will you not put honour upon your Old Testament Scriptures by following the road it has clearly marked out to the New Testament, *and above all to—CHRIST*? All our hope lies in Him.

A. J. POLLOCK.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(*James ii.* 10-26).

Please read the passage indicated above before reading this article, and then keep your Bible open so that you may refer to it as may be necessary from time to time.

The writer takes it for granted that you will comply with this request, and hence he addresses you in the terms he would employ if giving a homely "Bible-talk."

NOTHING could be more sweeping than the statement made in verse 10, and at first sight some of us might be inclined to question the rightness of it. We have to remember however that the law is treated as a whole, one and indivisible. An errand boy, carrying a basket of bottles, may slip and break one bottle in his fall, and his employer cannot with any justice accuse him

of breaking all of them, for every bottle is separate and distinct from each of the others. If however the lad were carrying the basket suspended from his shoulder by a chain, and in falling he also broke one link of the chain, his master could rightly tell him that he had broken the chain. If in addition he indulged in rough horseplay with other boys, and hurling a stone mis-directed it through a large shop window, it is rightly spoken of as a broken window.

It is thus with the law. The chain may have many links yet it is one chain. The window may comprise many square feet of glass yet it is one pane. The law has many commandments yet it is one law. One commandment may be carefully observed as verse 11 says, indeed many commandments may be kept, yet if one commandment is broken the law is transgressed.

If that be so then must we all plead guilty, and we might begin to enquire if then after all we are to stand before God and be judged by Him on the basis of the law of Moses? To this question James replies in verse 12. We stand before God and shall be judged on the basis of the "law of liberty"—an expression which means the ~~revelation of God's will~~ which has reached us in Christ, as we saw when considering verse 25 of the previous chapter. We shall have to answer as being in the much fuller light which Christianity brings. Being in the

light of the supreme manifestation of God's mercy in Christ we are responsible to show mercy ourselves. This thought brings us back to the matter with which the paragraph started. Their treatment of "the poor man in vile raiment" had not been according to the mercy displayed in the Gospel. They set themselves up as "judges of evil thoughts," but, lo! they would find themselves under judgment.

A serious position indeed! Are we in a similar position? We shall have to answer to God as in the light of Gospel mercy and as under the law of liberty, even as they.

Notice that the last phrase of verse 13 is not, "Mercy rejoiceth against *justice*," but, "against *judgment*." Divine mercy goes hand in hand with righteousness, and thereby it triumphs against the judgment that otherwise had been our due.

The change of subject that we find in verse 14 may strike us as rather abrupt but it really flows quite naturally from the profound insight which James had by the Spirit into the foolish workings of the human heart. He began the chapter by saying, "My brethren have not . . . faith." They might wish to rebut his assertion by saying, "Oh, yes! we have. We have the faith of the Lord Jesus as much as you." Is there any certain test which will enable us to check these contrary assertions and discover where

the truth lies ?

There certainly is. It lies in the fact that true faith is a living thing which manifests its life in works. Thereby it may be distinguished from that dead kind of faith which consists only in the acceptance of facts, without the heart being brought under the power of them. We may profess that we accept the teaching of Christ, but unless that which we believe controls our actions we cannot be said to really have the faith of Christ. Hence the latter part of this second chapter is of immense importance.

It must be carefully noted that the works, upon which James so strenuously insists in these verses are the works of faith. Having noted this we shall do well to turn at once to Romans iii. and iv., and also to Galatians iii., where the Apostle Paul so convincingly demonstrates that our justification is by faith and is not of works. These works however which Paul so completely eliminates are the works of the law.

A great many people have supposed that there is a clash and a contradiction between the two Apostles on this matter, but it is not so. The distinction we have just pointed out largely helps to remove the difficulty that is felt. Both speak of works, but there is an immense difference between the works of the law and the works of faith.

The works of the law, of which Paul speaks, are works done in obedience to the

demand of the law of Moses, by which, it is hoped, a righteousness may be wrought that will pass in the presence of God. "This do, and thou shalt live," said the law, and the works are done in the hope of thereby obtaining the life—life upon earth—that is proffered. No one of us ever did obtain this abiding earthly life by law-keeping, since as James has just told us we became wholly guilty directly we had transgressed in one point. Hence we all lie by nature under the death sentence, and the works of the law are dead works, though done in the effort to obtain life.

The works of faith, of which James speaks are those which spring out of a living faith as its direct expression and result. They are as much a proof of faith's vitality as flowers and fruit prove the vitality and also the nature of a tree. If no such works are forthcoming then our faith is proclaimed as dead, being alone.

Is there any contradiction between these two sets of statements? By no means. They are indeed entirely complementary the one to the other, and our view of the matter is not complete without both. Works done for justification are rigorously excluded. Works flowing from the faith that justifies are strenuously insisted on, and that not only by James but by Paul also; for in writing to Titus he says, "These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have be-

lieved in God might be careful to maintain good works." (iii. 8). The works that are to be maintained are those done by "*they which have believed*"; that is, they are the works of faith.

The above considerations do not entirely remove the difficulty for there remain certain verbal contradictions, such as, "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. iii. 28), and in our passage, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Again we read, "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God" (Rom. iv. 2), and in our passage, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" Some puzzled reader may wish to ask us if we can extricate ourselves from the contradictory conclusions that in the distant past Abraham both *was* and *was not* justified by works; and further that in the present a man is justified *by faith without works*, and also *by works and not by faith alone*?

We should reply that there is really no difficulty from which to extricate ourselves. We have but to remark that in James the whole point is that which is valid before man, as verse 18 of our chapter shows. A man has the right to demand that we display our faith in our works, thus justifying ourselves and our faith before him. In Romans the

whole point is that which is valid *before God*. The very words, "before God," occur in Romans iv. 2, as we have seen. Our faith is quite apparent to *His* all-seeing eye. *He* does not have to wait for the display of the works that are the fruit of faith, in order to be assured that the faith really exists.

In the world of men however works are a necessity, for in no other way can we be assured that faith exists of a living sort. The illustrations of verses 14 to 16 are quite conclusive. We may profess faith in God's care for His people in temporal things, but except our faith in that care leads us to a readiness to be the channel through which it may flow, our faith is of no profit to the needy brother or sister; nor indeed to ourselves. Our faith as to that particular point is dead and consequently inoperative, as verse 17 tells us, and we must not be surprised if it is challenged by others.

A man may come up to you and say, "Well, you say that you believe but you produce no visible evidence of your faith, kindly therefore produce your faith itself for my inspection." What could you do? Obviously, nothing! You might go on reiterating, "I have faith. I have faith." But of what use would that be? Your confusion would be increased if he should further say, "At all events I have been doing such-and-such a thing, and such-and-such, which clearly evidence that I personally do believe,

though I am not in the habit of talking about my faith."

So far the Apostle has urged these very practical considerations upon us in connection with matters of every day life in the world, but they stand equally true in connection with matters of doctrine, matters connected with the whole faith of the Gospel. In verse 19 the very fundamental point of faith in the existence of the one true God is raised. "Oh, yes," we each exclaim, "I believe in Him!" That is good; but such faith if real is bound to affect us. We shall at least tremble, for even demons, who know right well that He exists and hate Him, go as far as that. The multitudes, who in a languid way accept the idea of His existence and yet are utterly unmoved by it, have a faith which is dead.

"What!" someone may remark, "Is such a thing as *trembling* counted as a work?" It certainly is. And this leads us to remark that James speaks simply of works, and not of good works. The point is not that every true believer must do a number of kindly and charitable actions—though it is of course good and right for him so to do—but that his works are bound to be such as shall display his faith in action if men are to see that his faith is real. This is an important point: let us all make sure that we seize it.

As an illustration, let us suppose that you go to visit a sick friend. You enquire for

his health when he at once assures you that he is perfectly certain to get well. As he does not seem particularly cheerful about it, you ask what has given him this assurance—upon what his faith rests? In reply he tells you he has some wonderful medicine, as to which he has read hundreds of flattering testimonials; and he points you to a large bottle of medicine standing on the mantelpiece. You notice that the bottle is quite full, so you ask him how long he has been taking the stuff, when he surprises you by saying that he has not taken any! Would you not say, “My friend, you cannot *really* believe that this medicine will cure you without fail, otherwise you would have begun to take it”?

You would be even more surprised however if in response to this he calmly remarked, “Oh, but my faith in it is very real, as may be seen by the fact that I have just sent £5 to help our local charities.” “What has that to do with it?” you would exclaim. “Your gift seems to show that you have a kindly heart, and that you believe in local charities, but it proves nothing as to your belief in the medicine. Start taking the medicine: that will demonstrate that you believe in it!”

Here is a rich man who, when requested, will draw out his cheque-book and sign away large sums for charitable services. There is a poor woman who is astonishingly kind and

helpful to her equally humble neighbours. What do their works show? Their faith in Christ? Not with any certainty. True it *may* be that their kindly spirit is the result of their having been converted, but on the other hand it *may* only spring from a desire for notoriety or for the approbation of their fellows. But suppose they both begin to display great interest in the Word of God, together with a hearty obedience to its directions, and a real affection for all the people of God. Now we can safely draw the deduction that they really do believe in Christ, for that is the only root from which springs such fruit as this.

Two cases are cited in verses 21 to 25—Abraham and Rahab. Contrasts they are in almost every respect. The one, the father of the Jews, an honoured servant of God. The other, a Gentile, a poor woman of dishonourable calling. Yet they both illustrate this matter. Both had faith, and both had works—the works exactly appropriate to the particular faith they possessed, and which consequently showed it to others.

Abraham's case is particularly instructive since Paul also cites him in Romans iv. to establish his side of this great question; referring to that which happened under cover of the quiet and starry night, when God made His great promise and Abraham accepted it in simple faith. James refers to the same chapter (Gen. xv.) in our 23rd verse; but he cites it as being fulfilled years

after when he "offered Isaac his son upon the altar," as recorded in Genesis xxii. The offering of Isaac was the work by which Abraham showed forth the faith that had long been in his heart:

Many a critic is inclined to object to the offering of Isaac and to denounce it as unworthy of being called a "good work." That is because they are entirely blind to the point we have just been endeavouring to make. When Abraham believed God on that starry night, he believed that He was going to raise up a living child from dead parents. How could he have so believed except he had believed that God was able to raise the dead to life? And what did his offering of Isaac show? It showed that he really did believe in God, just in that way. He offered him "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead" (Heb. xi. 19). His work showed forth his faith in the most precise and exact way.

With Rahab it was just the same. She received the spies from Joshua and sent them out another way. Again our critic is far from pleased. He denounces her action. It was unpatriotic! It was treason! She told lies! Well, poor thing! she was but a depraved member of an accursed race, groping her way towards the light. Her actions can easily be criticised, yet they had this supreme merit—they clearly demonstrated that she had lost faith in the filthy

gods of her native land and had begun to believe in the might and mercy of the God of Israel. Now this was exactly the point, for the faith she professed to the spies was, "I know that the Lord hath given you the land . . . for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Joshua ii. 9-11). Did she believe this? She did, for her works showed it. She risked her own neck to identify herself with the people who had JEHOVAH as their God.

Is not all this very wholesome and important truth? It is indeed. It is reported that Luther was betrayed into speaking of James with contempt, and referring to his Epistle as "the Epistle of straw." If so, the great Reformer was mistaken, and did not grasp the real force of these passages. If we have grasped their force we shall certainly confess it to be more like "an Epistle of iron." There is a sledge-hammer directness about James hardly equalled by any other New Testament writer.

The sum of the matter we have been considering is this—that, "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." We may talk of our faith in Christ, or of our faith in this, that and the other detail of Christian truth; but unless our faith expresses itself in appropriate works it is DEAD! That is a sledge-hammer hit! Let us allow it to exert its full effect in our consciences.

THE FUTURE LIFE.

IT is a deep-set belief of the human heart that there is a future life, and naturally there is a desire that it may be a *blissful* life. It is this yearning that is the urge, for instance, of such a system as Spiritism, utterly evil as we believe it to be. Most people, we should imagine, at some time or other in their lives ponder on the subject on the future life to which they are travelling. Many alas! dismiss the subject with a shrug of the shoulders, and occupy themselves exclusively with this world's affairs, and let matters of the next world take care of themselves.

On the other hand there are many who think long and earnestly as to this. Socrates and Plato, living long before the Christian era, thought deeply on these subjects. Many a heathen has held out beseeching hands to God in his yearning for satisfaction in this vital matter. We are assured that beseeching hands will never be held out in vain.

Let an example be given. A Hindu is reported as having presented his difficulty and desire in the following words:—

“ If God is impersonal and perfect He is of no use to me. He will not hear my prayers. He will be supremely indifferent, and let Nature's laws work. If He is personal, He is imperfect, but that is what

I want Him to be. I want Him to set His law aside and forgive me. I want Him in the imperfect state."

There are two or three things in connection with the deeply interesting and touching statement of this Hindu, groping, as he was, for the light, we should like to draw attention to.

First of all he yearned to be forgiven. This presupposes that he had become conscious of what sin is; that it was heinous in God's sight, that it called for punishment. So far, so good. Would that multitudes had the same consciousness of sin, and the same yearning for forgiveness.

But our Hindu friend expressed a wish that, in order to forgive him, God would set aside His law. *Impossible!* You may ask perhaps, Cannot God do anything that He likes? Certainly, anything He LIKES. But remember, He must ever act in consonance with His own nature. He cannot do those things that are a contradiction of His nature and being. For instance, "It is impossible for God to lie" (Heb. vi. 18).

Now for God to depart from His just laws in order to forgive would be in the nature of a lie. In other words He would have to set aside His own words and decrees to do such a thing as that. He would cease to be consistent. That could not possibly be.

The Hindu exclaimed, "I want Him [God] in the imperfect state." But if God

were imperfect, He would cease to be God. The Hindu cried for the unattainable. Happy for him that it is unattainable. Could he have understood the problem aright, he would have discovered that God must be perfect, or there could not be any way of blessing for man, any satisfaction for the deep yearning of his heart.

God is perfect. He is inflexibly just. He cannot depart by a hair's breadth from absolute righteousness. We read, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John i. 5).

When the law was given with all its terrifying accompaniments, we read of Jehovah "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, *and that will by no means clear the guilty*" (Exodus xxxiv. 7). There seems a contradiction here at first sight. Here is God declaring that He is ready to shew mercy to thousands, to forgive sins, and yet declaring that He will by no means clear the guilty. How can this seeming contradiction be explained? It is just here where the Hindu needed enlightenment.

There were three things that he needed to know.

First, the nature of God, love, the Divine essence—inflexible righteousness, a Divine attribute.

Second, the penalty passed upon sin.

Third, the way that penalty has been

met, so that God can express His nature, love, whilst upholding His absolute righteousness.

Thus and thus only is it possible to explain how God can forgive sins, and yet by no means clear the guilty.

FIRST, *the nature of God*. The Hindu thought that if God were impersonal and perfect He would not hear his prayers, that He would be supremely indifferent, and let Nature's laws, like some awful Juggernaut car crushing its victims under its wheels, carry mankind into a frightful eternity of woe. Little did he know of God. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job. xi. 7).

"God is love" (1 John iv. 8). God was ever love. This is His nature. Nature must ever express itself. A tiny seed has been known to drop into a minute crevice in a recumbent tombstone, and to germinate there. Consequently nature worked, and the ponderous stone was lifted into mid-air. If God gave such power to a tiny atom of His creation, surely the Creator Himself must express His own nature, whatever obstacles may stand in the way.

The Hindu enquirer wished that God might not be impersonal. What did he mean by the word, "impersonal"? Did he mean what is so commonly believed in heathen lands that the only expression of

God is seen in creation, in nature, in material things; that God is in everything—mountains, rivers, animals, birds, men—in another word, pantheism? If so there could be no appeal. Nature in such a case must take its course, and the yearning of the human soul left unsatisfied.

We read, however, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." It is clear from this first verse in the Bible that God existed before the creation, that He is transcendent, that is to say, as to God's being He is supreme, beyond all limitations, distinct from all that creation which has proceeded from Him.

It is true that God is not in material form, but it is an all-pervading Spirit, "who only hath immortality [that is *inherently*], dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Timothy vi. 16). But it is also true that God is not impersonal. He is a Person from whom everything proceeds, and by whom everything is sustained. But if we are to know God, it is clear that it can only be by *revelation*. All our knowledge of His nature comes through the Scriptures. Creation will tell us of His "eternal power and Godhead" (Romans i. 20). But creation cannot reveal His heart. It cannot tell us that "God is love." But revelation will tell us that God is perfect and yet will ever hear the real cry of need.

SECOND, *the penalty passed upon sin.*

We can dismiss this in few words. Not that the subject is of slight importance. It concerns us all, and that very deeply and vitally. The penalty passed upon sin is death and judgment. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews ix. 27). It is clear, if God will by no means clear the guilty, and yet desires to maintain an attitude to men of forgiveness, that death and judgment—sin's penalty—must be met by a Substitute great enough to atone for sin, satisfy the divine claims of justice, and set God free in righteousness to show His love to guilty sinners.

THIRD, *the way that penalty has been met, so that God can express His nature, love, whilst upholding His absolute righteousness.* Here we must begin by speaking of a PERSON. Who is the Person, who can step into such a mighty breach? Gradually Scripture unfolds the truth as to that Person. Indeed we make bold to say that there would have been no Scriptures, if there had been no Christ.

It would have been possible for Christ to have come into this world without any preparation for His coming, He might have come as a bolt from the blue, but how difficult it would have been for men to have believed on Him. It is true that faith is "the gift of God" (Ephesians ii. 8), and that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians

ii. 14). But when a man has faith, he has in the Old Testament the material "to give an answer to every man that asketh [him] a reason of the hope that is in [him] with meekness and fear" (1 Peter iii. 15). Faith is not unreasonable.

So God has taken pains to meet us in our slowness of belief in the preparation He has given for the coming of the Christ. He has given us prophecies of the coming Christ, prophecies spoken by men, unknown to each other, separated from each other by centuries, living in different countries, uttering prophecies that fitted into each other, as parts of a puzzle fit into each other, and which could not possibly have come true had there not been one divine, omniscient, controlling Mind behind them. No wonder the Apostle Paul could write of "The Scripture foreseeing" (Galatians iii. 8).

When the Person arrived, who had all the marks the prophecies called for, faith was found to be reasonable.

Let us take one prophet, Isaiah, and see how he prophesies of this wonderful PERSON. He tells us, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder" (ix. 6). Here we are told that this wonderful Person is to be a MAN. "As one by man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one [*man*] shall many be made righteous" (Romans v. 19). "There is . . . one Mediator between God and men, the MAN, Christ

Jesus" (1 Timothy ii. 5).

But this is not all. Isaiah also says, "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son" (vii. 14). His birth was to be miraculous. The birth of Isaac was miraculous. So was that of John, the Baptist. But both of them had a father and mother. But here was one to be born of a virgin, a hitherto unheard-of thing.

But even this is not all. Isaiah goes on to say, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father" (ix. 6). So this wonderful Person was to be God and Man, in other words Deity was to take into its embrace holy humanity, untainted by Adam's fall, so as to come forward and make atonement for sin, so that forgiveness of sins might be given **RIGHTEOUSLY**, the guilty by no means cleared, the holy Substitute stepping into the breach, and taking upon Himself the sentence of judgment and death.

So we find the prophet adds one more title to this wonderful Person, that is, "The Prince of Peace" (ix. 6). This involves His death, His atoning death. He made "peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians i. 20). We find this prophesied in Isaiah liii., that chapter, which the unbelieving Jew finds so difficult to explain away, for it so plainly points to the suffering Messiah. "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities:

the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (verse 5).

Here we get the answer to the Hindu's yearnings of heart. Had he rightly understood, he could have rejoiced that God is perfect, and been assured that He will answer true prayer, that He is love and has shown it by sending His only begotten Son into the world—God and Man, yet one blessed Person—who died an atoning death on the cross, and that God can RIGHT-EOUSLY forgive sins, and yet maintain absolute justice.

Has each of our readers trusted that Saviour? A tall elderly gentleman was seen dropping papers over fences, nailing them on posts, etc. A Christian man was curious to see what was being broadcasted, and discovered texts of Scripture. He went up to the gentleman and said, "I presume, sir, that you are a Christian man, seeing that you are broadcasting Scripture texts."

Looking at the questioner for a full minute, he replied, "I am a double-barrelled believer. For forty years of my life I had THE FAITH OF ADMISSION. I admitted the Bible to be God's book, but I had no peace in my conscience, no joy in my heart, no rest in my life, and no hope for the future. But one glad sweet night I got THE FAITH OF COMMITMENT. I com-

committed myself to the Lord Jesus for safe keeping, and ever after I have been able to say with the great Apostle Paul:—‘ I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day ’” (2 Timothy i. 12).

Reader, are you a double-barrelled believer? Have you solved the problem of the future blissful life?

A. J. POLLOCK.

THE VISION OF GOD.

“ All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”
ROM. iii. 23.

NO one will feel any difficulty about the earlier part of this sentence. That all have sinned is a fact patent to everybody, and none is so ignorant as to deny it. Nor would the most self-satisfied person on earth refuse to place himself among the *all* who have sinned. But what about the latter clause, “ And come short of the glory of God ”? What do these words mean? To come short of one’s duty is easily understood, and to come short of the righteousness which the Ten Commandments call for is not a hard saying; but this coming short of the glory of God—what is that? Here is a new measuring line, a new standard. How may we find out what it is?

The vision of God which Isaiah saw, and which he describes in chapter vi. of his prophetic book, may help us. Let us look at it.

Mark the time of this vision. It was seen in the year of King Uzziah's death. When monarchs die the great events of their reign pass afresh before the eyes of men and become, for a moment, the talk of every tongue. Uzziah was one of Judah's great kings. His reign, extending over a period of fifty and two years, had been extremely prosperous. In war, in diplomacy, and in the more peaceful pursuits of life he had been marvellously helped. But prosperity has its dangers, and there is a foe whose citadel is within the human heart, who sometimes succeeds in compassing our ruin when others fail. Uzziah found this out to his cost. In an evil day he went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense there. He should have known better. But pride had made him bold. With a rashness soon to be avenged, he seized the censer with its burning incense and, in the sight of others, stalked into the Holy Place where none but the Priest should go. Leprosy was the immediate result. He was a smitten man. He felt it, he knew it, and he hasted to get away. From that hour his sun set to rise no more. The affairs of his kingdom passed into other hands, and Uzziah ever after lived alone, cut off from the house of the Lord, an unclean man, and an awe-

inspiring witness to the *holiness* of God, which he had forgotten and which we too much forget.

It was while all this stirred the memory of men that Isaiah saw this great vision. The Throne was there before which all earthly thrones were as nothing. And on it sat Jehovah, the King, the Lord of Hosts, whose glory filled the temple courts. And by its side stood the seraphims with their many wings, proclaiming with a loud voice the holiness of God. No wonder the prophet was seized with fear and with a great trembling. "Woe is me! for I am undone," he cried aloud. "Unclean! unclean!" had been the cry of the leper in olden days, and such was Isaiah's cry now. Never before had he realized this to such a degree. Among men he may have had a name for piety and for zeal in the cause of God. But all such things were now as withered leaves. His righteousnesses were but filthy rags. He was measured by the glory of God, and he came short of it. "Unclean! undone!" was all his faltering lips could say.

We pause for a moment here to ask you, reader, whether a similar conviction has ever laid hold of your soul. Are you fit for the glory of God? Can you stand in His presence? This is now the measuring line. It is no question of your having done your duty among men, or met the requirements of

Sinai's law, but are you fit for the glory of God, or do you come short of it? If Uzziah was cut off for entering into the "holy places made with hands," are you clean enough to enter into heaven itself and stand before God there?

Listen to what Job said—that good-living, kind, generous man, whose sympathy and helping hand had made many a widow's heart to sing for joy. He, too, found himself one day face to face with God, and what did he then say? "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job xlii. 5, 6).

Have *you* ever been there? Has a similar cry ever broken from your heart and lip?

Let us be thankful that the vision tells of something more than the soul's conviction of its unfitness for the glory of God. If the Throne is there before which no sinful man can stand, the Altar is also there, so that the deep need—now laid bare—might be fully met. "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." Blessed words! by which the stricken heart of the prophet was set quite at rest.

And that altar speaks to us in these bright Gospel days of a nobler offering than Jewish courts had ever known, and of richer blood than was ever sprinkled on their mercy-seat. Theirs was the shadow, ours is the substance. Christ has come for the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He has come to satisfy the claims of the Throne by taking our sins upon Himself and bearing the solemn consequences of His so doing. Oh, what a tale Calvary tells! Draw near, my soul, with unshod feet draw near, and see thy Saviour there! Harken to His cry. It is the cry of One forsaken of God. And why was *He* forsaken? He—the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person, the mighty upholder of all things—who in manhood here on earth had never swerved from the path of obedience and trust, why should He be forsaken of God? Little wonder if angels stood aghast. Ah! there is nothing like the Cross—the one beacon of hope, the only refuge for the lost. There the holiness of God, His righteousness, His love, everything that makes His name glorious, shines out in fullest majesty and strength.

And shall not all *that* speak peace to our soul in a far deeper measure than Isaiah ever knew? He has made peace by the blood of His cross. No toil or tears of ours, no sorrow, no penitence, no change of life, can add aught to the worth of His sacrifice. To add anything to it is to tarnish its glory.

It stands alone—centre of two eternities—to which the wondering eyes of prophets and holy men looked on, and to which the still more wondering eyes of the ransomed of the Lord shall look back in the most distant ages yet to come. Not now the live coal from off the altar, as seen in Isaiah's vision, but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son—it is this that cleanseth us from all sin.

And every believer in Him is cleansed. Whiter than snow is the soul that has fled to Him for refuge. We are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Such is the plain declaration of Colossians i. 12. *Made meet!* Not a work in process of accomplishment, to be made perfect when our soul plumes her wings to fly upwards to the land and home we love. We have been made meet *now*. The Father's welcome and kiss were followed by the best robe, the ring for the hand, and sandals for the feet. The prodigal son—a prodigal no longer—was thus made meet for the father's house. Is it not so with us? Indeed it is. In spirit, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we enter even now our Father's home and taste the joys which shall be ours eternally ere long.

Reader, do you know anything of this blessedness? Or are you standing afar off, trembling and afraid, not knowing whether *your* iniquity has been taken away? How shall you ever know it? Not by frames,

a disinclination to be taught and to receive with meekness the engrafted word.

Other Scriptures make it abundantly clear that God is pleased to raise up teachers in the church, amongst other gifts, and all such gifts are to be received with thankfulness. The verses before us do not in the least militate against that, but they do warn us against the desire so natural to the flesh to be continually instructing and legislating for other people. The fact that those who teach will receive greater judgment, as compared with those who are taught, may well make us pause.

James is here only enforcing that which the Lord Jesus Himself taught in Matthew xxiii. 14, when addressing scribes and Pharisees, who were the self-constituted religious teachers of that day. It is evidently a fact, in the light of these words, that there are differing degrees of severity in the Divine judgment, and that those who have more light and intelligence will have more expected of them and be judged by higher standards. It is also evident that we shall be judged according to the place that we take, whether we have been called into it by God or not. In the light of that let none of us rush into the position of being a master or teacher. On the other hand if God has really called any man to be a teacher, or to take up any other service, woe betide him if he shirks the responsibility and ties up his pound in a napkin.

The plain truth is that "in many things we offend all," i.e., we all often offend. Moreover our most frequent offences are those connected with our speech, and to offend against God in our words is especially serious if we be teachers, since it is by words that we teach. This is illustrated by the case of Moses. He was a teacher divinely raised up and equipped, and hence his words were to be the words of God. When He offended in word he had to meet severer judgment than would have been meted out to an ordinary Israelite sinning just as he did.

How terribly common are sins of speech! Indeed we all do often offend, and in respect of our words very often. So much so, that if a man does not offend in word he may be spoken of as a perfect man—the finished article, so to speak. Further, he will be a man able to control himself in all things. As we think of ourselves or as we look at others we may well ask where this completely controlled and perfect man is to be found? Where indeed? We do not know him. But it should teach us to be slow in taking the place of a master, for it is eminently right that he who aspires to be master of others should first be master of himself.

The Apostle is going to speak to us very plainly about our tongues, and he uses two very expressive figures of speech: first the bridle or bit used for the direction of the

horse; second the rudder which is used for the steering of a ship.

The bit is a very small article when the large bulk of a horse is considered, yet by this simple contrivance a man gains complete control and, when once the animal is broken in and docile, it suffices to turn about its whole body.

Ships are large and driven by fierce winds, or, in our days, by the fierce force of steam or motor driven propellers, yet are they turned about by means of a very small rudder as compared with the bulk of the ship.

Even so the tongue is a little member. Yet it is an instrument of very great things either for good or evil. If men's tongues are used for the proclamation of the Glad Tidings, why then their very feet upon the mountains are beautiful! Alas, as the tongue is ordinarily used among men it is rightly declared by James to be "a fire, a world of iniquity." Small as it is, it boasts great things. It may be like a little spark of fire, but how many a ruinous conflagration has been started by a little spark!

The Apostle had first alluded to the danger of the tongue in chapter i, 26. In chapter ii, he contrasts the works of faith with the mere use of the tongue in saying that one has faith. In the chapter before us he uses the very strongest language as to

it in verses 6 and 8. Yet who, that knows the fearful havoc that the tongue has caused, will say that his language is too strong? What mischief has been caused amongst Christian people by the rash and foolish and wicked use of the tongue. When we read, "so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body," the context indicates that James was referring to the human body, yet it would be equally true if we read it as referring to the church which is the body of Christ and of which we are all members. More defilement has been brought into the church of God by it than by anything else.

Then again there is not only the direct mischief of the tongue, but think of the indirect mischief! The whole course of nature may be set on fire by it. Every instinct and faculty of man may be roused. The deepest and basest passions stirred into action. And when the tongue is thus used we may be quite sure that the tongue itself was originally set on fire of hell. It has been enslaved by the devil to be used for his ends. It was he who struck the spark which by means of the tongue has fired the whole train of evil.

Another feature that marks the tongue is brought before us in verses 7 and 8, and that is its unruly character. Man can tame all kinds of creatures but he cannot tame his own tongue. The reason for this is

fairly evident. Speech is the great avenue by which the heart of man expresses itself, and hence the only way to really tame the tongue is to tame the heart. But this is a thing impossible to man. The grace and power of God are needed for it. In itself the tongue only gives expression to the deadly poison which lurks in the human heart.

In verse 9 and onwards a still further feature is mentioned. There is a strange inconsistency about the tongue when it is a question of the people of God. Unconverted people do not bless God, even the Father. They do not really know God at all, and much less do they know Him as Father. Christians know Him and bless Him in this way, and yet there are times when utterances of a very contrary sort come out of their lips. Sometimes they even go so far as cursing men who are made in the likeness of God; so that out of the same mouth goes forth both blessing and cursing. No wonder that James so emphatically says, "My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

Nature teaches us this. Fountains of sweet fresh water can be found, and also fountains of water that is salt or bitter. But never a fountain that produces both out of the same opening. Fruit trees of various kinds may be found each producing its proper fruit. But never a tree violating the fundamental laws of nature by bearing fruit

not of its own kind. Why then do we behold this strange phenomenon in Christian people?

The answer of course is twofold. First, they to begin with were sinful creatures, possessing an evil nature, just as the rest. Second, they have now been born again, and consequently they now possess a new nature, without the old nature having been eradicated from them. Consequently within them there are, if we may so speak, two fountains: the one capable only of producing evil, the other capable only of producing good. Hence this strange mixture which the Apostle so strongly condemns.

Someone may feel inclined to remark that, if the case of a believer is thus, he hardly ought to be so strongly condemned if his tongue acts as an opening from whence may flow the bitter waters of the old nature. Ah, but any who think this are forgetting that the flesh, our old nature, has been judged and condemned at the cross. "Sin in the flesh," as Romans viii. 3 puts it, has been condemned, and the believer, knowing this, is responsible to treat it as a judged and condemned thing, which consequently is not allowed to act. The believer therefore IS to be reprimanded if his tongue acts as an outlet for the evil of the flesh.

The Apostle James does not unfold to us the truth concerning 'the cross of Christ.

This ministry was committed not to him but to the Apostle Paul. He does however say things that are in full agreement with what the Epistle to the Romans unfolds. The wise man is to display his wisdom in meekness which shall control both his works and manner of life. If the contrary is manifested—bitter envying and strife, out of which spring all the evils connected with the tongue—such an one is in the position of boasting and lying against the truth.

What is this truth, against which we all far too often are found lying? Every out-breaking of the flesh, whether by the tongue, or whether in some other way, is a practical denial of the fact that sin in the flesh was condemned in the cross of Christ. Which is truth?—the cross of Christ, or my bitter strife and fiery tongue? They cannot possibly *both* be truth. The cross of Christ is TRUTH, and my evil is a *lie against the truth*.

It is also a lie against the truth that we are born of God, and that He now recognizes us as identified with that new nature which is ours as born of Him and not with the old nature which we derived from Adam by natural descent.

In verse 15 the two wisdoms are plainly distinguished. If we wish to find the two natures plainly distinguished we must thoughtfully read Romans vii. The two

natures lie at the root respectively of the two wisdoms. The wisdom which is of God brings into display the characteristics of the new nature, and like the nature which it displays it is from above. The other wisdom brings into display the characteristics of the old nature, and like the nature which it displays it is from the earth; it is sensual or natural, it is even devilish, for alas! poor human nature has fallen under the power of the devil, and has taken on characteristics which belong to him.

Its character is summed up in verse 16. At the root of it lies envy or emulation. This was the original sin of the devil. By aspiring to exalt himself, as envying that which was above him, he fell. When this is found there is bound to be strife, and strife in its turn results in confusion and every kind of evil work. Many of these evil things, perhaps all of them, would be counted as wisdom by fallen men. It looks wise enough to the average man to scheme and fight for oneself—to be always out for “number one” as it is called.

How great the contrast in the wisdom from above, as detailed in verse 17! Its features may not be of the kind which make for a great success in this world, but they are delightful to God, and to the renewed heart; and he who manifests them may count upon having God upon his side. Notice that purity comes first upon the list, before peace

even. If we reflect we shall at once realize that this must be so, since all is of God. He never compromises with evil, and hence there can be no peace except in purity. Again and again this was the burden of the prophets. See for instance, Isaiah xlvi. 22; lvii. 21; Jeremiah vi. 14; viii. 11; Ezekiel xiii. 10, 16.

Peace and gentleness, yieldingness and mercy should indeed mark us but always as the handmaidens of purity and never as compromising with evil.

There is however another side to the question even in this matter. Though the wisdom from above is first of all pure, and only then is peaceable and gentle, it always proceeds upon the lines of making peace. It is never marked by the pugnacious spirit. The last verse of our chapter makes this very plain. Those who are making peace are faithfully sowing that which will make for a harvest of the fruit of righteousness. Peace and righteousness are not disconnected, and much less antagonistic, in Christianity. Rather they go hand in hand.

Ancient prophecy declared that, "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever" (Isa. xxxii. 17). This will be fulfilled in the day of Christ's kingdom, yet the Gospel to-day brings us peace

on exactly the same principle. Romans iii. speaks of righteousness manifested, and established in the death of Christ. Romans iv. speaks of righteousness imputed, or reckoned, to the believer. Romans v. consequently opens with, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

This being so, peace-making is on the part of the Christian simply practical righteousness which will produce the fruit of righteousness in due season. Purity must be first always, but even purity must be pursued in a spirit not of pugnacity but of peace-making.

F. B. HOIE.

ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT.

Would you be kind enough to explain the significance of the linen girdle spoken of in the 13th chapter of Jeremiah?
—PLAISTOW.

VERSES 9 to 11 of the chapter give the application of this remarkable incident to the people of Jerusalem and Judah, amongst whom Jeremiah lived. The girdle represented them.

Just as a girdle "cleaveth to the loins of a man" so God intended the whole house of Judah to have been in closest contact with Him. They should have been for His service, when He would have wrapped them, as it were, round Himself. Instead of this they left Him

and walked after other gods. Consequently they should be spoiled as the girdle was marred.

The girdle was marred by Jeremiah burying it in the earth, hiding it "in a hole of the rock" by the river Euphrates. Formerly it was upon his loins and not put in water, now it was buried and sodden by the banks of the great river. Put to its proper use it would have lasted long; buried it soon perished. Thus Judah was soon to be carried captive to Babylon, which was by the Euphrates, and there they would perish as a nation and be good for nothing for many a long day. We know how this prophecy came to pass.

Like all other prophecies of the Scripture this has a voice for us. If we are true to our Christian calling, if we maintain nearness of heart to God we shall be serviceable to Him and we shall be preserved. Severed from Him we shall come under the government of God, we shall get buried in the world, of which Babylon is a type, and there we shall rapidly deteriorate and be marred, as far as His testimony in the world is concerned.

Let us all earnestly ask the Lord that we may be preserved in communion with Him.

THREE KINDS.

1. **Rowboat Christians**—have to be propelled by others, wherever they go.
2. **Sailboat Christians**—always go with the wind.
3. **Steamboat Christians**—decide where they ought to go, and go regardless of wind and weather.

Which kind are you?

NO CONDEMNATION.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”—Rom. viii. 1.

WE take these words in their plain and obvious meaning, just as any simple-minded man would take them. They seem to us to state a fact—absolute and unconditional, and fenced about with no kind of stipulation whatsoever. “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.*” And there the verse should end. The qualifying clause, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” finds its fitting place in verse four—not here, and the Revised Version rightly leaves it out. It is indeed no part of the Scripture as originally written. So the words stand out before our eyes in all their native beauty. They are God’s words, full of gladness and of summer sunshine. And they wait to be received into the believing heart. *No condemnation!* Far, far beyond its reach have we been placed—high up on a rock where no threatening wave nor rising tide can ever come.

The very form of the phrase, “*in Christ Jesus,*” carries our thoughts to heaven and fastens them on the person of our Saviour *there*. He has been received up into glory.

Can anything in the nature of judgment or condemnation ever overtake *Him* in those blest abodes? Is He not in the place of honour—in the full and cloudless favour of His God and Father, and the blessed and worthy Object of His delight and love? Think, then, O my soul, of this—thou art in Him *there*! He is thy Representative in the Heavenly Courts—the last Adam, the Head of a redeemed family, the Giver of eternal life to all who believe in Him (Rom. v. 21).

The sin of our first parent Adam—to say nothing of our own sins—brought all his family into a path that leads to judgment and condemnation. But the obedience of Christ, even unto death, delivers from this and brings all who are His into a place of life and favour. This is clearly stated in the latter part of chapter v. Christ, risen and in glory, is the One in whom we now stand. All that He is—as the risen and accepted Man—we are, for we are one with Him. Condemnation, then, there is none, nor can ever be for those that are “in Christ Jesus.” Well may our hearts rejoice and be glad.

How many of God’s dear people have yet to be led into the knowledge and enjoyment of their place “in Christ Jesus.” They cling to the cross, they lie at the foot of it—suppliants there—and think it is the only true and proper attitude to take. “God be

merciful to me a sinner" is their constant cry. Hence their life is like a cloudy day with but fitful gleams of sunshine—there is but little joy and peace and triumph in it. They need to pass over to the other side. The Ark of the Covenant that went down into Jordan when that river of death overflowed all its banks is no longer there (Josh. iv. 10, 11). Christ is risen and in glory. Our sins have indeed been borne away, and if sought for shall never more be found. They are gone for ever, like a stone cast into the mighty sea, buried beneath the waves of everlasting forgetfulness (Heb. x. 17). But more, far more than this. We have died with Christ. Our life, as of Adam's fallen race, has been brought to an end judicially in His death of shame upon the cross, and now we live of that life of which He is the source. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. vi. 23).

Oh, that we could induce the many timid, fainting, yet believing, hearts to look up and see Christ in glory—to pass over to the other side of His cross, the resurrection side of it, and to wake up to the glorious fact that they are evermore identified with Him. Would that they knew that His standing before God was theirs, His acceptance theirs, and that they are as clear from all charge as He is clear—His Father their Father, and His God their God.

And if these blessed truths are all revealed in the Holy Scriptures, how is it that they are not great realities to the souls of so many? Is it not because they are continually thinking of their own worthiness, the feebleness of their faith and their little love to Christ? Self, in one or another of its insidious forms, fills their minds to the exclusion of all else. The shutters are closed and though the golden sunshine is flooding the scene without, none of it enters their dark and dreary room. Are you not sick of self? Are not your efforts to improve it miserable failures? Are you not quite in despair of ever being any better? Oh, that you could but see how God has dealt with that wretched self—so hopelessly unmendable and evil! He has set it aside in the cross and death of Jesus. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him.” Why, then, should “our old man”—that unhappy, depraved self—be ever thought of more? Look up and see Christ in glory, and know that not only has He put your sins away, but that He is your life and righteousness *there*.

“Then let our souls in Him rejoice
And sing His praise with cheerful voice;
Our doubts and fears for ever gone,
For Christ is on the Father’s throne.”

CHRIST'S FUTURE APPEARING.

*(Notes of an Address).**Scripture read:—Hebrews ix. 28.*

WE now propose to consider the closing words of the chapter—"Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." We want to look at the passage not exactly according to its strict interpretation, but rather to learn from these three different appearings of the Lord Jesus Christ the very wide, comprehensive, far-reaching effects of His work.

We read from the 26th verse that "once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," showing that on the cross the work was accomplished on the ground of which He is going to clear the universe of every trace of sin. For those who believe in His blessed Name, we have got the happy announcement in the last verse of our chapter, that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many"; that is, when on the cross, the Lord Jesus not only dealt with the great question of *sin*, that is the root, but He also "suffered for sins." So the gospel that you and I believe, the gospel of our salvation, tells us that "Christ died for our *sins*, according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3), and trusting in that precious Saviour we know that all our sins are forgiven. But then we are still in

the world where we are surrounded by sin on every hand; not only so, but we know that we still have sin in us. Yet we rejoice that the moment is near at hand when the Lord Jesus shall come as Saviour, and when, just as we have been delivered from our sins, there will be complete deliverance from the presence of sin in us, from this poor groaning creation, and from the sorrow that is the secret of the groaning which marks it to-day.

Now we want in the first place, to be quite clear as to how comprehensive is the finished work of Christ as the basis of everything for the glory of God. Then I think we can see quite clearly, that there is something more still ahead of us. That finished work on the cross is past; His priestly work of which we have also spoken still goes on, for He now appears in the presence of God as representing us. He is able to carry us through this world in face of all the snares and pitfalls that meet us at every point, and He is going to bring, as the second chapter tells us, the "many sons to glory." He will set everyone of them down in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. That brings us to His future appearing.

The day is coming when the Lord Jesus is going to rise from His seat in the glory, and when Heaven is once again going to become active in relation to this world; in relation in the first place to Israel, then to

the world generally, and all going to merge finally into the eternal state. But then before anything could be done in that way, before He acts with regard to Israel, or to this world, before He clears this world of sin, in order to bring in a new world where everything will be in perfect accord with the mind and the heart of God, one thing is necessary—He will remove those who compose His assembly at the present time.

When we speak of His assembly, or the church, I suppose everyone here understands we speak of those who are the purchase of the blood of Christ, those who are born again, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God: the church consists of every child of God and nobody else. There may be somebody here who is unconverted, and he says, "I belong to the church." If you are unconverted, you do not belong to the church of God and that is the only church that God recognises, and those who form part of the church of God will be the only ones who will be taken when the Lord comes.

The church then must be removed from this world to the Father's house, and therefore while it may not be the strict interpretation of our Scripture, we who know and love the Lord Jesus can quite see how we come in here.

I know there are some who have made use of this Scripture in a way that is unjustified.

The precious truth of the coming again of the Lord Jesus is being preached in every part of the world, and, thank God for it, there has been a revival of interest amongst His people generally with regard to the great fact that He is coming quickly. But then you know just as soon as there is a revival of truth the enemy does his best to spoil it.

Of recent years there have risen those who have said that when the Lord Jesus comes for His people He will take *only* those who are looking for His return, and they base their theory very largely upon this verse. Yet I need scarcely say that the Word of God does not support such a theory. We learn from 1 Corinthians xv. 23, that when He comes it will be "they that are Christ's" who will be taken. Thank God for that!

If we had nothing more than that little bit of the Word of God it would be quite sufficient for us; but we have more. If the assembly, the church, is the body of Christ, and Scripture tells us plainly that it is, then it is perfectly clear that, when the Lord comes, He is not going to take part of His body with Him and leave part behind. If the church is the bride of Christ, we can very easily understand that the Lord when He comes, is not going to take a little bit of His bride and leave the rest of His bride behind. We have only got to mention that to show the absurdity of their theory.

And there is this also to be said; there may be those who know the Lord, who do not know very much, in fact they may not know anything at all, about the truth of the "rapture" as we call it, but if they love the Lord Jesus at all, then there can be no question that they are expecting Christ to come for them some day in order to take them from this world to be with Him where He is.

What we have here I have no doubt presents to us that which is true of Christians generally in contrast with that which is true of the world. The world does not know anything about the coming of Christ, because it absolutely ignores His existence. Men do not want Him to come, for to entertain the idea of His coming would altogether upset all their plans and calculations. When He does come for His people the world that is not looking for Him will get a tremendous surprise. Those who know Him and love Him desire to see His blessed face. They know that they are not going to be left for ever in this world, but are going to be taken from this world. That will be a day of supreme joy and gladness to their hearts.

Those who are intelligent as to these things, and every Christian ought to be, should be on the tiptoe of expectation, their hearts aglow with anticipation, in the prospect that at any moment the blessed Lord

Jesus may come. Why, my dear fellow-Christian, what¹ cheers your spirit, what gladdens your heart, what dispels the gloom and all the sorrow and all the troubles that assail you in your pathway here like the prospect that He is coming and coming quickly? He may be here at any moment.

Well that is putting it on a somewhat low level perhaps. There is another reason why we look for Him and that is, because He has made Himself so unspeakably precious to our hearts. He has captured our affections. As He passes Himself before the vision of our souls, filling us with delight; as we get to know Him better and contemplate the glories of His adorable Person, the one thing that we want before everything else is to have the joy of seeing His face, delighting in His company, being "close to His trusted side." There is still another reason why we want Him, and it ought to be the strongest reason of all. It is, that to have us with Him will be the joy and the supreme gladness of His heart, for He is going to present us before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

But then whilst we can consider all that, without stretching our scripture or bringing our imagination into play in the slightest possible degree, I do not think that is the primary interpretation of the words that we are now considering. I have no doubt whatever that they refer very particularly to the

remnant of Israel looking for the Lord's return, just as there was a remnant looking for His first coming.

You remember how we read in the book of Malachi that there were those who feared the Lord, and spoke often one to another. The Lord valued that so much, in a day when the mass of Israel was going on with a mere form of things with no reality, that He hearkened and heard—the word means that He bent His ear to listen—and He claimed them as His own. He looked down and in the midst of all the failure He saw that little company, characterized not by anything spectacular, not by anything that man would think of great account; they were characterized by this, that they feared the Lord, they thought upon His name and they were looking for His coming. Then we come down to the second chapter of the Gospel according to Luke and we find that some four hundred years after that there were still a few and they were looking for the *first* coming of the blessed Lord. In a coming day there will be a remnant that will be looking for the *second* coming of our Lord Jesus, and to them He will appear and, observe, He will appear without sin unto salvation. He bare the sins of many and to these He will appear, and of course it will be these that will be looking for Him.

Perhaps someone finds this verse rather puzzling. I remember meeting a lady and

she said to me, "What troubles me is this, that there is a verse in the Word of God which says, 'Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many,' but how can I know I am one of the many?" I replied, "You can settle that very quickly. If you do not know whether you are included in the many or not, come to the Lord Jesus Christ, come in your sins, come as you are and trust Him here and now, and the moment you trust Him you will learn that your sins are all gone, and you will say, thank God I am one of the many."

The Lord Jesus then will appear apart altogether from sin. He is coming back for those whose judgment He endured on the cross, and He is coming back not to deal with the question of sin, because that question has been dealt with and settled, but to take them out of that condition and order of things that is marked by sin and He is going to transfer them to a world freed from sin's presence and blight. Now is that not exceedingly beautiful? He is going to appear unto salvation, not the salvation of the soul because that is already an accomplished fact, accomplished the moment we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but to deliver us from a scene that is marked by sin and to transfer us to a world where sin shall be unknown.

Further, the Lord Jesus is coming to put down all rule and all authority and all

power. He is going to put down everything, that is contrary to God. What a wonderful thing my dear fellow-Christian that you and I are in the secret of what God is going to do. The Statesmen of this world do not know anything about that. Neither the men in power to-day, nor the men that are hoping to be in power, know anything about it. "You give us the money and the power," say they, "and we will show you what we can do!" But they will only show what they *cannot* do. They will show the world that they are unable to make anything one whit better than it is. Why? Because Christ is not in all their thoughts, and I tell you something more, the schemes of men to-day are such that there is no place in them where they can fit Christ in—absolutely none. We read in the second chapter of the first epistle of Peter of "the Stone which the builders rejected."

Have you ever thought what a striking word that is? You watch a mason who is erecting a building. There is a stone. "Yes," he says, "I think that will do very nicely." There is another stone; "Yes," I think I can fit that in there." But there is another stone; "No, I cannot do anything at all with it," and he flings it aside as worthless and it is rejected. That is exactly what this world has done with Christ. I do not mind what the party is, and I do not care who it is who will try to put this world right, they can find no place for Christ in

their scheme, and if there is anybody who has been deluding himself into thinking that by following a certain party or following a certain policy he is going to help towards the putting of this world right, let me say to you, my dear friend, you are on the wrong track, you are going *against* Christ, for there is no place for Christ in the schemes and the plans of men to-day and that is why everything is upside down. Make no mistake about it but waken up to it before it is too late.

I have no doubt if we could get at the back of the thoughts of the men who are in power, as to the state of things in the world generally, we would find that they are simply at their wits end to know what to do. Is it not a marvellous thing that you and I whom they look upon as so many simpletons, are in the secret of what God purposes. We are in the secret of what Christ is going to do, and we know what is going to happen to this world, as also to the men that are engaged in a futile attempt to make the world better.

We know there is only one Man that will put the world right. There was a Member elected for the first time for a certain constituency some years ago, and the day after his election a friend of mine said to him, "Well, Mr. So-and-so, I suppose you are going to Westminster to put the world right." "No, I know better," he answered,

“there is only one Man who can put the world right and that is the Man who is at the right hand of God.” My friend might well have said, “Then why are you going to Westminster?” but I suppose he did not want to hurt his feelings.

That is true, there is One and only One who can put the world right. Christ is coming. He will put down all rule and all authority and all power, everything that sets itself up against the authority of God; and “the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” Then He will deliver up everything to God, that He may be all in all.

That will be the ultimate and complete triumph of God. If you want to know what it will be like, read the first seven verses of Revelation xxi. There is to be a new Heaven and a new earth, there is the Holy City coming down out of heaven from God, there is God dwelling with men, who is called their God and they His people, and what is characteristic of that world is that God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.” If the politicians could get their ideals realized to-morrow, and introduce that new world that they see in their dreams, they could not give us a world like that.

But that world is coming so that God can

find His home and delight in the midst of His people, and they find their home and their delight in the presence of God. He who on the cross nearly two thousand years ago, with His dying breath, said, "It is finished," shall be on the throne and say "It is done." God will be all in all, and we who form the bride of Christ, shall share with Him in His joy, and in God's triumph in that day of everlasting glory.

Let us seek to apprehend these things a little better, so that being in the secret of His mind with regard to that day and that world, we may be maintained in separation from the vain show of this day and this world. So shall we be found here, walking worthy of the Lord unto all well pleasing, for His glory.

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

"THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH."

A PREACHER used a very striking illustration in our hearing lately. A wolf escaped from a menagerie in the North of England, and found its way to the hills. It then took to scattering the sheep, catching the sheep and killing the sheep. The farmers and shepherds banded together to capture the marauder, but it successfully

escaped capture, and continued its depredations.

After having done a considerable amount of mischief, to the great relief of the countryside it was discovered cut in two on the railway.

Note the wolf did three things. It scattered the sheep; it caught the sheep; it **KILLED** the sheep.

But the preacher drew attention to the parable of the Good Shepherd in John x. There we read the verse, "He that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep." (verse 12). He pointed out that the wolf could scatter, and catch the sheep, but he **COULD NOT KILL** *the sheep*. What a comfort to know this! No true believer shall ever perish. The Good Shepherd has pledged His word, and His Father's name and power. He said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall **NEVER PERISH**, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one" (verses 27-29). Yes, one in interest, purpose, love and care for the sheep, as

well as one in essential being.

We see how the divine intention was that there should be ONE flock and ONE Shepherd. Alas! the wolf has scattered the sheep. See how the Christians are broken up into divisions, denominations, factions, sects. But thank God, the Good Shepherd shall triumph at last. The Divine intention shall stand good. When the day of glory comes not one, not the feeblest lamb of the flock, shall be missing. All shall be gathered home. The wolf cannot kill.

The Good Shepherd says, "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day" (John vi. 39).

A. J. POLLOCK.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(*James iv.*).

Please read the passage indicated above before reading this article, and then keep your Bible open so that you may refer to it as may be necessary from time to time.

The writer takes it for granted that you will comply with this request, and hence he addresses you in the terms he would employ if giving a homely "Bible-talk."

THE last note struck, as we closed chapter iii. was that of peace. The first note of chapter iv. is the exact opposite, that of war. What lay behind the peace was the purity that is the first mark of the wisdom that is from above. So now

we discover that what lies behind the wars and fightings, which are so common among the professed people of God, is the impure lust of the human heart, the lust connected with that wisdom which is earthly, sensual, devilish.

You will notice that the marginal reading for "lusts," in verses 1 and 3, is "pleasures." That is because the word used means the pleasure that comes from the gratifying of our desires, or lusts, rather than the desires themselves. If our desires run riot and we find a sinful pleasure in their gratification, we at once have the root of endless contentions and warfare.

Verses 2 and 3 tell us the way this evil works. First, there is the desire for what we have not. Now this desire may carry a man to the point of killing in order to achieve his end, but at any rate it fills him with envy if he cannot accomplish his desire. And after all there is a very simple way in which we may receive what we desire, if indeed we are Christians. We may struggle and strive and move heaven and earth, and yet receive nothing. Yet the Saviour Himself has told us to ask and we shall receive. We have not, because we ask not.

Does someone say in a rather aggrieved tone, "But I have asked, time and again, yet I have never received." The explana-

tion may be that you have asked "amiss" or "evilly"; your object in asking being simply the gratification of your own desires. Had you received it, you would have just spent it upon your own pleasures. Hence God has withheld from you your desire.

How plainly this teaches us that God looks at the heart. He scrutinizes the motive that lies behind the asking. This is very searching, and it explains a lot of unanswered prayer. We may ask for thoroughly right things and be denied, because we ask from thoroughly wrong motives.

You may be serving the Lord. Perhaps you have started to preach the Gospel, and then you certainly desire that your words may be marked by grace and power. Is not that right? It is eminently right, yet beware lest you ask for this just because you have an over-mastering desire to be a successful preacher. Your prayer will sound quite beautiful to us all, but God will know the thought that lies behind it.

Here I am, writing this article. I have asked the Lord to guide so that it may bring light and help to many. Yet I ask myself very seriously, Why did I ask this? Was it that I had a genuine care for the spiritual prosperity of others, or was it just that I might enhance my reputation as a writer of magazine articles of a religious sort? Again I say, this is very searching.

Verse 4 brings in another consideration. We cannot very well be set on our own pleasures without becoming entangled with the world. The world is, so to speak, the arena wherein pleasures disport themselves, and where every lust that finds a place in man's heart may be gratified. Now for the believer alliance with the world is adultery in its spiritual form.

The apostle James is exceedingly definite on this point. The world is in a state of open rebellion against God. It was ever thus since man fell, but its terrible enmity only came fully to light when Christ was manifested. Then it was that the world both saw and hated Him and His Father. Then it was that the breach was irrevocably fixed.

We are speaking, of course, of the world-system. If it be a question of the people in the world, then we read, "God so loved the world." The world-system is the point here, and it is in a state of deadly hostility to God; so much so that friendship with the one entails enmity as regards the other. The language is very strong. Literally it would read, "Whoever therefore is minded to be the friend of the world is constituted enemy of God." It does not say that God is his enemy, but the breach is so complete on the world's side that friendship with it is only possible on the basis of enmity against God. Let us never forget that!

And let us also never forget that we, as believers, are brought into such close and intimate relations with God that if we play Him false and enter into guilty alliance with the world the only sin amongst mankind with which it can be compared is the very terrible one of adultery.

Verse 5 is difficult, even as to its translation. The New Translation renders it thus, "Think ye that the Scripture speaks in vain? Does the Spirit which has taken His abode in us desire enviously?" The force then would seem to be—Has not the Scripture warned you of these things, and does it not always mean what it says? Can you for one moment imagine that the Holy Spirit of God has anything to do with these unholy desires? If we read it as in our Authorized Version we should understand it to mean that all along the Scripture had testified that man's own spirit is the source of his envious lusts. The truth to which it leads us, is the same, whichever way we read it.

The chapter opened with the lusts of the flesh. It passed on to warn against alliance with the world. Now in verse 7 the devil is mentioned, and we are told that if resisted he will flee. But how thankful we should be for the verse which precedes this mention of the devil, containing the assurance that "He giveth more grace." The flesh, the world, the devil may exert against us power which is much. God gives us grace which

is *more*. And if the power against us becomes more and *abounds*, then grace *superbonds*. The great thing is to be in that state which is truly receptive of the grace of God.

What is that state? It is that condition of humility which leads to submission to God and consequent nearness to Him. This comes out very clearly in these verses. God gives grace to the humble while He resists the proud. The wise king of olden time had noted the fact that "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. xvi. 18); though he does not tell us why it is so. Here we get the explanation. The proud get no grace from God but rather resistance. No wonder they go down. And with none is the fall so manifest as with proud believers, since God deals promptly with His children in the way of government. The worldling He often leaves untouched until the final crash comes, as eternity is reached.

If we are marked by humility we shall have no difficulty in submitting to God, and as we submit to God we shall be enabled to resist the devil. All too often things work the other way round with us. We start by submitting to the devil, which leads to our developing the pride that marks him, and consequently resisting God; and as a result of that God resists us and a fall becomes inevitable, with its consequent

humiliation. If only we were humble we should escape much humiliation.

The order then is clear. First, humility. Then, submission to God, which entails resistance as regards the devil. Third, drawing near to God. No one of course can draw near to God except as happily submitting to Him. Drawing near to Him He will draw near to us. This is the way of His government. If we sow the seed of a diligent seeking of His face, we shall reap a harvest of light and blessing from a realized sense of His nearness to us.

Let us always keep clear the distinction between God's grace and His government. In His grace He took the initiative and drew near to us, when we cared nothing for Him. From that all has flowed. But saved by grace we are brought under the holy government of God, and here we reap as we sow. If we seek Him He will be found of us, and the more we draw near to Him the larger will be our enjoyment of His nearness and all its benefits.

Immediately we think of drawing near to God the question of our moral fitness is raised. How can we draw near except as cleansed and purified. Hence, what we find in the latter part of verse 8 and in verses 9 and 10. James speaks very strongly as to the state of those to whom he wrote, accusing them of sin and double-mindedness

and a good deal of indifference to their real condition, so that they were filled with laughter and jollification in spite of their sorry state. What they needed was to purify themselves not only externally—the “hands”—but internally—the “hearts,” and also to repent, humbling themselves before God.

Are we sometimes conscious that our hearts are far from God? Do we sometimes feel as though it were impossible for us to draw near to Him? These verses then will explain matters for us and show us the way. The only road into the Divine presence that is available for us is that of purification, within as well as without, of repentance and of freshly humbling ourselves before God. Then it is that He will lift us up, and we shall be in the full enjoyment of the light of His countenance.

In verses 11 and 12 the Apostle again reverts to the matter of the tongue. No sin amongst Christians is more common than that of speaking evil against their brethren. Now those to whom James wrote were very familiar with the law and greatly revered its commandments, so he reminds them how distinctly the law had spoken on this very point. Knowing what the law had said, to speak evil of and judge their brother would be tantamount to speaking evil of and judging the law which forbad it. Instead of obeying

the law they would be setting up to legislate for themselves. These early Jerusalem Christians were "all zealous of the law" (Acts xxi. 20). But that only made the matter more serious for them. We are not under the law but under grace, still it will do us all good to remember the word which the Lord spake unto Moses saying, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale bearer among thy people" (Lev. xix. 16).

Another sad feature of those days was a lack of piety, and as to this James utters words of rebuke in the paragraph extending from verse 13 to the end of the chapter. The Jew true to his nature was out for gain and moved from city to city buying and selling. If unconverted he thought of nothing but the demands of his business and laid his plans accordingly. The converted Jew however had claims which were higher than the claims of business. He had a Lord in heaven to whom he was responsible, and every movement must be planned and made subject to His will.

True piety brings God and His will into everything. It is wholesome to recognize our own littleness and the brevity of our days. In a boastful spirit we may begin legislating for our own future, but it is evil work. We have no power to legislate, since we cannot even command what shall be on the morrow. But why should we wish to

legislate when we are the Lord's, and He has a will about us? Shall we not recognize His guidance and be satisfied with that?

Not only should we recognize His guidance but we should be glad to acknowledge it in all our ways and by word of mouth also. We "ought to SAY, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." And notice please that "we OUGHT to say." It is not something which we *may* say, and find that God approves of it. It is something we *must* say if we wish to give Him His proper place in our lives.

Knowing this let us be careful to do it, for a very striking statement closes our chapter. Sin is not only the doing of that which is wrong: it is also the not doing of that which we know to be right. Hence to know is a great responsibility.

Shall we therefore shrink from know-ledge? But that would only make matters worse, inasmuch as it would entail closing our eyes against the light; and those who do that will have no ground of complaint against God, should He do for them what long ago He did for others, and shut them up in hopeless darkness. No, let us welcome the light, and let us look upon the responsibility to put into practice the good that we know, as being also a very great privilege.

THE SAILOR'S RESPONSE.

MISS Agnes Weston, so well called "The sailors' Friend," used to recount how one of our Jack tars found his way to the Sailors' Rest at Devonport. When he was shown the cabin that had just been presented to The Rest by Queen Victoria, he asked if it was really provided at the Queen's own cost, and given out of her private purse. On being told that it was so, the sailor was much moved. He dashed away a tear saying, "I never would have believed it unless I saw it. She has always been my Queen, now she is my friend!"

Is it not so with our souls? We have been glad to escape the wrath of God. Indeed some measure of gratitude may have arisen to the One who so kindly undertook our cause. But it is only as we discover at what cost to Himself He wrought our salvation, that the affections of our hearts are drawn out to Him. For we were "not redeemed with silver and gold," but with "the precious blood of Christ." It is a "blood-sealed friendship." It is as we realize that Christ *suffered* for sins, to bring us to God, that our love ascends to Him in worship. When we know "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet FOR OUR SAKES He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich," we exclaim like the sailor, "He has long been my Saviour, now He is my Friend."

E. R. M.

“SOUND IN THE FAITH.”

“IT’S bad! It tasted nasty, mother!” exclaimed a bright healthy boy, as he hastily threw away an unwholesome nut. The little man was interrogated regarding his action, but, although not able to explain much, his features looked painfully nauseated and he had done wisely. Indeed, it would be well if we all acted similarly in more important matters, by having done with what is unwholesome and unsound.

How commonly it is said to-day, “So-and-so is unsound as to the inspiration of the Bible,” “He is unsound as to the atonement,” “He denies the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and so on. The very fact, that the children of God have the Holy Spirit within them, causes them to shrink from the preaching and teaching of such men, and to reject their God-dishonouring doctrines. Yet, after a while, through becoming familiar with them, there is the awful danger of losing the keen dislike which was once divinely imparted to the soul, and of being consequently robbed in regard to the Truth.

Again and again in the three short epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, the Spirit of God emphasizes the importance of that which is “sound”;—“sound doctrine,”

"sound words," "sound speech," "a sound mind" and "sound in the faith" are all spoken of, in view of believers being preserved from the unwholesome opposites, and of being kept in the healthfulness of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

We will concisely consider the verses referred to.

1. "*Sound doctrine*" (1 Timothy i. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 3; Titus i. 9; ii. 1). In the very first verse we see where unsoundness in regard to the faith begins, as we read, "contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious Gospel." Corruption starts as to God's Gospel. Then it is foretold, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine," for (as it now abounds), "They heap to themselves teachers having itching ears." But, in healthy contrast, it is good when one is able to hold fast the faithful word, and "be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers," speaking "the things which become sound doctrine." To promote the good is the way to keep clear of the evil.

2. "*Sound words*" (1 Tim. vi. 3; 2 Tim. i. 13). "If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing." Such have

forsaken the ground where true knowledge and humility are cherished. Therefore the apostle says to young Timothy, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” The apostles used words “which the Holy Ghost teacheth,” not “the words which man’s wisdom teacheth” (1 Corinthians ii. 13). This should be remembered today when we are faced by boasted advance, modern scholarship and the latest expressions, so that more tenaciously than ever we may hold fast to sound and wholesome words.

3. “*Sound speech*” (Titus ii. 8). Then what a fine exhortation is found here for a servant of the Lord! What an antidote to the temptation which ensnares many, when truth is sacrificed for delusive language or vain eloquence. “In doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say against you.”

4. “*A sound mind*” (2 Tim. i. 7). Granted that the behaviour of a faithful servant of the Lord leaves the enemies of the faith without one evil thing in his practice to condemn, but rather that a feeling of shame consequently takes hold of the opponents, nevertheless he himself is not to be ashamed of the Truth, nor is he to fear, however much they may oppose; so it is

written, "God hath not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (or "wise discretion," for so it should read). "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." From God's side the servant is equipped; on his side boldness, love and wise discretion in regard to the Lord's testimony are to mark him.

5. "Sound in the faith" (Titus i. 13; ii. 2). "Rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith." . . . "Sober, grave, temperate, sound in the faith, in love, in patience." In view of subversive teachings and corrupt influences, Titus was to forcefully bring home the Truth to believers that they might be found SOUND IN THE FAITH. True believers at the present time need the good,—*the positive Truth of God!* It is not sufficient, though necessary, to be done with the bad,—the unsound. Certainly "refuse the evil," but feed upon "that which is good."

The epistle of Jude instructs those who are "beloved in God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ" to build themselves up in the Faith, keeping themselves in God's love, praying in the Holy Ghost,—to get on together in "the faith once delivered to the saints,"—to be earnest as to this; not as to latter-day copies or developments of it, but as to that which is "from the beginning."

God is revealed in Christ, and we are redeemed to God in Christ through His blood. Christ is glorified on high, and we are blessed in Him. The faith centres in the Son of God, and the Spirit enables the children of God to "*abide in Him*" in faith, affection and intelligence, that our joy may be full, while true edification in love is promoted according to the Word of God.

H. J. VINE.

"GIVE ATTENDANCE TO READING."

(1 Timothy iv. 13).

THAT this exhortation points to the public reading of the Scriptures seems to be confirmed by the rest of the verse. The Apostle Paul writes to Timothy, "Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." In those days, manuscripts of the Scriptures were few and far between, many could not read at all, so that the public reading of the Scriptures was a very needed service.

May we not well pay heed to this exhortation to-day. In this country at least, it is rare to find any unable to read. The younger generation can read one and all. Printing has multiplied and cheapened the means of possessing a copy of the Bible. A few pence can command this priceless boon.

Surely if one was exhorted to read to the many, because the many had not easy access to the Holy Scriptures, now that the many have that access it is well within the spirit of this verse to exhort the Lord's people to the study of the Scriptures.

Any observant Christian will have noticed that the serious reading character that our fathers possessed is in danger of being lost by the younger generation. It is to our younger brothers and sisters that we address these lines particularly.

There never has been an outstanding servant of Christ, but who studied the Scriptures, not in an intellectual way, but devotionally, and with the purpose of translating it into the practice of his daily life.

Take Psalm cxix with its 176 verses. Scarcely a verse but has reference to God's word and the Psalmist's delight in meditation in it.

"I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.

I will meditate in Thy precepts, and have respect unto Thy ways.

*I will delight myself in Thy statutes:
I will not forget Thy word."*

(verses 14-16).

These are three verses taken almost at random. To rejoice, to meditate, to respect,

to delight, not to forget, form a series of expressions that bespeak an earnest study of the Word of God. Can this be said, even feebly, of you, as you read these lines.

It is interesting to see how the Word of God was known by God's servants of old. Daniel had evidently studied the Book of Jeremiah (Daniel ix. 2). Mary, the mother of our Lord, in her *Magnificat* (Luke i. 46-55) showed that she had an intimate knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. What a touching example is that of the blessed Lord Himself, always the perfect One, in quoting three times from the Book of Deuteronomy in the temptation in the wilderness. Peter on the day of Pentecost in his wonderful sermon, used to the conversion of about 3000 souls, showed an intimate acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures. He quoted from the prophet Joel, from Psalm xvi. 8—11, a second time quoting verse 10 in particular. In his second Epistle he draws attention to the writings of “our beloved brother Paul” showing that he had studied them; whilst Paul writes happily of Timothy as knowing the Scriptures, able to make him “wise unto salvation,” with very evident satisfaction.

There are 245 pages in the New Testament (Oxford Bible), and there are over 350 quotations from the Old Testament, that is, more than one quotation for every page of the New Testament. The Old Testament can-

not be understood without the fuller light of the New; and the New cannot be understood without a knowledge of the Old. We need a knowledge of the Book in all its parts.

Suffer a further word of exhortation. There are many excellent books, expository and doctrinal, that have opened up the Scriptures wonderfully to many of our older brethren. There is a great danger of their being neglected to-day.

Let them not be neglected. Especially is this more necessary when our young brothers and sisters are connected with a meeting where there is little or no gift. Careful reading of sound literature that will open up the Scriptures to the reader is of great importance. To have a few rows of well chosen books ought to be the ambition of our younger brethren.

A superficial knowledge of the Scriptures means a superficial Christian. Shall we be content with being merely superficial? Remember if we are shallow in the one, it means that there is too much room for the world to get in. Our minds are filled either with the Lord's things, or those of the world. Which shall it be? Each of us makes our choice, and the choice is intensely solemn and fraught with great possibilities of good or evil. Youth is the crucial period for decision.

A. J. POLLOCK.

WHAT SHALL WE READ?

NEVER before were there so many books as to-day, and perhaps never before was it so difficult for the reader to pick his way among them.

Long, long ago before the invention of printing, when all books must needs be written, the question hardly arose. True the Apostle Paul speaks of his books, "and especially the parchments," but books as we have them now were necessarily unknown.

Later, as historians tell us, books were either very good and moral; some truly pious, which we read with pleasure and profit still, or alas! very bad, so bad that to-day they would be unreadable; but in either case books were for the few, and it is only in comparatively recent years that books and readers have increased to their present enormous numbers.

In writing to the readers of *Edification* I take it for granted that you understand the importance of giving the Holy Scriptures the first place in your reading and study. Without them there can be no robust Christian life, nor any knowledge of God, nor any understanding of His ways. I cannot sufficiently beseech you to know your Bible from cover to cover, not simply special portions, and to store your memory

with the Gospels and Epistles. Oftentimes they will come to you and so fill your heart and mind with holy thoughts that other thoughts will find no place. Oh! read the Scriptures prayerfully and thoughtfully, looking up to "your Lord and Teacher" and depending on the Holy Spirit, whose office is to take of the things of Christ and shew them unto you. Read also helpful books on the Scriptures, which preserve for us the wisdom and knowledge of those whom God has gifted, as teachers and expositors.

It is when we come to general reading that so much care is necessary. Some may not care for general reading and do not need it; but there are others, to whom books are as essential as their daily bread and who, if they had to choose, would sacrifice some portion of their daily bread rather than be without books. And a book can be a very good thing.

By reading books what journeys one may take, and behold the wonders of creation in far-off lands! What company one may keep, the company of men and women who have done great things, some who have hazarded their lives, and others in quiet places who have just let their light shine! What marvels of science (the science that is true, and not science falsely so-called) will unfold themselves to us! What wonders of the deep, of the paths of the seas,

what wonders of the distant heavens, the moon and stars that *He* has ordained!

Just what each one may read must ever be a matter for individual conscience; but I would like to quote you some lines which seem to me a very helpful guide in this matter.

“THE HABITATION OF GOD.”

“Here on earth a temple stands,
Temple never built with hands;
There the Lord doth fill the place
With the glory of His grace.
Cleansed by Christ’s atoning blood,
Thou art this fair house of God.
Thoughts, desires that enter there
Should they not be pure and fair?
Meet for holy courts and blest,
Courts of stillness and of rest,
Where the soul a priest in white
Singeth praises day and night;
Glory of the love divine
Filling all this heart of thine.”

(*G. Tersteegen*).

I think this is so beautiful. If we realize beloved young Christians, that each one of us is indeed a temple of the Lord, as indwelt by the Holy Ghost, and the soul within the white-robed priest to sing His praise, shall we not see to it that nothing that is not “pure and fair” shall cross the threshold of our temple, and that there shall be no dweller in the courts who would silence the little singer there? If we are true-hearted and self-judged we shall know well when we have allowed the entrance of anything that hushes the song.

You will remember, if you have read Ezekiel, how God shewed him that in the temple which was raised for His glory, Israel had made idols of abominable things, beasts and creeping things (Ezek. viii.). You would not that such as these should come into your temple but rather would earnestly desire that it might be "holy unto the Lord."

One would not be uncharitable, but the warning is sorely needed, for many evil books, comparable to abominations and creeping things are put forth in their tens of thousands. There are books that insinuate doubts as to the authenticity and authority of the Bible; books that inculcate a line of conduct which is in every way contrary to God; there are spiritist books, destructive alike to spirit, soul and body, and books in which the tenets of many false and evil cults are hidden by misapplied passages of Scripture. They are indeed many and specious, Satan himself being transformed as an angel of light.

There is only one way of safety—to *choose* the good and *refuse* the evil; not tampering with bad books, because they assume the appearance of good, but in humble dependence on the Lord remembering the word in Psa. xvii. 4, "By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer."

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(James v).

Please read the passage indicated above before reading this article, and then keep your Bible open so that you may refer to it as may be necessary from time to time.

The writer takes it for granted that you will comply with this request, and hence he addresses you in the terms he would employ if giving a homely "Bible-talk."

IN the closing verses of chapter iv. James was addressing those of his own people belonging to the prosperous commercial class, who professed to receive Jesus as their Lord. In the opening of the fifth chapter his thoughts turn to the rich Jews, and these, as we have before mentioned, were almost to a man found amongst the unbelieving majority. In the first six verses he has some severe and even scorching things to say about them, and to them.

The accusation he brings against them is threefold. First he charges them with fraud, and that of the most despicable character. They took advantage of the humblest people who were least able to defend themselves. Second, they were utterly self-indulgent, thinking of little but their own luxuries. Third, they persecuted and even killed their brethren who had embraced the faith of Christ, who are spoken of here as "the just."

As a consequence, self-enrichment was their pursuit and they were successful in it. They "heaped treasure together." Mean-

while the labourers who could not defend themselves cried out in their poverty, and the Christians, who very possibly might have defended themselves, followed in the footsteps of their Master and did not resist them. The rich men succeeded famously and seemed to have matters all their own way.

Appearances however are deceitful. In reality they were but like brute beasts being fattened for killing. "Ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter," is how James puts it. If Psalm lxxiii. be read we discover that this is no new thing. Asaph had been greatly troubled observing the prosperity of the wicked, coupled with the chastenings and sorrows of the people of God; and he found no satisfactory solution of the problem until he went into the sanctuary of God.

In the light of the sanctuary everything became clear to him. He saw that the course to both the godless rich and the plagued and downtrodden saints could only be rightly estimated as the end of each came into view. A few moments before he had been near to falling himself because he had been consumed with envy at the prosperity of the wicked: now he exclaims, "How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment!" Asaph himself was one of the godly, plagued all the day long and "chastened every morning." Yet in the sanctuary he lifts his eyes to God with joy and con-

fesses, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." The end of the one was, brought into desolation. The end of the other, received to glory. The contrast is complete!

And that contrast is very manifest in our chapter. The amassed wealth of the rich was corrupted and cankered. Utter misery was coming upon them. As for the tried saints they had but to wait with patience for the coming of the Lord: then their glad harvest of blessing would be reaped, as verses 7 and 8 make manifest.

These inspired threatenings of judgment found an almost immediate fulfilment in the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus. History informs us that most Christians took warning and left the city before it was invested by the Roman armies, while the unbelieving mass were entrapped and such miseries came upon them as all their weepings and howlings could not avert. Yet while a fulfilment it was not the fulfilment of these words. "Ye have heaped treasure together," it says, "for the last days." That means, not merely the last few years of that sad chapter of Jerusalem's history, but the days just preceding the coming of the Lord.

You will notice how James corroborates his fellow-apostles, Paul, Peter and John. All four of them present the coming of the Lord as imminent, as the immediate hope of

the believer. They say to us such things as, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." "The end of all things is at hand." "Little children, it is the last time." "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh." And yet nearly nineteen centuries have passed since these words were written. Were they mistaken? By no means. Yet it is not easy to get their exact view-point, and so understand their words.

An illustration may help. A drama is being enacted on the stage, and the curtain rises for the last act. It is the first public performance, and someone who has already witnessed it privately whispers to a friend, "Now for the finish! It is the last act." Yet nothing seems to happen. The minutes pass, and the players appear to be absolutely motionless. Yet there is something transpiring. Very slow, stealthy movements are going on. Something is slowly creeping on to the stage. It needs good opera glasses and a very observant pair of eyes behind them to notice it! The crowd becomes openly impatient, and the man who said, "Now for the finish," looks a fool. Yet he was perfectly right.

In the days of the Apostles the earth was set for the last act in the great drama of God's dealings. Yet because God is full of longsuffering, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," (2. Pet. iii. 9.) He has slowed

down the working of iniquity. It is a very long time coming to a head—as we count time. It was perfectly true when the Apostles wrote that the next decisive movement in the drama was to be God's public intervention, in the coming of the Lord; though for His coming we are still waiting to-day. We shall not wait for it in vain!

His coming is our hope, and these words of exhortation ought to come to us with tenfold force to-day. Are we tested, our hearts oppressed with the burden of unrighted wrongs? "Be ye also patient," is the word for us. Do we feel unsettled, everything around and within seemingly insecure and shaking? The message comes to us, "Stablish your hearts." Does it seem as if we are everlastingly sowing without effect? Do we plough and wait, and plough and wait, until we are tempted to think that we are but ploughing sands? "Be patient," is the word for us, "unto the coming of the Lord." Then we shall enjoy our grand "Harvest-home."

We must remember however that the Lord's coming will not only mean the judgment of the ungodly and the uplifting of the saints, but it will entail the righting of all that has been wrong in the relations of believers one with another. Verse 9 bears on this. What is more common than grudges or complainings of believers one against another, and what more disastrous in its

effects upon the spiritual health of the whole body of saints? Are we inferring that there are no causes of complaint, nothing that might lead to the cherishing of a grudge? There are probably more causes than we have any notion of, but let them not be turned into grudges. He who will sit in judgment, and assess everything—even as between believers—in perfect righteousness, is standing with His hand upon the handle of the door ready to enter the court; and he who is readiest to entertain and nurse a grudge will probably be himself the first to be condemned.

In all this we should be encouraged by the example of the prophets who have gone before, and particularly by the case of Job. We see them suffering affliction, enduring patiently and, in many cases, dying as the result of their testimony. Job's case was special. Satan was not permitted to take his life and so remove him from our observation. He was to live so that we might see "the end of the Lord" in his case. And what a wonderful end it was! We can see the pity and tender mercy of God shining through all his disasters as we view them in the light shed by the finish of his story.

Job's case was just a sample. What God wrought out for him He is working out for all of us, for He has no favourites. We cannot see to the finish of our own cases, but in the light of Job's case God invites us to

trust Him, and if we do we shall not grudge against our fellows any more than Job bore a grudge against his three friends when God had reached His end with him. Why, Job then was found fervently praying for his friends instead of grumbling at them! Let us trust God and accept His dealings, assured that His end according to His tender mercy will be reached for us at the coming of Jesus, and we shall see it then.

How important it is then that the coming of the Lord should really be our HOPE. If faith be vigorous it will be kept shining brightly before our hearts, and then we shall endure with patience, we shall be lifted above grudges and complaints, and we shall be marked too by that moderation of language to which verse 12 exhorts us. He who lives in an atmosphere of truth has no need to fortify his words with strong oaths. The habitual use of them soon has the contrary effect to that intended. Even men of the world soon doubt the veracity of the man who cannot be content with a plain yes or no. The last words of the verse, "lest ye fall into condemnation" seem to infer this.

While we wait for the coming of the Lord our lives are made up of many and varying experiences. Going through a hostile world there are frequent afflictions. Then again there are times of peculiar happiness. Yet again, seasons of sickness come, and sometimes they come upon us as the direct result

of committing sin. From verse 13 to the end these matters are taken up.

The resource of the afflicted saint is prayer. We do not always realize this. So often we merely betake ourselves to kindly friends, who will listen to the recital of our troubles, or to wealthy and influential friends, who perchance may be able to help us in our troubles, and prayer falls into the background, whereas it should be our first thought. It is affliction which adds intensity to our prayers. You attend a meeting which may be described as "our usual prayer-meeting," and it is, we trust, a profitable occasion. But even so how different it is when a number meet together to pray about a matter which burdens their hearts to the point of positive affliction. In meetings of that sort the heavens seem to bow down to touch the earth.

But here, on the other hand, are believers who are merry indeed, their hearts are full of gladness. It is spiritual gladness, at least to begin with. The danger is however that it will soon degenerate into mere carnal jollification. If spiritual gladness is to be maintained it must have an outlet of a spiritual sort. That spiritual outlet is the singing of psalms, by which we understand any poetical or metrical composition of a spiritual sort which can be set to music. The happy heart sings, and the happy Christian is to be no exception in this.

Just think of the range of song that is within our compass! Earth's great singers have their portfolios of familiar songs, their *repertoire* they call it. We read that Solomon's songs were one thousand and five, but how many are ours? In his days the heights and depths of love divine were not made known as they are in ours. We have the breadth and length and depth and height of divine revelation and the knowledge of the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ as the subject matter for Christian song. There are moments, thank God, when very really we break forth with,

Sing, without ceasing sing,
The Saviour's present grace.

only let us be careful that our singing is of such a character as may further lift us up, and not let us down.

As to sickness the Apostle's instructions are equally plain. It is viewed as being God's chastening hand upon the saint, very possibly in the form of direct retribution for his sins. In this the church would be interested, and the elders of the church should be called in. They, at their discretion, pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Lord's name and he is healed, his sins being governmentally forgiven. It is evident from such a scripture as 1 John v. 16 that the elders were to exercise their spiritual discernment as to whether it was,

or was not, the will of God that healing should be granted. If they discerned it to be His will then they could pray the prayer full of faith and confidence, which would be without fail answered in his recovery.

Is this all valid for to-day? We believe so. Why then is it so little practised? For at least two reasons. First, it is not an easy matter to find the elders of THE church though the elders of certain religious bodies may be found easily enough. The church of God has been ruined as to its outward manifestation and unity, and we have to pay the penalty of it. Second assuming the elders of the church are found and that they come in response to the call, the discernment and faith on their part, which are called for if they are to offer such a prayer of faith as is contemplated, are but very rarely found.

The faith, be it observed, is to be on the part of those who pray, that is of the elders. Nothing is said as to the faith of the one who is sick, though we may infer that he has some faith in the matter, sufficient at least to send for the elders in accordance with this scripture. We may infer too from the words that immediately follow in verse 16 that he would confess his sins, if indeed he have committed them. We point this out because this passage has been pressed into service on behalf of practices

not warranted by this or any other scripture.

The confession of which verse 16 speaks is however not exactly confession to elders. It is rather "one to another." This verse has nothing official about it as verses 14 and 15 have. There is no reason why any of us should not practice prayer for healing after this sort.

The case supposed is that of two believers, and one has offended against the other, though neither apparently are entirely free from blame, and consequently both are suffering in their health. The main offender comes with heart-felt confession of the wrong he committed. The other is thereby moved to confess anything which may have been wrong on his side, and then melted before God they begin to pray for each other. If they have really forsaken their wrong-doing and are going in the way of righteousness they may expect to be heard of God and healed.

In connection with this Elijah is brought before us. Verse 17 is particularly interesting inasmuch as the Old Testament makes no mention of the fact that he prayed that it might not rain, though we are given very full details of how he prayed for rain at the end of the three and a half years in 1 Kings xviii. He is introduced to us very abruptly in the opening verse of 1 Kings xvii as telling Ahab that it would not rain, so this verse in James gives us a peep into

scenes before his public appearance—scenes of private and personal dealings with God. Though of like passions to ourselves he was righteous, and burning with the fervency of a passion for the glory of God. Hence he was heard, and he knew that he was heard with an assurance that enabled him to confidently tell Ahab what God was going to do. Would that we resembled him, if only in a small degree!

We may learn in all this what are the conditions of effectual prayer. Confession of sin, not only to God but to one another; practical righteousness in all our ways; fervency of spirit and petition. Fervent prayer is not that which is uttered in loud stentorian tones, but that which springs from a warm and glowing heart.

The closing verses revert to the thought of our praying for one another for healing and restoration. Verse 19 alludes to the conversion or bringing back of an erring brother, and from this we pass almost insensibly to the conversion of a sinner in verse 20. He who is used of God in this blessed work is an instrument in saving souls from death and the covering of many sins. Do we realise what an honour this is? Some people are for ever on the tack of unconvincing sin, whether of their fellow-believers or of the world. The covering of sins *in a righteous way* is what God loves. Let us go in for it with all our hearts.

F. B. HOLE.