

EDITOR'S FOREWORD.

“THE very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. v. 23).

God's standards are always lofty and worthy of Himself. The verse quoted above gives us His standard of sanctity, or holiness.

So lofty is it that He must Himself work to bring us up to it. So lofty, that it will only be reached in full perfection at the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Still it is to be wrought out now. The whole man, spirit, soul, and body, is to be set apart wholly for God's pleasure, and thus be blameless at the coming of the Lord.

This evidently is what God is pursuing now with all His saints. The question arises, Are we each pursuing it for ourselves? We hardly need stop to prove the point that God makes known to us His objective for us, in order that we may make it our objective.

Are we pursuing holiness? We make no attempt to answer the question in a broad, wholesale kind of way. We can only speak according to that which comes under our own very limited observation. Speaking thus, we have to say with reluctance that the pursuit seems to be slack.

We do not say that there is no pursuit of the things that are good. We believe that there is, and with some a pursuit of considerable diligence. We observe those who pursue an intelligent understanding of the things of God. They read the Word of God and understand it. We observe those who pursue the service of the Lord. They do not miss the occasions when the Lord gathers His saints together for the breaking of bread, or for worship, or ministry of the Word. They take part in it as may be suitable. They rejoice in opportunities for testimony in the Lord's name. But is there a corresponding keenness as to personal holiness?

We wish we could give an unqualified "Yes" to the question. But we hesitate.

Where is our insatiable thirst after God—such as characterized the Psalmist (lxiii. 1)? Where, our yearnings after communion with Christ, our desires for "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" our Lord? Where, the deep abasement when sin has come in (see, Psalm li.)? Where, the fervent longings for deliver-

ance from the workings of sin in the members, until the Deliverer Himself and the power of His Spirit are known?

In matters such as these we certainly seem to have slipped backwards during more recent years.

Let us bestir ourselves. The next verse says, "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it." Thank God, He *will* do it! Blessed news this, but very serious also. *Blessed*, because this guarantees that the thing will be really done. *Serious*, because He will do it according to His call, even if we are quite slack about it; which means that we shall be dragged through discipline, even heavy chastening, to bring it to pass.

Is this the explanation of many of our trials and disappointments? We believe it is.

We hope that what may appear in the pages of our little magazine may be such as shall incite us in this direction, and lead us to "follow . . . holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14).

Oh beware of your own way. Follow the Lord fully. Take no path that conscience tells you is doubtful. If God's smile is not on it abandon it for ever. Christians bring sorrow of heart upon themselves, darkness of soul and loss of peace, not so much by taking wrong paths as by taking doubtful ones.

THE LIFE OF FAITH.

(1) *Hebrews xi.* 1-7.

THE last three and a half chapters of this remarkable epistle form a section distinct in itself.

In the earlier portion the Holy Spirit, by the pen of the nameless writer, has been passing in rapid review the glories of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ; the excellence of His work; the abiding character of His Priesthood; and has shown much of what that means to all true believers. At the middle of chapter ten the climax is reached, as we read the astounding statement that they who believe have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," and that they are invited to do so.

After having attained the summit there is a somewhat sharp reminder that they, to whom the epistle was addressed, were still in earthly circumstances, and that they must be prepared for exercises and trials of various kinds. With this there was the assurance that God, who had brought them to the wonderful elevation indicated in verse 22 of chapter x., would not fail them in the difficulties outlined in verses 33 and 34. It would seem as if the Hebrew Christians had grown weary and discouraged; hence the word in verse 36, "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."

Afflictions and persecution might be their portion, but if they were doing the will of God, nothing else mattered. For their encouragement they were referred to the charming little book of Habakkuk.

May we ask our readers to stop just here, open their Bibles, and read these three short chapters? It may be the prophet himself was feeling discouraged, and depressed, because of the state of things all around him. The Lord graciously spoke to him, told him of a vision, and cheered him by saying, "Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Habakkuk ii. 3). In our epistle the inspired penman, by way of encouragement, called attention to this, writing not of a vision but of a Person. "For yet a little while, and *HE* that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (verse 37). "Good! But how are we to get on till He comes?" might have been asked.

For answer, Habakkuk is once more quoted, "The just shall live by his faith" (ii. 4). So great importance is attached to these six words, that no less than three times are they found in the New Testament. If each time we read them there, we put the emphasis on a different word we shall arrive at the meaning in the particular setting in which we find them. Thus:—

- (1) "The *JUST* shall live by faith"
(Romans i. 17).

(2) "The just shall live by *FAITH*"
(Galatians iii. 11).

(3) "The just shall *LIVE* by faith"
(Hebrews x. 38.)

This last is illustrated in chapter xi. where there is passed before us a galaxy of men and women, named and unnamed, who had proved the reality of it. Thus chapter xi. to which we now invite the attention of our readers, might well be entitled :

THE LIFE OF FAITH.

After stating what is characteristic of faith in verse 1, certain outstanding persons are named, and it is of them that we desire to write. We trust we shall see that the names were chosen not in haphazard fashion, but that there is a moral order, so that the Hebrew believers in their day, and we in our day, might learn a lesson therefrom. In this paper we propose to look at the first three. We observe then that

- (a) *Abel worshipped God.*
- (b) *Enoch walked with God.*
- (c) *Noah worked for God.*

This is the correct order. It is fitting that walk should occupy the centre place. From it we move backward and forward. We will be able to worship and to work only in measure as we walk with God.

In Genesis iv. 4, we read that "Abel . . . brought of the firstlings of his flock and

of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering." Abel recognised what was due to God. He approached God on the ground of sacrifice, and he was taken account of by God in the value of the sacrifice. "He obtained witness that he was righteous" (Hebrews xi. 4). Shall we stop and ask ourselves—Do we come thus to God? Has it to be confessed that we approach God mainly when we desire something from Him? He delights that we should come to Him thus, He encourages us to do so; and He assures us of His loving interest. We are quite sure however that He would have us approach Him because He desires worship from us—the overflow of hearts that are at home in His presence and that delight in His love.

The story of Enoch is intensely interesting. Shall we, at this point turn to Genesis v. and read verses 22 to 24? Up to the birth of Methuselah it is said of him, as of all the others mentioned in the chapter, he "*lived.*" Then it is recorded of him that after he begat Methuselah he "*walked* with God" three hundred years (verse 22). He was not an ascetic; he accepted family responsibilities; his name which is said to mean, "disciplined," or "devoted," would suggest that he was by no means free from exercise and trials, and the state of the world, in which he found himself, was as bad as it could possibly be.

Yet he "walked with God." Probably he was considered peculiar; it might have been suggested to him that if he would associate with the men of the world; show an interest in its pursuits, and not plough a lonely furrow, he might do some good. Realizing that he could not walk with God and walk with the world, he chose the former; and thus got the distinction of having this testimony that "he pleased God," with the additional honour of being translated to Heaven without dying. It was well worth while: was it not?

Is there a young man or a young woman reading these pages who is wobbling? Anxious to walk with God, yet fearful of losing some imaginary advantage, missing some position, and who wonders if it might not be possible to go just so far, and make it all right later? Take courage dear brother or sister! Emulate Enoch, and seek to walk with God. Better than all that the world has to offer, is the knowledge of pleasing God. Enoch had to bear witness against the world (Jude 14, 15). His life was a short one as reckoned in his day, but his record was this, "he pleased God."

Noah worked for God and he is the only man of whom this was said. He was in "the secret of the Lord." God had told him what was going to happen, and also to make an ark into which should come himself, his sons, his wife, and his sons'

wives with him (Genesis vi. 18) and "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (Hebrews xi. 7). His work did not seem encouraging. He was in a world that was under judgment; and he was surrounded by those who refused to believe that a flood was coming. He may have been looked upon with pitying eyes by some, spoken to, and spoken of, in contemptuous terms by others, but he went steadily on working for God, walking with God, and he was rewarded by God.

God is doing a great work at the present time: we might say, the greatest work to which He has ever put His hand. He is taking out "a people for His name" (Acts xv. 14). The Apostle Paul could speak of himself and his fellow-apostles as "workers together with Him" (2 Corinthians vi. 1); and in lesser degree we may think of ourselves as workers for God and with God. In the kitchen or in the drawing room, in business, in the workshop, at school or college, just where we are, it is our high honour and our holy privilege to work for and with God.

In closing, let us recapitulate. Joying in God, (Romans v. 11), we approach Him in worship. In simplicity and humility we seek to walk with God. Talk is cheap, it is walk that counts. To please God, not

ourselves but God, our one consuming ambition. To work for God and to work with God our heart's desire. How can it be done? "By faith," for "By faith Abel" worshipped. "By faith, Enoch was translated," having walked with God and pleased God; and "by faith Noah" worked for God and worked with God. Theirs was a life of faith, and the record has been given for our encouragement that we may follow on in the path of faith, recognizing that "without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews xi. 6).

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

Next month, God willing, verses 8-21. Kindly read the whole chapter over and over again.

"BE NOT UNEQUALLY YOKED TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS."

HOW tersely Scripture relates the histories of men and women of olden days, bringing before our minds, in a few bold strokes, incidents and experiences of their lives, which awaken a chord of sympathy even in these modern times.

I wonder how many of our readers are familiar with the name of Shelomith as a Bible character, or could relate the incident which must have left her a crushed and

lonely woman. She just flits across the page of Old Testament history, few comments are made on her personal experiences, and a veil falls upon her exit, leaving us with much to provoke thought.

Besides the woman's name, her father's name is mentioned, and the tribe in Israel to which she belonged, giving an impression of detail in the entries made in God's Book—possibly also to establish her claim to be a *true* daughter of Israel. Turn to Leviticus xxiv. 10-23, and read carefully the incidents which may be new or unfamiliar to you; and yet it is an old, old story, ever new.

Shelomith was a woman favoured above most. She belonged to a nation chosen by God to be a light-bearer in this world, chosen to be Jehovah's peculiar possession in the midst of a world sunk in idolatry and sin, responsible to Him for the privileges bestowed upon them. Every privilege carries a corresponding responsibility. The responsibility of Israel was to keep separate from the surrounding nations religiously and socially. If they surrendered their separation they forfeited their *raison d'être*, and failing to carry out divine commands they ceased to be God's light-bearers in the world.

Shelomith lived in the lifetime of Moses, God's most chosen vessel, called upon to lead his people through the wilderness, into their promised inheritance, and to give them

the priceless heritage of the Law. Surely Shelomith was a favoured woman, and yet her life was a blighted one.

What had blighted it? The same action that has blighted many a life since—the unequal yoke of marriage with an unbeliever. Details are not dwelt upon nor elaborated, only implied. Shelomith gave to her infant son an Egyptian father. What issues are involved in that simple statement! Scripture does not tarry to condone or condemn the action, it simply states the fact, and proceeds to demonstrate the result.

Shelomith's son was distinctly handicapped—half the blood in his veins was Egyptian loaded with the idolatry and depravity of centuries of idol worship. We know not whether the young man learned from his father's lips to blaspheme the God of Israel, but "blood tells," and the crime of blasphemy seems to have come naturally to him.

Divided in sympathy between the widely different religions of his two parents, the young man grew up without that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom, and in a moment of stress, and excitement—in a fight with another man—he broke out into swearing and blaspheming the God of Israel. Had he been brought up in a godly home he surely would not have fought or sworn "in the camp" where hovered the Shekinah glory-cloud, reminding Israel of

God's presence. Many a young man not godly in himself has been restrained in moments of stress by the memory of a mother's faith and a mother's prayers. "It isn't done at home," comes to his rescue.

Can you follow the story with sympathetic horror? The report circulates, the lad has committed a capital offence, he has publicly blasphemed the God of Israel (Exodus xx. 7). He is arrested, his case is tried, and God through the lips of His vicegerent pronounces the young man's doom (verse 14). Inflexible justice must take its course. Israel must be saved from pollution at all costs. The individual must suffer to save the nation and to establish the principle of Israel's separation.

As we turn from the tragic scene we are tempted to say, "*cui culpa?*" Who hath sinned, this man or his parents—or both? We dare not apportion the blame.

Why is this incident inscribed on the sacred page? Scripture itself answers the question—"for *our* learning," that we may be warned, *in time*, ere we may, either in ignorance or in wilfulness, bring upon ourselves or our posterity the inevitable curse of "the unequal yoke." Times have changed but the same dangers and temptations remain and warnings up-to-date are engraved upon the sacred pages. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for *what* fellowship hath righteousness with un-

righteousness? and *what* communion hath light with darkness? . . . or *what* part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Cor. vi. 14, 15).

Union with a worldly partner may appear very tempting, dangerously attractive. Stop and furnish an answer to the thrice-repeated question of Scripture, *what* fellowship? *what* communion? *what* part? And finally, may I add, what chance—Godwards, Christwards, and heavenwards, would any family have on whom you had thrust a godless parent?

Christian young man and woman, may Shelomith's tragic story not have been written in vain, as far as your life-history is concerned. Commit your life and future in trustful confidence to God, who understands youth's needs and desires, and determine in His fear to avoid the disaster of marriage with an unbeliever.

E. M. POLLOCK.

SPEAKING TO PROFIT.

THE true object of ministry is "that God in all things may be glorified" and the Body of Christ edified. Some who have a measure of gift fail to edify as they might. The reasons for this may be in their own hands and capable of re-

moval. Some hints may help writer and reader. Ministry may fail to edify on account of ;

1.—*Inordinate Length.*

This is specially wearying when prefaced by the usual formula, "A brief word," or "A few remarks." This frequently preludes a long drawn-out address of forty minutes or so . . . There is another phase of this which is very trying to an audience, the trick of making "false finishes." The speaker seems to have come to an end, and then starts off again with renewed energy. Some speakers are long but never lengthy. Some may seem lengthy without being long. If you have seven heads to your address, perhaps it is more prudent not to announce that fact to your audience "lest they be discouraged."

2.—*Undue Frequency.*

Some speakers would be twice as valued if they spoke half as often. "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (Jas. i. 19). Of some it may be said, as to Israel of old, "Their strength is to sit still" (Isa. xxx. 7). The flesh is very restless. There is but little waiting upon God. Every one is at full-cock, ready to go off at the first opportunity. This is the death-blow to spiritual worship . . . We are not local Atlases bearing up the Church of God on our shoulders ; there

are others qualified to edify. Perhaps the Holy Spirit would use one of these if we spoke less frequently.

3—*Monotony.*

Some people have their pet themes. To them your ministry is irrelevant if you move outside their little repertoire. They always speak of "Principles of Reception," "The Higher Life," "Separation from the World," or "The Great Tribulation." Themes of great importance these, but not to be used to the exclusion of many others, for "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. iii. 16). Others are always dwelling on the low state of things. Their motto is "Ichabod." This kind of thing is apt to be very depressing if it bulk largely in preaching. Those present are scolded for the shortcomings of the absent.

Things are low and weak to-day in many ways, and the testimony is of a remnant character in the midst of the growing apostasy, but God is the same; His Spirit abides with us, and His Word is as true as ever. We should avoid a depressing ministry. Let us "strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die" (Rev. iii. 2).

4.—*Staleness.*

There is a great deal of stale manna about. Once a man's ministry was fresh

and crisp ; now he seems played out. Once he was a blessing ; now he fails to move. His words lack unction. He is perfectly sound, but it is the soundness of tinned meats. A young man once said to an elder brother who was seeing him off from the station after a short series of meetings, " I hope you will have me again. I have thirteen undelivered addresses." " The Lord add to their number, dear brother ! " was the reply of the other. In Africa the long grass is burnt up every year, and many a noisome creature with it. But grass is not the only thing here below that gets long and dry. It would be a good thing if some notes of addresses were " purged with fire " every year or so.

5.—*Crudity.*

How badly ill-cooked food nourishes the body, and little better for the soul is crude ministry. The Word of God must be pre-digested. " Thy words were found, and I did eat them ; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart " (Jer. xv. 16). The teacher must be first fed himself. True ministry brings us into the presence of God. There two persons are revealed, ourselves in our littleness, vileness, and unworthiness ; and Christ in His infinite perfection. The teacher must have this double vision. He must share the thoughts of God, and then, like Luke, he can set them in order.

Some people seem to claim a sort of on-the-spot inspiration. They ask us to believe that, like the prophets of old, a message has come to them as a direct revelation from God on a verse they have never thought of before . . . But claims to inspiration are rarely inspiring. As for preparation, it is as we meditate on the Word that it takes shape in our minds in an orderly way, and it is only then that we can give it out clearly. When a person says that he understands a thing clearly, but cannot express it, it is his understanding which is at fault. The poet wrote truly :

"That which is well grasped is told out clearly,
And the words to express it suggest themselves easily."

6.—*Powerlessness.*

This is the most serious hindrance of all. Correct doctrine with no grip. The water of the Word, but no oil of the Spirit. Form without the power. This usually comes from a careless walk, some inexpedient thing clung to, worldly ways, sin allowed. The Word has been neglected, or, if studied, not fed upon. Perhaps some doubtful habit blinds the eyes. The holy oil will only pour out into clean vessels. The way to the throne of grace has been little trod . . . If we want to be vessels unto honour we must "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord."

How much has been talked of separation "from," and separation "unto" has been overlooked ; of separation from what is outside, while the inward parts are full of self, envying, and strife. This is "Pharisaism." The separation without holiness, of which God complained in Israel of old, who said, "Stand by thyself ; come not near to me, for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day" (Isa. lxxv. 5). Ecclesiastically, they were separated from their fellowmen, morally they were separated from God.

Extracted.

If you look at rivers you can often tell whence they come, and the soil over which they have flowed by their colour : those which flow from melting glaciers are known at once. There is a text concerning a heavenly river which you will understand if you look at it in this light : "He showed me a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb." Where the throne is occupied by Godhead, and the appointed Mediator, the incarnate God, the once bleeding Lamb, then the river must be pure as crystal, and be a river, not of molten lava of devouring wrath, but a river of the water of life.

C.H.S.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(2 *Corinthians i.* 1-20.)

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

THE second epistle to the Corinthians was evidently written not very long after the first. In the closing chapter of the first, Paul intimates that he wrote from Ephesus, where an effectual door of service had been opened to him of the Lord, and where adversaries abounded. In the opening chapter of the second he alludes to the great riot in the Ephesian theatre which closed his service of over two years in that great city; and later in the epistle he indicates some of his subsequent movements. It may be well to trace these at the outset as they throw light on some of the remarks he makes.

Before the riot occurred the purpose of the Apostle was to pass through Macedonia and Achaia on his way to Jerusalem, and later to go to Rome. Acts xix. 12, proves this, and there is confirmation of the first part of the plan in 1 Corinthians xvi. 5, and in verses 15 and 16 of our chapter. However he had been diverted from what he had planned. First of all the riot led to a hurried departure for Macedonia. He got as far as Troas, where again the Lord opened a door before him (see ii. 12, 13). As yet he was too disturbed in mind about

the Corinthians, and the possible effect on them of his first epistle, so instead of passing by them into Macedonia (i. 16) he sailed for Macedonia direct. When he got into Macedonia things were even more disquieting, but presently he was cheered by Titus with good tidings as regards the Corinthians. This gave him great relief and prompted the second epistle which we are now to consider.

During the stay at Ephesus, Timothy had been sent in advance into Macedonia (Acts xix. 22), which accounts probably for the omission of his name at the beginning of the first epistle. By the time the second was written both Paul and Timothy were in Macedonia, and hence his name appears.

The opening salutation given, the Apostle at once gives expression to the thankfulness and comfort and encouragement that filled his heart. He traces it all back to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. Comfort had been poured into the heart of Paul, and he returned it Godward in the form of blessing or thanksgiving.

This however was not the end of it, for it also flowed outward for the help of others. Having been through heavy tribulation and received abundant comfort from God, he turned it to account and traded with it for the comfort of those similarly suffering.

This is, without a doubt, an important principle in the ways of God. Whatever spiritual favour we receive from God, whether comfort, or joy, or warning, or instruction, or anything else, we are not to treat it as though it were entirely personal to ourselves, but rather as something granted us to be shared with others. We are never to forget the oneness of the saints of God.

Indeed, we believe that we really never possess things in their fulness until we do begin to pass them on to others. A Christian poet has said,

“For we must share if we would keep
That good thing from above;
Ceasing to give, we cease to have;
Such is the law of love.”

The poet's word is undoubtedly true. If we do not use what we have, we ultimately lose it. Again and again, does the Lord pass His servants through trying circumstances in order that they may learn valuable lessons and obtain the needed grace; and having done so, that thus qualified in an experimental way, they may become more efficient in helping others.

Another important principle comes to light in verse 5. God suits and proportions the consolation to the sufferings. If the sufferings are slight the consolation is slight. If the sufferings abound, the consolations abound. The sufferings, be it noted, are “*of Christ.*” That is, they are not only

endured for His sake, but they are of the same character as those which He endured because of His absolute identification with God and His interests. Such sufferings, the sufferings of Christ in His people, are always followed or accompanied by consolation, which is ministered *through* Christ.

In verses 3 to 7, one word occurs (in various forms) no less than ten times. It is translated six times by comfort, and four times by consolation. It indicates a "cheering and supporting influence," and in Darby's New Translation is rendered consistently by "encourage" or "encouragement." A slightly different form of the word is applied to the Holy Spirit by our Lord, and in John xiv., xv., xvi., is translated "Comforter." In the same verses the tribulation, the trouble, the afflictions, the suffering, are only mentioned seven times: so that even in these verses the encouragement over-abounds in comparison with the sufferings. Without a doubt, herein lay the supernatural fortitude of the martyrs. Called of God to face unusual suffering, they were carried through it on a wave of unusual encouragement. The cheering and supporting influence abounded in their cases.

There is very little persecution from the world to-day in the English-speaking regions. For a century and a half great quietude and toleration has prevailed without; and it has synchronized with a period

of disintegration and doctrinal laxity within. The sufferings that characterize the saints are mainly of the order spoken of in the first epistle, "many are weak and sickly among you," or else troubles connected with trying circumstances, and the like. The sufferings of which Paul speaks in these verses are very largely unknown by us. The encouragement of which he speaks is also very largely unknown. The saint overflowing with encouragement in the midst of severe persecution is a sight but rarely seen. This we say to our shame, and our loss as well.

In verses 6 and 7 the Apostle links the Corinthians with himself in a very beautiful way. Carnal though they had been and feeble as to many things, they yet had partaken in sufferings akin to those of the Apostle, and this fact in itself might yield them encouragement. Then in addition it was certain that in due season they would partake also of the encouragement.

This leads Paul to allude plainly to the special tribulation he had suffered in Ephesus, the capital of Asia. In Acts xix, the occasion is called, "no small stir," but his words in verse 8 reveal to us that it was even more critical and full of danger than we should deduce from Luke's account of it. Death evidently stared him in the face. Later in the epistle he recounts his experiences as a servant of the Lord, and speaks

of being "in deaths oft." This was one of the times when he was in death.

The riotous mob in Ephesus put upon him the sentence of death, and did their best to execute it. The Apostle met the situation with the "sentence of death" in himself. Thereby he was brought to nothing as to any hope or trust in himself, or in any powers that he possessed. He was shut up to God and His power. The God whom he trusted is the God who raises the dead, and who therefore would undo all that the mob might have done, had they been permitted to do their worst.

God however had intervened and held them in check. Paul and his friends had been delivered on that day, and were still being delivered. The Apostle did not contemplate the danger ceasing. The rather he knew that it would continue throughout his course. So he anticipated that he yet would be delivered, and that the Corinthians would have the privilege of helping to this end with their prayers. Then indeed God's gracious answers would call forth a larger volume of thanksgiving. If many had joined in the request, many would join in the giving of thanks.

What gave him such boldness in requesting the prayers of the Corinthians was that he had a good conscience as to his whole manner of life. The simplicity and sincerity

which are of God had marked him, and the wisdom which is of the flesh had been ruled out. This was true as to his general attitude in the world, but especially true as regards his course amongst the saints. He knew that in thus boasting he was only stating what the Corinthians themselves recognized right well. There had been those amongst the Corinthians who had aimed at defaming him, and at prejudicing them against him. The effect of this had by now been partly removed, for, as he says in verse 14, "Ye have acknowledged in part that we are your rejoicing." That is, they had acknowledged in part that he was their boasting, even as they were his, in the day of the Lord Jesus. They were thus in considerable measure in happy accord.

In this delicate way does he allude to the great improvement that had come over the feelings of the Corinthians towards himself since the dispatch of his first epistle. But let us take to heart the fact that he based his request for prayer upon the simplicity and godly sincerity of his life. We hear Christians pretty frequently asking prayer from one and another. Sometimes we ask for prayer ourselves. But can we always ask for it upon this basis? We fear not; and possibly this accounts for a good deal of prayer and intercession being unanswered. For our lives, and all the secret motives governing them, are perfectly open to the eye of God.

Even before, when writing the first epistle, Paul had confidence that the relations between himself and them, though for the moment imperilled would be of this happy order. Because of this he had proposed to visit them previously, even before he took his journey into Macedonia. However things had been ordered otherwise, and the projected visit had not taken place. Here let us pause a moment. Even an apostle, you see, had plans disarranged and upset; and was led of God to record that fact for us in Scripture. The change, as we shall see presently, though not exactly ordered of God was overruled of God for ultimate blessing. Guidance may reach the servant in many ways; and if he misses direct guidance he may yet find even his mistakes overruled for blessing. Our concern should be to maintain that simplicity and godly sincerity of which verse 12 speaks.

Now those who were opponents used even this change of plans as a ground of attack. They insinuated that it indicated that Paul was a man of lightness, and shallowness of purpose: that he had no depth of character: that he would say one thing to-day and another thing to-morrow. The Apostle knew this and therefore he asked the question of verse 17. Was he a man swayed merely by fleshly impulse, so as to be pulled easily in this direction or that—saying yes to-day, and no to-morrow?

He answered this question by an appeal to his preaching when first, together with Sylvanus and Timotheus, he came amongst them. There had been nothing indefinite or contradictory about that. When he says, "Our word toward you was not yea and nay," he alludes apparently to the *manner* of his preaching. Then in the following verse he mentions the great *theme* of his preaching—Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In Him everything has been firmly established for God. In Him is eternal stability.

Having such a theme. Paul's preaching was marked by a rock-like definiteness and certainty. The same definiteness and certainty should mark all the preaching of the Word to-day. Modernistic preachers, in the very nature of things, can only preach ideas—ideas based upon the latest pronouncements of speculative science, which are for ever changing. Their word most emphatically is, "*yea and nay.*" The statements of to-day, strongly *affirmed*, will be *negatived* before very many years have passed, just as the statements of not many years ago are negatived to-day.

We need not be unduly perturbed by the modernists. Their little day will soon be over, their vacillating pronouncements silenced. Let us be careful to preach the unchanging Christ in an unchanging way.

THE LIFE OF FAITH.

(2) *Hebrews xi. 8-21.*

WE would just remind our readers that in our last paper we called attention to Abel, who learned the secret of approach to God and worship of God. Also to Enoch, who "by faith was translated that he should not see death." After a brief biographical sketch of six men each ending with the tragic words "and he died," we read of one whose faith delivered him from the fear of death and from its power. Lastly Noah by faith prepared an ark to the saving of his house and passed scathless through the judgment.

In this paper we propose to consider the record of other three men : Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ; under the heading of

- (1) *The Venture of Faith.*
- (2) *The Vision of Faith.*
- (3) *The Victory of Faith.*

The fact that a large portion of our chapter is devoted to Abraham would suggest that the Holy Spirit has an important lesson which He desires us to learn. We have to fill in the details of the story partly

from the historical account in Genesis xii.-xxii.; also from Joshua xxiv. Acts vii., etc., as well as from the chapter which, we trust, now lies open before us. We find that by faith Abraham was made superior

- (a) *To social links.*
- (b) *To the laws of nature.*
- (c) *To the power of death.*

In a land of idolatry (Joshua xxiv. 2), there came to him a call from "the God of Glory" (Acts vii. 2). He was called to get out from his country, kindred and father's house (Genesis xii. 1). "By faith . . . he obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Hebrews xi. 3). That call altered the whole course of his life. Idols were abandoned; social links were snapped; former associations were forsaken; and he went forth by faith in God.

Some one may ask, "Does that mean that I must literally leave my father's house; give up my means of livelihood and step out to be a wanderer upon the face of the earth?" No, not by any means. But it does mean that "the God of Glory" has called us, who believe, not only from our sins and out of the condition under His judgment in which we were because of our sins; but He has called us out of this world; has set before us another world, and He would have us allow nothing to hinder our responding to that call. It will

cost us something, but the compensation will far outweigh the cost. "By faith, Abraham obeyed, and went out." Have we done so? If not, shall we do so?

Abraham knew not whither he went, but God knew. We know not the path that lies before us if we step out, but God knows, and that is sufficient. Abraham's faith was tested, as ours will be. God promised him a son, but that son was long in coming. It would seem as if at times Abraham grew weary of waiting: Sarah certainly did, but Abraham believed God. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Romans iv. 20). He believed the impossible. He was one hundred years old, and Sarah was only ten years his junior: when "*at the set time*" Isaac was born (Genesis xxi. 2). At the very time fixed in the divine plan, on the tick of the clock, the promise was fulfilled. We have read or heard somewhere:

"God never is before His time,
And never is behind."

Is some one reading these lines who has been praying and praying and praying; and waiting and waiting and waiting for years for something. Pray on; wait, and "*at the set time*" He will surely answer. What a marvellous result in this case, for there "sprang . . . so many as the stars

of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable" (Hebrews xi. 12), and, as the following verse tells us "these all died in faith." They did not receive the promises but with a telescopic view they saw them afar off, they were "*persuaded* of them"; they "*embraced* them"; and, as a result, they "*confessed* that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

How the Holy Spirit seems to delight to linger over this. It was not mere theory, it was reality; nor was it fancy, it was fact. They were mightily moved by it, and living in the light of another world they were set free from the entanglements of this world. How God showed His appreciation of that. "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city" (verse 16). Do we give God cause to be ashamed of us? Have we cause to be ashamed of ourselves? Oh, that the light of God's word might attract us, and so wean us from this world, that found here as strangers (away from home), and pilgrims (going home), we might give pleasure to His heart.

But a severe test awaited Abraham. There came a call from God to offer up Isaac whom he loved (Genesis xxii. 1, 2). Think of it! Isaac was the child of promise for whom Abraham had waited long:

the one of whom God had said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Genesis xxi. 12), and now he was called upon to offer him up. What happened? Let us look at our chapter, verses 17-19:

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

Incidentally, this shows that "only begotten" does not refer to generation. Isaac was not Abraham's only begotten son according to generation, nor, in point of time, was he the first begotten. But he was the centre of his father's affections, and the one round whom not only his father's plans, but the divine plan, circled. So in John i., the only begotten was, and is, the centre of the Father's affections, and the Father's counsels, and for the carrying of these out, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John iii. 16). That by the way. By faith Abraham offered up Isaac and received him even from the dead in a figure. His God-given faith rendered him superior to the power of death, because it was in the God of resurrection.

Space permits no more than a glance at Isaac and Jacob. Isaac's life seemed to be

more or less unevenful, but at its close he had the vision of faith as he "blessed Jacob and Esau concerning *things to come*" (verse 20). He looked down through the ages, past the period in which we find ourselves, to a time when Israel shall have the place that has been forfeited because of having rejected the Messiah; and when having owned Him, it shall have the position that God had planned from the outset.

What shall we say of Jacob? True to his name, he seemed to be out to supplant everybody. Scheming, working for his own ends, indifferent to what happened to his fellow-men, he followed a devious course at Bethel (The house of God). God appeared to him and made a magnificent offer. Jacob seemed to think he could bargain with God as he did with men. Terrified by the vision he went forth, and the story of the next few years is a sad one. Then God in His infinite patience, appeared to him again, recalled him to the place where he first missed his way. There he learned his lesson, and not only renewed his acquaintance with Bethel, but got to know the God of Bethel (Genesis xxxv. 7); built an altar, and, from that point, went steadily forward.

He had to go through a sea of sorrow after that, but he had a bright sunset. He blessed the sons of Joseph, not as their father desired, but as God willed, and the

close of his chequered career was that he "worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff" (Hebrews xi. 21). This was indeed the victory of faith.

In all this there is encouragement for us. These men were like Elijah, "subject to like passions as we are" (James v. 17), they failed, but God did not fail; their faith wavered, but God's faithfulness never slackened; they grew weary, but God was ever and always the same. They trusted God in the most critical circumstances, and in face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties, and God honoured their faith. Their manner of life in the main was consistent with their confession, and God showed His appreciation of it.

They suffered loss here but were assured of reward hereafter. They lived in separation from this world, energized by the vision of God's world, and thus faith triumphed, God was glorified, and they were blest. May we be greatly encouraged to follow on in the path of faith!

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

Next month, God willing, verses 22-31. Kindly read the whole chapter over and over again.

Let us put all matters into God's hands, and leave them there. Can they be better ordered than by Him? We never think that the sun, moon and stars will go wrong, because man has nothing to do with the ordering of them.

“GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY.”

THUS Paul wrote to the believers at Corinth, for they were in danger of using their bodies in a wrong way (1 Cor. vi. 18-20).

A day is approaching when the bodies of the redeemed will be altogether for the praise of God's glory. They are bodies of humiliation now : they will be bodies of glory then, for Christ will have come and raised or changed them.

The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the pledge and proof of this, as chapter xv. 20-23 shows : “ *Christ the Firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming.* ”

The burial of a believer's body is spoken of as seed sown, and the fruit is borne in resurrection. Dead and buried it will burst forth soon in resurrection life ! The sleeping time will give place to the glorious awaking ! The eighth day, or the first day of the week, often speaks of the resurrection day ; and eight distinctions, or glories, are to mark our bodies for the praise of the living God soon, as this chapter clearly shows :

1. A *quicken*ed body (36, 45).
2. A *raised* body (42).
3. In *incorruption* (42).
4. In *glory* (43).

5. In *power* (43).
6. *Spiritual* (44).
7. *Heavenly* (49).
8. In *immortality* (53).

"When this corruptible shall have put on incorruptibility, and this mortal shall have put on immortality," we may truly say, God will eternally be glorified in our bodies.

Oh! for grace to glorify Him increasingly in them now, as we await the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

H. J. VINE.

TWO RESULTS FLOWING FROM THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

"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.

"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. 9, 10).

Here we have presented to us two great blessings, which the death of Christ has brought to the believer, LIFE and PROPITIATION.

LIFE! This is put first in order in these verses. One can understand the reason of this. Man is fallen, has a fallen, sinful nature, incapable of any response to God. Ephesians ii. 1, speaks of the believer's condition before conversion as "*DEAD in trespasses and sins.*" What can a spiritually dead man do? He may be very active in his sin, as is presented in Romans, but Godward he is DEAD. What he wants is *life*.

Now the life of the fallen creature is forfeited. Besides which, in its nature it can only sin. If a gardener desires to have good fruit off a crab apple tree, he knows full well that to give the tree stimulating fertilizers, careful pruning, every encouragement that nature can bestow, will never produce good fruit. It will only produce crabs, sour crabs, larger crabs, more crabs. The gardener realises that the only way to get good fruit from that tree is to impart a *new* life, a life capable of producing good fruit. So he grafts, say, a Ribston pippin, or a Cox's orange pippin, or some well-known cultivated variety, and the desired result is secured.

So it is with the believer. If it were possible to translate an unbeliever to heaven he would be most unhappy. Just as a hen is unhappy in water, or a fish on dry land, so would the unbeliever find heaven intoler-

able, his sinful nature is the opposite of what is found there.

This is very definitely emphasized by our Lord, when he said to Nicodemus, the ruler of the synagugue, the expounder of the law, that he must be born again, born from above. It must have been startling to the last degree for that good man, as men speak, to be told that nothing of the old life would do for God, that there must be a new birth, a new spiritual being, if the pleasure of God is to be secured.

But how is that life secured for the believer? This is where the love of God is manifested. He gave His Son, His only begotten Son, gave Him to the death of the cross that righteousness might be satisfied, and the claims of a thrice-holy God met. At Calvary we see the amazing love of God, we see the inexorable claims of divine righteousness, that nothing less than the death of the Son of God as the Sin-bearer at the cross would suffice. So life to which no sin is attached, a life incapable of sinning, is communicated to the believer. True it comes as the sovereign act of God, but the believer comes into the consciousness and intelligent enjoyment of it as he receives the Saviour as His.

PROPITIATION! This is a long word. What does it mean? The same word in other places is translated *mercy seat*. So we read, "Christ Jesus, whom God hath set

forth as a propitiation *in mercy seat* through faith in His blood" (Romans iii. 25). It is set forth typically in the ritual of the tabernacle in the wilderness. There was the ark in the Holiest of All, the ark composed of shittim wood, covered with pure gold. The shittim wood setting forth the humanity of our Lord, the pure gold, His deity, God and man, one blessed Person. On the top of the ark lay a slab of pure gold, setting forth divine righteousness. Once a year the High Priest entered the Holiest of All, and sprinkled the blood of the sin-offering on the gold. Typically the gold cried out for its claims to be met. Typically the blood satisfied those claims. Thus it became typically a mercy-seat, a meeting place between God and the sinner, God in all His holiness, the sinner in all his sin and defilement.

The type was worthless save as a type. Here in Romans iii. 25, we get the efficacious Antitype, the blessed Son of God, meeting all the claims of God at the cross for His glory and the sinner's blessing. The love of God was thus expressed.

So through the impartation of life our great need on one line is met; through the propitiation, through the atoning death of Christ on the other line, there is a righteous meeting place between God and the sinner. And when "faith in His blood" is exercised, the value of that propitiation

is known by the believer, and he learns that "He [Christ] is the propitiation for OUR sins" (1 John ii. 2). Indeed the whole world comes in for the scheme, but it is "faith in His blood" that appropriates it.

May these two blessings commend the love of God to us more and more.

A. J. POLLOCK.

CHRISTIAN CONVERSATION.

THE Apostle Peter frequently uses the word "conversation" in his two epistles. We must not understand it as being merely the talk of the lips: it is a word of much larger meaning, covering all our lives and behaviour. What Peter says to us is doubtless the outcome of the memorable words of the Lord to him, as recorded in John xxi. What is the practical result of the conversation of the saints? If we were all thoroughly set for God, what an effect would be produced, and what testimony for Christ!

First, he reminds us that we have been brought clean out of the old "vain conversation" (i. 14-18) all connected with the old system of religion which suits the first man. We have been redeemed to God with the precious blood of Christ. The first thing the soul gets hold of is

that we are out of the old state, and delivered from that vain conversation. So we need to shake ourselves clear of everything of a religious nature which does not suit God.

Next comes the "honest conversation" (ii. 11, 12), that should adorn us as strangers and pilgrims. What is a stranger? A stranger is a person who is away from home. Where is our home? It is not here. He is up there and we are strangers here. We are not at home. A pilgrim is a man going a journey, and the point of our pilgrimage is home—HEAVEN. The apostle Paul was a pilgrim, as his words recorded in Acts xx. 22-24, reveal. We are away from home, but we are going home. Does your heart say, yes, to this? Then travelling home to Him we must have our conversation *honest*.

You know we live surrounded by much dishonesty. God says to you and me, See that you are honest: see that you have a heart and a conscience that are answering to the truth and light of God.

Then we find "chaste conversation" (iii. 1-4). He is here addressing Christian women, whose path may be very difficult. Cases are before his mind where the wife is converted and the husband unconverted. The husband might be won by the chaste conversation of his wife. That stresses the importance of the inside—the *home life*.

Then comes a "good conversation" (iii. 8-17). This is to be outside in the world, for a Christian is a person who is blessed, and is sent out to be a blesser. You bless even the person that is opposed to you. Thus you may reproduce something of Christ in the world out of which he has been cast. Do you want to see good days if the Lord tarry? Refrain your tongue from evil. Here we come to the actual talk of the lips and what a good effect is produced on ourselves as well as on others. The blessed Lord sees and hear all, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and his ears are open unto their prayers." But the face of the Lord is against his own children if they are doing evil, as it is against the children of the world. But on the other hand "who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?"

Notice the good things—good days follow that which is good; a good conscience, and good conversation. So if we are doing good, following good and feeding on good, we shall see good days and have a good conscience and all around you will have to admit that yours is a good conversation. More than that. God will yet so work that they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

In the second epistle we read of that which must necessarily pain us, for God

will and must judge. But before He did it in Sodom He "delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked" (ii. 4-9). If Lot had only had a little spiritual sense and devotedness to God, he would have kept close to his old-fashioned uncle Abraham. But like many young men, he thought he would get on in this world, and where did he go? He first "pitched his tent towards Sodom" (Gen. xiii. 12), and then he got inside and "dwelt in Sodom" (Gen. xiv. 12). God gave him soon after a solemn warning for he was taken prisoner with all his belongings by Chedorlaomer and his confederates. His old-fashioned uncle came again on the scene and set him free. But heedless of this warning back he went straight to Sodom. Perhaps he thought he could improve that godless city. Like many Christians to-day who seek in vain to whitewash this present evil world. God had to drag Lot out of Sodom. But while in it he only got his soul vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.

There is a way of preventing the conversation of the wicked from getting into your soul and vexing it. Get preoccupied. If you are preoccupied with Christ, there will be no room for this to get in. There is plenty of moral filth all round about. Be occupied with Christ and with the good, then you will have the honest and the chaste conversation and all the filthy conversation

round you will not affect you. If you do this you may meet with persecution, but you will find in the long run that the world will not trouble you much. If you take your stand for Christ, you will very soon find the world shaking you off. You will never get your soul really vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked unless you get "unequally yoked" with them.

Lastly in speaking of the appearing of the Lord, Peter says, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness" (iii. 8-14). That is beautiful. The saint, born of God and filled with the Holy Spirit is to walk in an atmosphere of holy love and go through the world with holy conversation. He lives in a holy atmosphere and carries it with him. That is, he is one separated to God, with whom he walks. So he radiates the grace resulting from God's presence. We cannot seek anything better than that, while wending our way to the glory and the day of manifestation and reward, our souls might know what it is to go forward in the power of the Spirit of God. So let us take heed to Peter's words, "Wherefore beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him *in peace, without spot and blameless.*"

We belong to heaven, so what befits us is, "honest conversation," "chaste conversation," "good conversation" and "holy con-

versation." May we be really set to follow the Lord. Let us seek with ever-increasing earnestness the blessing of others, since we are so fully blessed ourselves.

THOS. GRAY.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(*2 Corinthians i. 19—ii. 11.*)

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

THERE is a very definite contrast between the "yea and nay," of verse 19, and the "yea and . . . Amen," of the following verse. The former indicates that which is vacillating and contradictory: the latter that which is definitely affirmed, and then unswervingly confirmed in due season.

Man is fickle. With him it is frequently yes on one occasion and no the next. Moreover man is contradictory when it is a question of God and His will. Again and again does he break down, and consequently negative all that God desires for him. His reply to God's will is uniformly "Nay." The opposite of this is found in Christ, for "in Him was, yea." He said "Yes" to every purpose and desire of God.

And not only was the yea found in Him but the Amen also. He not only assents

to all the will of God, expressed in His promises, but He proceeds to carry all out, and bring all to full and final completion. In Him the thing is done, and shall be done, until a great Amen can be put to all God's pleasure, so that God is glorified. And further, He obtains a people who become His servants for the carrying out of the Divine will: so that the two words, "by us," can be added at the end of verse 10. What glorious stability and security is here! What confidence, what repose garrisons the heart that rests in Christ!

The Son of God, preached by Paul among the Corinthians, bore this wonderful character. Hence the solidity and certainty of his preaching. Hence also the stability which characterized Paul himself, and which is properly the character of every true Christian. We have been established in Christ. And it is God who has done it. What man does, he may very likely undo at some subsequent period. What God does, He does for ever.

We are thus firmly established in Christ—the Christ in whom is established all the counsel of God—by an act of God. Let us lay hold of this fact, for it lifts the whole thing on to a plane immeasurably above man. We have received too, the anointing of the Spirit equally by an act of God.

Bear in mind that the significance of "Christ" is "the Anointed One." So verse 21 shows us that we are anointed as those who are established in the Anointed One. The Anointing reaches us as those who are connected with Him. When Aaron was anointed the "precious ointment" that was poured upon his head ran down even "to the skirts of his garments" (Psa. cxxxiii. 2). Which thing was a type or allegory; for the grace and power of our exalted Head has been carried down to us His members by the anointing of the Spirit. Thus it is—and only thus—that the promises of God can be carried into effect to the glory of God "by us." It is Christ Himself who will bring to perfect fruition the promises of God in the coming day; but He will do it *by us*. That is, He will carry things out in detail through His saints, who are His anointed members. If only our hearts lay hold of this, we shall be very much lifted above this present evil world.

But the Spirit of God is not only the Anointing: He is also the Seal and the Earnest. As the Anointing He connects us with Christ. As the Seal He marks us off as being wholly for God. We are the Divine possession and marked as such, just as the farmer, who purchases sheep, at once puts a mark upon them that they may be identified as his. In the book of Revelation we read how the coming "beasts"

will cause all to "receive a mark" (xiii. 16). Those who do receive that mark will have to face the fierce wrath of God, as the next chapter shows; and chapter vii., of the same book reveals to us that God anticipates the wicked action of the beasts by putting "the seal of the living God" on His own.

God "hath also sealed us," and we may well rejoice in this blessed fact. But do we always bear in mind its serious implications? We cannot carry two marks, if the one mark, that has been placed upon us, is God's mark. He is a jealous God. The mark that is upon us is exclusive. If we attempt to carry also the world's mark—to say nothing of the devil's mark—we shall provoke Him to jealousy, and lay up much discipline and sorrow for ourselves. Take great care, O young Christian! for the world is ever seeking to put its unholy marks upon you, as though you belonged to it. You do not belong to it, you belong to God; so be careful not to wear the seals and badges it wishes to put upon you.

Then again, the Holy Spirit is the Earnest in our hearts. If, as the Anointing, we view Him in connection with Christ; and, as the Seal, more in connection with God the Father, the Earnest indicates what He is in Himself. Presently, when the promises of God reach their fulfilment, we shall be in the full flood-tide energy of the Spirit of

God. But to-day He is the Earnest of all this in our hearts. "In our *hearts*, notice: not merely in our bodies, or in our minds. Our bodies are indeed His temple. Our minds may happily be suffused with His light. But in the deepest affections of our hearts we have the earnest—the pledge and foretaste of the glory that is coming. By the Holy Ghost given to us, we may realize anticipatively something of all the good that shall be ours, when the promises of God are brought to fruition to His glory, and by us.

In these three verses (20-22) we have been conducted to a wonderful climax of blessedness; and it all springs out of the seemingly small matter of the Apostle being obliged to make it plain that he was not a man of light mind, promising things that he had no real intention of performing. He did not merely defend himself. He improved the occasion to some purpose.

Having done so, he returns in verse 23 to the more personal matter out of which it all sprang. Another thing had most evidently weighed with him, and helped to divert him for the moment from another visit to Corinth. He had no wish to come amongst them, only to find himself bound to act in severity by reason of sin and grave disorder still being found in their midst. Hence he had waited until he had news of the effect of the earlier epistle he had

written to them. He hoped for better things. It was not that he assumed dominion over their faith, but rather that he was just a "helper," or "fellow-worker," to the end that they might be delivered and rejoice.

The chapter closes with the words, "by faith ye stand." This is a fact that we ought very much to lay to heart. If he had assumed dominion over their faith in any matter, their faith in that respect would have ceased to be. He would have merely ordered them to do certain things (quite right things, doubtless) and they would have done them, not as the fruit of the exercise of faith, but mechanically. There would then have been no faith in their actions, but just the mechanical action as a kind of outward shell. And then one day they would have scandalized everyone by collapsing; just as a hut in the tropics collapses suddenly, when all the insides of the supporting posts have been eaten away by the white ants.

There are plenty of Christian folk to-day who would much like to live their lives on somebody else's faith. They would like to be told what to do. Let somebody else have the exercise, and solve the problem, and issue orders as to what is the correct thing! They will be good and obedient and do as they are told. But it does not work, save disastrously. It is by faith we

stand, not by somebody else's faith. By somebody else's faith we fall. And further, it is not good for the somebody else. Such forceful individuals begin to love having dominion over the faith of their brethren, and so becoming little popes. Consequently it ends disastrously for them.

The Apostle had made up his mind that he would postpone his visit until it could be made under happier circumstances: and now, as he wrote this second letter, the heaviness was passing and brighter things coming into view. His first letter had made them sorry, as he intended it should, and their sorrow now made him glad, as verse 2 of chapter ii. shows. It had been sent ahead on its mission so that when he did come amongst them it might be with confidence established, and with joy.

In verse 4 we get a very touching and valuable glimpse of the manner and spirit of Paul's writing. Reading his earlier epistle we can discern its powerful and trenchant style; we can notice how calculated it was to humble them with its touches of holy irony. We should hardly have known however that he wrote it "out of much affliction and anguish of heart . . . with many tears," had he not told us this. But so it was. Foolish and carnal though they were, yet he loved them with a tender affection. Consequently the inspired Word of God flowed to them through

the human channel of a loving and afflicted heart, and was mightily effective. Would to God that we were followers of Paul in this, and learned the holy art through him! How much more effective we should be.

What a deluge of controversial writings has flowed through the church's history! What polemics have been indulged in! And how little, comparatively speaking, has been accomplished by them. We venture to believe that if only one tenth had been written, but that tenth had been produced by men of God, writing with much affliction and anguish of heart, and with many tears, because of that which made the writing needful, ten times as much would have been accomplished for the glory of God.

After all, love lies as the rock-bottom foundation of everything. Not cleverness, not ability, not sarcasm, not anger, but LOVE is God's way of blessing.

"Out in the darkness, shadowed by sin,
Souls are in bondage, souls we would win,
How can we win them? How show the way?
'Love never faileth,' Love is the way.

'Love never faileth,' Love is pure gold;
Love is what Jesus came to unfold,
Make us more loving, Master, we pray,
Help us remember, Love is Thy way."

It might have seemed harsh of Paul to call the evil-doer at Corinth, "that wicked person," and to instruct that he be put away from their midst. But his loving

heart caused his eyes to shed tears as he penned the words. Paul's words and tears were effective and the punishment was inflicted, as verse 6 states; and inflicted not by Paul merely, or by one or two of the more spiritual at Corinth, but by the whole mass of the saints. Thus the man was made to feel that they all abhorred and disowned his sin. His conscience was reached. He was brought to repentance.

This, of course, is the end that discipline is designed to reach. Erring believers are not disciplined merely for the sake of punishment, but that they may be brought to repentance and so restored, both in their souls, and to their place of fellowship amongst God's people. This happy end was reached in the case of the offender at Corinth.

How unfrequently is it reached to-day! All too often the putting away is done in a hard judicial spirit. The anguish of heart, the tears are absent, and the offender becomes more occupied with the harsh manner of his brethren than with his own delinquencies. Hence his repentance is a long way off—to his loss and theirs.

The action taken at Corinth was so effective that the man was brought himself into much affliction and anguish of heart. Indeed the danger now was that the Corinthian assembly would in their zeal against his sin, overlook his sorrow, and not forgive

him administratively by restoring him to his place in their midst. Now, therefore, Paul has to write to them urging them to do this, and thus confirm their love towards him. It was possible otherwise that he might be overwhelmed with overmuch sorrow. Sorrow for sin is good; yet there is a point where it may become excessive and harmful—a point where sorrow should cease and the joy of forgiveness be known. The joy of the Lord, and not sorrow for sin, is our strength.

Verse 10 shows that if the assembly at Corinth forgave the man, their forgiveness carried with it Paul's. And again, that if Paul forgave any, by reason of his apostolic authority, he did so for their sakes, and as acting on behalf of Christ. The forgiveness spoken of in this verse may be termed administrative forgiveness. It is the forgiveness of which the Lord spoke in such scriptures as Matthew xvi. 19, where it is apostolic; Matthew xviii. 18, where it is vested in the assembly; John xx. 23, where it is confirmed to the apostolic company by the Lord in His risen condition. In 1 Corinthians v. we have a case in which the powers of "binding" or "retaining" were exercised. In our chapter we have an example of "loosing" or "remitting."

Paul wrote thus, not merely for the sake of the sorrowing brother, but for the sake

of all, lest Satan should get an advantage over all of them. Note it well! The very devil himself in some cases likes to see believers righteous overmuch, at the expense of "the meekness and gentleness of Christ." The Apostle could add, "for we are not ignorant of his devices." Alas, that so often we cannot truthfully say that! We *are* ignorant of his devices, and though our intentions are good we fall into traps that he sets.

What wisdom we need to hold the balance evenly, in practical matters, between the claims of righteousness and love. How necessary to remember that all discipline is inflicted in righteousness, whether by God Himself or by men, in order that repentance may be produced: and that when it is produced love claims the right to hold sway. Let us not continue to smite in discipline a repentant soul, lest we come under Divinely inflicted discipline ourselves.

F. B. HOLE.

Here is the first truth of our holy faith—"Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." He who was born at Bethlehem is God, and "God with us." God—there lies the majesty; "God with us," there lies the mercy. God—therein is glory; "God with us," therein is grace. God alone might well strike us with terror; but "God with us" inspires us with hope and confidence.

C.H.S.

THE ASCENDED MAN.

ELIJAH'S character is portrayed in the very first mention of him. There (1 Kings xvii. 1) we see the whole man, living and moving before us. His appearances, like his going, were sudden and spectacular. As from nowhere he appears before Ahab and we are abruptly set at once in the midst of his life.

It is no mere pedantry to attach importance to the names of God's servants, or indeed, to any name mentioned in the Bible. The names of Scripture characters were often given by God Himself, and were indicative of divine promise or assurance, or of their character or calling. Striking examples of this are Noah, Abraham, Othniel, Antipas, etc. Frequently they served, like bells on the priests' garments, to keep, ever fresh, the remembrance of Jehovah. The name of this fearless man of God is no exception. It means "My God is the Lord." How appropriate it was any reader of his divinely given history will at once see. The power of this was in his soul, and without hesitation he could walk, on one occasion, right into the presence of Ahab who had sworn his death and leave that monarch

speechless. It was not that Jehovah strengthened Elijah, but that Jehovah Himself was his strength. A distinction with a difference. As to his moral condition the words "before whom I stand" would appear to indicate both his standing and the characteristic state of his inward life.

By far the most remarkable instance in this prophet's life is that which is recorded in 2 Kings ii. His arduous labour upon earth is finished. Like a mariner, who, after a long and perilous voyage approaches his harbour, he is about to strike sail. The chariot of Israel and the horses thereof will take him to another and blissful world. This chapter, which begins typically in the glory and ends in millennial blessing lends itself to a triple division. Clearly this is (1) A vivid picture of our Lord's stoop from the glory to the cross and back again as the Ascended Man; (2) A picture of grace meeting and blessing sinners; (3) A word of warning to scoffers. We would confine our remarks in this short paper to the first of these divisions.

If we fail carefully to note Elijah's starting place we shall lose a great deal of the beauty and moral import of this chapter. It is of great help to consult a map of Palestine for Gilgal's geographical position. Just west of Jordan, be it noted, is that Gilgal at which the people of Israel passed the first night after crossing the river. This is *be-*

low Bethel and Jericho. From this place it is impossible to go down (ver. 1) to Bethel. The solution to the apparent difficulty is that the Gilgal of the Jordan bank, so rich in typical teaching, was not Elijah's starting point at all. This is confirmed by the fact that in Joshua and 1 Samuel the journey from Gilgal to the neighbourhood of Bethel is spoken of as an ascent. But there is, perched up in the heights, just ten miles north of Bethel, another Gilgal from which Elijah set out upon his memorable descent. Even to this day the ruins stand and the place is called Jiljilia.

If Canaan speaks to us of heavenly places can Gilgal of the heights speak to us of anything less than the glory? For even as Elijah went from thence to Bethel, so that perfectly obedient One stepped down to the house and to the people of God. "The Lord has sent me to Jericho." There was no tarrying at Bethel for Elijah. He was on his way to the Jordan of death. Again and again the Lord presented Himself to His own, always to be refused. He presented Himself also to man under the curse. Just how far He stooped we can learn from Philippians ii. The light from the New Testament illumines the Old and in the rays of that light the chapter before us displays in beautiful type the whole journey made by our gracious Lord from the glory to the cross, and back again to the place He now adorns as the Ascended Man.

Thrice, at Gilgal, at Bethel and at Jericho, did Elijah entreat Elisha, his companion, to leave him. Thrice Elisha gave the same decided reply, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." So the "two went on" and they crossed Jordan together. In two ways is the death of the Lord seen. As the atoning Substitute He was absolutely alone ; but as Head of the New Creation we are reckoned to have died with Him.

Elisha's attitude calls for further comment. He was far and away ahead of any of the sons of the prophets, for they "stood afar off." It is one thing to see that Jesus has died for our sins and quite another to accept the place of death with Him. In this matter we can cross with Him or "stand afar off."

Elijah's bold invitation to Elisha met with an equally bold request. "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me," he asked. "If thou see me," Elijah replied, "when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee." Nothing could be more important than this. To become possessed of that for which he asked it was imperative that he should see Elijah taken up. He had keenly observed the descent but that would not bring the blessing he desired. No! he must see the ascended man who had crossed Jordan. When this came about he "took

hold of his clothes and rent them." and "took also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him."

It is very precious to see the path of our Lord down from glory, down, down to death itself. But He that descended has also ascended. If Christ is not risen our faith is vain. It is as important for us to see the Ascended Man Christ Jesus as it was for Elisha to behold the ascending Elijah. The effect upon Elisha was very like the effect the sight of the ascended Jesus had upon Saul at the Damascus gate. Henceforth to be "found in Him" was his desire.

The returning Elisha passes over the powerless waters. The spirit of the ascended man now rests upon the one left behind. As for the sons of the prophets, they were content to stand afar off. Lacking spiritual energy they stayed at Jericho. What effect this had upon them is clearly to be seen in the methods adopted to find Elijah. They could not rise to the idea of an ascended man, consequently they sent fifty strong men to search for him, in spite of Elisha's emphatic command. Dismally they failed.

Are we walking in the power of Elisha's secret, confirmed by that faith which is the evidence of things unseen? The Lord is not to be found by earth's methods. He is in the place of glory and power. May

grace be given to us by faith to see Him there! The measure in which this becomes real in our lives will be the measure in which spiritual vigour and courage will characterize us, whether it be serving in Jericho—the place under the curse—or meeting the unbelief of Bethel—that which professes to be the house of God.

S. O. THURSTON.

THE LIFE OF FAITH.

(3). *Hebrews xi.* 22-31.

IT will be observed that our triplet in these verses consists of two men and a woman. There is nothing incongruous in this, as the woman forms a connecting link between what goes before and what follows after. Three things to be noted are:—

- (1). THE SIMPLICITY OF FAITH.
- (2). THE SUPREMACY OF FAITH.
- (3). THE SELECTION OF FAITH.

In dealing with the simplicity of Joseph's faith, we do not mean that faith is necessarily a simple thing. In one sense it is. An old-fashioned hymn used to read:—

“Faith is a very simple thing,
Though little understood.”

When we first trusted the Lord Jesus we found how very simple it was, and perhaps some of us wondered why we had

not trusted Him sooner. Others, it may be, were long in getting the blessing because they stumbled over the very simplicity of faith.

Had we been in Joseph's circumstances we should probably have said, as we may have done under much less trying conditions, "how difficult it is to trust." Joseph was characterised by simple, unquestioning, unwavering faith. It did not seem to occur to him to doubt God; on the contrary to trust God was wrought into every fibre of his being. It seems remarkable that though his was such a wonderful life, the Holy Spirit in our chapter refers only to its close. What is said about that however embraces all that preceded.

What a history it was! When seventeen years old, sent by his father to his brethren, they refused him. Just as our blessed Lord was sent by the Father to His brethren and they "received Him not." (John i. 11). Cast into a pit; sold to the Ishmeelites; a slave in the house of Potiphar; consigned to prison, his "feet hurt, with fetters laid in iron." Observe what follows just here:—"Until the time that His Word came: the Word of the Lord tried him." (Psalm cv. 18, 19). Then transferred from the prison to the palace, second only to Pharaoh, made administrator over the land of Egypt, and all commanded to bow the knee to him. What

a lovely picture of Him who has been raised from the prison house of death to the right hand of God; the great Administrator of all God's blessing, and the One to whom every knee shall bow.

The story of those thirteen years in Joseph's life is thrilling. He never murmured; he refused to recognize second causes; he traced everything to God; and from start to finish his faith in God was unshaken. He reached the end of his journey, he was in the mind of God; he knew that the children of Israel would not find their home in Egypt, but that God would carry out His purpose for them; and "by faith" he made mention of that, "and gave commandment concerning his bones."

When at length Israel made their exodus from Egypt they carried his bones, over the Red Sea, across the desert, over Jordan into the promised land, and not till the "land had rest from war," and Joshua himself was dead, did they bury the bones of Joseph (Joshua xxiv. 32). His recorded history is one of ninety three years simple faith in God.

Moses occupies a large place in the Holy Scriptures. The first five books rightly bear his name. "By faith" his parents "hid him," and "were not afraid of the king's commandment." Had it been otherwise God's purpose would have been de-

feated, and that is impossible. for our God knows no defeat.

See how it worked out. The child was placed in an ark; the ark was put by the river's brink: Pharaoh's daughter came down, saw the ark, discovered the child, unwittingly, *so far as she was concerned*, got the child's mother to nurse him; and in due course the child was found in the palace of the king who had pronounced his doom. How wonderfully God works, and causes even His enemies to do His service and carry out His purpose.

For forty years Moses was in the palace; then he had to make a great choice. He had "come to years,"—"had become great" (New translation)—he had to choose between suffering "affliction with the people of God" and "enjoying the pleasures of sin for season;" between "the reproach of Christ" and "the treasures in Egypt." How many refuse to decide for Christ because they prefer the "pleasures" to the affliction; and would rather have "the treasures" of the world than "the reproach of Christ." How many who profess to have accepted Christ cling to their "pleasures" and "treasures," and are not prepared for the "affliction" and the "reproach."

By faith Moses chose the latter and refused the former. He left the palace, he sought out his brethren, and he proposed

to undertake their cause. Acts vii. 25., casts an interesting sidelight on this:—"He supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them." But Moses was before God's time. He had to be trained, and forty years in the back side of the desert was his training time. It might have been said by some, "What a waste of forty of the best years of his life. A brilliant young man 'learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in words and in deeds' (Acts vii. 22), and there he is, looking after some sheep." That was God's way. What a lesson for us now!

At the fitting moment, in other words in God's time, he came forth, and his life-service was one that showed the supremacy of faith over every obstacle. Assailed harassed, tormented, persecuted on every hand and practically every day, he went onward and forward, until on Pisgah's height he viewed the land, and was put to sleep by God. He got the most wonderful funeral that any man ever had, for the Lord buried him; and centuries later he appeared with Elijah on "the holy mount" in the company of the Son of God.

The story of Rahab is deeply interesting. If in this connection we write of the selection of faith, we do not mean that faith selects; but we do mean that God in His sovereignty selected Rahab and implanted

in her true faith. She had heard what God had done; she knew what God was going to do; and she desired to be numbered among His people.

What claim had she? None, except faith in God. Who gave her that faith? God. But why did He choose her? To carry out His own plan. Says the inspired historian, "She dwelleth in Israel even unto this day" (Joshua vi. 25). She was introduced into the royal line, was not far removed from David (Ruth iv. 18-22), and is one of four remarkable women whose names appear in the genealogy of Matthew i.—names that we should not have chosen, but God did so. Why? Because He is sovereign, and here we see the excess of His grace.

Why did He choose us? Had we any claim upon Him? No. Did we deserve it? No. He chose us because He was pleased to do so, and because of the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Ephesians ii. 7). We cannot understand it, and we never shall. We can only delight in it, and praise Him for it now, as we shall for ever and ever.

What a God is ours! What grace is His! Everlasting glory be to His holy Name.

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

Next month (God willing) Hebrews xi. 32-40. Kindly read the whole chapter over and over again.

“TRY THE SPIRITS WHETHER THEY ARE OF GOD.”

(1 *John* iv. 1-3).

THE late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle took this Scripture as advising that all and sundry should attend spiritist seances in order to try whether the spirits were good or bad. It is curious how those, who refuse Scripture as a whole, will drag a verse in as authoritative, if it can be twisted seemingly to support their position or teaching.

Of course a very surface reading of the passage will show the sophistry of Sir Conan Doyle's advice. We are plainly told what the divine test is, viz., Does the spirit confess that “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh”? We cannot now ask Sir Conan Doyle, for he has gone to his long account, but we should be surprised to learn that he had ever put this test to the spirits. We know that without exception the spirits of spiritism do not confess that “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.”

However, without tampering with spiritism which we do well to avoid as we would the plague, the test imposed by the Apostle John is of very wide application. There are many religious speakers and writers to whom we should apply the test. If the test was so important in A.D. 90, it is equally, if not more, important in 1935.

Of course every book does not exhaust every line of truth, and when we come to pamphlets and tracts, this is even more so. But the speaker or writer, who confesses "Jesus Christ come in the flesh" cannot fail, when he speaks or writes, to reveal the fact that he is sound in this vital truth of Christianity.

If we hear or read the confession of "Jesus Christ come in the flesh," then we know that spirit is of God. But if this confession is not forthcoming, we know that spirit is not of God. It is a useful test and increasingly necessary.

For instance, there is an increasing amount of literature to-day, embodying the most beautiful instruction as to how to live the Christian life, and the example given of our Lord as furnishing the life *par excellence* for our admiration and model. I have known such writing to come from the pen of a leading modernist, whose powers of evil influence are heightened by his ability to put things so strikingly and beautifully from a literary point of view. I have asked myself the question, Could every word of this come from the pen of one, who has no claim to be a Christian, one, who denies the Deity and atoning sacrifice of our Lord? Alas! the answer was in the affirmative. The writer did not confess "Jesus Christ come in the flesh," and that being so, he never once

remotely witnessed a true confession of our Lord. His views coloured his book, though these special views were not its subject matter. We have not only to ask, What does this man teach? but, What does he *not* teach?

Some of these writers are most earnest and the yearning of their hearts after beauty of life and character is most attractive. How it shows the awful power of the enemy that such earnestness can be side-tracked to what is in reality antichristian.

We may now well ask, What is the precise meaning of confessing "Jesus Christ come in the flesh"? To understand the need of the warning, we may say that a set of people arose in the days of the Apostle John called "Gnostics." They professed to have advanced from the simplicity of early Christianity and to have received further light. The word "Gnostic," means one who knows. It is just the opposite of Agnostic, which means the one who does not know; though as a matter of fact the Agnostic usually thinks that he knows more than the Christian, and holds him in contempt as being enslaved in superstition.

The chief of the tenets of these Gnostics of the apostolic times was that they affirmed that the manhood of our Lord was not real, that He had the appearance of a man, but that He was an apparition, a phantom, without any substance. What then is the real

significance of confessing that " Jesus Christ is come in the flesh " ?

It had evidently a twofold implication. It affirms His Deity and His manhood, that our Lord is very God and very Man.

How vitally important is the truth of our Lord's Deity. We need not in a short article enter fully into the proof of it. It is asserted in Scripture again and again, and woven into its very structure. Two short verses will prove the two-fold implication of which we speak.

" *The Word was God* " (John i. 1).

" *The Word was made [became, New Translation] flesh* " (John i. 14).

When we think of the magnitude of the work our Lord came to do, we know instinctively that no man, as a man and nothing but a man however good or powerful, could be sufficient for the work of atonement. "Pastor" Russell, of Millennial Dawn notoriety, falsely taught that the Lord could only die for Adam, that one man can only die for one man. That would be so if our Lord were only a man. But thank God, Deity gave a different value to His manhood, and He was able to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. He was the only One who could say, " IT IS FINISHED." That could never be said by any other. So we thank God, that Jesus was and is and ever will be God.

Who is it that came in flesh? "Jesus Christ"; *Jesus* meaning JEHOVAH Saviour, *Christ* THE Anointed, the One appointed in the wisdom of the Godhead to do the work of God on earth. Oh! the infinite character of God. Man is finite. The comparison between the infinite and the finite is far, far greater than the comparison between the mighty sun in the heavens and the tiny creature swimming in a drop of water, that needs a powerful microscope to reveal its presence.

It takes God to reveal God. It takes God to satisfy God. No mere creature can do this. So it is the joy and delight of our soul to worship our Lord as Thomas of old did, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God."

Then what does it mean to become flesh? It surely means the true full manhood of our Lord. The heretical idea that our Lord was an apparition, a phantom, and that His manhood was not substantial and real, is surely a blow at the whole scheme of redemption; for how could a phantom die on the cross, how could blood and water flow from the pierced side of an apparition?

It is indeed necessary in these, or in any other days, to confess "Jesus Christ come in the flesh."

It is sadly interesting that whilst it is the *spirit* of antichrist *NOT to confess* "Jesus Christ come in the flesh," when anti-

christ comes he will *deny* the Father and the Son. "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John ii. 22). Surely the apostasy is very near, for this is true already in Russia. The Lord's coming must be very near.

So we can understand how the Apostle urges his readers, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard FROM THE BEGINNING" (1 John ii. 24). We can never get beyond that which is from the beginning. All the light we have and the glory of God is revealed by our Lord Jesus Christ.

May we ever cleave to that which is *from the beginning*, and eschew novelties in whatever form they may be presented.

A. J. POLLOCK.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(1 *Corinthians* ii. 12—iii. 18).

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

One remarkable feature about this epistle is the way in which historical details as to Paul's movements and experiences form a kind of framework, in the midst of which is set the unfolding of much important truth, which is introduced rather in the form of

digressions—often lengthy ones. The epistle opened with his sufferings and trouble in Asia, and the consequent change in his plans, and this led to the important digression of verses 19-22 of chapter i. Then he picks up the thread as to his subsequent movements, only to digress further in chapter ii., as to the forgiveness of the repentant offender.

At verse 12 he again reverts to his movements. This brief visit to Troas must be distinguished from that recorded in Acts xx. 6. It apparently came between the departure from Ephesus and the arrival in Macedonia, as recorded in Acts xx. 1. Though an open door was set before him by the Lord he was unable to avail himself of it, owing to his great anxiety for news of the Corinthians. In this case his pastoral solicitude prevailed against his evangelistic fervour. If the servant is not at rest in his spirit he cannot effectively serve the Lord.

The apostle was evidently conscious that this was failure on his part. Yet looking back he was equally conscious that God had overruled it to the glory of Christ; and this led him to an outburst of thanksgiving to God. It also led him once more to digress from his account of his experiences, and we do not come back to them until chapter vii. 5, is reached. The long digression which starts with verse 14 of

our chapter, contains the main teaching of the epistle.

As regards his service, one thing he knew: he really and truly set forth Christ. Many there were who dared to manipulate the Word of God to serve their own ends. He, on the other hand, spoke with all sincerity as of God, and as in the sight of God, and as representing Christ. Moreover Christ was his great theme. Hence God led him in triumph in Christ.

The language the Apostle uses seems to be based upon the custom of according a triumph to victorious generals, when sweet odours were burned, and some of the captives, who helped to augment the triumph, were appointed to die, and some to live. The triumph was Christ's; but Paul had a share in it as spreading abroad the sweet odour of Christ wherever he went—an odour so infinitely fragrant to God. This was so whether he were in Troas or whether in Macedonia.

He preached Christ as the One who died and rose again, whether men believed and were saved, or whether they believed not and perished. If they believed not and were perishing, then the tidings of the *death* of Christ simply meant *death* for them. If He died *for* sins, and they refused Him, they certainly must die *in* their sins. If some believed, then tidings of His *life* in

resurrection brought the odour of *life* for them. Because He lived they should live also.

How solemn then is the effect of a true preaching of Christ! What eternal issues hang upon it! This is so, whether the lips that utter it be Paul's in the first century or ours in the twentieth. No wonder the question is raised, "Who is sufficient for these things?" It is raised, but, not answered immediately. It is answered however in verse 5 of the next chapter. The whole thing being of God there is no sufficiency but of God. Would that every servant of God always bore this in mind! What deep-toned earnestness it would produce in us: what dependance upon the power of God. How careful we should be not to adulterate the message, and not to carry out the work just as we like, or as we think best; but to serve according to the Word of God.

Paul had just spoken of the way in which he preached the Word, but this did not mean that he wished to commend himself to the Corinthians, or that he needed others to commend him. The fact was that they themselves were his "letter of commendation," being so evidently, in spite of their sad faults, the fruit of a genuine work of God through him. He speaks of them as an epistle in two ways. First as written in his own heart. In so saying, we believe

he wished them to realize how deeply they were engraved, as it were, on his affections. They little realized the intensity of his love in Christ for them. But then they were an epistle of Christ in a more objective sense, and of this verse 3 speaks.

They were "the epistle of Christ" in a double sense, inasmuch as that which is written is, in one word, Christ; and also it is Christ Himself who is the great and effective Writer. True, He writes by the hand of His servant, and so we find the words, "ministered by us." Paul was *only* the minister, still he *was* the minister, and this sufficiently commended him.

Next we have a double contrast. The thoughts of the Apostle went back to the former ministry of the law through Moses. Then the Divine commandments were engraved on tables of stone, and apparently made the more visible by some kind of ink. Now it is not ink but the Spirit of the living God: not tables of stone but the tablets of the heart. That was *dead*; this was *living*. The Gospel had indeed been to the Corinthians a savour of life unto life.

In this verse the work of God in the hearts of the Corinthians is viewed as being equally the fruit of the operation of Christ and of the Spirit of the living God. Christ and the Spirit are very closely linked together thus all through this remarkable passage, as we shall see.

This work of Christ and of the Spirit had been carried out through Paul. He had been the minister. Every servant of God who preaches the Gospel is in that position. Yet Paul had that place in a very special sense. He had no more sufficiency for it than we have, yet he had very specially been made "able" or a "competent" minister of the New Covenant, which had found its basis and foundation in the death and resurrection of Christ. The New Covenant, of which Jeremiah prophesied is of course to be formally established in the future with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, but the basis of it has already been laid, and the Gospel preached to-day is of a new covenant order. The blessings promised in the New Covenant are found in it, as well as blessings that go beyond anything that the New Covenant contemplates.

Again in verse 6 the living character of the Gospel ministry is emphasized, whereas the law brought in death. We get the expression "the letter" twice in verse 6, and the same word (in a slightly different form) occurs in verse 7, where it is translated, "written." The New Translation renders it, "the ministry of death, in letters, graven in stones," which shows that in this passage the term, "letter," refers to the law. The law kills. Its ministry is unto death. The Spirit quickens.

What we have just pointed out is worth notice, for some have sought to deduce from this Scripture that the letter of Scripture kills! Under cover of this idea they feel free to disregard the letter of Scripture in favour of what they are pleased to declare is its spirit. What Scripture *says* is waved aside in order to introduce what it is *supposed* to mean. And if other passages be quoted which definitely contradict the alleged meaning, that matters not, for those other passages can be waved aside as also being but the letter which kills. Such people kill the letter because, they say, the letter kills. But it is all a mistake. There is no such idea in this verse.

We have been pointing out the digressions of this epistle. We now have to note that there is a big parenthesis in the midst of this lengthy digression, covering from verse 7 to verse 16 inclusive. Within this parenthesis the very striking contrast between the ministry of the Law and the New Covenant is developed, and the point is particularly made that the glory connected with the latter far outshines the glory connected with the former.

First, the law was but a ministry of death: the Gospel is a ministry of the life-giving Spirit. Yet there was a glory connected with the law: a glory so great that the children of Israel could not behold it, nor could they look at the reflection

of it as seen in the face of Moses. That glory was to be done away, for presently it faded from the face of Moses, and the time came when the signs of the divine presence left Sinai's crest. So our verse states that the law system "began with glory," (N. Tr.) not merely that it "was glorious." It began, but it did not continue. Now comes the question, "How shall not rather the ministry of the Spirit subsist in glory?" (N. Tr.). The glory of the law began, but soon it was quenched in the ministry of death to all who came under it. When the ministry of the quickening Spirit comes in, it abides in glory.

Again the law was a ministry of condemnation, whereas the Gospel is a ministry of righteousness. That demanded righteousness from man, and, because he had none of it, utterly condemned him. This brings righteousness, and ministers it to man by means of faith. Without a question a ministry which confers righteousness, and thus enables sinful man to stand in the presence of God, greatly exceeds in glory a ministry which merely demands righteousness where it is non-existent, and as a result condemns.

There is a further contrast in verse 11. The law system and its glory is "done away" or "annulled" in Christ; whereas the glory introduced by Him abides. There has been introduced by the Lord Jesus that

which remains to eternity; and the glory of that is so surpassing that it completely eclipses any glory that once existed in connection with the law, as verse 10 points out.

This then was the wonderful character of that ministry with which the Apostle was entrusted; and the character of it influenced the manner of its presentation. That which the Gospel ministry presents is not yet brought into full display, but it will be in due season. Hence he speaks here of having a *hope*, and *such* a hope. Having it, he was able to confront men with "great plainness of speech" or "boldness," and also with great openness and absence of reserve. There had to be reserve in connection with the law, for men could not stand in the presence of its glory.

Moses had to put a veil on his face when he had come down from the mount, to hide the glory from the children of Israel. That which has been annulled had an "end" which they did not see. "End" signifies not the finish or termination of the law, but the purpose of God in the law; which was Christ, as Romans x. 4 tells us. The law provided man with a very thorny road for his feet, but it led to Christ; just as every other road laid down by God leads to Christ. The glory that shone in the face of Moses was really a faint re-

flection of Christ. But Israel could not see it. Had they seen it they would have condemned themselves and waited with eager expectancy for the advent of Christ, the Deliverer.

Alas, their minds were blinded. They used the law as though it were a kind of feather stuck in their cap, to give them a pre-eminent place among the nations; and it is as though the veil that once was upon the face of Moses has been transferred to their minds and hearts. There is of course an election of grace to-day from amongst Israel, nevertheless it is still true of them as a nation that they read the Old Testament with the veil on their hearts.

Still a moment is coming when the veil shall be removed. Verse 16 of our chapter is an allusion to Exodus xxxiv. 33-35. Though Moses veiled His face when he dealt with the people, when he turned to the Lord and had to do with Him he removed the veil from his face. This is a kind of allegory as to what will happen with Israel. When at last they shall turn to the Lord in sincerity and repentance the veil will be lifted from their minds, and the glory of the Christ, whom once they crucified, will burst upon them.

Verse 16 completes the parenthesis which began at verse 7. With verse 17 we pick up the thread from verse 6, where it was

stated that the Spirit quickens. Here we find the Lord and the Spirit identified in a very remarkable way, the Spirit being the Spirit of the Lord, as also He is the Spirit of God. We are so accustomed to *distinguishing* between the Persons of the Godhead that we may easily fall into the error of *separating* between them. This we must not do. There is the related truth of the unity of the Godhead, and we must never lose sight of their essential *oneness*.

The Lord is the life-giving Spirit of the New Covenant, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. *Life* and *liberty* go together, just as law and bondage are associated. The divine life is not to be hampered or entangled within legal restraints. There is no need that it should be. Legal restraints are necessary and suitable enough when the flesh or the world are in question. They are not effective, for the flesh and the world break through them and transgress. In another way the law *is* effective, for it curses and brings death in upon the transgressor. All is changed when once the Spirit has given life. Then liberty can be safely accorded, for the Spirit of the Lord holds sway.

Verse 18 brings in a third wonderful thing. In addition to life and liberty there is *transformation*. As we have it in the Authorized Version the words, "with open face," are a little vague, and would prob-

ably be read as applying to us. It is true of course that we have no veil upon us as Israel has; but the point seems to be that the glory of the Lord, upon which we gaze, has no veil upon it. There is no veil upon the face of our Lord as there was upon the face of Moses. Moreover the glory that shines in Him is not repellent as was the glory in the face of Moses, it is attractive: and not only attractive but transforming also. The more Christ in His glory is before our spiritual vision the more we gain His likeness.

This transformation is a gradual process, and not reached all at once. We are changed "from glory to glory," that is, from one degree of glory to another. It is a Divine work, "even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Here again the wording is remarkable. "Even as by [the] Lord [the] Spirit." (N. Tr.). The definite article "the" is omitted both times in the Greek. Our little plumb-line may utterly fail when let down into the depths of this statement; but at least we can see that both the Lord and the Spirit work together in this transformation process; the Lord as an Object before faith's vision, the Spirit as a power within us.

Oh, that we might be kept steady with the eye on Christ; kept as true to Him as the needle is true to the pole!

F. B. HOLE.

THE LIFE OF FAITH.

(4). *Hebrews xi.* 32-40.

THE first thing that arrests our attention in the concluding portion of this remarkable chapter is the opening question in verse 32:—"And what shall I more say?" We have witnessed a procession of remarkable men; our interest and admiration have increased as we have looked upon one and another. In the end the crowning touch is supplied as a woman appears—a woman seemingly outside the pale of blessing, a poor outcast, without a character, and known only as "Rahab the harlot." God put His hand upon her; He singled her out, and saved her not only *from* the doom of Jericho, but *for* His own purpose.

Are we satisfied with knowing that we have been saved *from* the judgment that our sins deserved; without getting to know that we have been saved *for* God's glory, and that He might introduce us into a wealth of blessing? Why did God choose Rahab? And why did He choose us? As we remarked in our last paper, it was in the exercise of His sovereignty, and be-

cause of the excess of His grace. Well now, "What shall I more say?"

This expression may also have to do with what follows. What more could be added? Much indeed if time permitted. The entire history of God's people might be searched, and men and women of similar calibre, and marked by the same confidence and continuance, would be found. Then a few names are given, not at random, and not in historical but moral order. The first four are taken from the book of Judges.

The book of Judges in the Old Testament corresponds with 2 Timothy in the New Testament. Moses was dead. Joshua was dead, "and also all that generation, [Joshua's] were gathered unto their fathers; and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel." (Judges ii. 10). That was the third generation. They took their own way, followed the bent of their own will, refused to recognise authority and were lawless to a degree. All is summed up in the closing verse of the book. "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (xxi. 25). From 2 Timothy we learn that Paul was about to lay aside his work, as the administrator of the great truth of the Assembly. Timothy was to carry on the testimony. That which he had heard he was to "commit

to faithful men." They would doubtless have successors in the third generation, and would find themselves surrounded by a state of matters described in chapter iii.

At the beginning of last century, wonderful truth was recovered to the people of God, truth that had been buried in the rubbish of centuries. The truth of the one body; of the heavenly calling of all believers; of the coming again of the Lord Jesus. Those whom God used then were called home. Others were raised up who held the truth and urged the necessity of the truth that had been presented objectively in Christ, being wrought out subjectively in His people. They have gone. We find ourselves in the third generation. What do we find? Self-will, lawlessness, heresy: the tendency of every one to do that which is right in his own eyes. We believe the Lord is calling for "faithful men" to-day just as He had faithful men in the days of the Judges, has had in the history of the Church, and, we are assured, will have "till He come." We urge our dear young brethren to covet this distinction, and to let their one ambition be to be "faithful men." It may cost something. Of what value would it be if that were not the case? But it will be grateful to the Lord.

Now to our verse (32). Gideon was a man who threshed wheat in secret (Judges vi. 11), and therein lies typically the secret

of spiritual prosperity. He was exercised as to the state of God's people (v. 13). He learned that the first step to recovery was to remove that which was offensive to God; and to bring in that which was pleasing to God (vv. 25, 26); and he answered to the call of God. He started out with an imposing army of thirty-two thousand. "Too many," said God, and they were reduced to ten thousand. "Still too many," said God, and they were brought down to three hundred. A contemptible army in men's eyes, with no ammunition, but with earthen vessels containing oil and lamps. The vessels were broken, the light shone, and God did the rest.

Does not this remind us of 2 Corinthians iv? "God has shone into our hearts for the shining out." "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," and the remainder of that chapter shows how God breaks the vessels, the light shines, and He does the rest. Gideon did all this by faith and triumphed.

Barak lived in a day of still greater failure, for a woman judged Israel, and he did not appear to see anything wrong therein. For a woman, no matter how devoted, to step out of her ordered place indicates weakness and departure from the path of God's will on the part of His people. God took account of the weakness and used Deborah. Barak responded to her call on

condition that she went with him. She nerved this weak man to fight, and when the Lord gave the victory, it would seem that she led the praise (Judges iv-v).

Samson, looked at by us, appears to have been a miserable failure. Set apart by God from his birth, the lust of the flesh affected him more than the call of God. He lost his separation: the Lord departed from him, and he had a tragic end to a tragic career. God saw faith in Samson. Does it not suggest that we should look at our fellow believers through God's eyes, and look not for faults in them but for Christ?

Jephthah was intelligent as to God's ways with His people, and His mind for them, and though he made a rash vow, which he must have regretted to his dying day, he too was used by God for the deliverance of His people.

We now make a big jump and read of David. A man after God's own heart, who served his generation by the will of God, and who slew the enemies of God and of His people. Suffering much in his early life, and scarcely less in his later days, faith in God was his sheet anchor.

Samuel was the intermediary between God and His people. He came on the scene when the Word of the Lord was

precious and rare, when there was no open vision, and when the lamp of God burned dim. (1 Samuel iii. 1-3). He held the ground for God; he kept the people in touch with God; and he encouraged them to constant, unvarying faith in God.

Then we see all that faith accomplished. Things incredible if we leave God out of account, but which become very simple indeed when we bring God in. Next we have the nameless, unknown warriors, men and women who endured unspeakable suffering, ending in agonizing death, sustained by faith in God. Could He have prevented it? Yes! Why did He allow it? Because they would have been the losers if He had not done so. He Himself has written their epitaph, "Of whom the world was not worthy." They have got "a good report." From whom? From God. What does it matter what the world says if we have a "good report" from God?

And now have they received the promise? No. Why? God is still working out His plan. In this little parenthesis of time, as we have already noticed, taking out a people for His Name. When the parenthesis ends, He will again pick up the threads, and they and we will see the grand consummation of everything in the city of God; "a city that hath foundations, whose builder and Maker is God." Then, as they look

back upon their dreadful suffering, and we recall our little pin-pricks, and they and we see the end of it all, how we shall magnify His grace and glorify His Name!

Shall we once again read Hebrews xi., pray that the faith that characterized these workers may be found in us; and, looking on to the end, seek to tread the path to the glory of our blessed Lord.

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

Next month, God willing, Hebrews xii. 1-17. Kindly read the whole chapter over and over again.

SOMETHING OF HIS GREATNESS.

OFTEN, when musing on the greatness of the One, who has expressed His love for us in death, we visualize the vast celestial system, where everything moves with mathematical precision and accuracy. We are filled with wonder and awe as we think of the mysteries of that region which defy the power of the greatest telescopes to penetrate, and with the Psalmist of old, re-echo "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psa. xix. 1).

Then too, we might think of the magnitude of space; the fascinating wonders of the rolling deep, with all its weird and terrifying secrets; of the untrodden peaks of the everlasting hills. Within our reach

we behold the perfect order of the changing seasons, and are assured that He hath made everything beautiful in its season.

But this vista of created glory, coupled with the multitude of shining hosts, could never win the affections of man's heart nor drive away his fear and distrust of the One who brought them into being by the Word of His power. The witness of creation would tend to overawe, and repel the approach of man to God.

How wonderful it is to see that God, knowing this, has found a way in which He can come within the range of man's vision and circumstances in a manner which does not occasion alarm and fear in the heart of His creature, and thus bring him into the warmth and comfort of that Divine circle, cleaned of every spot and stain. This wonderful expression of love and grace, of the disposition of God's heart, has been made fully known, not in the glory of created majesty and wonder, but in the Person of His only Son.

We learn by contrasts, and in Matthew xii, the greatness of that despised and rejected One stands out in clearness when brought into contrast with Solomon, Jonah, and the Temple.

No earthly potentate like Solomon, when kings flocked from the uttermost parts of

the earth for his counsel. His reign was characterised by peace, plenty and praise, yet he only formed part of a background to bring into relief the greatness of Christ.

Was there ever such a preacher as Jonah? A whole city repented at the sound of his voice, and even the beasts of the field were affected. Nothing like it before or since. But here was One greater than Jonah.

To the Jew the temple was his life; the singing and the incense, the order of the priesthood, and very much more. But here in their midst was a *living* Temple, great enough to satisfy every spiritual aspiration of the worshipper. He could give to the stricken heart that which no temple order could. He was greater than the temple.

How precious to view Him in this scene of moral corruption; no retinue of angels, no bodyguard of seraphim. As holy as when seen in Isaiah vi., but divested of all that visible and terrifying expression. Let us muse on those features which have endeared Him to our hearts and won our trust. He was meek; He was lowly; He was harmless; He was undefiled; He was approachable; the weary came for rest; the blind to see; the deaf to hear; the guilty one for pardon; the bereaved for comfort; and the weak for strength. Very much more could be sung of His moral

greatness in His lowly pathway here, and as we dwell on this, surely it will cause the tongue of the dumb to sing for joy, and the lame to leap like the hart.

He *was* rich, but for our sakes became poor. The heaven of heavens was not great enough to contain Him, but down here He had nowhere to lay His blessed head. The scene which He left was reflective of His glory, but here He was despised and rejected. Up there the subject of angelic praise, here the song of the drunkard, and the object of derision. The power of His Godhead was no less in Jerusalem than in glory, but He allowed them to pluck the hair off His cheek, and He gave His back to the smiter. He could have taken refuge in His creatorial power, but He had made himself of no reputation. No circumstance of His pathway could make Him deviate from it; it was the way which God was taking in order to reach us, to recover us for the glory of His Son.

And after a pathway of moral perfection, with its end in sight, we are privileged to witness one more blaze of His moral greatness; when, death having no claim upon Him, He voluntarily goes into it, in order that He might rob it of its fearful character, and thus set us free in the liberty of sons to praise and worship Him throughout the ages of the ages.

C. D. WALLACH.

LIFTED ABOVE CIRCUMSTANCES.

THERE is much hidden treasure in one verse in the Old Testament—Deuteronomy xxxiii. 3. The first words are “Yea, He loved the people,” and whoever you are, you are embraced by the word, “people.”

Let us begin however with that little word, “HE.” This leads us up to the everlasting God who sits on the throne of glory, and it says, “He loved the people.” How wonderful that *He* should love us, for He Himself is the unchanging One, and therefore nothing will ever alter His love. It will never be exhausted, it will never grow cold. Yes, but some may ask, When did He love us? Ah! when there was nothing about us that was worth loving. When we were in our sins and ruin, away from God without any desire even to know God—dead towards Him. Then He loved us, because He Himself is love.

For proof of this we turn to the Cross of Calvary. There the Lord Jesus was made sin, and bore all God's righteous judgment, in order that God might be glorified in a world where He had been dishonoured, and also that guilty sinners might be set at liberty and in joy before His face. He loved us because He Himself is love. If He loved us while we were sinners will He love us any the less now that we are His saints?

Pause here a moment. Have you yielded yourself to Christ who died for you? Being a sinner His offered salvation is for you. Accept Him now, and then you will be able to say, "He loves even me now." Blessed, present portion in this world of sadness. What will His presence be but fulness of joy?

Next it says, "All His saints are in Thy hand."

"In His strong hand Who all commands,
 How blest to be.
 Those hands once given, by cruel nails riven
 On Calvary's tree."

This spells safety. But do I hear some simple, trusting soul say, "I don't feel I am one of His saints"? It is not what *you feel*, it's what *God says* that matters. If you turn to 1 Corinthians i. 2; Philippians i. 1; Colossians i. 2; you will find that Christians are called saints. We are saints by a heavenly calling. I may not feel like a saint but God calls me one, and that is enough. Well, where are His saints? All God's saints are in Christ's hand.

How comforting is the word, "All." That includes you, if you are sheltered by the blood of His cross, even the weakest child of God. Yes, and even the wayward, back-sliding one, for His love has not altered towards you. But where are all His saints? *In His hand*. Not *near* His hand, or simply

under His hand, but *in* His hand. Yes, but whose hand? There is one, "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand" (Isa. xl. 12). God has put everything into Christ's hand, just as Pharaoh once put all into Joseph's hand; so He can say, "I give unto my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

You remember the table of shewbread in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, with its twelve loaves, representative of the twelve tribes of Israel. God could look at Israel in two ways. He could see them as they were, a stiffnecked people; or He could view them typically as fragrant with frankincense on this golden table.

If you look carefully at Exodus xxv. 24, 25, you will see there were two crowns and between these crowns there was a border of an hand breadth. There was no fear of the loaves falling off that Table, and where is the foe powerful enough to take one loaf off? The enemy we know is mighty but the One who has charged Himself to bring us home to the glory of God is almighty. The enemy would have to break through that hand in order to touch the believer in Christ and this he can never do. The glory of God's throne and Christ's work would have to be broken, were the weakest saint to be touched by the enemy. Oh! what a word of comfort is this, "All His

saints are in Thy hand." "In His hand." I see not only that my spiritual welfare is secure, but in the circumstances of this life. I am protected in the home life; in the business world too He preserves me from dangers and snares of which we have no idea. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them" (Psa. xxxiv. 7).

But these lines may reach someone whose circumstances are most difficult and unpleasant. You may perhaps have to admit that it is all your fault that you are in them. You may be seeking a way out and looking for better days. Ah! I know something of this, but let me go just one step more.

You may have thought, that to die would be better than to live. To die would be to be with Christ and your soul longs for Him to call you home. Oh! let me try and help you where I have been helped. I would like to give you a new *view point*, from which to see these unpleasant circumstances.

If you will turn to Lamentations iii. 7, you find Jeremiah complaining that he is hedged about and he "cannot get out." I wonder if this is what you are saying, and adding, "but then it is all my own fault, I would have my own way and all this is the result. Things would have been so different if I had heeded His voice, but alas! my life has been a sad mistake."

But it is "HE" who has hedged me about so that I cannot get out. "HE," that is the word to lay hold of. The One who loves you has allowed that hedge to be placed about you. You may be very disappointed with yourself and your life, but because God knows the end from the beginning He is not disappointed with you. He knew that you and I would turn out like this long before He called us by the Gospel. Oh the wonder of the love that knew all about us—how we should fail, and fall, and blunder out of one mistake into another. His love is unaltered and He wants our company. Blessed be His name!

It is said of the Lord Jesus when here on earth, "He hath done all things well," and He has allowed you to be found just where you are to-day. He knows every secret of your heart. It may be His will to still allow you to remain in those circumstances. Yet there is one thing the Lord is willing and able to do for you, and that is supply you with enough grace and patience to glorify Him in each detail of your life. Remember there is nothing too hard for the Lord (See Jer. xxxii. 17 and 27).

I think I hear the unspoken cry from some burdened heart, "Lord I would like to be put right here and now." Then join the Psalmist in saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked

way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting " (cxxxix. 23, 24).

Open out everything before the Lord. There is no need to fear, for He knows it all, and if you hand over to Him all the keys of your heart, and confess all your waywardness and backslidings to Him, He will restore to you the joy of His salvation. He is Jesus Christ the righteous, the Advocate with the Father, who is able to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Then is fulfilled the word, "They sat down at Thy feet." This is something to be experienced rather than talked about. To sit at His feet is to be occupied with the beauty of the Lord. Here the soul can put off its armour, as the heart goes out to Him. Have you ever sat down to be loved by Him; not to be asking for something in prayer, but just to be filled full with His company? Oh, to taste more and more of this! It is not service, but we shall be more effectual servants if we know this place well. Service is the outcome of the enjoyment of Christ.

Lastly "every one shall receive of Thy words." Not the words of man so often faulty and empty, but pure words, the words of the Lord. Words of cheer, comfort, grace, strength, wisdom, guidance. The soul that enjoys sitting at His feet will say, "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job xxiii. 12).

The Lord Jesus could say to the Father, "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me" (John xvii. 8).

His words are full of blessing, so that we may be satisfied with God's favour. "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

J. R. JAMESON.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(*2 Corinthians iv. 1-14*).

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

THE New Covenant ministry entrusted to the Apostle Paul is unfolded to us in chapter iii. As we open chapter iv., our thoughts are directed to the things that characterized him as the minister of it. And first of all he was marked by good courage. Since God had entrusted him with the ministry, He gave with it suitable mercy. So, whatever the opposition or difficulty he did not faint. The same thing holds good for us. The Lord never calls us to ministry of any kind without the needed mercy being available. "Ministry" of course is just "Service;" the kind of thing that any of us might render, though it is a word of wide meaning and covers things that many of us might not be called to do.

The second verse emphasizes the honesty and transparency that marked Paul in his

service. He descended to none of the tricks that so commonly disfigure the world's propaganda. Many a zealot, religious as well as political, will stoop to a great deal of craft and falsification in order to gain his end. The end justifies the means, to his way of thinking. Paul was very conscious that he was proclaiming the "Word of God," and this must not be falsified, but rather made manifest in all its truth. His transparent honesty in handling the truth was thus made manifest to every upright conscience.

And another thing also was gained. Things were brought to an issue in the case of those who did not receive his message. The word, "hid" which occurs twice in verse 3, is really, "veiled;" the same word (in a slightly different form) as occurs several times in the latter part of chapter ii. "If also our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in those that are lost." (N. Tr.). There was no veil on the Gospel, for Paul declared it in its purity and its clarity: but there was a veil upon the hearts and minds of the perishing who did not believe; a veil that had been dropped in their minds by the god of this world. Had Paul preached the word only partially, or in deceitful fashion, the issue would not have been so clear.

What a word is this for those of us who preach the Gospel! Are we rightly affected by the awful solemnity of preaching the

Word of God? Have we renounced every "hidden thing," whether of dishonesty, craft, deceit, or anything else unworthy? Do we make manifest the truth, and only the truth? These are tremendous questions. If we do not, the unbelief of our hearers may not be attributable to *their blindness*, but to *our unfaithfulness*.

However, even when the Gospel is preached as it should be preached there are found those who do not believe; and the explanation is that the devil has blinded their eyes. The sun in the heavens has not been eclipsed, but a very dark blind has been dropped over the window of their little room. The light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ shines, but it does not shine into them. The god of this age will use anything, no matter what, so long as it blots out the Gospel: not usually material things, but rather speculative notions and teachings of men. During the past three-quarters of a century he has very effectually blinded multitudes by the revival of a favourite speculation of the pagan world before Christ—evolution. The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ does not penetrate where the evolutionary blind has been securely dropped. The blinded soul may entertain miserable notions of man as the image of a monkey—or some other elementary creature—or of a monkey as the image of man. He cannot in the nature of things know Christ as "the Image of

God," though he may talk about a Christ of his own imagination. There are many imaginary Christs: Christ, as men wish He had been. There is only one real Christ, the image of God; Christ as He was and is, the Christ of the Bible.

Christ Jesus was the great theme of the Apostle's preaching, and he emphasized His position as Lord. He kept himself out of sight as a mere bondman of others. Preaching Him as Lord, he of course presented Him in His present glory at the right hand of God; and so he could speak of his message as, "the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ" (ver 4. N. Tr.). Elsewhere He speaks of preaching, "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts xx. 24). There are not two gospels, of course. The one Gospel of God has both the grace of God and the glory of Christ amongst its outstanding features, and so either may be presented as characterizing it. Here the glory of Christ is the prominent feature as befits the context, for he had been speaking of the passing glory of the Old Covenant which once shone in the face of Moses. We can declare that the glory of God now shines, and will for ever shine, in the face of Jesus Christ.

Verse 6 is very striking, for it clearly alludes first to God's act in creation, then to His act in Paul's own conversion, and lastly to the ministry to which he was called.

Of old God said, "Let there be light," and light shone out of the darkness. That was in the material creation. But now there is a work of new creation proceeding, and something analogous takes place. Divine light—the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus—shines into dark hearts, as it did in such a pre-eminent fashion into Paul's on the road to Damascus, producing marvellous effects. It shines in that it may shine out. It is "for the shining forth of the knowledge" (N. Tr.). In that way the believer becomes luminous himself. He begins to shine, just as the moon shines in the light of the sun, save of course that the moon is a dead body merely reflecting light from its surface without being affected itself.

The fact we are dwelling on accounts for the wonderful character of Paul's ministry. He was not a mere preacher—a mere professional evangelist—throwing off so many sermons a week. He preached more than others indeed, but his preaching was the shining out of the light that was shining within, the telling forth of things that were thus wrought into every fibre of his being. No one knew better than he that every Divine excellence shines forth in Jesus, and that He dwells in light above the brightness of the sun, for he had seen it on the road to Damascus. That which he knew was as a precious treasure, deposited within him.

We have not seen Christ in His glory as Paul did, yet by faith we do see him there; so that we too can speak of having a treasure. As with Paul so with us. "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." The allusion here is to our present mortal bodies, for as to his body "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground" (Gen. ii. 7). As originally formed, man's body was perfect, and perfectly suited to his environment and his place in the scheme of creation. As fallen his body becomes marred, and so the earthen vessels in which the treasure is found are poor and feeble. But then that only makes more manifest the fact that the power at work is of God and not of man.

In the passage before us, extending to the early verses of chapter v., we have many allusions to the body, and it is spoken of in various ways. In verse 10 it is clearly mentioned apart from figurative language as, "our body." In verse 11 it is, "our mortal flesh." In verse 16, "our outward man." And in the next chapter, verses 1 and 4, "our earthly house of this tabernacle," and "this tabernacle." The whole passage instructs us as to the dealings of God with Paul as regards his body, and it throws great light on many an event in our own histories.

All God's dealings with us, as regards the earthen vessel of the body, have as their

object the better and more adequate shining forth of the treasure which He has placed within. There is an "excellency," or "surpassingness" of power about this treasure, which was very manifest in the case of Paul. By virtue of it not only was he sustained under unparalleled afflictions, but life worked in those to whom he ministered, as verse 12 shows. Now, as we know, there is truly a surpassingness about the power of natural life which is inexplicable by us. Seeds get buried under heavy flagstones, and lo, in the days to come tender green shoots, *filled with life*, manifest surprising energy sufficient to lift the stone and push it aside. Life of a spiritual sort manifests even more surprising powers.

Now this power was operating very energetically in a frail mortal man like Paul. Had he been sent into the world to serve, clothed in a splendid body of glory, he would have been viewed as a kind of superman, and the power largely attributed to him. As it was, the surpassing power that wrought in him and through him was obviously of God.

The trouble with us so often is that we rather want to wield power as though it were connected with ourselves. We are not content to be like an earthen vessel containing a power manifestly not its own. Hence very little power, or perhaps even complete absence of power, is what marks

us. This indeed is the inveterate tendency of our poor human hearts.

And it was also the tendency of Paul's heart, for he was a man of like passions to ourselves. Verses 8 to 11 clearly show this. He was continually faced with seas of trouble and difficulty. On the other hand, he was continually maintained and carried through, and made a blessing to others by the power of God.

If we examine these verses carefully we see that what he had to face came upon him in a threefold way. First, there were adverse circumstances. These are mentioned in verses 8 and 9. Trouble, perplexity, persecution, castings down, all these came upon him. Verily he was "a man," as he told the Jews, (Acts xxii. 3), and hence not beyond these things. He knew what it was to be perplexed and cast down like the rest of us.

Second, there was the spiritual exercise and experience expressed in the words, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." The dying of the Lord Jesus was abidingly impressed upon the mind of the Apostle, so that he bore it about with him continually. But these words seem to convey more than this, for as a consequence the dying of Jesus laid its finger, so to speak, upon every faculty and every member of his body, controlling

all his ways. It laid its finger, for instance, upon his tongue, repressing many an utterance that would have been unworthy. The thing was not perfect with him, as we know. Yet it was characteristic with him, marking him normally, in spite of occasional deviations and failures.

Third, there was God's disciplinary action which he describes as being "always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." God permitted many a thing to come upon him, such as that episode at Ephesus, which he described in chapter i. as "so great a death," by which he was delivered to death in his experiences amongst opposing men. In this way the inward and spiritual experience of which he speaks in verse 10, was supplemented by outward experiences, sent of God to further help him in his service. By these things he lived, and his light the more brightly shone.

We have only noticed so far one side of the matter. The other side is concerned with the wonderful results, with the way in which the surpassing excellence of the power of God was displayed in and by means of these things. Though circumstances were continually against him yet he was not distressed, not in despair, not forsaken, not destroyed. Obviously a sustaining power was working in him which counteracted all that was working against him. He was rather like one of those self-righting

lifeboats, pounded by the stormy seas and even overturned, which nevertheless comes up, the right side up, when the thundering billows have passed. It was indeed the power of the divine life in Paul that accomplished this.

Again, whether the action of faith and love in his own experience, leading him to bear about in his body the dying of Jesus, be in question, or whether God's disciplinary actions in keeping with that experience be in question, the same end was achieved, and a wonderful end it was. The life of Jesus was made manifest in his body, his mortal flesh. In verse 2, referring to his service, he had spoken of the *manifestation* of the truth. Again in verse 6, still referring to his service, he had spoken of the *shining forth* of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Now we have something additional to this, for the *manifestation* of the life of Jesus is not just service. It is character. In his unconverted days Saul of Tarsus manifested *himself*, as a man of imperious energy and self-will, in his mortal flesh. Now all was changed. The dying of Jesus was so applied to him that the Saul character was effectually stilled in death, and *the life of Jesus* manifested.

Nothing less than this is true and proper Christian testimony. Behind preaching and service lies the life. Christ in His glory

should be clearly manifested *in the preaching*, but that manifestation will only reach to its maximum of power and effect as Christ is manifested *in the life*. And this is as true in regard to ourselves to-day as it was for the Apostle Paul. Without a doubt here lies one of the main reasons for the ineffectiveness of so much modern preaching, even though the preaching itself is correct and sound.

Verses 10 and 11, then, show us that, as the result of death working in Paul, life wrought in him, and the life of Jesus was lived by him. Verse 12 shows that there was a further result—life wrought also in those to whom he ministered, and notably the Corinthians. Some years before life had worked to their conversion. Now he was rejoicing to see further evidence of life in their genuine repentance as regards their wrong-doing, and their affection for himself in spite of his rebukes. And lastly he looked forward to the resurrection world where they together with him would be presented in due season. Verse 14 mentions this.

The words, "I believed, and therefore have I spoken," are quoted from Psalm cxvi. 10. If that Psalm be studied it will be seen that the circumstances of the Psalmist when he wrote were very similar to those of Paul. He had been confronted by death and tears and falling, but had

been delivered; and now he had the confidence that he would "walk before the Lord in the land of the living:" that is, he had the resurrection world in view. Believing that, he was able to open his mouth in testimony. Now Paul was just like that. He had "the same spirit of faith." The resurrection world was full in view for him.

Is it fully in view for us? It should be. Life and incorruptibility have come to light by the Gospel: and that which was known partially to the Psalmist may be known in full measure by us. It is only as we live in the light of resurrection that we can be content to bear about in our bodies the dying of Jesus; and only as we do that is the life of Jesus manifested in our bodies, and does life work in others whom we may serve.

F. B. HOLE.

The clearest and most important exposition of the revelation of God in the inspired Book is the revelation of God in the renewed man. Every Christian will discover, in proportion to his advances in divine knowledge, that the very things which are written in these hallowed pages are written in his own experience. We never fully understand divine truth until we have experienced it; the diamond of divine promise never glistens so brightly as when it is placed in the setting of personal trial and experience.

C.H.S.

THE TRUE WORSHIPPERS.

(Read John iv. 23, 24).

WHILE there is a danger on the one hand of cultivating that which is mystical and fanciful, there is, on the other hand, the equal danger of limiting the truth of God to that which is according to our small understandings. This latter, I think is particularly so in connection with the corporate worship of the saints when gathered together. I mean that the Lord's mind, in the institution of His supper, is too often limited by our superficial thoughts.

The institution of the Lord's Supper is given to us in the three Synoptic Gospels; each in its own particular setting, and His words indicate that we are to partake of the Supper together "for a calling of ME to mind."

In the reference to it in 1 Corinthians xi, the Spirit of God would impress upon those who partake the signification of what they do, i.e. "ye do shew [or, announce] the Lord's death, till He come." The sad condition of the Corinthian Assembly made it necessary for this to be brought to bear upon their conscience, and it is well for each of us to have the significance of this

in mind, so that we too might judge and free ourselves of everything unworthy of that which becomes us as saints, in the light of the Lord's death, as set forth in the broken bread and the cup.

We do not learn from the Scripture that this showing forth the Lord's death is the *object* of our coming together; but rather that, when we come together to remember Him and "break this bread and drink this cup" we by that act *do* announce His death. The act has that significance.

But in what way would the Lord have us to remember Him? Here again we have to fear the intrusion of the thoughts of men, in one way and another, and it must always be remembered, none can lay down any rules or regulations in this connection.

To many, the partaking of the Supper has become a morning's service, in which they go over all that the Lord Jesus suffered in His life and death for their sins, and their whole time is spent in praising and thanking Him for this. Where the praises and thanksgiving rise from hearts filled with love going out to Him, how precious and fragrant must this be to the Lord.

Yet this aspect of the Lord's death is particularly *individual*, and is that which should be continually before us day by day. His praise in this connection should always

be in our hearts and on our lips and, for myself, I make it a rule to go to Him with my thanksgiving for His love in going into death for me personally, before I start out from home for the Assembly meeting, or else in the quiet of the meeting room, while we tarry one for the other.

When we *come together*, we do so in assembly character. What we are as men after Adam is set aside, and we meet according to what we are IN CHRIST; He is Head and we are all members of His body, and each in our place before Him according to where He has been pleased to place us in the body; where too, all is subject to the power of the SPIRIT OF GOD. Thus assembled with Himself in our midst, He will have His joy in leading out our hearts in the Spirit's power, in praise and worship to the Father. The partaking of the Supper brings HIM to mind, so that our thoughts and hearts are set free of every hindrance to worship in spirit and in truth.

This is in keeping with the great care and detail in which the mind of God for His earthly people in their service of worship, was set forth by Him in the Old Testament times. We learn very much from the type of the Tabernacle, and also the offerings stipulated in the book of Leviticus; with all the priestly service in connection therewith.

It was the great privilege of His earthly people, under the Law, to have God dwelling in their midst, and to be able to draw near to Him as worshippers. The mind of God was that this should have been the privilege of every one in Israel, that they should be a Kingdom of Priests; but by reason of the failure of the people and also the fact that they departed from His grace and asked for the Law, only a special family was taken by God for the Priesthood, namely, that of Aaron and his sons; while the whole tribe of Levi was chosen by Him for the service of the Tabernacle. The qualification to serve thus in the things of and service of God was, as we know, that in the tribe of Levi was found regard for the holiness of God and what was due to Him, regardless of all other claims, even of the closest natural ties.

The worship too was expressed in the *offering* that was brought. All the offerings spoke, in one way or another, of the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, particularly of God's appreciation of these, and they also spoke of the blessing accruing to the offerer from that blessed life and death. As the offerer brought his offering it typified *his* measure of apprehension of the significance to God and His claims, of the death and life of the victim. The offerings of the priestly family, Aaron and his sons, as worshipping priests, are set out in detail in Leviticus viii., as also Exodus xxix.

The Lord Jesus made known to us, through His conversation with the woman at Sychar's well (John iv), that it is the desire of the Father to have worshippers—those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth—and the Christian company to-day, (the Assembly of God) are all constituted priests by God, to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter ii).

Unfortunately this great truth is not known amongst the Lord's people generally, and so many of them are content to have a special class of men "ordained" to undertake so-called priestly service for them.

There is no earthly priesthood now in connection with the worship of the FATHER; we have no high priest on earth and no earthly tabernacle or temple, nor is worship in any earthly sanctuary. Those who are His to-day, are heavenly in character and connected with the heavenly sanctuary of which the Lord Jesus is Minister in heaven. This we learn very clearly from the Epistle to the Hebrews.

We have no bullock to bring, or sheep or goats to offer; but we can present our worship to God. Where His earthly people had but the shadow, we have the substance. They offered that which was a type and pointed on to our Lord Jesus Christ; we are now able, as taught and empowered by the Spirit, to offer before the FATHER our appreciation of what the Lord Jesus

meant to Him in His life and death, and all else that is expressed in His Person, as well as what He has meant to us, and done for us. He is our Great High Priest, *through* whom and *with* whom—as sons of the heavenly family—we draw nigh to worship.

Worship, of course, is not confined to when the saints are assembled together. There is an individual worship, which is open to us all, at all times; but whether it be individual or collective, we see very clearly from the Old Testament types, that is only in our priestly character, i.e. as *of* Christ and *in* Christ that we can draw near. God has not in any way given up one iota of His holiness, and none can appear in that holy presence except in the value of the precious Blood and the efficacy of the perfect sacrifice of our beloved Lord and Saviour.

The realization of this must cause every godly soul to be very much in earnest, before Him, in the refusal of the allowance in ourselves of anything that is contrary to Him, i.e. all that finds its source in the natural and fleshly mind, which assuming to enter into the worship of God, would be of the nature of “strange fire.”

If what is set before us in the Old Testament is to be our guide (and such things were written aforetime for our learning) that which we find in the Book of Leviticus,

as well as that given us in the Epistle to the Hebrews, would give us to know that God would have us to enter into:—

1. All that the Lord Jesus in His life meant to the Father.

2. All that His death has secured for the glory of the Father.

3. The wonderful love of the Father to usward, as manifested in Him; in that He has given Him for us, and His purpose in so giving Him.

4. The preciousness of the Church to the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. The great vista of glory that is yet to be eternally established through His death upon the Cross.

6. Something of all the glories that centre in Jesus, and all else that the Spirit of God would teach us of the glory of that blessed One, our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom and through whom we learn the heart of God, and all that is to be known of Him.

So that, with the hands filled full with Spirit-taught appreciation of Christ, we may wave Him before the Father, sharing His delight in the Son of His love, and being brought by Him—the SON—to joy with *HIM* in His delight in the Father's love, which too, is the same love wherewith we are loved by the Father.

This cannot be produced like learning lessons out of a text book, but can only be the fruit of the Spirit's work in us; but one would desire that we may all be more subject to the Spirit's teaching and guidance, so that in the enjoyment of our place with the Father, in Christ, He—the Spirit—may lead us thus to worship when we are gathered together in Assembly from time to time. Then we shall not be limited to thanksgiving for that which is merely our benefit accruing from His precious blood-shedding.

J. F. ENGLISH.

THE LIFE OF FAITH.

(5) *Hebrews xii.* 1—17.

IN our first three papers we considered in each three different persons. Last month we called attention to the verse in which six men are grouped together. We now have our gaze focussed on one Man who has no peer, beside whom no man could be named, but who stands forth in all His pre-eminence and glory. His name is *JESUS*. Just as the inspired writer of the Epistle works up to a grand climax in chapter x. 19-22; so we can see how in this closing section he was conducting those to whom he wrote to this altogether unique Person in the glory of God.

The first word of chapter xii. links it with chapter xi. The "cloud of witnesses" refers not to angels, nor to our departed friends, but to the splendid pageant of the preceeding chapter. How great was the desire of God, and the exercise of His servant, that they should not drop out of the race. In the first place they must be in form for it by laying aside every weight, and by casting off the hindrance of sin, in order that they might run the race. A man running a race would be in deadly earnest. Thinking not of his "gallery" but of the winning post; not of the opinions of the people but of the laurel wreath. If success was to be his, he would think not of the possibility of his competitor getting in first and thus, becoming wearied and discouraged, drop out, but he would run with patience and endurance. Thus did Paul run and at the end he could say, "I have finished the race" (2 Timothy iv. 7. N. Tr.).

How many, alas! in these days, drop out! Some because they cling to the weights, things that end in smoke and that retard their progress; others hindered by actual sin; while others grow weary and faint. Let us see in verse two, the preventive; the incentive; the objective. "Looking unto Jesus." Three golden words.

We would urge our young friends in particular to make them the motto of their life. Begin the day with them; go through the

day with them; finish the day with them. "Looking unto Jesus." The significance of the word is, "Looking steadfastly off unto Jesus." It is recorded of Stephen that, having concluded his address, and just before he was stoned; "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (Acts vii. 55). Thus he finished his race and "fell asleep."

That is where we are to look, and upon the same Person who is there. He is the beginner, (margin) and finisher of faith. He inaugurated the path; He has completed it; He has reached the goal; and from "the right hand of the throne of God" He would encourage us to run, and to run with endurance, the race that is set before us. He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, yet, as the dependent Man, nothing affected his trust in God one single iota, then why should we be wearied and faint in our minds? He resisted unto blood; we are not called upon to do that, then why feel tempted to give up?

"That is all right," says one, "but what a life is mine! I have had sickness, bereavement, business reverse, unemployment, disappointment; the troubles of half a dozen people rolled into one, and I am just at breaking point. How can I run at all, not to speak of running with endurance?"

Perhaps the following verses are for you, troubled heart. They deal with the vexed subject of chastening.

Many Christians have erroneous ideas about chastening. They think it means that the Lord is punishing His own for something in their life that is not pleasing to Him. That is quite possible, and we must not turn aside the sharp edge of it. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth" (verse 6). His is a jealous love. He may put us through the fire of affliction to remove all that is obnoxious to Him, and that is calculated to hinder us in the race. On the other hand, He may send trial along in order that Christ may be expressed in us, and by us, more than ever before, and that we may carry a ministry of comfort to others (see 2 Corinthians i. 3-4).

There are three ways indicated in which chastening may be treated. Some may "despise it;" (verse 5) others may "faint under it" (verse 5); still others are "exercised thereby" (verse 11). A well-known servant of the Lord has illustrated it thus. On a wet day, a duck is quite indifferent to the weather conditions. It does not object to getting wet because it is quite used to it; it despises. A hen, in similar circumstances, looks a poor, miserable, bedraggled creature, and aptly describes a believer who is inclined to faint. A robin sings in the rain, but it changes its note.

We may not exactly sing while it rains; that is, while under the chastening, but the exercise caused thereby may produce the songs in due season.

In June last year, we had the opportunity of accompanying our Editor to Shetland and there we learned a lesson from the lark. It sang at midnight as well as mid-day. Our Editor remarked that Shetland might be called "The Land of the Midnight Lark." It sang when the day was bright and when it was dull, when it rained and when the sun shone. Please note this carefully, it sang as it soared upward, and as soon as it came to earth its song ceased. We were asked recently, "Can we soar upward in tears?" And we replied, "The lark soars upward *when it is raining*." How great is our tendency to come back to earth and then there is no song. The Lord very tenderly and graciously comes in; He stirs our nest; He puts His hand upon us; we are exercised; we ask Him—Why? We learn that He has been missing our song; and, "*afterward*," having learned our lesson we once again soar upward and sing His praise. To "despise" is fatal; to "faint" is to miss the blessing; to be "exercised" is to "*afterward*" secure "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (verse 11).

There is no need therefore to let the hands hang down, nor to allow the knees to become feeble. By so doing we may be

the means of others being turned out of the way. While we run the race, let us "follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (verse 14). A pithy, pointed, practical word which carries with it its own interpretation. Then let us see to it that we do not "fail of," or "lack," the grace of God; let us eschew every "root of bitterness;" and let us be careful that we do not despise our birthright; and miss that which God intends for us.

He would have us take our Christianity tremendously seriously. It is an uncommonly happy thing; but it is serious indeed. He has not saved us and taken us to heaven right away. He has saved us to run the race; He has provided the equipment; He has laid down the conditions; He has pointed out the dangers; and having done all that, He bids us run; not in any strength of ours, for we have none; not at our own charges; but by His grace; in His power; and for His glory.

We finish where we commenced with the three exquisite words, "Looking unto Jesus." *Looking!* LOOKING!! LOOKING!!! There is no effort in looking—is there? "Looking stedfastly off unto Jesus." What an Object for our contemplation; for our encouragement; for everything that we need to carry us through!

Weary, faint-hearted, discouraged, almost-dropping-out fellow-believer, take courage! Look away from yourself, your failings; your circumstances; your surroundings; your everything; and "looking steadfastly off unto Jesus" run, and "run with endurance," till the goal is reached, and you, with all His blood-bought people, see Him Himself, face to face.

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

Next month, God willing, Hebrews xii. 18-29. Kindly read the whole chapter over and over again.

"SHROUDS HAVE NO POCKETS."

WHAT a trite and obvious remark! The first time I heard it was when I passed on to a homely woman something for which I had no further use. It was *her* way of expressing her satisfaction at receiving something useful to her, remarking, "Some folk can never let go of anything they have. I once heard a sermon of which the text was, 'Shrouds have no pockets.'"

We both gave a laugh at the triteness of the utterance, but, as I pondered it, I wondered what lesson the old-time servant of Christ had enforced from what some might regard as a platitude. There was no means of ascertaining this point, so fancy began to weave a little homily to

myself based on the simple words, "Shrouds have no pockets."

First I reflected, apart from the blessed hope of the Lord's return, we are all safe to wear a shroud eventually. It is the common lot of man. Shrouds may differ in quality, but broadly speaking all who wear a shroud are on a dead level. All that has distinguished mankind previous to death has vanished by the time they wear a shroud. Most of what man has lived for and toiled for has vanished when he dons a shroud.

A man may have signally outshone his fellows, or may have fallen behind in life's race, but from the point of view of a shroud what does it matter? Cæsar and "The Unknown Warrior" must both have donned shrouds, but neither carried away with him the fruits of his victory.

So it is with other less distinguished characters. Man toils, hopes for some tangible result from his life's work, only to find at the finish that he can carry nothing with him—"shrouds have no pockets." As Job wails, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither" (chapter i. 21).

I address myself now more specially to those who are God's people, who have had vouchsafed to them more light than had the saintly patriarch, Job, and more light

than has the ordinary worldling. What about us, Christians? Are we spending our lives as though shrouds had pockets? "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven," speaks the Lord to His disciples (Matthew vi. 19, 20).

Treasures need not necessarily be in cash, or even in kind. The world boasts many sorts of treasure—fame, prestige, culture, ease, position and the like. The acid test to the treasure we may be accumulating lies in the answer to the enquiry, "Will it survive death?"

What treasure *will* survive death? What of intrinsic value shall we be allowed to carry with us of all our possessions? One only, OUR CHRISTIAN CHARACTER, that which has been worked in the heart of each one between the moment of his conversion and of his dissolution, that of which the Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians iv. 19., "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until *Christ be formed in you.*" Each redeemed soul will surely bear some likeness to Christ, worked out by the Holy Spirit, and this Christ-image embryonic or developed, will be the one treasure, which we shall retain even through death.

Why then strive unduly to accumulate those treasures, which we must needs lose, while being unmindful of the one treasure

that matters. If it has become the habit of our lives to put first things 'first, to value God's interests in this world before our personal gain, wishful only to spend and be spent, we shall have no reason to regret that shrouds have no pockets.

E. M. POLLOCK.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(2 *Corinthians iv.* 15—*v.* 12.)

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

PAUL'S ministry and service are still in view in verse 15, and the "all things" of that verse refer to the treasure with which he had been entrusted, the mercy that carried him in triumph through the persecution and discipline, the resurrection world which lay at the end. All these things were not matters purely personal to Paul, but through him were for the sake of the whole church of God. Consequently the Corinthians had an interest and a share in it all, and could add their thanksgivings to Paul's to the greater glory of God. We too may join in the thanksgiving though nearly nineteen centuries have passed; for what great blessing has reached us through his inspired epistles which sprang out of these experiences, written for our sakes as well as for the Cor-

inthians. We too shall be presented with Paul and the Corinthians in the resurrection world.

There is nothing like having the resurrection full in view as an antidote against fainting. That glorious hope sustained the Apostle and it will sustain us. In the last verse of 1 Corinthians xv., we see how it inspires to active labour in the work of the Lord. Here, we discover how it sustains and encourages under the severest trials which threaten the perishing of the outward man: that is, the dissolution of the body in death.

And not only is there resurrection in the future but also a work of renewal in the present. "Our outward man" is the material body with which we are clothed. "The inward man" is not material but spiritual—that spiritual entity that we each possess, and which (since we are believers) has become the subject of God's new creation work. The current usage of this phrase in the world is a total misapplication of it. A man speaks of paying attention to "the demands of the inner man" when he means having a good meal to satisfy his stomach; and thus even the inner man is turned into a part of the anatomy of the outward man. This of course is symptomatic of the fact that the spiritual does not come within the range of the natural man.

The outward man is subject to all kinds of buffetings and wear and tear, yet it *may* in the mercy of God receive a certain amount of renewal, which may stave off for a time that ultimate perishing which we call death. The inward man IS renewed day by day. This renewal is doubtless produced by the gracious ministry of the Spirit of God, who indwells us.

What an extraordinary and inspiring picture is presented to our mental vision by this passage. Here is the Apostle; he has years of strenuous and dangerous labours behind him. He is continually being troubled and persecuted and battered by men, and again and again "delivered unto death" in the providential dealings of God. Yet he is pressing forward with undaunted courage, with the light of the future glory of resurrection before his eyes; and though he is worn as to his body, and signs of decay are appearing, he is being renewed daily in his spirit so that he goes forward with unabated or even increased spiritual vigour. He felt all the trouble that came upon him, yet he dismisses it as "our light affliction."

The affliction is not only light but also only "for a moment." In Paul's case it lasted from the days shortly after his conversion, when the Jews of Damascus took counsel to kill him, to the day when he suffered martyrdom: a period covering

thirty years or more. This period is only a moment to him because his mind is set on an eternity of glory. What tremendous contrasts we have here! The coming glory is weighty and not light: for eternity and not merely for a moment: and it is this in a "far more exceeding" way. It might have seemed enough to say it was exceeding. To say it is "*more* exceeding" seems almost superfluous. But, "*far more* exceeding!" Paul piles on the words. It is something excessively surpassing! He knew it, for fourteen years before he had been caught up into the third heaven and had glimpses of it. He wishes us to know it too.

The secret of the Apostle's wonderful career is found in the last verse of the chapter. The "look" of which he speaks is, of course, the look of faith. He was passing through the scenes and circumstances of earth, which were very visible, yet he was not looking at them. He was looking at the eternal things, which are not visible to mortal eyes. Here doubtless is discovered to us where much of our weakness lies. Our faith is weak like Peter's was when he essayed to walk on the waters to go to Jesus. He looked at the raging waves which were so very visible, and he began to sink. If, like Paul, we had our eyes upon Christ, upon resurrection, upon glory, we should be upheld by divine power and inwardly be renewed day by day.

There is no real break between chapters iv. and v., for he passes on to show that if our outward man does perish, and so our earthly tabernacle house be dissolved, we are to have a house of another order which shall be eternal. The thought of what is *eternal* links these verses together. Eternal things are brought within the sight of our faith. An eternal weight of glory awaits us. And we shall need a resurrection body, which shall be eternal, in order to sustain that eternal weight of glory without being crushed by it. It is absolutely certain that such a resurrection body shall be ours. "*We know*," he says. He had established that fact in the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle; so that they knew it as well as he.

Our bodies are spoken of as houses in which we dwell, and very appropriately so. Our present bodies are only "tabernacle" or "tent" houses, comparatively flimsy structures and easily taken down. Our future bodies in the resurrection world will be of a different order, as 1 Corinthians xv, has shown us. Here we learn that they will be "not made with hands;" that is, spiritual, and not of an earthly or human order. They will be eternal, for in them we shall enter into eternal scenes. Also they will be heavenly. Our present bodies are natural and earthly and abide but for a time.

In these opening verses of chapter v. we read of being "clothed," and being "unclothed;" of being "clothed upon," and of being "naked." We dwell at present in an earthly tent, clothed in bodies of humiliation. Presently we shall be clothed in glorified bodies of a spiritual, eternal and heavenly order. All the dead will be raised; even the wicked will appear before their Judge clothed in bodies. But though clothed they will be found spiritually naked before that great white throne. If we are true Christians we shall never be found naked thus, though we may be unclothed, for that word denotes the state of those saints who are "absent from the body" (verse 5) in the presence of the Lord. Paul himself, and myriads more beside, are unclothed at the present moment, but that unclothed state, blessed though it is, is not the great object of our desire. What we do long for, while we groan in our present weakness, is this clothing upon with our house from heaven.

All those who are raised will be "clothed," but only the saints will be "clothed upon," for the reference here is to that which will take place at the coming of the Lord. The term is perhaps particularly appropriate as regards those who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord. Such will all be changed, and so enter the resurrection state. They will in

the twinkling of an eye be invested with their glorified bodies, and so clothed upon with their house from heaven. Thus in a moment mortality—which is attached to our present bodies—will be swallowed up of life.

Let us not read the two expressions, “in the heavens,” and “from heaven,” in a materialistic sense, as some have done. We must not conceive of our future glorified bodies as though they were a new and improved suit of clothes, already existing somewhere in heaven, and coming to us straight out of heaven. So thinking, we should find ourselves in collision with 1 Corinthians xv. 42-44, where a certain identity is preserved between the body of humiliation which is put down into the ground and the body of glory that is raised up. Those expressions indicate character rather than place. Heaven is our destiny, and we shall enter there in bodies which are heavenly in their origin and character.

We have the happy assurance of these things, and can say, “we know,” because God has *spoken* and revealed them to us. But not only so, He has *acted* in keeping with what He has revealed. He has already “wrought us” for this very thing. This alludes to that spiritual work wrought in us and with us by the Holy Ghost. God by His Spirit has been the Potter, and we have been the clay. This clothing upon,

of which we have just been speaking, is described in Romans viii. as the quickening of our mortal bodies. Our mortal bodies *shall be* quickened, but already God *has* wrought a quickening work as regards our souls, and this present work is in anticipation of the work that is yet to be done as regards our bodies. Moreover He has already given us His Spirit, as the Earnest of what is to come.

What God has wrought by His Spirit must be distinguished from the Spirit Himself, given to those who are subjects of His work. The order in this fifth verse is first, the work of the Spirit: second, the indwelling of the Spirit as the Earnest; the one preparatory to the other.

Hence the Apostle can say, "we are always confident." How could it be otherwise? We have the plain revelation of God as to it. We have the work of God in keeping with it. We have the gift of God—even His Holy Spirit—as the pledge and foretaste of it. Could anything be more certain and secure? Difficulties may throng around us, as they did around Paul. We too may groan, as burdened in our mortal bodies. But that which lies before us in resurrection is perfectly clear and sure. We too may be always confident: as confident when our sky is filled with black thunder clouds as when it is for the moment wholly blue.

For the moment we are at home in the body and absent from the Lord, left here to walk not by sight but by faith. Paul's confidence was such that he was willing—even more than willing, *pleased*—to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. This is his portion to-day, and the portion of all those who have died in the faith of Christ. They are absent from their bodies which have been laid in the grave, waiting the moment when they shall be clothed in bodies of glory. But even now they are present with the Lord, and in all the conscious blessedness of His presence, as the opening verses of chapter xii. bear witness.

There are those who assert that assurance and confidence as to one's future is bound to have a disastrous effect on one's behaviour. That idea however is definitely negatived by verse 9. Were it a true idea we should read, "We are confident, I say . . . wherefore we"—take our ease and are indifferent and careless. The exact opposite is what it does say—"wherefore we labour . . ." The word here is not the usual one for "work." It has the sense of "being zealous," or even "ambitious." The very confidence we have stirs us to an earnest zeal; and this is our ambition that come what may, whether life or death, we may be "accepted of Him," or, "agreeable to Him." We are "accepted in the Beloved" as Ephesians i. tells us. Now we

want to be agreeable, or well-pleasing, to Him.

This desire to please the Lord is surely an instinctive one in every heart that loves Him; yet all too often it does not burn as it should. So the Apostle now brings in another fact that is calculated to stir it to greater vehemence. When He comes Christ will set up His judgment seat. It will not be like a criminal court: that is reserved for the occasion when the great white throne is established, as we see in Revelation xx. It will be more like a naval prize court, when the judges sit to adjudicate as to captures during naval warfare, and the actions of officers and men come up for review, and prize money is awarded in many cases.

Before that judgment seat we must all appear; that is, we must all be manifested. Everything must come into the light in the presence of our Lord. Would we wish it to be otherwise? If there were left episodes of our lives, some of them marked by failure and shame, as to which the Lord had never had anything to say to us, would there not be a sense of reserve? Would not our otherwise bright eternity be clouded over in part by the feeling that some day they might be dragged into the light? Solemn though that judgment seat must be, it is yet a matter for rejoicing that it is to stand at the very threshold of the eter-

nity of glory that awaits us. Before it we ourselves are to be manifested, and consequently all that we have been and done will come under the scrutiny of our Lord. That will mean seeing everything as through His eyes, and getting His verdict. It will mean the unravelling of every mysterious episode that has marked our way; the discovery of the why and wherefore of innumerable trying experiences; together with a full understanding of the amazing grace of our God, and the efficacy of the Priesthood and Advocacy of Christ.

It will also mean reward or loss, according to what has been done "in the body;" that is, in the whole of our lives of responsibility here. This is what we see also in 1 Corinthians iii. 14, 15; only there it is distinctly a question of the character of our work as servants of the Lord. Here it is more general and comprehensive, being a question of all our actions and ways.

The thought of that judgment seat evidently carried the mind of the Apostle on to the fact that before the Lord Jesus ultimately all men will stand, whether saved or unsaved. And as he thought of these latter, and recognized what the terror of it would be for them, he was moved to warn and persuade them. He was moved also in another direction more personal to himself and the Corinthians: moved to live in such a way as to be manifested to

God, and also in the consciences of his fellow-Christians.

The word for "manifest" really occurs three times in these two verses, but at the beginning of verse 10 it is translated, "appear." Substitute "be manifested" there, and the connection becomes plain. If we live our lives in the remembrance of the certainty of being manifested before the judgment seat, we shall be careful to maintain open, honest, manifested dealings with God now. When we sin we shall at once humble ourselves in confession before Him, and attempt to conceal or palliate nothing. Further we shall, like Paul, not attempt to appear other than we are in the eyes of our fellow-believers. We shall be open and transparent in all our dealings with them, and not desire or seek a cheap reputation for a devotedness or sanctity which we do not possess. There were some in Paul's day who were doing this, as verse 12 bears witness.

Are we living in the light of the judgment seat? A great question this! Let each answer it in his own conscience before God. Depend upon it, if we are we shall be characterized by lives of devotedness, unworldliness and zeal. We shall be transparent before both God and man. And we shall be keen to persuade men as Paul was. We shall earnestly seek the salvation of souls to the glory of God.

F. B. HOLE.

THE LIFE OF FAITH.

(6) *Hebrews xii.* 18-29.

IN the latter half of this chapter we seem to have something different from that which has gone before, and yet the first word of verse eighteen distinctly connects it therewith. In verse fifteen we read—we trust we all did read—the practical exhortation to “look diligently lest any man fail of [or, lack] the grace of God.” Now they were to learn how they had been transferred from the rule of the law to the system of grace.

Probably they could appreciate the language of these verses better than we can, because they had been born and bred under the dominion of the law and had been made painfully conscious of their inability to keep it. The Jew knew much about Mount Sinai; he also knew about Mount Sion, though to his mind it was still future. We can therefore imagine the intense interest with which the Hebrew believers would read, or listen to, these remarkable words.

To catch their significance we should read the opening words of verses eighteen and twenty-two together. “*For ye are not come*

unto the Mount that might be touched. *But ye are* come unto Mount Sion." Mount Sinai was an awe-inspiring sight. The majesty, the greatness, the holiness, the power of God were there displayed. The parenthetical twenty-first and twenty-second verses give us an idea of it. We do well to linger over these verses and to consider them well.

We, in this age of grace, occupy a position in relation to God unknown in any dispensation in the world's history. We know Him as the Father, and we are privileged to come to Him in all the simplicity, and liberty, and confidence of children. Let us never forget however, that He is God. Then we will be marked by a reverence when we speak to Him, when we speak about Him, and when we sit before Him, that is not by any means too much in evidence in the present day. The Hebrew believers were to learn that they had *not* come to Mount Sinai where the law was given, but they had come to Mount Sion where royal grace abounded.

It has been pointed out that it will assist in our understanding of verses twenty-two to twenty-four, if we observe that the word "and" indicates the various divisions. Let us look at our Bibles and we shall see that at once. "Mount Sion" then speaks of grace. Obviously that must come first.

Next, "The city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," which would speak of the Church in its administrative capacity in a future day. The city has a two-fold aspect. Abraham was told to count the stars, if he could, the heavenly side; and the sand, if that was possible, the earthly side; "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God," and doubtless that is what we have here.

Then, "An innumerable company of angels, the general assembly," or "the universal gathering." This reminds us of Psalm lxxviii. 17, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." Angels have ever played a prominent part in God's ways; and their interest in the Church, as well as their service to those who compose it, we learn from Ephesians iii. 10, and Hebrews i. 14.

After that, "The church of the firstborn [ones] whose names are written [or enrolled] in heaven." That is the only register in which our names need be enrolled. Under the old order God claimed the firstborn for Himself. He still does so, but all who form the Church are "firstborn ones" and therefore belong exclusively to Him.

After all these previous statements why do we now read, "And to God the Judge of all"? That sounds very alarming,

but it need not be. The Apostle Paul in telling Timothy of his near departure wrote, "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Timothy iv. 8). Paul will receive that crown from the Judge, and the *righteous* Judge at that; and so will all them also *that love His appearing*. Demas is not likely to receive it, because he "*loved this present world*" (verse 10). Those who love this present world do not love His appearing, and *vice versa*. So that to come "to God the Judge of all," while having a sobering effect, should fill the heart with joy.

We proceed: "And to the spirits of just men made perfect." We have only to connect this with chapter xi. 39, 40, to catch the meaning right away.

Then the best seems to be reserved to the last. "And to Jesus." We have come to Jesus. "Of course we have," they might have said, as we, through mercy, can say, and praise His Name for it. We seem to be carried back to the beginning of our Christian history. But let us look at the verse again.

"And to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." The first covenant showed what God required from man; the new covenant

showed what God offered to man. The first covenant meant death, the new covenant brought life. The first covenant demonstrated man's inability to approach God, the new covenant told the story of God's approach to man.

On what is it based? "And to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel."—surely the blood of Abel's sacrifice. When we partook of the Lord's Supper last Lord's Day (Did you do so, dear reader? If not, why not?) as we drank of the cup, did we not hear our precious Lord saying to us, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, shed for you."

But let us consider this verse further. If we did not have this we might ask, how was the transfer from the reign of law to the system of grace righteously made? Here we have the secret. Between Mount Sinai and Mount Sion comes Mount Calvary. There every demand of divine justice was satisfied; and now, on a righteous ground, they who were under the power of law have been brought under the sway of grace. Not only so, but we who were not under law have been brought under the same beneficent rule, and such is the triumph of grace, that now the righteous requirement of the law is "fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit" (Romans viii. 4, N. Tr.).

Verses twenty-five and twenty-six of our chapter are solemn. The whole epistle shows that the writer took into account that among the Hebrew believers were those who were mere professors. They had for the time being changed over from the Jewish religion to what they might call the Christian religion. Chapters vi. and x. show that very clearly. Hence these serious words. The close of verse twenty-six shows that everything — earth and Heaven — will be shaken. We see that now, so far as the earth is concerned, as perhaps it has never been seen before. But the writer of the Epistle and the Hebrew Christians, as well as we who believe now, are among those of whom it is written, "wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved." Thank God for that. Everything here is being shaken. Man in his ingenuity is seeking to build up a vast system without God, and "in one hour" it will come crashing down (Revelation xviii. 10, 17, 19). We have a kingdom which cannot be moved. We are not going to trust in a world that will go to pieces. We have that which cannot be moved and all our real interest is in that.

"But that is future," says some one. It is. "Then why are we left here?" To serve God. That was the business of these Hebrew Christians in their day, and it is our business in this day. Just in the niche in which God has placed us, be it humble

and obscure, or be it prominent, "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

Lastly there is a striking word: "For our God is a consuming fire." That was written to believers. It is comforting to us. The fire tests. It consumes all that is not pleasing to God, in order that what is pleasurable to Him may remain, and may in a coming day, be displayed to His praise and glory. Surely all this is calculated to lead us to magnify the grace of God and to produce, or deepen, the desire to be found here well pleasing to Himself.

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

Next month, God willing, concluding paper on Hebrews xiii. Kindly read the whole chapter over and over again.

THE CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN.

SURELY a follower of Him, who said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew xi. 29.), must be a Christian gentleman. It is interesting that in the verse just quoted our Lord says of Himself, "I am meek and lowly *in heart*." Meekness and lowliness were not merely thin veneers

covering that which was coarse and unsightly, but, as a blessed perfect Man down here, He was meek and lowly *in Himself*, in His nature, and therefore His ways were characterized by what He was.

It was said that someone remarked to the late G. V. Wigram, the well-known servant of Christ, "There will be no gentlemen in heaven;" to which he replied, "On the contrary they'll *ALL* be gentlemen there."

True we use the word "gentleman" in a technical sense, and certainly there will be no class distinctions in heaven. In Christ "there is neither Greek nor Jew [no national distinctions], circumcision nor uncircumcision [no religious distinctions], Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free [no social distinctions], but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians iii. 11).

We have known men born in the social rank designated "gentle folk," who were anything but gentlemen; and we have known men born in the humblest strata of society, who were true gentlemen, for they were "meek and lowly *in heart*."

The origin of the word "gentleman," is obvious—a *gentle man*. The world requires gentlemen. In the late war the seeds of roughness and brutality were sown by the writings of the mad philosopher, Nietzsche. Gentleness was despised as effeminate.

Yet we read in Psalm xviii. 35., "Thy gentleness hath made me great;" and in 2 Corinthians x. 1., Paul, whose Christian gentleness we are about to consider, wrote, "Now I, Paul, myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

We shall surely find in the Apostle Paul, who so evidently had taken the yoke of the meek and lowly One upon him, the traits that mark the Christian gentleman.

We find Paul joining the name of Sosthenes with his own in the first inspired letter to the Corinthian assembly; in the second epistle we find Timothy's name associated with that of the Apostle; in the Epistle to the Colossians we find the name of Timotheus again linked up with that of the Apostle Paul; in the two Epistles to the Thessalonians we get the names of Silvanus and Timotheus associated with that of Paul.

A beautiful delicacy of feeling marks the Apostle in this. Instead of lowering him and putting him in our mind on an intellectual and spiritual level with the ones associated with him, our admiration for Paul is only heightened. A little man would not have acted thus. He was the chiefest of the Apostles, his rank and authority unchallenged by all the spiritually minded saints in his era. The flesh in the Apostle might be jealous to maintain such a position, and pride would certainly have kept

the names of his associates out of the ascriptions of these epistles.

But no, with his heart set in following at all costs Him, who was meek and lowly *in heart*, Paul was characterized by the traits that marked his Master. And so he beautifully associates these brethren with himself in writing these Epistles.

In the Corinthian assembly leaders arose, who were of a different spirit to the Apostle. They allowed themselves, possibly courting the position, to become leaders of factions in the assembly. The assembly was likely to be rent in pieces. But how delicately he administered the rebuke. He did not mention the names of these leaders, holding them up to opprobrium all down the ages from that day to this. He wrote, "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul ; and I of Apollos ; and I of Cephas ; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided ? was Paul crucified for you ? or were ye baptised in the name of Paul ? " (1 Corinthians i. 12, 13.). But Paul and Apollos and Cephas were not in the Corinthian assembly. It was other nameless brethren and their foolish followers that were responsible for the sad state of things.

But Paul tactfully and beautifully administered the rebuke all the more effectively by using his own name and those of Apollos and Cephas (see 1 Corinthians iv. 6). If he had rebuked the parties con-

cerned by using their names, they might have retorted, "It is all very well brother Paul, to rebuke us. The fact is you are jealous of *your* position, and therefore seek thus to dispose of us, that you may be unchallenged." How effectual was the rebuke when he used his own name,—*and meant it*. The Church of God was one, and it was too precious to Paul, who wrote of these very Corinthians, "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Corinthians xi. 2), to allow him to become the leader of a faction or a party. He acted as a Christian gentleman, "*meek and lowly in heart*."

Another instance of Christian delicacy of feeling is beautifully seen in the verse, "As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you to the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time" (1 Corinthians xvi. 12.) One can discern no pique in the mind of the Apostle. He might have thought his position as chiefest of the Apostles warranted instant submission on the part of Apollos. A little man would have acted differently. There is a breadth of graciousness that is refreshing.

We have the spectacle of popes big and little in the world. Diotrophes, loving to

have the pre-eminence was a pope. The first of a long line of troublers. The Apostle was not one such. "Meek and lowly *in heart*," he comported himself as the Christian gentleman, one who lived in the sense of the grace of God. He allowed others freedom before God, and did not try to over-ride his brethren in virtue of his apostleship.

May this meekness and lowliness characterize us all.

A. J. POLLOCK.

AN EXHORTATION TO ZEAL.

(The late Bishop Ryle wrote this a good many years ago. Let every reader challenge his heart as to whether it has a message for him — Ed.)

LET me say something *to arouse* those who make a profession of being decided Christians, and are yet lukewarm in their practice. There are only too many, I regret to say, in this state of soul. Reader, if you are one, let me speak to your conscience. I desire to put the question in all brotherly affection, Where is your zeal?—Where is your zeal for the glory of God, and for extending the Gospel throughout the world? You know well it is very low. You know well that your zeal is a little feeble glimmering spark that

just lives, and no more;—it is like a thing ready to die. Surely there is a fault somewhere if this is the case. This state of things ought not to be. You, the child of God,—you, redeemed at so glorious a price,—you, ransomed with such precious blood,—you, who are an heir of glory such as no tongue ever yet told, or eye saw;—surely you ought to be a man of another kind. Surely your zeal ought not to be so small.

I deeply feel that this is a painful subject to touch upon. I do with reluctance, and with a constant remembrance of my own unprofitableness. Nevertheless truth ought to be spoken. The plain truth is that many believers in the present day seem so dreadfully afraid of doing harm that they hardly ever dare do good. There are many who are fruitful in objections, but barren in actions; rich in wet blankets, but poor in anything like Christian fire. They are like the Dutch Deputies who would never allow Marlborough to venture anything, and by their excessive caution prevented many a victory being won. Truly, in looking round the Church of Christ, a man might sometimes think that God's kingdom had come, and God's will was being done upon earth, so small is the zeal that some believers show. It is vain to deny it. I need not go far for evidence. I point to societies for doing good to the heathen, the colonies, and the dark places of our own land, languishing and standing still for want of ac-

tive support. I ask *is this zeal*? I point to thousands of miserable guinea subscriptions which are never missed by the givers and yet make up the sum of their Christian liberality. I ask *is this zeal*? I point to false doctrine allowed to grow up in our midst without an effort being made to check it, while so-called believers look on and content themselves with wishing it was not so. I ask *is this zeal*? Would the Apostles have been satisfied with such a state of things? We know they would not.

Never were there such doors of usefulness opened,—never were there so many opportunities for doing good. I loathe that squeamishness which refuses to help religious works if there is a blemish about the instrument by which the work is carried on. At this rate we might never do anything at all. Resist the feeling, reader, if you are tempted by it. It is one of Satan's devices. It is better to work with feeble instruments than not to work at all . . . If you have only one talent, do not bury it in the ground. Try to live so as to be missed. There is far more to be done in twelve hours than most of us have ever yet done on any day in our lives.

Think of *precious souls* which are perishing, while you are sleeping. Be taken up with your inward conflicts if you will. Go on anatomizing your own feelings, and poring over your own corruptions, if you

are so determined. But remember all this time souls are going to hell, and you might do something to save them by working, by giving, by writing, by begging, and by prayer. Oh, awake, be zealous, and repent.

Think of the *shortness of time*. You will soon be gone. You will have no opportunity for works of mercy in another world. In heaven there will be no ignorant people to instruct and no unconverted to reclaim. Whatever you do must be done now. Oh! when are you going to begin? Awake! be zealous, and repent.

Think of *the devil*, and his zeal to do harm. It was a solemn saying of old Bernard when he said that "Satan would rise up in judgment against some people at the last day, because he had shown more zeal to ruin souls than they had to save them." Awake! be zealous, and repent.

Think of *your Saviour*, and all His zeal for you. Think of Him in Gethsemane and on Calvary, shedding His blood for sinners. Think of His life and death,—His sufferings and His doings. This He has done for you. What are you doing for Him? Oh, resolve that for the time to come you will spend and be spent for Him. Awake! be zealous, and repent.

Now let me say something to encourage all readers of these pages who are truly zealous Christians.

I have but one request to make, and that is that *you will persevere*. I do beseech you never to 'go back from your first works, never to leave your first love, never to let it be said of you that your first things were better than your last. Beware of cooling down. You have only to be lazy and sit still, and you will soon lose all your warmth. You will soon become another man from what you are now. Oh, reader! do not think this a needless exhortation.

It may be very true that wise young believers are very rare. But it is no less true that zealous old believers are very rare also. Never allow yourself to think that you can do too much,—that you can spend and be spent too much for Christ's cause. For one man that does too much I will show you a thousand who do not do enough. Rather think that the night cometh, when no man can work Lay to heart the words of that noble-minded Jansenist, who said when told that he ought to rest a little, "What should we rest for? have we not all eternity to rest in?"

Fear not the reproach of men. Faint not because you are sometimes abused. Heed it not if you are sometimes called bigot, enthusiast, fanatic, mad man, and fool. There is nothing disgraceful in these titles. They have often been given to the best and wisest of men. If you are only to be zealous when you are praised for it,—

if the wheels of your zeal must be oiled by the world's commendation, your zeal will be but short-lived. Care not for the praise or frown of man. There is but one thing worth caring for, and that is the praise of God. There is but one question worth asking about our actions: "How will they look in the day of judgment?"

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(2 *Corinthians* v. 13—vi. 10)

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

THE Apostle Paul was marked by a very fervent zeal. It produced within him a great desire to be acceptable to the Lord, to be open and transparent with his brethren, and to persuade men in view of the coming judgment. His zeal was such that sometimes it carried him clean outside himself, and men labelled him as fanatical, as Festus did when he called out, "Paul, thou art beside thyself." But Paul was no fanatic, for when thus beside himself it was "to God;" that is, God was the Object before him; he was outside himself because God was so truly inside—"he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John iv. 16).

We may find it difficult to understand this being "beside ourselves," and still more difficult to explain it. That may be because it is an experience almost, if not entirely, unknown to us. Very possibly we move in circles where zeal of the Pauline stamp would be looked upon as fleshly energy from the spiritual standpoint, and quite bad form from the social point of view. How great then is our loss !

But Paul was not always in an ecstasy Godward. He also knew well how to look out with sober-minded wisdom upon the interests of his Lord. Then he cared in a calculating way for the people of God, the Corinthians among them. And in this, as much as in the other, the love of Christ was the power that wrought within Him and constrained him. That love had been expressed in His death, and it exerted its pressure on Paul, both in his affections toward God and His saints, and also as guiding his judgment. Constrained by the love, he was able to judge aright as to the significance of the death in which the love was expressed.

Christ "died for all." Here we have His death stated in its widest extent. He did not die for the Jew merely nor for any lesser circle than "all." This is a fact in which we may well rejoice, but what does it imply ? This, that all were in a state of spiritual death: all were but dead men be-

fore God. This was the *implication* of His death.

But what was the *purpose* of His death? Its purpose was to provide a way of life for at least some, and to alter the whole character of life for these living ones.

Verse 15, you notice, begins with His death and ends with His resurrection. The intervening words set forth the design and purpose connected with those two great facts. They were in order that those who have been quickened into life might find in the risen Christ the Object and End of the new life they live. In our unconverted days we each of us had ourselves as the object and end of our lives. Everything was made to revolve around and contribute to self. Now things are to be entirely different with us, and everything in life is to revolve around and contribute to the interest and glory of Christ. Such at least is the Divine purpose and intention for us.

Verse 16 springs out of this, as the first word, "Wherefore," bears witness. Because Christ is no longer among us in the life of this world, and because we also now live in connection with Him, a new order of things has come in. Even Christ Himself is known by us in a new way. Paul had not been amongst those who knew Christ "according to flesh" in the days of His flesh. But even if he had been, he would have known

Him thus no longer. But also we know *no man* after the flesh. That is not because men are not in the old condition according to flesh; for the great mass of them are. It is because of the subjective change wrought in ourselves. The Christian learns to look at men in a new way, not because of what has been wrought in them but because of what has been wrought in himself.

What has been wrought is stated in verse 17—a work of new creation in Christ. As newly created in Christ we find ourselves in a new world. We are not there yet as regards our bodies. That awaits the coming of the Lord. But we are there as regards our minds and spirits. Even to-day our spirits move amid things totally new, things utterly unknown in our unconverted days; also even the old things of this present creation, amongst which we move, are viewed by us in a new way.

This truth needs to be thoroughly digested by all of us. How much difficulty arises amongst Christians because they know and have dealings with one another according to flesh, that is, on the old basis and after the manner of the world. Then it is the easiest and most natural thing possible to drop into parties and cliques, to have our likes and dislikes, to be tremendously friendly with this or that fellow-believer until some disagreement arises, when an equally

tremendous antagonism breaks out. All that kind of thing, even the friendship and the pleasantries and the apparent concord, rests on a wrong basis. It is according to flesh, and not according to new creation and the Spirit of God. If all saints knew one another upon the new basis what a transformation would come over the aspect of things that at present prevails in the church of God.

Verse 18 adds a further fact. We are reconciled to God *by* Jesus Christ, as well as being a new creation *in* Christ. Now reconciliation involves the removal of all that is offensive to God in us and about us, including that enmity of heart that kept us away from Him. As the fruit of reconciliation God can look down upon us with joy and complacency, and we can look up to Him with confidence and responsive love.

When Christ was here, God was in Him with reconciliation in view for the whole world. He came to bring men to God, not to arraign them before God, bringing them to book as regards their sins. This we see strikingly exemplified in John viii. 11. But God's overtures to men in Christ, with reconciliation in view, were rejected and He was put to death. It is one of the chief wonders of the Gospel that notwithstanding this His death became the basis of the reconciliation that is being announced to-day.

We believers are now reconciled to God; and as reconciled ourselves we have a part in the ministry of reconciliation. When the Apostle wrote, "We are ambassadors for Christ," he probably was thinking of himself and his fellow-labourers and the other apostles, for they were in a special sense put in trust with the Gospel; yet his words have an application to every believer. The church of God is like a divine embassy in the hostile world, and each of us has to remember that we are a part of that embassy, and that our attitude towards men has to be in keeping with the word of reconciliation that we carry. At the end of verse 20 we get as in a nutshell what the word of reconciliation is. The words, "you," "you," and "ye," are not in the original. "God as it were beseeching by us, we entreat for Christ, Be reconciled to God" (N. Tr.).

And if, when we thus entreat men, they turn to us asking on what basis such a reconciliation is possible, we can answer in the words of the last verse. The basis lies in God's own act, accomplished in the death of Christ.

There is a profound depth in verse 21 that defies all our feeble attempts at explanation. That God should make Christ to be a sacrifice for sin might be explained in terms of those Old Testament sacrifices

that furnish a type of His sacrifice. But that God should make Him, who knew no sin, TO BE SIN for us baffles all explanation. Again, we might offer some explanation of how we are justified, of how righteousness is imputed to those who believe. But how we may in Him be MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD is beyond us. Sin wholly characterized us, and all that we were He was made when He died on the cross. Righteousness wholly characterizes God, and that which He is we are made in Christ.

On the one hand then, all that we were is removed, and all that God is has been established, and we established in it. Here evidently is a perfect and unchallengeable basis for the reconciliation that we enjoy, and that we are privileged to proclaim to others.

Let us pause at this point to observe how the Apostle has been led through a considerable digression, from about verse 7 of chapter iv., springing out of the reference there made to the circumstances pressing in upon himself as a minister of the new covenant and the vessel of the light. The digression is completed at the end of chapter v., and again we see him as a minister, but this time of the word of reconciliation. The word of reconciliation doubtless goes beyond the terms of the ministry of the new covenant, and it is helpful

to distinguish the one from the other. Yet we must not divide them as though there were two gospels. The one gospel of God is so great and comprehensive that it may be considered in these varied ways.

As we open chapter vi., we find Paul making a personal application and an appeal to the Corinthians concerning these things. Paul and his companions were fellow-workers in connection with the ministry (the words, "with Him," are to be omitted); and they had faithfully brought the word, whether of new covenant grace or of reconciliation, to the Corinthians. Now their beseeching was that the grace of the Gospel should not be received in vain by them. Grace is received in vain if it does not work out to its legitimate end and effect. In the epistle to Titus we are told how grace teaches us to live in a sober, righteous and godly way, and the Corinthians were very defective in these things; so the exhortation was needed by them, as also it is needed by us.

Verse 2 is parenthetical and in brackets. The first part of it is a quotation from Isaiah xlix. 8. The words quoted are addressed prophetically to the Messiah, who was to be rejected, and yet become a light to the Gentiles and salvation to the end of the earth. In spite of His rejection He should be heard and helped of Jehovah; and the hour when He should be heard and helped would be the time accepted and the

day of salvation. The latter part of the verse points out that we are living in that very hour. He has been heard in resurrection, and with His resurrection the day of salvation has begun. It will continue until the day of judgment supervenes. That of course is the reason why grace has visited us at all. We are not to receive it in vain.

Having exhorted us thus, the Apostle does not for the moment carry his beseechings further (he does this, we believe, from verse 11 onwards) but again turns aside to speak of the features that had characterized himself and his companions. He had said a good deal as to these in chapter iv., and one may be tempted to wonder why he should be led to recur to the matter here. We cannot but think that the reason is that the character, the behaviour, the whole spirit of those who are God's ministers is of the utmost importance. It has an effect upon their ministry which is simply incalculable by us. Reading the Acts of the Apostles, we see what exceptional power marked the ministry of Paul. It was of a type that either brought very great blessing or stirred up the fiercest opposition: it could not be ignored. The power of God was with him; that was the explanation. But why was the power of God with him in this exceptional degree? Because he was characterized by the features mentioned in verses 3 to 10 of our chapter.

First there was the studied avoidance of all that would give offence, for he knew well that any blemish discernible in the servant would be put down as a black mark against his service. The great adversary is continually striking blows against the work of God; first by enticing the workmen into offences, and then by giving the offences wide publicity so as to discredit his work. Sometimes, sad to say, Christians play into his hands by acting as his publicity agents. They noise abroad their brother's failure to the blame of the ministry of the Gospel.

It is not enough however to avoid offence. There must be the commendation which flows from good. This was found very abundantly with the Apostle, for he was marked by much patience, or endurance, and that in the presence of a whole host of adverse and trying circumstances, which he summarizes under nine heads. Most of these nine things are clearly specified in the history of the Acts—such as afflictions, stripes, prisons, tumults, labours. The rest were not absent, as we can see reading between the lines. Through all these things he went with endurance, pursuing the ministry of grace.

And then he himself was marked by grace, in keeping with the grace he proclaimed. Verses 6 and 7 speak of this. Again we find the matter summarized under

nine heads, beginning with pureness and ending with the armour of righteousness on the right hand and the left. Purity and righteousness stand like sentinels, right and left, before and behind; and protected thus, knowledge, longsuffering, love, truth, are found in the energy of the Spirit and in the power of God. What a beautiful blending of spiritual graces is found here. The servant of God who is armed with righteousness, and yet is full of longsuffering and kindness and love unfeigned, must be like a polished sword in the hand of the Holy Ghost.

We have in these verses then, first, the negative virtue seen in the absence of offence. Then, the commendation springing from endurance under all kinds of opposing forces. Third, the positive virtues connected with both righteousness and love. And now lastly, the paradoxical state of affairs that resulted from the contradiction found between his state as to outward appearance and his state in inward reality. Once more we find nine heads under which the paradox is set forth.

If one looked merely on the surface appearance of things from a worldly standpoint, that which would have met the eye would have been dishonour. Here was a man who had thrown away all his brilliant prospects. Evil reports continually circulated about him. He appeared to be a

deceiver, unknown and unrecognized by the men of religious repute. His life appeared to be a living death. Even God seemed to chasten him. Sorrow continually surged around him. He was poor, and possessed practically nothing. What a story!

There was another side to the story however. There was honour, and a good report from God. Sometimes there may have been a good report from his converts; but that was a small matter compared with his joining the company of those others who obtained "a good report through faith," as Hebrews xi., tells us. He was a true man, and well known on high. He was entering into that which is really life. He was inwardly always rejoicing. He was so serving as to enrich a great multitude. He was like a man rolling in spiritual riches, for he possessed all things. Again we say, What a story! Only this time there is another tone in our voice.

This amazing servant of God was the leader of that little band of men who were spoken of as, "These that have turned the world upside down," (Acts xvii. 6)—and no wonder! The ingredients of spiritual power are found in the verses we have just considered. Let us inwardly digest them very well, and may they be a blessing to us in this day of abounding evil in the world, and small faith and devotedness amongst the people of God. F. B. HOLE.

THE LIFE OF FAITH.

(7) *Hebrews xiii.*

IT seems fitting that such a chapter as this should come at the close of such an epistle. In one sense it is like a post-script to a most remarkable letter, and one that we would not miss on any account. We have already observed that the first nine and a half chapters bring before us the glories of Christ : the magnitude of His work ; and the value of His present priestly service in the presence of God. He Himself : all that He is ; all that He has done, is doing, and will yet do ; are seen to be *better*, infinitely better, than all that has gone before. In the portion we have been considering we have, we trust, seen the encouragement to those Hebrew believers in their days, and to us in this day, to follow on in the path of faith ; to run the race, and to serve God. In the closing chapter we note three salient points : namely :—

SATISFACTION,
STABILITY and
SEPARATION.

There are details also which afford guidance for those who desire to be in the good

of the earlier portion of the epistle, and to follow on in the line of faith. "Let brotherly love continue" (verse 1). Let us warn our dear young fellow-believers in particular against judging their brethren. This frequently means misjudging; and imagining in others blemishes prominent in ourselves, but which we fail to see there. "Brotherly love" is not only a fine word, but it is a desirable virtue; and we may well covet its possession and seek its continuance.

To "entertain strangers" is grateful to the Lord, and if we do not exactly entertain angels, as Abraham did, we may at least entertain those who may be angels, in the sense of being God's messengers to us. If in Britain we are happily free from being in bonds for Christ's sake, let us not forget those in less favoured lands who suffer for His sake and let us remember them in our prayers. Marriage is to be held "every way in honour." This, alas! does not obtain in the world to-day as the record of the divorce courts shows, but in this we are to be governed by the Word of God, and not the ideas of men, nor even the lax laws of so-called Christian countries. Not only in this chapter, but in not a few epistles, moral rectitude and purity are insisted upon. Evidently it was necessary when the Scriptures were written and it is necessary to-day. Let us heed it.

Now we come to our first point. We venture to reproduce verse 5 from the New Translation by J. N. Darby. "Let your conversation be without love of money. **SATISFIED** with your present circumstances." What havoc has been wrought by love of money! It is not necessary to be wealthy in order to love money. A man might be poor indeed and yet love money. How many Christian lives have been blasted, and how many derelicts there are as the result of the love of money. "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred [been seduced — margin] from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy vi. 10). The safeguard is "**SATISFIED** with your present circumstances."

That is more than being content. A person who says "I suppose I must try to be content" means "I cannot alter it, so I must just put up with it." That is fatalism, "**SATISFACTION**" means "I am in the circumstances that the Lord intends for me. If He considers a change necessary, He will do it. He is working out His own plan for my blessing, and associated with that, His glory. Therefore I will not attempt to take myself out of present circumstances, but leave all to Him." Why? "**FOR HE HAS SAID**, I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee." So that if we have Him with us in the circumstances

what can we be but satisfied? But why has HE said this? "So THAT, TAKING COURAGE, WE MAY SAY, The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid; what will man do unto me?" (verses 5 and 6 New Trans.). Our circumstances are our training, our discipline, our being fitted to run the race to the glory of Him, who assures us of His presence with us all the way.

There is the call, repeated later in the chapter, to remember leaders. We live in democratic days, when the slogan is "Jack is as good as his master—perhaps better." This does not come into the things of God, nor must we allow it to have a place in our hearts. Leaders are known by their "conversation" or "conduct" which is evidence of their faith and this believers were, and are, to imitate.

Now comes a golden verse,

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." (verse 8).

We can consider it in the light of what has gone before, and what follows after. Or we can view it in its solitary grandeur,

"Jesus Christ [is] THE SAME yesterday, and to-day and forever."

"THE SAME" is a Name of God, and, in the very excellent New Translation to

which we have frequently referred in these papers, it occurs sixteen times. In Hebrews 1, as setting forth the glory of Christ we have a quotation from Psalm cii., where Jehovah answering Him as a Man says, "Thou art THE SAME." (verse 27). Then after His Person, His work, His service, and ever so much more, have been passed before us, he discovers this priceless nugget of pure gold. "Jesus Christ [is] THE SAME yesterday and to-day and for ever." Praise His Name! The self-existing One, He who "is, and was, and is to come"—and also who never changes, whose love can never die. We change, our nearest and dearest change, everybody changes, the world changes, but here we rest: "Jesus Christ [is] THE SAME yesterday and to-day and for ever." Hallelujah!

It is the knowledge of this that produces STABILITY. They were not to be, nor should we be, "carried about with divers and strange doctrines," nor be influenced by current ideas set forth under the guise of truth; nor even run after new movements, started and carried on in all sincerity, and become associated with them, or seek to imitate them, but be "established with grace." What we should go in for to-day is STABILITY.

The snare of the Hebrew Christians appears to have been meats. Then the writer tells those to whom he communicated

God's mind "We have an Altar." That speaks of identification or fellowship, and obviously they could not have it both ways. Those who served the tabernacle could not claim a link with that Altar, and *vice versa*.

This bring us to the third point and that is SEPARATION. The Lord Jesus was the true sin offering and He "suffered without the gate," but He did so that "He might sanctify the people with His own blood." Further He suffered without the gate because the world—and its *religious system* at that—had no room for Him. Now comes the call:—"Let us go forth therefore UNTO HIM without the camp, bearing His reproach." (verse 13).

Let us read that verse again and again and then ask ourselves: have we, have I, done it? Do we love Him? Yes. Do we love Him sufficiently to join Him in the outside place? Jonathan loved David as his own soul, but he chose the palace with its comfort rather than the cave with its hardship. Obadiah feared the Lord greatly, but he may have argued that he could do more good by maintaining his association with Ahab. Anyhow he remained with him rather than associate with the persecuted prophet of God. Love craves to be with its objects. Do we desire to be associated with Christ now? If so, where will we find him? "Outside the camp." Hence this loud call to go forth.

The weakness of many of us in these days is the want of separation. Why? It means "bearing HIS reproach." Not bringing reproach upon His Name but bearing HIS reproach. As we have already noticed, Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. Those who answer to the call are conscious that, like the patriarchs, they have here no continuing city, but they seek one to come. (verse 14). They are fitted to function as holy priests, (verse 15), and as royal priests. (verse 16).

And now, in closing, we must go on to the charming benediction in verses 20 and 21. Our readers will find profit in noting the number of times that "The God of peace" is mentioned in the New Testament. Here "*our* Lord Jesus, (this pulsates with affection), is spoken of as "The Great Shepherd of the Sheep." The "Good Shepherd" in death (John x. 11). The "Great Shepherd" in resurrection (Hebrews xiii. 20). The "Chief Shepherd" in glory (1 Peter v. 4) : and He has been raised by, or in the power of, "the blood of the everlasting covenant." We note a similarity between this and Ezekiel xxxvii. 26:

"Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them ; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore."

Now the prayer, "Make you perfect in every good work to do His will." How can poor, weak creatures do that? Read on:—"Working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ." That explains it. Then the burst of praise:—"To whom be glory for ever and ever." As we close this paper, and conclude our meditation on the portion we have been considering; as He fills the vision of our souls, and we get a fresh impression of all that He is, and of what He has done, is doing, and proposes to do, and will yet do for us, we may well add to this doxology our sincere and hearty AMEN.

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

THE CHRISTIAN'S STANDING AND WALK.

WE WOULD ask the reader to open his Bible at the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. He will see there, on studying the first eleven verses, what forms the subject of this article, namely, the Christian's *standing* and *walk*.

It is clearly stated in our passage, that the Christian is *in Christ*, and that his walk is *according to the Spirit*. The former is the position where God has set him by

His own sovereign grace; the latter is the practical and natural outcome of what he is in that position. To grasp these great facts is of fundamental importance. Indeed, they are the very foundation of true Christianity.

The same general truth might be expressed in another way. The Christian is in Christ before God, and that in perfect righteousness. This is his standing. Christ is in the Christian before the world, and that in the power of the Spirit. That is his walk.

As to his standing, he is clear from every possible charge. Nothing therefore, can be brought against him. Whatever he may have been, as a child of Adam; whatever guilt he may have accumulated, as a wilful and rebellious sinner; however deep he may have sunk in the pit of sin, as a fallen creature—from all this he is cleared, when he accepts Christ as his Saviour. It may seem incredible. The statement may seem staggering. Unbelief may come with doubtful questions—Is it so? Can it be? Yet the fact remains, like an immovable rock, on which faith calmly rests, unperturbed by the reasonings of the human mind, and unaffected by the subtle questions of unbelief.

And why this restful attitude of faith? Because it has the sure word of God. Here

it is: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Could there be a clearer statement made? Then, apart from the clearness of the statement, there is the unchallenged authority of the One who makes it. God, who cannot lie, has spoken. His word is addressed to faith, and by faith it is received. The Christian owns it to be God's Word; bows to its authority, without hesitation or reserve; rests upon it with implicit and unquestioning trust. And in doing this, he does no more than he should. God and His Word are one; as we treat it, so we treat Him.

Now that the Christian has this standing in Christ, exempt from all charge, it is well for us to know what it is to be *in Christ*. Some of God's children have queer notions about their standing; indeed, they reason about it in such an unscriptural way, being occupied almost entirely with themselves, that they end by doubting if they have a standing. In other words, they doubt if they are saved. This, needless to say, seriously hinders them in their progress as Christians. And if we enquire why it is they get in such doubt, we can soon see the source of their difficulties. They read statements in God's word, in the light of their own experience. A fatal thing to do!

For instance, they read the statement before us, namely, "There is therefore now

no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." They turn immediately upon themselves, to see if experience in them verifies the statement. Needless to say, they find no verification of it, but much that would flatly contradict it. They see a great deal in themselves that must be condemned; consequently they conclude that the statement cannot refer to them. Now God's word does not say, "There is no condemnation to them that *feel* they are good, or to them that *think* they are good, or to them that *try* to be good." No such thing! Scripture does not take account of the Christian's goodness (supposing he has it), but of Christ. It is, then, entirely a question of what Christ is. When this is clearly understood, faith keeps the eye on Christ, and never allows it to turn upon oneself. "Not I, but Christ" are words that well express the language of faith.

Any Christian might say, In me there is much that righteousness would condemn. But, turning to Christ, he is bound to say, There is nothing in Him that can be condemned. Impossible! Then the question arises, In whom does he stand? Is he *in himself*, or is he *in Christ*? Certainly not *in himself*. Then he need not think, or speak, about himself. Only *in Christ* has he standing before God. And when this is accepted, as the very foundation of his faith, never can a single question arise as to his standing before God.

What comes next, as a natural result of his high standing in Christ, is his walk according to the Spirit. He has a new life in Christ, and this life expresses itself in him in this very practical and natural way. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John ii. 6). The abiding in Christ, and the walking as Christ walked, are things we cannot separate. But, with this new life in Christ, there is power by which it is expressed. We give expression to life in us, not by effort, but by natural and spontaneous power, quite apart from ourselves.

For instance, if we *tried* to express Christ in our walk, we would soon get into difficulties. Life is not expressed by effort, it is natural, and gives expression to itself, by a power all its own. So it is with the Christian; he does not *try* to walk as Christ walked. Christ in him is expressed in the power of the Spirit. This is all natural and without effort. We say "natural," because it is spontaneous, and not artificial. The life of Christ produced in us, in the power of the Spirit, is not the result of effort on our part. It is the exclusive work of the Spirit. We would not say a plant, or an animal, gives expression to life in it by its own effort. On the contrary, the life in it expresses itself, and that by a power all its own. Why should we *try* to express life, when life expresses itself, and that in a perfectly natural way?

Now the reader will have noticed, if he has carefully read the portion to which we have drawn his attention, that from verse four to eleven, the Spirit is much in evidence. He is contrasted with the flesh. For example, we have the phrases: "after the flesh," "after the Spirit;" "the things of the flesh," "the things of the Spirit;" "the mind of the flesh," "the mind of the Spirit;" "in the flesh," "in the Spirit." A very clear line of demarcation is here drawn between these contrary principles of life. In like manner, the result of each is presented in vivid contrast. The mind of the flesh is death; the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. Now the question arises, Is the Christian as to his walk, actuated by the flesh, that is, *as a principle of life*? The answer is emphatically, NO. He is in the Spirit, and walks after the Spirit, as the normal rule of his life.

It was in the power of the Spirit that Christ Himself walked. It was in that power He performed His miracles, and in it He offered Himself on the Cross, a sacrifice for our sins. It was by that power He was raised from the dead. And now it is said, "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." Here it is clearly shown, that the same power that was in

Christ, by which He walked, worked, and was raised from the dead, is that which dwells in us. In Him, of course, there was perfection. In us there is a great deal of imperfection. But the power is the same, and what an incentive this should be for a walk "after the Spirit," the only walk, we venture to say, that is pleasing to God! Then, at last, to have our mortal bodies quickened, and transformed to the likeness of His body of glory, at His coming again, to receive us to Himself! And, marvellous as it is, the power that will effect the transformation to His likeness, is that which is now indwelling us, to work out in us now, in our practical daily walk, the good pleasure of God. Does this not set the Christian's walk at a very high standard?

Naturally, everything in Christianity is on a high standard, because Christ is everything. A Christianity that does not make Christ everything is no Christianity at all. If it is a question of our standing as Christians before God, all is *in* Christ. If it is a question of a life that is pleasing to God in this world, all is *of* Christ (nothing of ourselves) and that in the power of the Spirit.

In conclusion, we would say in the apt words of a hymn, with reference to our standing:—

We stand accepted in the place
That none but Christ can claim.

And no less apt words are these, with reference to our walk:—

O teach us so the power to know
Of risen life with Thee;
Not *we* may live while here below,
But Christ our life may be.

J. HOUSTON.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(2 *Corinthians* vi. 11—vii. 16).

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

TWICE already had the Apostle spoken of the ministry of exhortation which was his, "beseeching" men (v. 20, vi. 1). These exhortations were of a more general nature; but in verse 11 he comes to one of a very personal sort, addressing the Corinthians in direct fashion. It is evident that at this point he found his mouth opened and his heart free to bring them plainly face to face with the error which lay at the root of so much that was wrong in their midst. They had not realized that if they remained yoked with unbelievers they would of necessity be dragged into much of their evil ways.

Paul did not bluntly bring them to book on this point directly he opened his first epistle. Whence came the tendency to split into parties and schools of opinion?

Whence the immorality, the love of litigation, the carelessness about idolatry, the disorder in their meetings, the speculative errors as to the resurrection? From the flesh doubtless; but also as imported from the world around them, for Corinth was full of things of that kind. We may learn a valuable lesson from Paul's wise action. In his first epistle he contented himself with meeting the errors which lay on the surface, waiting until that letter had had its effect before he exposed the underlying causes. Now however a suitable spiritual atmosphere had been produced. He had been able to direct their thoughts to the ministry of reconciliation. God and the world are in the sharpest possible antagonism, and therefore *reconciliation* with the One must involve *separation* from the other. Hence the opportune moment to speak plainly on this point had arrived.

The Apostle Paul was the man of large heart. The Corinthians were saints of narrow affections. "Straightened," means narrowed, and "bowels," signifies affections. Quite remarkable—do you think not? The average man of the world would assess matters just the other way round, and not a few Christians would agree with him. They would dub the separate Christian as, the "narrow-minded man," and praise the easy-going one of worldly type, as the large-hearted man. But as a matter of fact it is the separate believer who finds his

centre in Christ, and so enters into the largeness of His interests. The worldly believer is limited by this little world and narrowed down to selfish interests. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to be *enlarged* by *separation* from the world.

Verse 14 contains an allusion to Deuteronomy xxvii. 10. The word literally is "diversely yoked" though of course if two, of diverse nature and form, such as the ox and the ass, were put together the resultant yoke would prove to be unequal. Any yoking together of the believer and the unbeliever must be unequal because they are *diverse* in their very nature and character—the one, born of God, a child of light; the other still in the Adamic nature, a child of darkness. The yoking together of two, so wholly diverse, must prove disastrous.

It is a question, be it noted, of a *yoke*. The believer is left in the world, and comes into contact with all sorts, as is indicated in 1 Corinthians v. 9, 10. While mixing thus with all sorts he is to be careful to avoid being yoked with any. The most intimate and permanent yoke that the world knows is that of marriage. A believer may yoke himself with an unbeliever by a business partnership. Before he is through with it he may suffer much spiritual loss and the Lord's Name be dishonoured; since he has to share in the respon-

sibility of evil things wrought by the unconverted partner. But at least he can get out of it in process of time, even if at financial loss to himself. But marriage he cannot get out of save by death—his own or his partner's. And there are many other yokes besides those in marriage and in business, though not so strong and enduring. We are to shun *all* of them.

Consider what the believer stands for—righteousness, light, Christ, the temple of God. The unbeliever stands for unrighteousness (or lawlessness), darkness, Belial, idols. Now what possible yoke, or fellowship, or agreement, can there be between the two? None whatever. Then why take up a position which involves an attempt to bring together things which are as the poles asunder? The unbeliever cannot possibly fit in with the things which are the very life of the believer. *He has not got the life which would enable him to do so.* The believer can entangle and damage himself with the things of unrighteousness which occupy the unbeliever, for though born of God *he still has the flesh within him.* Yoke the two together, and what must be the upshot?

No deep understanding is needed to answer that question. The one can only travel in *one* direction: the other can travel in *either* direction. The way of the unbeliever prevails, though the believer may be dragged

very unwillingly, and hence act as a kind of brake on the wheels.

The exhortation then is that we come out from among the unbelievers and be separate, not even touching what is unclean. The believer cannot be too careful to avoid every kind of connection and complicity with what is evil; and that because of what he is in his individual character as a child of light, and also what he is collectively with other believers as the temple of the living God. Being the living God, He not only dwells in the midst of His people but He walks in their midst, observing all their ways. And holiness becomes his house for ever.

Some of us may say to ourselves, "Yes, but if I obey this injunction and consequently break these or those links, I shall suffer a great deal of loss and be in a very difficult position." That is very possible. But such a contingency is foreseen. The world may cast you out, but God will receive you, and be a Father to you. The last verse of our chapter does not refer to proper Christian relationship which is established in Christ, which is expounded by the Apostle in Galatians iii. 26 to iv. 7; but rather to that practical "fathering" of the believer which he needs when suffering from the world. If we may so put it, with all reverence, God Himself will play the part of Father to him. Hence we

are said to be His sons and daughters. When it is a question of proper Christian relationship we all, whether male or female, are His sons.

And notice this; the One who is pledged to play the Father's part is the Lord, Almighty. Here then we have brought together His three great Names—Father, Jehovah, Almighty. He is Jehovah, the unchanging One, faithful to His word. He wields all power. And the value of both Names He brings into His fatherly care. We need not be afraid to cut all links with the world, cost what it may.

An interesting and encouraging contrast between this verse and Ephesians vi. 12 may be pointed out. There are "the rulers of the darkness of this world," or, more literally, "the world-rulers of this darkness"—Satanic authorities and powers, no doubt, who dominate this world of darkness. We might well fear them, were it not that we are under the protection of the Lord Almighty. The word translated, Almighty, is literally the All-ruler. The *world-rulers* may be great, but they are as nothing in the presence of the *All-ruler*; just as this world, though great to us, is very small when compared with all things—the mighty universe of God.

We have then these striking promises from the lips of God. If we are separate

from the world, and face whatever loss that may involve, we shall find God acting as Father toward us, and we shall enter consciously into the good and sweetness of the relationship in which we are set. Now having such promises we are exhorted (as we open chapter vii.) to purify ourselves, and thus perfect holiness in the fear of God. Notice that it says, "from *all* filthiness of the flesh and spirit." This is a very important word, and very sweeping. Our attention has just been directed to the necessity of a purification from all fellowship with the world in outward things. Yet if we merely practised separation in outward things, confining ourselves to that, we should just become Pharisees; a most undesirable thing. The separation we are to practice goes much deeper. All filthiness or pollution of the flesh is to be avoided, and all filthiness of the spirit too.

Both forms of separation are called for; the inward and the outward too. The outward without the inward is just hypocrisy. The inward without the outward is at best a very defective thing. At the worst it descends to the plight in which Lot was found in Sodom, though not himself descending to the shocking morals of that city. Abraham was in the happy path of God's will; clean outside the place as well as free from the evil. There are the pollutions of the world: the pollutions of the flesh: the pollutions of the spirit: the last of the three

the most subtle of all, because the most refined form of sin. May God awaken us to great carefulness as to it. Holiness when carried to its perfection covers all three. But we are to be carrying it on towards its perfection even now. May God help us to do so.

The Apostle had delivered his soul thus as to the Corinthians, and was conscious that the threatened breach between himself and them had been averted in the mercy of God; and those from outside, who had fomented trouble and had been his detractors, had lost something of their power. The Corinthians, under the influence of these men, had been inclined to turn their backs on Paul. Things however were now changed, and he can say simply, "Receive us." They knew the integrity that had ever characterized him, and the fervent love towards them that was in his heart; he was identified with them in his affections whether in life or in death. Moreover, confident now as to their affection for him, he was filled with encouragement and joy. He could tell them now of the happy experience that was his, when tidings of the effect of his first epistle reached him.

Verse 5 picks up the threads of happenings from chapter ii. 13. One can read from one verse to the other as though nothing came between them. He had left Troas, in spite of the door for the Gospel

opened of the Lord, because he had no rest in his spirit as to the Corinthians.; yet when he got into Macedonia conditions were even worse. There were not only fears within but also fightings without. One can imagine a little perhaps of what he felt as he plunged deeply, and yet more deeply, into sorrows and troubles. Suddenly however Titus appeared, bringing good news as to the effect of his first epistle, which ministered to him great comfort. He had the companionship of Titus, and the assurance that God had intervened in His mercy.

His first epistle had been used to effect two things: first, a thoroughgoing repentance as to the evils he had denounced; second, a revival of their affection for himself. There was of course a very distinct connection between them. As they realized the error of their ways so they saw that his plain and faithful remonstrances were actuated by love; and responsive love was kindled in their hearts towards him. For a time he had been tempted to regret that he ever wrote the letter, but now that its good effect had been manifested he could only rejoice.

This scripture shows us very clearly what genuine repentance really is. It is not exactly sorrow for sin, though godly sorrow of that sort is an ingredient of it. Verse 11 shows what repentance involved in their

case, and with what zeal and fear they cleared themselves. Repentance of a right sort is repentance to salvation; that is, it means deliverance from the thing repented of. Mere sorrow for sin, when confronted with its consequences, is the kind of which the world is capable, and it only works death and not salvation. Judas Iscariot is a sad example of this.

One great thing, then, that had come out of all the troubles at Corinth and the sending of the first epistle had been a mutual expression of love as between Paul and the saints there. Verse 7 mentions, "your fervent mind toward me;" and verse 12, "our care for you in the sight of God." It was no small thing to put things right as between the one who did the injury and the one who was injured, but it was even greater to bring into display that love which is the fruit of the Divine nature in the saints.

A striking feature of this chapter, from verse 5 and onwards, is the way in which all these happenings are traced to the hand of God. Having sent his first epistle, Paul was agitated and cast down in spirit to the point of regretting that he had written it—even though, as we know, it was a letter inspired of God. Then at last, when things seemed at their lowest, Titus appeared with good news as to its effect upon the Corinthians. This was the mercy of God inter-

vening to comfort the downcast Apostle, as also it had been the mercy of God effecting a godly repentance in the hearts of the Corinthians. The word, "godly," occurring three times (verses 9, 10, 11), is really in each case, "according to God." God had intervened, and this was the real basis and cause of Paul's comfort and joy.

Moreover Titus had come back thoroughly refreshed and joyful. This evidently had far exceeded Paul's hopes. There had been much anxiety as to them, and many things to blame, as the first epistle shows; and yet the way in which they had received him had gone beyond his expectations. True he had boasted of them to Titus. He had spoken of them with warmth of affection and with assurance of their reality. And now all had been found as he had said. The Apostle's distress had been turned into exultant joy and thankfulness.

In all this we see how God delights to lift up and encourage His tried servants. The God who thus acted with Paul is just the same to-day. Why are we not filled with greater and more implicit confidence in Him?

The Corinthians had received Titus "with fear and trembling;" they had been marked by obedience. Paul's letter had come to them with an authority that was Divine. In it he had called upon them to

recognize that the things he wrote to them were "the commandments of the Lord." Being the inspired Word of God, it had authenticated itself as such in their consciences, and it commanded their obedience. Nowadays some would like to persuade us that we have no logical reason for accepting any given scripture as the Word of God unless we are prepared to receive it as authenticated by "the Church," unless it carries the imprimatur of pope and cardinals. Nothing could be further from the truth. It was not so at the beginning, and is not so to-day. The Word of God is self-authenticating in the hearts and consciences of those who are born of Him.

The obedience of the Corinthians to the Word of the Lord gave the Apostle full confidence as to them. He could say with joy, "I have confidence in you in all things." Are we inclined to look upon this as a rather exuberant overestimate on his part, the fruit of the revulsion of feeling he had undergone? It was not so at all. It was the expression of a sober judgment. Saints may be very defective and blameworthy as to many things, but if they recognize the Word of God when they hear it, and yield obedience to its instructions, one need have no fear as to them. All will be well.

It was not that they had any fear of Titus, or that Paul's letters, though weighty and

powerful, put the fear of Paul upon their spirits. It was rather that in spite of all their errors they did tremble at the Word of the Lord, when they heard it.

Are we equal to the Corinthians in this respect? Our day is peculiarly marked by disrespect for the Word of God. In many quarters, professedly Christian, the Bible is looked upon as subject matter for criticism. Let us beware lest we catch the infection of it. Would Paul have confidence in us as to all things? Only if he saw that we too were marked by subjection and obedience to the Word of God.

F. B. HOLE.

“FOLLOW ME, AND I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN.”

(*Matthew iv. 19.*)

I UNDERSTAND this, first, in this sense : *be separate unto Christ.* These men were to leave their pursuits ; they were to leave their companions ; they were, in fact, to quit the world, that their one business might be, in their Master's name, to be fishers of men. We are not all called to leave our daily business, or to quit our families. That might be rather running away from the fishery than working at it in God's name. But we are called most distinctly to come out from among the ungodly, and to be separate, and not to touch the unclean thing. We cannot be fishers

of men if we remain among men in the same element with them. Fish will not be fishers. The sinner will not convert the sinner. The ungodly man will not convert the ungodly man ; and, what is more to the point, the worldly Christian will not convert the world . . .

I believe that one reason why the church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the church . . . They plead that they may live like worldlings, and my sad answer to them, when they crave for this liberty, is, " Do it if you dare. It may not do *you* much hurt, for you are so bad already. Your cravings show how rotten your hearts are. If you have a hungering after such dog's meat, go, dogs, and eat the garbage. Worldly amusements are fit food for mere pretenders and hypocrites. If you were God's children you would loathe the very thought of the world's evil joys, and your question would not be, ' How far may we be like the world ? ' but your one cry would be, ' How far can we get away from the world ? How much can we come out from it ? ' " . . .

The worst day the world ever saw was when the sons of God were joined with the daughters of men. Then came the flood ; for the only barrier against a flood of vengeance on this world is the separation of the saint from the sinner. Your duty as a Christian is to stand fast in your own place and stand out for God, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh, resolving like one of old that, let others do as they will, as for you and your house, you will serve the Lord.

SPURGEON.

THE HONOUR THAT COMES FROM GOD.

WHEN a man is raised to the peerage by the King, we may be sure that he has shewn his fitness for the honour by some distinguished public service, and also *that he has the means to maintain the dignity of the title.* A chimney sweep might be a most honourable man, but if he were made a peer of the realm he would be the butt of a thousand jests. It could not be done. His lack of means and general unfitness for that position would make it impossible.

God bestows high honour upon men. There are people in this world who have received from Him "the adoption of sons" (Galatians iv. 5), and they can rejoice in those moving words, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John iii. 1). And nobody will question the fact that the honour that God bestows must be greater than any that the greatest of Kings can give, for God's gifts are for ever.

But who are they, to whom they are given? Not to "many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble" (1 Cor. i. 26). There have been some from these exalted ranks, but they have been the first and most ready to own that they had no claim at all to such distinction. There is a grand song in the Old Testament composed and sung by a Spirit-inspired woman, who knew something about the ways and grace of God, which answers the question. She sang, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar *from the dunghill*, to set them among princes and to make them inherit the throne of glory" (1 Sam. ii. 8). Mary, the mother of our Lord, had learnt the same great truth, when she said, "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted *them of low degree*" (Luke i. 52). This is God's way and it magnifies His grace, it is such as these that He blesses.

But if God takes up those that have neither claim nor fitness for the exalted place and relationship in which He puts them, is He indifferent as to how they conduct themselves in it? Most certainly not. If the King scattered his distinctions with a lavish hand upon unworthy men, it would bring him as "the fountain of honour" into contempt, the throne itself would be discredited, and the peerage become a laughing stock. We are sure that God cannot be less careful about the conduct of those

whom He exalts than the King; their lives and ways must be consistent with their relationship to God.

Wonderful words are addressed to them as to this. Here are a few of them: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew v. 48) "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children" (Eph. v. 1. N. Tr.). "Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus ii. 10). "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter i. 14-16). "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; *that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light*" (1 Peter ii. 9).

The consideration of such words as these raises the question at once, How can it be done? And we answer, There must be both fitness and means, and God gives both. Those upon whom the honour of sonship has been bestowed can give "thanks unto the Father, *which hath made us meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians i. 12). Exceeding great and precious promises have been given

to them by which they become "*partakers of the divine nature*" (2 Peter i. 4). They are 'born of God,' "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fade not away, reserved in heaven" (1 Peter i. 3, 4). And along with the new inward life and nature which God has imparted to all His children, there is that which answers to the robes that peers of the realm wear on state occasions which indicate their rank. God's honoured ones have a glory in which they stand before Him—they have received both robe and coronet. Paul said, "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians iii. 9). And to every child of God Christ is made, "Wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1. 30) It all might be summed up in those full and happy terms, "In Christ" and "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" or in the Lord's own words to His Father, "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them" (John xvii. 22).

Now this glory in which God's sons are enrobed, which the world does not yet see, is not like the insignia of a viscount or earl, that can be put on or off as the King commands. It is part of their very constitution, and as vital as the new life that

they have received; it is an inseparable part of it, and with the life forms the suitability they possess for the exalted place that is theirs.

But what of the means necessary for the maintenance of a life consistent with the dignity of sonship? These too are given to us. Peter said, "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter i. 3). and Paul said, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son unto your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians iv. 6). And we remember the Lord's own words to Paul, His suffering servant, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. xii. 9).

There are, then, divine power and divine grace, which are more than enough to lift every child of God above weakness within, and to enable them in spite of foe without to be more than conquerors through Him that loveth us. And they may take full advantage of these by the Holy Spirit that dwells within them. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts i. 8) is the Lord's own promise, and again, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit,

which they that believe on Him should receive (John vii. 37-39).

It is right that we should consider these great truths. There is this great dignity of sons bestowed, and a suitability in keeping with the dignity and means to support it are supplied from God's own fulness, that we might not bring dishonour upon the Name of Him who has bestowed this honour upon us.

J. T. MAWSON.

IS THE SOUL IMMORTAL?

THAT the soul is immortal is denied by many, especially by the followers of crank religions. The writer cannot count the number of letters he has received, calling him to prove the statement that the soul is immortal. In nearly every case the challenge is given, "Show me the verse in Scripture that asserts that the soul is immortal. Shew me the expression in the Bible, 'Immortal Soul.'"

Then generally the writers of these letters draw attention to 1 Timothy vi. 16:

"God . . . ONLY HATH IMMORTALITY, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen,"

triumphantly pointing to the words,

“WHO ONLY HATH IMMORTALITY,” and charging anyone, who holds that the soul is immortal, with contradicting this passage. What then is the reply to these assertions ?

As to 1 Timothy vi. 16, the answer is that this Scripture means that ONLY God has immortality INHERENTLY. That is immortality is not *conferred*, but is proper to God, who is from everlasting to everlasting the uncreated, without a beginning, and who is the “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus iii. 14)—the ever existent One from eternity to eternity.

That God can *confer* immortality as His gift is very evident. To take the stand the writers of these letters do is to prove too much, even for them. It would debar God from conferring eternal life upon the believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. These writers all stand for the doctrine of “conditional immortality,” that is, only believers on Christ will live for ever. But their use of 1 Timothy vi. 16, would clearly shut out this, and their treatment of that passage proves too much even for them.

That God cannot confer immortality *inherently* upon anyone is clear. To do so would be to abrogate His own Godhead, for it would be equivalent to making another God, independent of Himself, an utter impossibility. We may assert that God can do anything, but it is likewise true that God

cannot do anything that is a contradiction of His own Being. We are told for instance in the Scriptures that God cannot lie, for departure from the truth would be the denial of His holy Being, and to communicate immortality *inherently* on any would be to do that likewise.

Now for the question, Where in the Bible is it stated, in so many words, that the soul is immortal? The answer is, that nowhere is Scripture, *in so many words*, is it stated. But that does not prove that the soul is not immortal. In fact the Scriptures take it for granted that it is, and there are many proofs of this.

It is a very significant fact that in lands, where the Bible and the gospel have not penetrated, the heathen have universally a belief in the survival of the soul after death.

It was said that Charles Darwin, when on his scientific voyage in the "Challenger," found very degraded natives in the cheerless regions of Patagonia, who, he affirmed, had no belief in a future state; but when the missionaries finally got in amongst them, and obtained more intimate knowledge of them, they found they were no exception to the universal belief in survival after death.

Why should there be this universal belief? It does not in the case of the stark heathen, come from the Scriptures. Where then does this belief come from? Surely

it is an intuitive belief borne in upon men's minds by 'the Spirit of God. Why should men in this land of gospel light, men with the Scriptures in their hands, deny the immortality of the soul? We fear that the true answer is, they desire to throw overboard their responsibility to God. At the bottom there is that desire to get rid of accountability for sin, and the reckoning with God that flows therefrom. They are determined to get rid of hell.

But let us come to Scripture proof. We read,

“ Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth ” (Ecclesiastes iii. 21).

The body at death goes downward to the earth, and if the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth, it implies that the spirit dies with the body, and the beast ceases to exist. But why should the spirit of man go *upward*? Surely this implies survival after the death of the body; that the spirit of man survives the death of the body.

This implication is directly sustained when we read,

“ Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it ” (Ecclesiastes xii. 7).

Here we have the truth, not that the spirit ceases to exist at the death of the

body, but that it returns to the God, who gave it. That teaches two things, that the spirit lives after death and that it is not dependent upon the body for continued existence, but responsible to the One, who gave it.

When king David was chided by his servants for eating when his child was dead, whereas he fasted and wept whilst it was alive, he replied,

“ Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast ? Can I bring him back again ? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me ” (2 Samuel xii. 23).

Here we get David's belief in survival after death; viz., the immortality of the soul. There is no intimation that it will be otherwise.

When Moses drew near to the burning bush he was greeted by the voice of Jehovah saying to him,

“ I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ” (Exodus iii. 6).

This our Lord quotes adding the words,

“ God is not the God of the dead, but of the LIVING ” (Matthew xxii. 32),

thus emphasising the present existence of the patriarchs, long centuries after the death of their bodies. No limit is put to their existence. It teaches the immortality of the soul.

When the prophet takes up his proverb against the king of Babylon, he says,

“ Hell [*Sheol*, the Old Testament equivalent of *Hades*: that is, the unseen world of departed spirits] from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming ” (Isaiah xiv. 9).

Here is a very vivid description of the recently dead joining those of earlier date, and the stir that his entrance among them made. This is not a picture of souls ceasing to exist, but of continued existence.

Take the case of the Apostle Paul. He says,

“ We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord ” (2 Corinthians v. 8).

There is no thought with him of anything but being consciously in the presence of the Lord, the moment he was absent from the body. But is that condition permanent?

He says in another epistle, referring to the coming of the Lord, when the sleeping saints shall be raised, and those alive on the earth shall be changed,

“ So shall we *ever* be with the Lord ” (1 Thessalonians iv. 17).

This looks like immortality of the soul.

But says someone, “ The instances you adduce are of saints, and we are all agreed

that they will have immortality." Listen to the Lord's own words,

"The rich man also died, and was buried, and in hell [hades] he lift up his eyes being in torments " (Luke xvi. 22, 23).

Here we get an unbeliever depicted as having died and been buried. That was as to the body. But what of the soul? Did it continue after death? The Lord Jesus teaches that very clearly. There is no indication that this condition of things should cease. Further listen to the words of our Lord again,

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal " (Matthew xxv. 46).

These are intensely serious words as far as the unbeliever is concerned. You cannot fritter away their solemn meaning. If the punishment is not eternal, the life is not eternal. The one half of the verse is the antithesis of the other. Here again is the affirmation of the immortality of the soul, whether of the believer or unbeliever. We cannot question the authority of our Lord's own words.

The immortality of the soul is not affirmed in Scripture, *in just those words*, but the truth of it is clearly taught in Scripture, making our belief in it as certain as if it had been.

In conclusion it is interesting to remember that

“This mortal [referring to the body that dies] must put on immortality”
(1 Corinthians xv. 53).

Now this is said of the body, but never of the soul. Why? The body is mortal. Therefore when the resurrection comes immortality becomes the condition of the body. But it never says that the soul puts on immortality. Why? Because it never was mortal. If the soul ceased to exist at death, not being immortal, then we should at the resurrection have bodies without souls. How could bodies put on immortality if there were not the living element of the soul to complete the person?

Much more evidence could be drawn from the Scriptures but this ought to suffice.

A. J. POLLOCK.

MUSINGS ON THE 32ND PSALM.

THE curtain is raised in verse one upon a happy man. The reason for his happiness is given; viz. transgression forgiven, sin covered. This is fitting language for the Old Testament. But the Cross of Christ removes not only sin, but

the order of man who is incapable of doing anything else but sin. This fact remembered makes us happy.

Note the orderly sequence that follows. Verse 3 speaks of *silence*. This always follows upon the committal of sin. The Garden of Eden for instance. It is Satan's object to silence and destroy what is of Christ, here. Many voices that should be raised in testimony and lips in praise are hushed on account of unconfessed sin.

Verse 4: *Suffering*. It must be so. The Psalmist says, "Thy hand was heavy upon me." God would seek to rouse our consciences and hearts to what is due to Him, not only from His Word, but from the pressure of circumstances. There will be no necessity for bit and bridle if we will be guided by His eye (verse 8). But He does not afflict willingly, and the Psalmist seeks the means whereby the pressure of His hand may be lifted. Verse 5 shows this in *speech*. "I acknowledged"—the result: "Thou forgavest." John tells us that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. It is good for the soul to keep short accounts with God; or, better still, to keep no account at all by *instant* confession. That open confession is good for the soul is evidenced by verse 6. Confession may be likened to a safety-valve. There is *safety* in telling God *everything*.

He knoweth the secrets of men's hearts. So the Psalmist says, "Thou art my hiding-place" speaking of safety and security."

Still continue to follow his experience, and to what does it lead? The knowledge that he is right with God unloosens his tongue, and his lips break forth into praise (verse 7). *Songs of deliverance*. He alone is able to give songs in the night. He made it possible for Paul and Silas to sing praises at night; and though it is generally agreed that the days are difficult and dark, God can—and will—give power to the silent harp which you may have hung on the willow. Then as a climax: if unable to contain his joy and gladness, there is his *shout* of joy (verse 11). When the foundations of the temple were laid in Ezra's time, there was the shout of praise—something that others could hear. What a glorious moment that will be when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a *shout*! To be forever with the Lord! May this inspire our hearts to put wrong things right with each other, and to walk before the Lord here as a vessel for his pleasure.

The Psalm summed up appears thus:—verse 1, sin; verse 3, silence; verse 4, suffering; verse 5, speech; verse 7, safety; verse 7, songs; verse 8, stability; verse 11, shoutings. Praise ye the Lord!

C. WALLACH.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(2 *Corinthians* viii. 1—ix. 15).

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

HAVING opened his heart to the Corinthians, both as to his own experiences and as to their need of separation from the world of unbelievers, and having expressed his joy in their obedience to the Word of God, and the confidence as to them which this gave him, Paul now felt ready to write to them more particularly concerning the collection then being made amongst the various Gentile assemblies for the benefit of poor saints in Jerusalem. He had alluded to it briefly in the closing chapter of his first epistle. He now refers to it at length in chapters viii. and ix. of this epistle; and in urging the Corinthians to liberality he brings out some very important instruction.

There has been a very remarkable display of the grace of God in the assemblies of Macedonia, and it has been put permanently on record, so that not only the Corinthians but ourselves might be stirred up by it. Some of us might be inclined to think that a recital of the devotedness of others, with a view to stirring up sluggish saints, would be an appeal to rather low-down motives and not a worthy proceeding. Here however we find the Spirit inspiring the

Apostle to do this very thing. So we never need be afraid of telling how the grace of God has wrought in others. Such recitals not only reveal the grace of God to us as a real and practical thing, but also they serve to convict us of our own shortcomings: and both these results are much to be desired.

The giving of the Macedonian believers was remarkable. Paul himself could bear witness that they gave according to their power. This in itself was a big thing. It means that having righteously discharged all their proper living expenses, they then gave up to the limit of their ability. They did more than this however. They gave beyond their power; that is, they denied themselves what might be considered proper living expenses in order to give to the Lord and His people. And this they did in the most willing-hearted way, begging Paul to accept the money and undertake the responsibility of having it distributed to the saints. They had caught the spirit that was exemplified when the tabernacle was to be made, and it was reported to Moses, "The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make" (Exodus xxxvi. 5).

And there is more even than this; for they exceeded Paul's expectations in another direction. They began their giving at the right point by first giving themselves to

the Lord. Yielding themselves to the Lord, they necessarily yielded to Him all that they had. Thus their possessions they regarded as the Lord's, to be used at His direction; and consequently they carried out the will of God in placing themselves and their possessions in the hands of Paul.

This, without a doubt, is the only true way to look at this matter of giving. God does not merely claim our superfluity but *all that we have*, because He claims *us*. When we see this, we at once become conscious how far our standard of giving falls below the standard set by the Macedonians. They were characterized by a liberality that was enhanced by their deep poverty and the fact that they were in the midst of a time of much affliction. What moved them to their liberality was the abundance of their spiritual joy. They had by faith so real and joyous a grasp of the things of heaven, that they could afford to be liberal with the things of earth.

Is liberality in giving a characteristic feature of modern Christian life? We fear there can be only one answer to that question. What devices are resorted to in many quarters in order to raise funds! What advertisements and appeals are issued! What lamentable stories as to shortness of funds! Doubtless a great deal of the trouble arises from people taking up causes and launching enterprises to which

they were never called by God. Still, it also indicates that many a believer is withholding more than is meet, and it tends to spiritual poverty—to themselves as well as others. There are exceptions no doubt, in the cases of some who acknowledge their stewardship and give largely according to their means, and of some very few who have given with a liberality that is astonishing. But they are the exception, and not the rule.

We are more like the Corinthians than the Macedonians, and we need to be stirred up, as they did, by this shining example. So Paul had begged Titus during his recent visit to carry the matter to completion. Giving is spoken of as a *grace*, you notice, and this indeed it is, if rightly considered and carried out. It becomes a potent method of expressing the working of the grace of God in blessing. If our own hearts are filled to overflowing with blessing from God, we are bound to overflow ourselves in giving to others. Verse 7 is a very gentle and tactful rebuke to the Corinthians—and, we believe, to ourselves also. Whether we can be said to abound in faith and in all diligence may be doubted, but we evidently do in utterance and knowledge. Is it not true that we know in our heads, and we utter with our lips, a good deal more than we express in the form of large-hearted giving?

Verse 8 shows that the Apostle did not wish to be understood as issuing a command on the subject. If we gave only because we were commanded of God to do so, our giving could no longer be spoken of as grace. It would be done under the compulsion of law. No, the forwardness and zeal of the Macedonians was to be a stimulus merely, and the giving for which he asked was to be an expression and proof of the sincerity and genuineness of their love. Love always delights to give.

The working of the grace of God in other Christians may act as a *stimulus* to us, but nothing short of the supreme working of the grace of God in Christ can supply us with the mainspring and *motive* we need, if we are to be characterized by the grace of generous giving. To that mainspring we come in verse 9.

How often verses which are like sparkling gems lie embedded in the discussion of matters which seem very ordinary and even common-place! This is a case in point. The Corinthians had been quite ready to consider the making of this collection. They had willingly taken up the idea a whole year before, and yet they had so far failed to bring it to completion, and actually give the money. What would bring them to the point? What, but the fresh sense of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ?

This marvellous verse is an epitome of the New Testament. "Though He was rich," carries us back into the depths of His Godhead glory before His incarnation; the glory that is unfolded in the opening verses of John's Gospel and elsewhere. "Yet for your sakes He became poor," opens out into the wonderful story of His life, sufferings and death, as recorded in all four Gospels. "That ye through His poverty might be rich," indicates the wealth of blessing and glory into which we are introduced by Him and in Him, as unfolded in the Epistles and the Revelation. And the whole story is the supreme expression of GRACE; which consists in the down-stooping of Divine love to meet man's need, not merely according to the need that is met, but according to the love that meets it.

Having used this grace as a powerful lever to move and uplift the hearts of the Corinthians, the Apostle turned to enunciate a few important principles that are to govern the Christian in his giving. In the first place, we are to give out of that which *we have*; not that which we used to have, or that which we hope to have in the future. We are to live and act in the present, trusting in God as regards the future.

For, in the second place, he did not contemplate the Corinthians being always, or

in every matter, in the position of givers. The time would come when they would be receivers, and the flow of gifts would be toward them instead of out from them. Indeed, if Romans xv. 25-27 be read, it will be evident that there had already been a rich flow of spiritual giving from Jerusalem to Corinth. Now there was to be a flow of giving in material things from Corinth to Jerusalem. The thought of God is that among His people there should never be a vacuum, but rather *a flow of supply* according to the need.

Verse 15 quotes Exodus xvi. 18. in support of this. Reading Exodus, one might suppose that the verse simply meant that each gatherer of the manna was able to rightly gauge his appetite and gather accordingly. The way the verse is quoted here shows however that there is more in it than that, since it is cited in support of the principle of sharing with others what God may have entrusted us with.

Verses 16 to 24 are occupied with details concerning the administration of the funds collected, which was to be in the hands of Titus and two other brethren. Though the circumstances then existing have passed away, there are points of abiding interest which we ought to notice. Paul had exhorted Titus to take up this service, and he on his part did so with willingness and alacrity. He did not count a service of

this kind as beneath him. Nor did the unnamed brother who was a gifted evangelist; nor the second unnamed brother, of verse 22, who was a man of diligent zeal in many things, though not perhaps a man of gift in the gospel, nor an apostolic delegate like Titus. All three evidently recognized that to be bearers and administrators of funds, which were given as an expression of Divine love working in the hearts of saints, was no mean service.

Again, it is evident from verse 19 that the churches that gave the money chose the man who was to have the handling of the money on their behalf. This is in accord with the choosing of the seven men of honest report to "serve tables," as recorded in Acts vi. So long as men provide the wherewithal, it is within their competency to select those who shall administer their bounty. In contrast to this, we do not read of saints selecting those who are to fill the office of elder, bishop, or overseer. But that is because such are called to exercise their spiritual functions on God's behalf, not man's. Hence God and not man must choose. We read of those whom the Holy Ghost had made overseers. The most that man can do is to recognize those whom the Holy Ghost has appointed.

Further, everything had to be done honestly as before God, and also in the sight of men. It is not enough that the

thing shall be handled in a way that is right before the God who knows all things. It must also be obviously right before the eyes of men who only see a very little way, but who are often very critical of what they do see. Verses 20 and 21 show this. So these men were marked by carefulness that all should be so handled as to be to the glory of the Lord, remembering that they were messengers of the churches, which are spoken of as "the glory of Christ." Let us remember that this is the proper character of every true assembly. We shall not think lightly of such, if we do remember it.

In the first five verses of chapter ix., Paul renews his appeal to the Corinthian saints. They had been so very forward a year before, when the matter had been started, that he had even boasted of them to the Macedonians, who had now outstripped them altogether in actual performance. Let them now really act, and act at once, so that their contribution might be seen to be a gift of the heart, and not something extracted from them almost as a matter of extortion. This fresh appeal is followed from some fresh considerations calculated to back it up. More important principles connected with the matter of giving are brought to light.

For instance, giving is *sowing*; hence the laws of sowing and reaping apply to

it. If seed be scattered with a sparing hand there is a scanty harvest: if with a bountiful hand, a bountiful harvest. It cannot be otherwise whether in nature or in connection with the things of God. In giving to others we are sowing *grace*; and the Apostle reminded them, "God is able to make *all grace abound* toward you" (verse 8.) Verses 10 and 11 also speak of the harvest of blessing that will be reaped especially in things spiritual.

But the giving to be really pleasing to God must be *cheerful giving*. If done grudgingly, or because one is pushed into it, there is not much value in it in the sight of God. Every man will purpose in his heart according to the state of his heart. If our hearts are right, and enlarged by dwelling in the love of God, we shall give not only bountifully but cheerfully also. We shall give after the style of God Himself; and God loves those who are like Himself.

As we give we are sowing not only grace but *righteousness* also. Psalm cxii. 9 is quoted, in which the man is described who is characterized as "good," and "upright," and "that feareth the Lord." Such a one disperses of his substance and gives to those in need, and his kind giving is not spoken of as grace but as righteousness that will remain for ever. Are we accustomed to look upon giving in this light? We have

received so much from God that it is only *right* that we should take the place of givers, if God has entrusted us with a supply of either material or spiritual things. If we do not give, but rather hoard up or expend upon ourselves and our pleasures what is given to us, we are positively unrighteous. Let us take time to mark, learn, and inwardly digest this fact, so that our lives may be ordered in keeping with it.

Moreover the results of large-hearted and cheerful giving are so very blessed. There is the supplying of "the need of the saints." This in itself is a very good thing. Who, that has seen the comfort and joy of some poor saint, when relief has reached them through the liberality of their brethren, could doubt it. Beyond this, however, God is glorified. The action "is abundant also by many thanksgivings to God." The saint, who has been helped and relieved, gives thanks to God again and again for the gift and those who ministered it to him. Presently too those who gave find themselves so blessed and enlarged of God that they begin to give thanks that they were ever privileged to give. We have, you will remember, the very best authority for saying that, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And finally the poor saints, who have nothing to give in return, do repay what is given by an answering affection and by earnest prayer. The givers reap the blessing which flows from the love

and prayers of those whom they have helped.

What a marvellous train of happy results is attached to giving ! No wonder it is enumerated amongst the "gifts" of Romans xii., or that elsewhere we read, "To do good and to communicate forget not." What spiritual enlargement flows out of it ! And conversely, how often is spiritual poverty the direct result of the neglect of it ! If believers are stingy in their handling of material things, the holy government of God will leave them poor and straightened in spiritual things.

All giving by the Christian flows from that which has been given to him from God. Hence the Apostle cannot close his exhortation on this theme without leading our thoughts to God's supreme gift from which all our giving flows. It is so great a gift as to be beyond all our powers of expression or description. We can only utter thanks for it.

God has given "His only-begotten Son." We read also of "the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him;" and again that, "the gift of God is eternal life." And other such-like verses there are. We believe that here in the mind of the Spirit all these great gifts are treated as *one gift*, which demands eternal thanksgiving from us.

As we add our hearty, Amen, to the thanksgiving, let us see to it that we have such a lively sense of the greatness of the gift that we diligently practise the grace of giving ourselves.

F. B. HOLE.

PERFECTED FOR EVER.

ONE all-availing sacrifice,
One payment—full and large,
And lo! the sins of myriad souls
Obtain a full discharge;
For such the glorious worth of Him
Who earth's sad desert trod,
That singly—all alone—He could
Propitiate our God.

“Once purged,” the worshippers now stand
Beneath the searching eye
Of Him whom seraphim adore,
And “holy, holy” cry
With faces veiled—full well they know
His majesty and might,
Yet, through the blood, as white as snow
The cleansed ones in His sight.

With boldness, then, most blessed God,
With joy we enter in
The holiest, where glory shines,
Nor fear that place within;
The blood, of untold worth, of Christ
Has satisfied Thy throne,
And set us free to worship Thee
Through what HE did, alone.

A. H. LYCETT.

OLD, YET EVER NEW.

“ There is a story sweet to hear,
I love to tell it too :
It fills my heart with hope and cheer,
’Tis old, yet ever new.”

THE third chapter of the Gospel of John is a very great chapter indeed.

Read it with care, and it will talk to you of profound truths and amazing facts in language of extreme simplicity. Some of its verses shine in the wide expanse of Scripture like stars of the first magnitude, which excite the admiration of the beholder by their brilliancy and beauty. Pre-eminent among these is verse 16: “ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” On these words the Holy Spirit delights to place peculiar honour, and He is never weary of using them to touch and melt and subdue the hearts of men and to turn them to the living God. They are indeed wonderful words of life. Oh, that they were written in letters of gold across the face of the blue sky, so that every eye could see them!

In reading the chapter our attention is immediately arrested by the saying, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Much less can he enter into it. This is startling, and to Nicodemus it was an unfathomable mystery. How can these things be? he asked in sheer amazement. The proud heart of man still resents this faithful saying, even as he cannot understand it. But it is true, nevertheless, that there is a realm of life and blessing, of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, of which men know absolutely nothing unless they have been born again. It lies outside and beyond their environment, and they know no more about it than the untutored savage knows of the literature of ancient Greece or the Commentaries of Julius Cæsar.

And why is it that men need to be born again if they are to see and enter into the kingdom of God? It is because the springs of our nature have been poisoned at their very source. Sin is there, and sin has brought in darkness and moral death. Were it possible for one who had never been born again to enter heaven, it would be no home, no place of happiness to him. He would get out of it as soon as ever he could. And the reason is simple—he would find nothing there suited to his taste, no correspondence between himself and his surroundings. But when a man is born again,

born of the Spirit, he receives a new life, divine in its origin, having a nature of its own. He is endowed with a capacity to know, to understand, to enjoy the things of God. This, the man of mere education, culture, and rich intellectual qualities does not possess—the new birth alone can give it.

In verse 7 of our chapter is one very emphatic "*must*." In verse 14 there is another on which equal stress should be laid. Men *must* be born again if they are to see and enter into the kingdom of God, and the Son of Man *must* be lifted up if men are not to perish, but have everlasting life. We are not left in any doubt as to what is meant by the lifting up of the Son of Man, for in chapter xii. we find the same words and the Holy Spirit's explanation of them. They signify the death He should die. To the Cross the Son of Man *must* go if any are to be saved from sin and its eternal consequences and receive life everlasting. Why was this? Could we not have been saved and blessed without the Cross? Is not God supreme, and who could resist His will? Such questions are often asked. But had He been pleased to do so, at what cost would it have been done! Where His authority? Where the maintenance of His justice against evil-doers?

If the great moral Governor of the universe takes no notice of the sins of men,

or looks upon them as weaknesses for which no one shall be called to account, why should not earthly rulers do the same? Let us do away with prisons, with magistrates and judges of the land, and suffer men to do what they list without fear of punishment. And if any demur, it shall be enough to plead that we cannot go wrong if we follow the Divine Example. But men are wise enough to see that such a principle would never do. And they are right. Nor will it do for God. Sin cannot be passed over—these offences against His government and throne. And this is why the Son of Man *must* be lifted up. Here, also, is the reason of that cry which otherwise could never be explained, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Forsaken He was while He made atonement for our sins in such a way and measure as satisfied the Eternal Throne, and made it manifest that God and sin could never be reconciled. And now if any man believes in Him he shall never perish. Nor is that all. For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness that the dying might look and live, so Christ has been lifted up, that *whosoever* believes in Him should receive here and now the great gift of life everlasting.

But we are not to stay at this point, but go on to verse 16. And now we reach the source of the broad river of salvation

and of endless blessing, even *the great love of God*. In that love the river takes its rise and flows on through this stricken land. Wonderful that God should ever have loved the world at all. For what was there to stir up that love save the sins, the sorrows, the miseries of men, over whom death reigned supreme? Think of the world—think of its history from Eden to the Flood, and from the Flood to Bethlehem and Calvary. Turn over page after page of its dark and dismal story and you will find no reason why God should love the world at all. Numberless reasons why He should not. Why, then, did He not leave it to its fate? Why not let it run on its sad and evil course till it should be summoned, in the judgment day, to stand before the bar of God to answer for its sins? It was His love that led Him to intervene—a love broader and deeper than the sea. God *so* loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son. Mark that “*so*.” How emphatic it is! With what burning intensity it should be uttered. And then observe the greatness of the gift! The only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, *He* is the sent One of God. He has come into the world to make God known, to speak unto us words of eternal life, to die for us that we, believing in Him, might be saved from perishing and have life everlasting. Twice over is this said, to make it sure to us; twice over is it said, lest

such tidings should be thought incredible by the very greatness and gladness of them. Herein is love which the tongues of angels and of men can never tell. It is too vast, too immense.

Observe also that "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world." On no such errand did He come. A mission of judgment might have been committed unto angels as in earlier days. But a work that had salvation in view could only be undertaken by the Son. He was sent that the world through Him might be saved. No greater proof of God's love could we have or He give. And yet we are so slow to believe in the reality of it. We are prone to think of God only as a Judge, offended by our sins, from whose anger we are shielded by the blessed Saviour. And the very element of truth that this view contains will darken our vision of the gospel unless we are on our guard. It is true that our sins have turned God into a Judge; but it is also true that before the day of judgment comes He has sent His own Son to be the Saviour of sinful men—to take up the sin question and to settle it so that it may never again be raised for any who believe. Surely He was under no obligation to do this. We owe it to His love alone.

And it was to save *the world* that the Father sent the Son. The salvation of which He is the Author is not for one nation

only. It is for all peoples who dwell on this round earth. For the millions of heathen lands as much as for those that are nearer home. Oh, let us make haste and go to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and tell them that the Dayspring from on high hath visited us. That God has so loved them that He has given His only begotten Son, that they, too, might have life eternal and be saved through Him with an everlasting salvation.

Notice also the directness with which our chapter speaks. "He that believeth on Him is not condemned." Could anything be plainer than that? Could such a consoling fact be stated in fewer words? There is another fact of equal and possibly of greater blessedness stated with the same plainness in verse 36. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." How does the believer *know* that he is not condemned? How does he *know* that everlasting life is his? If any ask such questions, he is at no loss to answer them. He points the inquirer to verses 18 and 36 of our chapter as the warrant for his faith. He knows it because the Scriptures declare it to be so. And what better authority could he have? None whatever. Here I pause to ask whether you who read these lines know these things for yourself. If not, why is this? Have you not received the Saviour? Do you not believe in Him? If you reply, Yes, I do believe, but still I shrink from saying

that everlasting life is mine and that there is no judgment for me, remember that He has said so first. Surely it cannot be either wrong or presumptuous to think as He thinks, and to receive what He says in the simple faith of a little child.

And what of those who do not believe? What of those who treat the story of God's great love with chilling indifference and in whose thoughts and love and life Christ has no place? What of these? The same Scriptures shall tell us: "He that believeth not is condemned already." Think of that. Think of it slowly, and weigh well the words. And if the one who believes not is "condemned already," what, let me ask, is the ground of it? The answer is, "Because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Nothing can be plainer, nor can anything be much more solemn. His judgment rests, not on the fact that he is a sinful man, but on this—that the Son of God has come—sent of the Father—sent not to judge, but to save. But the unbeliever rejects Him, despises Him, ignores Him. On such the wrath of God must ultimately fall.

Here, then, are some of the truths set forth in this great chapter. Ought we not to give earnest heed to them? It is true they have but little place in the popular preaching of the day. But the thoughts and theories of men are vanity. They shall

perish and pass away. Not so the word of the Lord. It lives and abides for ever. Happy the man who cleaves to God's testimonies, for they are very sure.

W.B.

"WELLS WITHOUT WATER."

HAVE you ever noticed in your general reading, that if a quotation is made, however brief, from the Scriptures it seems to lend a force, all its own, to the passages, like a scintillating gem among stones of lesser value? This was my experience lately when reading an article in a weekly, and the words which arrested me were those written at the head of this paper.

The tragedy wrapped up in those simple words gripped my heart. They started a trend of thought which led me to familiar passages, to to ponder anything that Scripture tells us about *wells*.

There are many references to wells in Genesis, and in glancing at a few of them we cull some significant instruction, but first let us ask ourselves, what *is* a well? and *how* comes it to be in any given spot?

A well speaks of man's skilled effort to garner God's most precious gift of water. If God withheld His water, it would be futile

to dig wells—a spring must exist ere a well is called for.

And whence comes the spring? From heaven's plentiful showers of rain, uniting over a wide area drop by drop, and streamlet by streamlet, till a spring, a perennial spring, comes into being underground. No one streamlet, far less one drop, will fill a spring, it must drain from many trickling streams and over a wide area.

Man's wisdom, industry and skill in providing a well make God's gift available for human necessity, yet water never ceases to be God's *gift*, whether we draw it from a well or from a tap.

Genesis xxi. 25, tells us that the wealthy sheik Abraham reproved Abimelech, the king, "because of a well of water which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away." Rulers negotiated with each other in those days as to the possession of a well, much as they would to-day about a railroad.

Chapter xxvi. tells us that Abimelech's people stopped the wells dug by Abraham's household and that rival herdsmen *fought* for the possession of "a well of springing water."

Chapter xxix. 1-8, tells of *three* flocks of sheep assembled round a well waiting to be watered when the stone was removed. What a tragedy had they found it to be

a "well without water." Have *you* ever experienced this?

In those Eastern lands *princes* did not disdain to *dig* wells, or nobles to help "with their staves" (Num. xxi. 18). But you can follow the trail through many books of the Old Testament, not failing to notice the significant allusion in Prov. x. 11, "The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life"—not necessarily a *learned* man, but a *righteous* man.

This crisp statement brings us to the figurative use of the term, "well," in Scripture and leads us on in thought to the wonderful scene in John iv., when the Lord gently guides a seeking soul away from Jacob's gift of earthly refreshment, to His own priceless gift, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life"—Himself the eternal source of the life, that is life indeed.

How does the Lord, now absent, minister refreshment and vitality to His people as they journey through arid lands? Surely it is by the Spirit's ministry in the countless companies of God's people all over this world, groups large and small, enlightened and simple, isolated or otherwise, His resources reach out through human channels each contributing his share toward the whole; as the drops and streamlets combine to fill the living spring.

How ideal it sounds; mutual refreshment, help, encouragement. But what if the *well* proves to be *without water*? Oh the pity of it. How angels must weep to see "wells without water" dotted over this world! Elaborate arrangements made for the dispensing of God's water, but alas! no water flowing. Does it not challenge any but a heart of stone to enquire of Him who is the searcher of hearts, whether by any chance we personally—you and I—are contributing to the tragedy in a dry and thirsty land of our "well" being without water?

E. M. POLLOCK.

THE INVARIABLE GOD.

James 1.

JAMES, the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, is reckoned the most austere of all the New Testament writers, and certainly he is most sternly unsparing in his denunciation of sin and folly; but how attractively he presents God to us in the first chapter of his Epistle., "Do not err, my beloved brethren," he says. Let nothing deceive you as to this; don't look around or within for good, for the world and the devil and temptation are

around, and lust is within, but LOOK UP. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above."

In looking up we shall not be disappointed, for the gifts are good and the giving is perfect; the gift and the giving are one. We have known men who have given gifts, but have done so grudgingly, and with such ill grace, that the gift has turned to gall; but not thus are these heavenly gifts. With them the giving exceeds in blessedness the gifts themselves, if that is possible. "God . . . giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not" (ver. 5). His manner of giving enhances the blessedness of the gift, and reveals His own perfect graciousness.

And these gifts are not only from above like the sunshine and the rain, so that we look up for them, but they are from *the Father of lights*; they are personal gifts from a personal God to intelligent persons. And He is the Father of lights. We cannot do without lights, and all lights proceed from God.

Most certainly those in the physical universe proceeded from Him, for "God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years . . . He made the

stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth " (Gen. i. 14-17). We see the wisdom and kindness of our faithful Creator in these lights above us and we enjoy them and give thanks for them. Life would be impossible without them; they bring order, and method and variety and guidance into our lives and he who would live well and long must not ignore "the signs and seasons and days and years" for which these lights were made. The ship-master steers his vessel with safety if he can take his bearings by the lights in the heavens; many a gallant ship has been lost because steered by dead reckoning. Those lights proceeded from God to guide the mariner over tempestuous seas.

Those physical lights are a parable to us. They speak clearly, for "Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Psalm xix. 4). They not only proclaim God's power and wisdom, but they remind us that we need more than physical light, we need the knowledge of Him who made the lights and set them in the heavens. This light also proceeds from God. He is the Father of it. All else is darkness. The lie proceeded from the devil in Eden and has blinded the minds of men—"The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (2 Cor. iv. 4), says the sure Word of God; and if we enquire

as to what that same Word says about the emanations from men's mind's—their philosophies and schemes—we learn that there is no light in them, as they vainly suppose, but that their understanding is darkened, that they are “alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph. iv. 18).

“Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun,” but the sweetest and most blessed light of all is the light of the knowledge of God. And He, “who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. iv. 6). God has sent forth His light and His truth. They came into the world in the Person of His beloved Son. Thanks be unto God for this good and perfect, and unspeakable gift.

But more, with God who is the Father of lights there is “*no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*” These, I understand, are astronomical allusions. With the heavenly bodies that give us light, there are “parallaxes;” they appear to change their position when viewed from different points; they act and react upon one another, and as they turn they cast shadows one on another; hence the eclipses. But with God there is nothing of this kind, with Him there

is no "parallax." From whatever point we observe Him He is the same, and nothing that He has created can move Him from His purpose or cast an obscuring shadow upon Him. The works of His hands shall wax old as doth a garment, but He changes not. We turn from all created light to Him as we hasten to the city that has "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. xxi. 23).

And we have been begotten of Him of His own supreme, unchangeable will by the word of truth, the living and ever-abiding word, which is as unchanging as Himself, that we might be like Him and it—a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. He would have us to be a sample, a pattern of what He would have all His intelligent creatures to be. Not fickle, wavering, unstable, changeable, traitorous, like sinful man, the children of disobedience, as we once all were, but steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, taking our character from Him who has begotten us, and bearing His features, "being imitators of God as dear children."

We surely desire it, but how can it be? If we are begotten of God by the word of truth we have the nature that not only desires this God-likeness, but is capable of producing it—but how? Does not verse

5 of our chapter answer the question, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; *and it shall be given him.*" And God being what He is, and His word being the word of truth, there is no room for doubt as to this, "it shall be given him;" so we continue, "*Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.*" Why should he waver since God is the unwavering God, and His word the word of truth? "*For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.*" And it is plain that such a man does not please God, for "*Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing from the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.*"

It is the knowledge of the invariable God, who has created great gifts for our good and gives them with unstinted grace, but who is greater than all He gives, and who proposes to be our Guide through the intricacies of life and to give wisdom and power for the right way, that will enable us to endure temptation and preserve us from the variable ways of men, and to be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, that in the end we may receive "the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him" (verse 12).

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(2 *Corinthians* x. 1-18).

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

THE last four chapters of this epistle are mainly concerned with matters of a more personal sort, that lay between Paul and the Corinthians. To write so much of such matters may appear to be egotism on the part of Paul. Paul himself speaks of it as his "folly" (xi. 1). Still what he wrote is as much inspired as the rest of the epistle, and as full of profit also. Much that is of deep importance for all saints, and for all time, is embedded in these chapters; and we gain immensely by having it presented to us, not from a theoretical standpoint, but as a matter of actual practice, worked out as between the Apostle and some of his fellow-believers.

During Paul's absence from them, the Corinthians had been influenced and sadly misled by other workers who had visited them. Some of these may have been true but ill-instructed believers of Judaizing tendencies; but others were "deceitful workers" (xi. 13), real agents of Satan. Anyway they had done their best to discredit Paul, making all kinds of charges and insinuations against him. They said, for instance, that though he might be able to write "weighty and powerful" letters, when he appeared on

the scene he was weak and insignificant in appearance and his speech was uncultured and contemptible. From this they deduced that he possessed no particular authority, and his instructions might be disregarded. This particular insinuation Paul takes up and meets at the beginning of chapter x.

He pleads guilty, with the utmost frankness, to being "base" or "mean" in his outward appearance. He was quite undistinguished to look at: when converted he took the name Paul, which means "Little." Now he was absent from them, and he was bold toward them. But further he expected presently to visit them, and he besought them so to carry themselves that he need not come amongst them with bold and powerful discipline which might be to their discomfiture. This he besought them by "the meekness and gentleness of Christ"—a very delicate yet powerful lever!

Meekness is not weakness, neither is gentleness that pliable softness that can be twisted in any direction. Meekness and self-assertiveness stand in contrast to each other: so do gentleness and harshness. Meekness is a matter of *character*—the Lord Jesus said, "I am meek and lowly *in heart*"—and so it comes first. Gentleness is more a question of one's *manner*. He who is meek in character will be gentle in manner. He who is self-assertive in character will be harsh in manner. Supreme meekness

and supreme gentleness were found in Christ; and yet no one was bolder than He, when it was a question of maintaining the right or opposing the evil. In a very large measure the Apostle was following His steps, and hence boldness as well as meekness and gentleness were found in him.

True to this character, Paul beseeches the Corinthians rather than issuing peremptory commands to them. There were some however who thought of him as though he were a man who walked according to the flesh. This led him to give us the important statement that follows as to the character of both his walk and warfare. Verse 3 is instructive, inasmuch as both senses in which the word *flesh* is used are brought together in it. We walk *in* the flesh; that is, in the bodies of flesh which we have derived from Adam. But we do not war *after* the flesh; that is, according to the Adamic nature which is connected with our bodies.

In so saying Paul of course referred to himself and his co-workers, and also he stated what normally should be true of every Christian. But is it true of us? Do we recognize the true character of the flesh—that is, of the Adamic nature—and treat it as a condemned thing? It is normal for Christians to walk “after the Spirit” (Rom. viii. 4), but that is not mentioned here, only inferred.

The point here is not exactly our walk, but rather our warfare. Is the believer then called to warfare? He is: and to warfare of a very aggressive sort. His weapons however like the warfare are not fleshly but spiritual.

Every servant of Christ gets involved in warfare. All evangelistic labour has that character, for the Gospel is preached that it may overthrow human pride and bring men to the feet of Christ. All the teaching imparted within the assembly has to overthrow merely human thoughts. And, evil teaching having invaded the Christian profession, there must of necessity be contention for the faith, which partakes of the character of warfare. All warfare however tests us, for it is very easy to slip into the use of purely natural and fleshly weapons. The practiced political speaker, who wants to swing men round to his point of view, has many weapons in his armoury—argument, ridicule, graphic exaggeration, and the like. But he contends merely with other human beings, and upon equal terms.

Our warfare is upon another plane altogether. With us there are "strongholds" to be overthrown. Who holds these strongholds? The great adversary himself. He it is who has entrenched himself in human hearts, so that they are filled with "imagination" or "reasonings," so that they exalt

themselves on high against the knowledge of God, and are filled with lawlessness. All these lofty thoughts have to be brought low into captivity to Christ, so that lawlessness is exchanged for obedience to Him. What weapons are sufficient to produce that result?

Merely human weapons must be perfectly futile. Fleshly weapons can no more subdue flesh than Satan can cast out Satan. Spiritual weapons alone can prevail; and they must be used in a way that is according to God, if they are to be effectual.

What spiritual weapons are at our disposal? In this passage the Apostle does not pause to specify, though the succeeding verses seem to show that he was specially thinking of those powers of discipline which were vested in him as an Apostle, powers peculiar to himself. There are however, spiritual weapons which all may use: those, for instance, which were mentioned by the Apostles in Jerusalem when they said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts vi. 4). Every saint can pray, and every saint can in some way speak forth the Word of God.

The Apostles recognised the extreme value of both these weapons, and refused to allow anything, however good in itself, to divert them from wielding them. Again and

again have servants of God found themselves face to face with some human fortress of pride and unbelief like unto Jericho. And yet when encircled by prayers of faith a moment has come when the Word of God has been sounded out as from a ram's horn, and the walls of unbelief have crashed, the stronghold has been overthrown. The Lord Himself indicated another spiritual weapon when He spoke of a certain kind of demon which only could be cast out by prayer and fasting. Fasting is a weapon but very little used in these days.

Would to God that we all were alive to these things! Take for instance the preaching of the Gospel. Do we recognize that the work involves conflict of this order? If we did we should simply flock to the prayer meetings for the Gospel—that is, if we have any heart for the glory of Christ, any love for the perishing souls of men. As things are, a tiny group of two or three, or perhaps half a dozen, usually turn up for the prayer meeting, and the majority of those who attend the preaching do so in the spirit of those who have come to hear a nice address, which they expect to “enjoy,” as if the enjoyment of saints were the chief end of the Gospel service. If once we caught the spirit that breathes in the verses before us, our prayer meetings, our Gospel meetings, and many other meetings, would speedily be transformed.

The Apostle made a very personal application of these things to the Corinthians. The discipline that he was empowered to exercise was, as we have said, a spiritual weapon, and they might very soon be feeling its sharp edge. The word translated, "destruction" in verse 8, is the same as that translated "pulling down" in verse 4. The word "overthrowing" is possibly better in both places. There is the power of God to overthrow strongholds of unbelief, and the same power can, if the sad necessity arises, overthrow carnal and disobedient believers. Yet the normal and proper use of that power is for the edification, or building up of the saints.

The Apostle had authority, given to him of the Lord, and power in keeping with that authority. The Corinthians, not being very spiritual were inclined to concern themselves a good deal with outward appearance (see verse 1, margin). Paul might be mean to look at, but let them remember that he was Christ's, and that at least as much as those who were his opponents and detractors, and he had an authority which they had not. Let them know too that when present amongst them they would find him to be just what his letters evidently were—weighty and powerful. Here we have, thrown in by the way, a tribute to the effect that his inspired writings had upon the people of his own day. They were the Word of God, and they authenticated

themselves to be such in the hearts of those who had any spiritual sensibilities. They do just the same to-day. We recognize them as far too weighty and powerful to be the mere word of man.

In speaking thus of his authority Paul was not for one moment entering into a kind of competition with those who opposed him. They were anxious to commend themselves, and so get a footing with the Corinthians; and in doing this a spirit of competition got among them, and they began "measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves," which was a very unwise proceeding. In so doing they got no higher than themselves. It was all self. One man might be distinguished by this feature, another by that; but in comparing themselves with one another they never rose up to God, and to the measure which He had ordained.

In verse 13 Paul continues to use the word, "measure," but with a rather different significance, coupling it with the word "rule" which occurs again in verse 15, and also in verse 16, where it is translated "line." It almost looks as if he were alluding to God's work in creation, as stated in Job xxxviii. 5, where God Himself asks, of the earth, "Who laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?" He is a God who works by measure and by line, whether in creation

or in the administration connected with His grace. Now God had measured things out and appointed a line or rule in connection with Paul's apostolic service.

From other scriptures we know what the measure and rule of Paul's service was. He could say, "I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle . . . a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity" (1 Tim. ii. 7). The line allotted to him was a very extensive one. The whole Gentile world was within the circumference of his measure. Of course then he had not stretched beyond his measure in coming to the Corinthians; his measure reached even to them. They came well within the scope of his apostolic commission.

"Indeed, Paul's eye of evangelistic zeal looked beyond Corinth to more distant regions beyond them, where he expected yet more abundantly to preach the Gospel. In the epistle to the Romans he speaks of having fully preached the Gospel of Christ from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, the district we now know as Albania, on the shores of the Adriatic; and ultimately he went to Rome. The true evangelist always has his eye on "the regions beyond."

We must not fail to notice the short clause in verse 15, "when your faith is increased." There was a connection between the increasing of their faith and the

enlargement of Paul's own service, at all events as regards the geographical spread of it. As long as they were feeble in faith their whole state would be feeble, and this would have its effect upon Paul's activities and service. When he saw them strong in faith he would be the more free to push on from them into the regions beyond. In this way the state of the saints affects the activities of the servant of God. We are members one of another, and not even an apostle can be wholly unaffected by the state of others. This fully applies to us to-day, of course. God help us each to diligently and conscientiously enquire as in His presence whether we are helping to enlarge or to contract the work of His servants. One or the other it must be.

Several of the remarks which the Apostle makes in these verses were intended to point out that the men opposing him, and endeavouring to turn the Corinthians from him, were working on very different lines. They were boasting of things without their measure. They held no commission from the risen Lord, as he did. They were not pushing out into the regions beyond, and suffering the privations and persecutions that were involved in such labour. They were "boasting . . . of other men's labours" for they were meddling with his work; or as he puts it in verse 16, "boasting in another man's line of things made ready" to their hands.

It is very noticeable how false religious cults often have this feature strongly marking them. They find their happy hunting ground amongst other peoples' converts. They boast in that which after all is the work of others.

The boasting of the Apostle was not in man, nor even in work. As in the first epistle, so here he declares, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." If the Lord gives the measure and the rule it is well. If the Lord prospers the work so that men are brought to faith in Christ, and in due course their faith is increased, again it is well. But even so our only boasting must be in the Lord, whose servants we are.

And, on the other hand, the commendation which comes from the Lord is the only commendation worth having. Men may push themselves forward, and commend themselves, as Paul's opponents were doing, but it is all worthless. It is very natural for us to "receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only" (John v. 44), but it is very fatal. To have the Lord's commendation when the great day of the judgment seat arrives, is worth everything. Let us live our lives as those who have their eyes upon that day.

F. B. HOLE.

“THE LAW OF LIBERTY.”

“**T**HE law of liberty” sounds almost like a contradiction of terms, and James, “the Just” is not the man to whom at first thought we should have gone to learn the secret of a life of liberty. With his bridle for the tongue and denunciation of so many things that men look upon as desirable, we should have been more inclined to expect restraint and bondage from his ministry. Yet he it is that talks of liberty, and this law of liberty he pronounces to be perfect; it is freedom from all irksome fetters; a royal law according to the Scriptures. This surely calls for enquiry.

The context in which the expression occurs is instructive. He tells us that if a man hears the Word and does not do it, he is like a man who beholds his natural face in a mirror and straightway forgets what manner of man he is. That is to say, he gets nothing more than a cursory glance of his inward condition and never really knows himself. It may be that the passing glimpse angers him, and because he is not honest and does not want to know the truth about himself he turns from it to forget. In one of the very interesting annual re-

ports of the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society, there is a story of a Mohammedan who bought a Bible from one of their agents. After a little while he brought it back saying he did not want it; he did not like it. "Why?" asked the agent. "It kicks me" was the answer. Many are like that; they listen to ministry or read the word, and since, as in a mirror, they see themselves for what they really are, they are ashamed. It hurts them; they do not care to face the truth and make haste to forget it. This is a prevalent and serious evil.

It was doubtless the law of Moses that James had in mind, for that does most definitely expose what a man is; but if that were all it did, there would be nothing attractive in it and it would be impossible for any man to look earnestly and steadily into it; for that is the meaning of the word that he uses. It is the same word which is used to describe John's attitude when he stooped down and gazed into the empty sepulchre of the Lord. One can understand the concentration of his gaze, and the surprise and wonder of it, for he saw something in that sepulchre that he never expected to see. And this, it seems to me, is suggested in the way James speaks of looking into the perfect law of liberty.

The fact is, eyes are needed, new eyes in a renewed heart, if we are to look stead-

fastly into this law and find in it not a curse but a blessing, not bondage but a life of liberty. We have spoken of God as the Father of lights (see September issue), but of what use are lights to us if we have eyes that see not? James had spoken of the double-minded man, and the Lord spoke of the single eye; that sort of eye the double-minded man does not possess, he has the evil eye that cannot endure the light, but turns from it and forgets. The single eye is God-given, and it looks with wonder into the law. "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Psalm cxix. 18), is the prayer of a man who has the single eye. He is filled with surprise as these wondrous things unfold themselves to him. But what are these wondrous things? Not the corruption of his own heart; that is not wondrous, but God's character and will, and His desire that men should draw near to Him, and know and respond to the love that is in His heart for them.

James knew as well as Paul that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. iii. 20). He had agreed with and confirmed Peter's moving appeal to the legal brethren at Jerusalem, "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts xv. 10). He could write of

"the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory" which faith teaches that "ye are not under law but under grace." So that we may be sure that he was not turning the disciples from the gospel to the law as a means of blessing and liberty; it was not the demands of the law or its awful sanctions that were in his mind when he talked of looking into it, but the beauty and the blessedness of it as he had seen them filled out in the life of our Lord Jesus. He was, we believe, the brother of our Lord and must have had extraordinary opportunities of noting that life. He probably, like the rest of the family, misunderstood it, at the time, for it was a mystery to all those whose eyes were not opened by the Spirit, but afterwards he would recall it; it would all be brought to his remembrance. He would think of Him as the blessed Man whose "delight is in the law of the Lord: and in His law doth He meditate day and night" (Ps. i. 2), and who always found the will of God, "good and acceptable and perfect;" and he desired that the Christians to whom he wrote should look into the same law and walk in the same steps.

It would be impossible for any man to delight in the will of one whom he did not know and love, and if God were only known in the lightning and thunder and darkness of Sinai we could not delight in His will. But see how James, who had looked into

the law of liberty, describes Him. "He giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not" (i. 5). He is the unchanging One from whom every good and perfect gift comes (i. 17). He evidently cares for the fatherless and widows in their affliction (i. 27). He giveth grace to the humble (iv. 6). He draws nigh to them that draw nigh to Him (iv. 8). He is "very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (v. 11). All these features are plainly seen in the law, but how livingly were they expressed in the Lord Jesus. We see them in all their perfection in Him.

It is the true knowledge of God that leads to a life of liberty. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." No man is free who believes the lie as to God's character, or does his own will instead of God's; but those of whom it can be said "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (i. 18), they love Him and find the life of liberty in happy subjection to His will, and the righteousness of the law is fulfilled *in* them, for they walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. It puts us in no bondage to do what we delight to do. And if we delight in the law of God after the inward man and have the power of the Spirit of God enabling us to do His will, that is liberty indeed. It is liberty to do what new nature within delights to do and in doing it we are blessed in our deed.

TWO-AND-A-HALF CONVERTS.

A STORY is told of that wonderful preacher, D. L. Moody of America.

Returning from a service he had conducted, he was asked, "How many converts were there to-night?"

He replied, "Two-and-a-half."

"You mean then that two grown-ups and a child confessed the Lord."

"No," he answered, "there were two children and one grown-up."

What a wise reply! His questioner was left to think out the answer. Two children converted means two *whole* adult lives for Christ. A grown-up person converted, say in middle life, means *half* a life for Christ.

Mr. Moody's reply was truly sagacious, and should be a very great cheer and incentive to all who labour in our Sunday Schools, and other agencies for teaching the young. It makes a child convert to be of special importance.

At the beginning of the Great War a man saw some lads being drilled. He looked at the lads, despised them and sneered saying, "Britain's *last* line of defence!" Often the truth is expressed by one out of sympathy. When the Pharisees murmured "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them," they never uttered a sublimer truth, though *they* thought they were saying what was derogatory to our Lord. Far

otherwise: though their hands were filled with hatred, in reality they were weaving a veritable crown of glory for our Saviour's brow, when they murmured, "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

"Britain's *last* line of defence," sneered the critic. But these lads of 8 and 10 years in 1914, in 1935 are men of 29 and 31, in their full powers of manhood—in the very first line of defence, if needed. If they had not been in the *last* line, they never could have been found in the *first* line; indeed there would have been no first line at all.

So with these bairns who get converted. A few years roll by, and often they have developed into stalwart Christian preachers, Sunday School workers, and helpers in a hundred ways in service of the Lord. Let us work then for the future. Let us value the young increasingly. Let us seek to win them for Christ.

The following table speaks for itself. Out of 1,000 Christians it was found that

548 were converted when under 20 years old					
337 between 20 and 30 years old					
86	"	30	"	40	"
15	"	40	"	50	"
13	"	50	"	60	"
1	"	60	"	70	"
0	"	70	"	80	"
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And all this becomes increasingly important as we realize that the coming of

the Lord draws nigh. If He came this year, and well He might, these young ones must be converted young, or not converted at all. Indeed one would not be surprised to see a mighty work of God break out in Sunday Schools, where the Gospel is faithfully and lovingly presented, in view of the coming of the Lord.

A. J. POLLOCK.

SAVE THE CHILDREN.

IN the street of a certain village stood a kind of skeleton waggon, of the sort used for the cartage of heavy timber. A few loose boards were laid across the axles, and a little boy, four or five years old, sat upon them.

The driver had gone away for a few moments to transact some business, when something occurred which frightened the horses and started them running furiously down the street.

As the passers-by stood and looked on with consternation, a woman who saw the awful danger of the child clasped her hands in anguish and cried out with all her might: "Stop that waggon and save the child! Stop the waggon! Stop it! Stop it!"

A man, standing near, looked at her with an amused expression on his face, and coldly said:

“Silly woman, don't fret yourself. *It isn't your child.*”

“I know it,” cried the woman, “but it's somebody's child. Stop it, oh, stop it!”

In a far more real sense, thousands of children all around us are in terrible danger. They are growing up without God, without knowledge of the Saviour, wandering farther and farther in the paths of sin. Some of us Christians have children of our own, and we are keenly anxious to see them saved. But what about other people's children? We see their peril; have we no responsibility towards them? It may be that seeking *their* salvation may be the means of bringing that priceless boon to our own loved ones.

I have read of a gentleman who lived in the city of Rochester, U.S.A. He had just arrived by train, after a long journey, and was anxious to go home and meet his wife and children. He was hurrying along the street with a bright vision of home in his mind, when he saw on the bank of the river a lot of excited men.

“What is the matter?” he shouted.

They replied, “A boy is in the water.”

In a moment, throwing down his bag and pulling off his coat, he jumped into the

stream, grasped the boy in his arms, and struggled with him to the shore. As he wiped the water from his dripping face and brushed back the hair, he exclaimed, "Oh, it is my own boy!"

He had plunged in for somebody else's boy, as he thought, and had saved his own! Can it be that sometimes the children of Christian parents remain unconverted because those parents are doing nothing for the salvation of other people's children?

Do not imagine because children attend a Sunday-school that they have no further need. In some schools the teachers are themselves unconverted. How can they win those who attend their classes for a Saviour whom they do not know?

Besides, many Sunday-schools are leavened with the wretched doctrines of the "Higher Criticism." The children are taught to look upon the stories of Adam and Eve in the garden, their fall and expulsion, the Flood, the call of Abraham, etc., as mere myths and fables. The seeds of unbelief are thus sown broadcast in their hearts. The fact that children attend such schools as these increases, rather than diminishes, our responsibility to reach them with the gospel.

If there is no Sunday-school where you may help, is there nothing else that you can do? A Christian lady, known to the writer, gathers a few little children into

her house once a week, and sings and prays with them, and tells them simple stories from the Bible.

If your circumstances do not permit of your doing anything of this kind, could you not get a few hundred gospel papers, specially suited for children, and give them to the boys and girls in the neighbourhood where you live ?

Above all, will you not carry the burden of the children into the presence of your Lord, and earnestly pray Him to show you in what way He would have *you* to help ?

Those who preach the gospel will do well not to forget the children in their audiences.

"O God," said a little girl one Saturday night, as she was praying before going to bed, "do help the preacher to-morrow to say something that I can understand."

Savonarola, the Italian Reformer, used to say, "We must fish with nets that have meshes small enough to catch the smallest fish."

Martin Luther, too, never forgot the boys and girls in his congregation. Says he: "When I preach, I sink myself deep down. I regard neither doctors nor magistrates . . . but I have an eye to the multitude of young people, children, and servants, of whom there are more than two thousand. I preach to those, directing myself to them who have need thereof."

The late C. H. Spurgeon was wont to say that of all the hundreds of conversions that took place as the result of his preaching, those of *children* were, generally speaking, the most satisfactory.

The Lord Himself welcomed and blessed children. Alas, that any of His servants in this day should resemble those of long ago, who imagined that their Master could be better occupied than with a lot of boys and girls, and would have driven them away but for the Saviour's gracious words: "Suffer little children to come unto Me."

We have reprinted the above from an old volume of **Simple Testimony**, moved to do so by reading an incident related quite recently at a meeting in London by no less an authority than the Dean of Canterbury. As some of our readers may not have seen it we repeat it in our own words.

Just before last Easter the headmistress of a school for girls, thought it would be fitting to relate to a class of her girls, aged 11 to 13 years, the story of the last week of our Lord's life. She began, and the class followed with keen interest. Time failed her however to finish the story. She got as far as the moment when the Lord Jesus was led by the priests into Pilate's judgment hall. She broke off at that point, saying she would resume the story in the class the following day. Almost with one voice the class cried out, "Oh, do go on. Tell us what happened. Did He get off?" We need not add any comments— EDITOR.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(2 *Corinthians xi.* 1—33).

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

IN the light of the coming day, when the Lord will commend His servants, the commendation of oneself in the presence of one's fellows appears to be but folly. Paul acknowledges this in the first verse of our chapter. He had been speaking about himself in the previous chapter, and he goes on to do so more fully in the chapter before us, but all with a view to assuring the Corinthians of the reality and genuineness of his apostolic mission. He pleads guilty to this "folly" and asks them to bear with him in it.

There was indeed a very good reason for it. His detractors brought their charges and insinuations against him not merely out of opposition to himself. There was an ulterior motive. They depreciated Paul because they aimed thereby at undermining, in the minds of the Corinthians, the truth of the Gospel that he had brought them. They would overthrow Paul's credit as a preliminary step towards overthrowing the Gospel that he preached, and that accomplished, Christ would lose His pre-eminent place in their hearts.

The thought of this stirred the Apostle very deeply. Elijah had been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts in his day, and here we find Paul jealous with a jealousy which was of God on behalf of Christ. When the Gospel he preached is truly received, it fairly wins the heart of the convert for Christ, so really so that he could say, "I have espoused you . . . that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." This is figurative language, but it is quite transparent as to its meaning. Paul so preached, and we all ought so to preach, that the hearts of those who believe are wholly captivated by Christ. But that is only the beginning.

We should also make it our aim, as Paul did, that each convert might retain this single-eyed devotedness to Christ all through life until the moment arrives for presentation to Christ in glory. Each believing heart should wear the "chaste virgin" character, untouched and unsullied by any other master-passion or absorbing love. Alas! how few of us bear that character in any measure. How many there are who are easily diverted from Him, and spend much of their energy in pursuit of other loves! It is possible to turn from Him to pursue things which are really quite opposed to Him; but to turn from Him to pursue things subsidiary to Him, and therefore quite good in their way, is an even greater snare. May God help us to beware of it.

Verse 3 is very important as exposing before us the way in which the great adversary lays the snare for our feet. In chapter iv. we were instructed as to the way in which he blinds the minds of those who believe not. Here we find that when some have believed, and so as to them his blinding tactics have failed, he is still pertinaciously active and aims at beguiling them, as once he beguiled Eve. When he acts with subtilty as the serpent he is more dangerous than when he opposes as a roaring lion.

The devil in the guise of a serpent deceived Eve in a very subtil and crafty way. Step by step he corrupted her mind as to God, and led her to act apart from and independently of her husband. In similar fashion he works to-day. He aims at diverting us from simplicity and from true subjection to Christ. The rendering of the New Translation is, "your thoughts should be corrupted from simplicity as to the Christ."

The words, "corrupted from simplicity," are very suggestive, and worth pondering deeply. In man's world things proceed from the simple to the complex. The earliest printing machines, for instance, were very simple affairs. In the course of several centuries they have become marvellous machines of great complexity. So in the ordinary way, confining ourselves to the affairs of men, we should speak of

things being developed and improved from their original simplicity. But here we are dealing with what is extraordinary and outside the affairs of men. God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are His ways our ways. It is well to get this firmly settled in our souls.

The works and ways of God are marked by simplicity. His simplicity is perfect. We cannot improve upon it. We may attempt to alter it, but then we only corrupt it. The Gospel is the essence of simplicity. It sets Christ before us as the One who is the expression of all that God has to say to us, as also He is the One who has wrought the necessary work of redemption, and in whom we now stand before God. It brings us into complete subjection to Him. But Satan is a master of craft and subtilty. Using these men who were the opponents of Paul, he did not totally deny the Christ whom Paul preached. Verse 4 is clear evidence of this. If they could have come with another gospel, announcing another Jesus, and conferring another spirit, there might have been something to say on their behalf, especially if it could have been an improvement on what they had already received.

Instead of denying Christ they came under the pretence of adding something to Christ. A fuller idea of their position may be gleaned from the epistle to the Galatians,

where we find them adding the law to Christ: teaching that, though we may be justified by Him, we are put under the law in order that holiness may be promoted. That Christ should be made righteousness to us they were prepared to admit, but that He should also be made sanctification seemed to them much too simple.

It is not otherwise to-day. The tendency to hanker after the elaborate, the abstruse, the complicated, the far-fetched is always with us. The intellectual men of the world find the Gospel far too simple, and they stumble at it. The trouble is however that believers, whose strong point is their intellect, always have a tendency in the same direction, unless they walk in the spirit of self-judgment as regards intellectualism. If they do not maintain self-judgment, all their elaborations, their deep and abstruse thoughts, only eventuate in something that corrupts from simplicity as to the Christ.

The mind is a very important part of a man, and Satan's acutest beguilements are aimed at it. It is far from being the whole of a man: his affections and his conscience have a very large place. The trouble is that the intellectual person is very apt to give a much larger place to his mind than Scripture gives to it, and to forget that God reveals His truth to us, not for our intellectual enjoyment, but that it

may command our hearts, appeal to our consciences and govern our lives. Let that be properly realized, and we at once find plenty to occupy our spiritual energies in the profound simplicities of the truth, and any itching desire we ever had for mere complexities and novelties and obscurities forsakes us.

"Simplicity as to the Christ!" That is what we need. To know Him: to love Him, as united in heart to Him: to adore Him: to serve Him: that is it! If our minds are thus stayed upon Him in uncorrupted simplicity, all else will be added unto us, and we shall be maintained in the fervour of "first love." It was just at this point that decline set in, as witnessed in Revelation ii. 4. So here: Paul knew well that if Satan succeeded in his beguilings at this point, he would succeed all along the line.

So, once more, in defending his Gospel from the subtle attack of Satan through men who were, however unwittingly, serving him, he had to make plain the reality and power of his apostleship in contrast to features that marked them. He was indeed an apostle, and not in the least inferior to those who were most prominent among the twelve.

From verses 6 to 9 we gather that the Apostolic had been belittled not only because his speech was not highly polished but because he had taken no monetary help from

the Corinthians whilst amongst them. In alluding to this his language was tinged with irony. He had abased himself in order to exalt them. Was this an offence, a sin? He had accepted help from other churches, notably the Macedonian, and he speaks of this as robbing, or spoiling, them—still the language of irony, of course. He had done the Corinthians the greatest possible service without the least cost to themselves. And he boasted thus, not in the spirit of emulation as though he did not love them, but just because he did love them, and he desired to deliver them from the fascination which the opposers exercised over them by reason of the foolish boasting in which they indulged so freely.

This leads the Apostle to speak with great plainness about the opposers. They were false apostles, for they never had been sent of the Lord as the true apostles were. They were workers right enough, but deceitful ones, since they transformed themselves into what they were not. In this they partook of the character of him whom they served, and according to their deceitful works will be their end.

It is very important that we should remember that Satan so commonly transforms himself into an angel of light, and his servants into servants of righteousness. That being so, we must expect sin and error to frequently present themselves in a pleasing

and delightful guise. Again and again we find the advocates of error to be quite nice men. It is unsafe to receive the message because the man who brings it appears so good, so charming, so eloquent, so like an angel of light. The only safe test is, Does he bring the doctrine of Christ, the true Gospel? If he does, receive it by all means, even if he is a bit uncouth, a poor speaker, or of ugly appearance. "Prince Charming" is all too often a servant of Satan in mufti.

Such was the character of some—if not all—of those who were opposing Paul. Hitherto he had not said much as to them, but now the time had come to stand up to them and expose them, and this he does very effectually here. They were always boasting concerning themselves, and they did it with a view to self-exaltation. They were marked by a spirit which was the exact opposite of Paul's. He abased himself in order to exalt those whose blessing he sought (verse 7): they exalted themselves and did not scruple to exploit those whom they professed to serve. They brought them into bondage, they devoured them by getting their money, they even smote them on the face. Very possibly smiting on the face was not literal, but in the sense of being rude to them in haughty fashion, or, as we should say, browbeating them. The Corinthians being carnally-minded had evidently been impressed with their domineer-

ing manner. Had they been more spiritual they would have seen through it.

Still as these men acted in this way Paul felt that he should take up their challenge. If they wished to institute a kind of competition as to who had the highest credentials, he would speak somewhat further as to his. This boasting was all foolishness, but since they had started it he would speak, and again in verse 19 he uses irony. The Corinthians were enriched in all knowledge and so took the place of being wise, and seemed to suffer gladly the fools who boasted so much; for, he says, you do indeed suffer when these boasting men domineer over you and brow-beat you as they have been doing.

The boastings of these men apparently centred around two points: first, their natural origin as true-blooded Hebrews and Israelites, the seed of Abraham according to the flesh; second, their dignity as servants of Christ, which they claimed to be. As to the former matter, for what it is worth, Paul was not one whit behind them. He could say, "So am I" without the least hesitation.

But when it comes to the second matter he does not say, "So am I," but rather, "I am more," for he completely outshone them. The phrase he uses has been translated, "I above measure so," for there was really no comparison between them: and he pro-

ceeds to speak, not of the triumphs he had won, but of the sufferings he had endured.

Let us take time to really digest the significance of this. Had we been in Paul's shoes, should we not almost for a certainty have proceeded to talk of the mighty power of God that had been manifested in our service? We should have had much to say about the mighty signs and wonders that had been manifested, the striking conversions, the wonderful transformations of life and character that had been recorded. Would it have occurred to us to recount the buffetings, the troubles, the sufferings, we had endured? We think not. To tell the truth there would have been hardly anything of that sort to tell.

We are not saying that the servant of Christ should never speak of that which the Lord may have done through him in the way of blessing. There are times when he may profitably do so, as we see by reading Acts xiv. 27, and xv. 12. We do say however that when it is a question of one's credentials, of producing facts which prove beyond all question that one is a genuine servant of Christ, then the record of one's sufferings is far more convincing. Signs and wonders may be produced by a power other than that of the Spirit of God: nothing but absolute devotion to the Lord will enable one to serve with patient persistence through years of toil and suffering.

There are modern religious movements whose main stock-in-trade is the recounting of the wonders they can produce, either in healings, or in tongues, or in the realm of habits and character—"life-changing" as it is called. Of fidelity to Christ, and of suffering for His Name, they have little if anything to say, for it seems non-existent in their scheme of things. They often know quite a lot about high-pressure meetings, and even first-class hotels, but nothing about the labours and perils and infirmities that marked Paul. And as for the rest of us, who do not wish to recount our own doings, successful or otherwise, how little are we like to him.

He was more than a servant of Christ, as he tells us in verse 23. He was an apostle of Christ and actively engaged in filling up "that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh" (Col. i. 24). As far as the record given to us in Scripture is concerned, he stands alone amongst the people of God in his sufferings. An Abraham, a Moses, a David, a Daniel, each had their own special and distinctive characteristics which marked them out as pleasing God, but not one of them approached Paul in this. Labours, stripes, prisons, deaths, journeyings, perils of all descriptions, weariness, painfulness, watchings, hunger, thirst, fastings, cold, nakedness, care—what a list! It covers pretty

well the whole range of human suffering, whether of body or mind.

From the Acts of the Apostles we can identify a few of the experiences of which he speaks. For instance, "once was I stoned," that was as recorded in chapter xiv. He speaks of being "in deaths oft," and one occasion was in the riot in the Ephesian theatre, recorded in chapter xix, for he speaks of this as "so great a death," in the first chapter of our epistle. But on the other hand we must remember that when he penned this list his experiences were not over. He had been shipwrecked thrice, one of the occasions involving a night and a day in the deep; being washed about in the waters of the Mediterranean, we suppose that means; but as yet the shipwreck recorded in Acts xxvii. had not taken place. That must consequently have been number four, at least.

The most wearing sufferings of all were, we venture to think, those that he speaks of last—the care of all the churches. To bear with the feebleness of the weak, to listen again and again to the complaints of the offended, to correct the foolishness of saints, and contend for the truth against false brethren, all this must have been the most testing thing of all. Yet he **did** it.

The incident with which he closes the chapter seems symbolic of the whole drift of his life of service. He was "let down,"

and that in a very undignified way. If secular history is to be trusted the lettings-down never ceased until he knelt by the headsman's block outside the imperial city, Rome. But it was just these lettings-down and the sufferings they involved which put upon him the brands of the Lord Jesus, and marked him out as a servant of Christ in surpassing measure.

F. B. HOLE.

HOW THE MEEK INHERIT THE EARTH.

JESUS said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." This promise is similar to the inspired declaration of Paul, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." So, first, it is the meek man who inherits the earth, for **he is the earth's conqueror**. In the Puritan times, there was an eminent and godly minister, named Mr. Deering, who has left some writings that are still valuable. While sitting at table one day, a graceless fellow insulted him by throwing a glass of beer in his face. The good man simply took his handkerchief, wiped his face, and went on eating his dinner. The man provoked him a second time by doing the same thing, and he even did it a third time with many oaths and blasphemy. Mr. Deering made no reply, but simply wiped his face; and on the third occasion, the man came, and fell at his feet, and

said that the spectacle of his Christian meekness, and the look of tender, pitying love that Mr. Deering had cast upon him, had quite subdued him. So the good man was the conqueror of the bad one. No Alexander was ever greater than the man who could bear such insults like that. And holy Mr. Dodd, when he spoke to a man who was swearing in the street, received a blow in the mouth that knocked out two of his teeth. The holy man wiped the blood from his face, and said to his assailant, "You may knock out all my teeth if you will permit me just to speak to you so that your soul may be saved;" and the man was won by this Christian forbearance. It is wonderful what rough natures will yield before gentle natures. After all, it is not the strong who conquer, but the weak. There has been a long enmity, as you know, between the wolves and the sheep; and the sheep have never taken to fighting, yet they have won the victory, and there are more sheep than wolves in the world to-day. In our own country, the wolves are all dead, but the sheep have multiplied by tens of thousands. Nothing is mightier than meekness, and it is the meek who inherit the earth in that sense.

They inherit the earth in another sense, namely, that **they enjoy what they have**. Enjoyment of life does not consist in the possession of riches. There are many rich men who are utterly miserable, and there are many poor men who are equally miserable. You may have misery, or you may have happiness, according to your state of heart in any condition of life. The meek man is thankful, happy and contented, and it is contentment that makes life enjoyable. It is so at our common meals. Here comes a man home to

his dinner; he bows his head and says, "For what we are about to receive, the Lord make us truly thankful"; and then opens his eyes and grumbles, "What! cold mutton again!" His spirit is very different from that of the good old Christian who, when he reached home, found two herrings and two or three potatoes on the table, and he pronounced over them this blessing, "Heavenly Father, we thank Thee that Thou hast ransacked both earth and sea to find us this entertainment." His dinner was not so good as the other man's, but he was content with it, and that made it better. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," but in the meek and quiet spirit which thanks God for whatever He pleases to give.

Again the meek-spirited man inherits the earth in this sense—if **there is anybody who is good anywhere near him, he is sure to see him.** I have known persons join the church, and after they have been a little while in it, they have said, "There is no love there." Now, when a brother says, "There is no love there," I know that he has been looking in the glass, and that his own reflection has suggested his remark. Such persons cry out about the deceptions and hypocrisies in the professing church, and they have some cause for doing so; only it is a pity that they cannot also see the good people, the true saints, who are there. The Lord still has a people who love and fear Him, a people who will be His in the day when He makes up His jewels; and it is a pity if we are not able to see what God so much admires. If we are meek, we shall the more readily see the excellences of other people. That is a very beautiful passage, in the second part of **The**

Pilgrim's Progress, which tells that, when Christiana and Mercy had both been bathed in the bath, and clothed in the fine linen, white and clean, "they began to esteem each other better than themselves."

With a gentle temper, and a quiet spirit, and grace to keep you so, you will be inheriting the earth under any circumstances. If trouble should come, you will bow to it, as the willow bows to the wind, and so escapes the injury that falls upon sturdier trees. If there should come little vexations, you will not allow yourself to be vexed by them; but will say, "With a little patience, they will all pass away." I think I never admired Archbishop Leighton more than when I read a certain incident that is recorded in his life. He lived in a small house in Scotland, and had only a man-servant beside himself in the house. John, the man-servant, was very forgetful; and, one morning, when he got up before his master, he thought he would like to have a day's fishing, so he went off, and locked his master in. He fished until late in the evening, forgot all about his master, and when he came back, what do you think the bishop said to him? He simply said, "John, if you go out for a day's fishing another time, kindly leave me the key." He had had a happy day of prayer and study all by himself. If it had been some of us, we should have been fuming and fretting, and getting up a nice lecture for John when he came back; and he richly deserved it; but I do not suppose it was worth while for the good man to put himself out about him. The incident is, I think, a good illustration of our text.

EXTRACTED FROM SPURGEON.

SOME BLESSINGS IN JOHN I.

IT is the light that SEARCHES the inward parts of the sinner's heart and exposes the sins and the sin that are there. And that light is Christ. He was "*the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*" (verse 9).

The sinner whose heart is searched cries out for one to SAVE him, and there is but One who can do that. He is "*the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*" (verse 29).

The sinner who is searched and saved becomes the cherished possession of His Saviour, and that there might be no doubt about it he is SEALED by the Holy Ghost. "*The same is He that baptiseth with the Holy Ghost*" (verse 33).

Nothing will SATISFY the heart of the one who is searched, saved and sealed, but the company of his Saviour. The question which springs from the heart to the lips is, "*Master, where dwellest Thou?*" and He answers. "*Come and see*" (verses 38, 39).

The one who is searched, saved, sealed and satisfied delights to SERVE the One who has blessed him, and he does it spontaneously and successfully constrained by the love that surpasses knowledge. *"One of the two that heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon . . . and he brought him to Jesus"* (verses 40-42).

Thus does He, who created the worlds, bless us. He became flesh in order to do it, and He dwelt among men to reveal the love that was in His heart. He delights to draw men out of the darkness of their ignorance and sin into the light of the love of God. He delights to lift and remove the burden of sin from their souls and bring them to rest and rejoice with Him in His own dwelling place, His Father's love; having given them the Holy Spirit to be the power and the capacity to enjoy that love. And He delights to see them go forth to serve Him, the Holy Spirit being the power for this; Christ Himself being the satisfying centre from which they go, to bring back to Him weary, needy sinners.

Let no Christian stop short of any of these steps in blessing; he will spoil his life if he does; he will lose the fulness of the blessing that may be his, and he will rob his Saviour of His full delight in him. The fact is that the Lord will be satisfied with

nothing less than the complete possession of every life that He has redeemed, and He has this in those whom He has searched, saved, satisfied, and whom He can trust with His service.

J. T. MAWSON.

FORGIVENESS.

WHEN the first stirrings of the Spirit of God took place within us, the effect in almost every case was that we became conscious of our sins and of the guilt that attached to them, and consequently we became seekers after forgiveness. We wanted to be forgiven, and to know it.

The reader has, we trust, the knowledge of forgiveness, yet it may be well if we begin by surveying the teaching of Scripture on this subject, and thus aim at obtaining an orderly understanding of this great fundamental blessing of the gospel.

First of all then, let us observe that when sin entered into the world by the transgression of Adam, and the human race consequently lapsed into an utterly fallen and sinful condition, its effects were manifold and went far beyond the incurring of guilt. Yet the first and most obvious effect was that Adam became a guilty and conscience-

stricken man. As men multiplied it had to be said that, "all the world" was "guilty before God" (Rom. iii. 19), and this means, since guilt is an intensely individual matter, that every individual composing the world, every one of us, is guilty.

But the Scripture speaks of, "them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth" (Rom. ii. 8). Many such are to be found, who are by no means disposed to acknowledge their guilt, but rather challenge the foundations on which rests the very idea of being guilty before God. They assert on the contrary the innate goodness of all men, who are, so they say, always struggling upwards. Some of these contentious folk go so far as to deny all fixed standards of right and wrong. Good and evil are words of only relative force, since to them "good" is that which is approved by the most enlightened sections of humanity in any given age, and "evil" is that which their mind repudiates. It therefore follows that "right" and "wrong" are values which fluctuate according to the fashions of the age in matters of morality. The human mind is left the whole arbiter of such questions, and consequently the only guilt they know is that which may be incurred before men as the result of flouting the standards erected by the most enlightened and advanced amongst them. The utmost verdict that they can approve of is therefore, *guilty before men.*

The epistle to the Romans, on the other hand, begins with GOD, and we do not have to travel far into its contents before we arrive at the verdict against us of, "*guilty before God.*"

In its opening chapter we read of,

"The Gospel of God "

"The Son of God "

"The power of God "

"The righteousness of God "

"The wrath of God "

"The glory of God "

"The judgment of God "

and God, whose power and righteousness and wrath and glory and judgment are revealed, is "the Creator" (i. 25). At once therefore we leave the quagmire of human standards and opinions for the sure rock of divine truth, and we find ourselves standing in the presence of the Creator, who is marked by fixed and unalterable righteousness.

Much may be needed indeed before the conviction of guilt is driven home effectually into the consciousness of the individual sinner. This may not be so difficult a matter with peoples who have lapsed into the barbarism that so frequently accompanies heathenism. Such are in view in Romans i. 18—32, and they stand without

excuse, and consequently their mouths are shut. The mere recital of the enormous evils into which they had fallen, as a result of turning away from the knowledge of God, is sufficient. In their case no reasoning is necessary in order to convict and silence.

But at different times in the world's history, nations, though pagan, have evolved amongst themselves systems of natural culture and civilization. Such were the ancient Greeks, and to these Romans ii. 1—16, is addressed. In their case the dark cesspool of iniquity was partly covered up by fine systems of philosophical thought and ethical teaching. They condemned the poor, unlettered barbarian yet they themselves did the same things in a more refined way. They too are pronounced to be "inexcusable" yet some very pointed reasoning, coupled with sharp home-thrusts of the keen blade of truth, is necessary before the conviction of it can be driven home. In the course of the reasoning they are reminded that, "The judgment of God is according to truth;" that the day is coming for the revelation of "the righteous judgment of God;" and that "there is no respect of persons with God."

By the combination of these three facts their escape from the judgment of God is rendered impossible. If His judgment were sometimes according to mere outward

appearances, or if it occasionally lapsed from strict righteousness, or deviated because of favouritism or other personal considerations, then there might be some chance of escape. It is however "*according to truth*," and hence the exact reality of things will be dragged into the light of day. It is "*righteous*," and hence absolute and inflexible justice will prevail. There is "*no respect of persons*," hence nothing will turn God from a judgment of absolute righteousness in the light of absolute truth. This must shut the mouth of the most civilized and the most cultured, and convict them too as "guilty before God."

Lastly there were the Jews, a people brought under a culture which was not merely natural but divine. Romans ii. 17---iii. 20, is addressed to such, and in this passage we have not merely reasoning but the decisive evidence of their own Scriptures. Their indictment is couched in terms culled from their own law, and at the close the weight of this Scriptural evidence is driven home into their consciences by the fact that "*what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law*;" that is, to the Jews. The sweeping accusations and condemnation of the law was aimed therefore, not at the barbarian nor the Greek, but at the opinionated and self-righteous Jew, that even his mouth might be stopped, and thus all the world become "guilty before God."

Guilt being established, forgiveness becomes an urgent necessity. Hence we find it placed in the very forefront of the instructions given by the risen Lord to His disciples. In Luke xxiv. 45—48 He told the eleven that "remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations." In Acts xxvi. 16—18 we have the apostle Paul's account of how in a heavenly vision he heard the voice of the Glorified One, sending him to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes . . . that they may receive forgiveness of sins." How these commissions were carried out the Acts bears witness. To the multitude in Jerusalem, who on the day of Pentecost were pricked in their heart, Peter spoke of "the remission of sins" (ii. 38). Before the council he again testified of "forgiveness of sins" (v. 31). Again to the Gentile Cornelius and his friends he proclaimed that "through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (x. 43). To the mixed crowd in the synagogue at Antioch Paul declared, "Be it known . . . that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (xiii. 38).

In each case, of the six quoted above, the same Greek word occurs in the original, though translated both as remission and forgiveness in the Authorized Version. It signifies simply "a sending away" or "a release" and this is just what a guilty sinner needs as regards his sins. Let them be

sent away or *dismissed* by the One against whom his guilt has been incurred, and what a happy *release* is his! Now this is just what every child of God is entitled to enjoy. "I write unto you little children" said the aged apostle John, "because your sins are forgiven you [are dismissed and sent away] for His name's sake" (1 John ii. 12).

It is in the epistle to the Romans, as we have seen, that the Holy Ghost pronounces the verdict of "guilty before God" against the whole human race. We might naturally have expected therefore that immediately following this we should have found a full unfolding of forgiveness. As a matter of fact however the word for forgiveness only occurs once in the whole epistle, and that when the Apostle cites David's words from Psalm xxxii. The blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works is described by David saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven" (iv. 6, 7). This shows us however that the imputation of righteousness—i.e. justification—is in this passage practically equivalent to forgiveness.

The words that are so much used in the early chapters of Romans are *righteousness* and *justification*, and they are on the whole words of great fulness. One cannot have one's sins forgiven without being justified, nor *vice versa*; yet in the main the force of forgiveness is negative—

we lose our sins: the main force of justification is positive—we gain righteousness.

It has been asserted that everybody is forgiven. Is there any sense in which such a statement is true?

No. It is of course a wonderful fact that, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. v. 19). Hence the Lord's words to the sinful woman, "Neither do I condemn thee" (John viii. 11). God's overtures of mercy, in Christ present upon earth were however rejected. It is also a wonderful fact that, His overtures being rejected, He has taken advantage of the death and resurrection of Christ to send out a world-wide message of forgiveness, so that in the Gospel to-day forgiveness is preached to all, and He is presented as a forgiving God. (See Luke xxiv. 46, 47).

Instead of the rejection of Christ being followed by a declaration of war, and the hurling of Heaven's thunderbolts against a rebellious world, God has, as it were, established a lengthy armistice, during which time an amnesty for all rebels is being proclaimed. If any rebel humbles himself and turns to the Saviour in faith, *he is forgiven*. It is true therefore that *there is forgiveness for everybody*; but in no sense is it true that everybody is forgiven.

In His parable of the two debtors in Luke vii., the Lord did teach however that both were forgiven by the creditor. Was not Simon, the self-righteous Pharisee, as much forgiven therefore as the repentant sinner?

"He frankly forgave them *both*." Both therefore *were* frankly forgiven. The two words "frankly forgave" are the translation of one Greek word—not the usual word for forgiveness but a word meaning, "to show grace to." The Lord Jesus therefore in His parable represented God as acting in a forgiving spirit and showing grace towards men, no matter what the depth of their sin. This is exactly God's attitude to-day.

Later in the story the Lord did utter the usual word for forgiveness. He said of the woman, "her sins, which are many, are forgiven." To her He said, "Thy sins are forgiven." *Her* sins, then, were definitely dismissed, for she believed in the Saviour and came to Him.

Grace was indeed shown even to proud Simon, and he was not brought instantly and summarily into judgment for his sins. In that sense he was "frankly forgiven," but the Lord never told him that his sins had been definitely dismissed. Only the repentant sinner is thus forgiven, in the ordinary meaning of the word.

Is it a fact that when a sinner repents and believes he receives forgiveness once and for all?

Certainly it is. In the argument on the subject of sacrifice, contained in Hebrews ix. 1—x. 18, that fact is one of the main points. In that great passage it is affirmed no less than six times that the sacrifice of Christ was *one* and offered *once*. It is also asserted that those who approach God as worshippers on the ground of His sacrifice are purged *once*, and consequently draw near with perfected consciences (x. 1, 2). The perfection of which the first verse speaks is “pertaining to the conscience” (ix. 9), and founded upon the *one* perfect cleansing, or purging, that has reached them. We stand before God in an eternal forgiveness.

To this it is objected by some, that if a believer is taught that at his conversion he obtained complete forgiveness, it is sure to provoke him to carelessness and license. Might it not be better to say that all is forgiven up to the point of conversion?

No one would object in this way but those who deny, or at least overlook, the fact that we are not converted without being born again and thereby becoming possessed of a nature that hates evil. Once give this fact its due weight and the whole case wears a different aspect. Further, not only are we born again and forgiven but we receive the Holy Spirit of God to dwell in us, and we come under the teaching of grace, of which Titus ii. 11—14, speaks.

We must remember that though forgiveness is ministered to us when we believe, yet it was procured for us by the sacrifice

of Christ; and *all* our sins—not only those up to the point of conversion—were future, when He died and rose again.

We must remember also that God, as Father, does deal with us, His children, as and when we sin. Upon confession we are forgiven and cleansed, for “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John i. 9—ii. 1). But this is the Father’s forgiveness, restoring us to communion, and not the eternal forgiveness, which we receive at the outset from Him as Judge of all.

What then is meant by, “the remission of sins that are past,” which we read of in Romans iii. 25?

All depends upon what is the fixed point, in relation to which the sins are past. If verse 26 be also read, it will be apparent that the contrast is between what God did as to sins in the past time and what He does “at this time;” the great event dividing the two times being the first advent of Christ. It is evident therefore that in speaking of “sins that are past” the apostle Paul referred to the sins of the believers who lived in the past dispensation. His words had no reference to certain sins of a believer being past, if viewed from the standpoint of his conversion.

The sins of these pre-Christian believers were remitted by God. “Remission” here is not the ordinary word for forgiveness, but one which means, “a passing by.” The

meaning of the passage is, that when the propitiatory work of Christ became an accomplished fact, it at once showed forth that God had been righteous in passing by the sins of Old Testament believers, just as it also vindicates His righteousness in this Gospel age in justifying the believer in Jesus.

THE UNEQUAL YOKE PROHIBITED.

"Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together" (Deuteronomy xxii. 10).

THIS was one of God's statutes for Israel. The New Testament command is, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. vi. 14), and it answers to the Old Testament type. The clean and the unclean were not to be yoked together, the believer with the unbeliever, in any way. This applies to business which ought to be conducted so as to please God.

The distinction commonly drawn between secular and sacred things is certainly not found in the Word of God. We are told "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. iii. 17,); and again, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). Now it is perfectly clear from this that a be-

liever's secular calling is to be conducted in the Name of the Lord Jesus and to the glory of God.

When he enters the workshop, the mine, the quarry, the factory, or the office on Monday morning he ought to do so in the Name of the Lord Jesus, as truly as he entered the place where the disciples gathered in that Name on the Lord's day. He ought to buy and sell to the glory of God and as under His holy eye, just as he worshipped and served beneath it on the first day of the week. It is by looking at business from this standpoint that we see the true character of the unequal yoke. Two men enter into a business. The one is a child of God, the other a man of the world and his desire is to make as much money as possible in the shortest possible time. They are committed to the actions of each other. It is clear they cannot really pull together. What the unbeliever sees no harm in the believer's conscience will not allow. If the child of God yields he compromises the truth, defiling his conscience and vexing his righteous soul from day to day; and often it ends very badly for the child of God. Prospects may be good for a time. It may appear as if prosperity and success attended them; but the Word of the Lord is firm and sure. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil; "which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced

themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy vi. 10).

Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, a child of God, entered into partnership with Ahaziah king of Israel, a child of the devil, in a shipping business. They were to sail a fleet of ships to Tarshish, and God in His mercy wrecked the whole fleet before they had made their first trip (see 2 Chron. xx. 35-37). So that ended the joint business of Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah; and thus has ended many a partnership, bringing ruin and loss to all the saints of God in connection with it. Oh, let the Lord's people ponder this and take heed to their spirits and way and listen to what our blessed Lord has to say to us, through His holy Word.

T. GRAY.

FOUR FIG TREES.

WE will summarize them in this way:—

Luke xiii. 6—9. The Fig Tree of Probation or Testing.

Matt. xxi. 18—21. The Fig Tree of Profession.

John i. 45—49. The Fig Tree of Repentance.

Matt. xxiv. 32. The Fig Tree of Hope.

In two cases the fig tree is brought in as a parable: in the other two it is a fact.

Luke xiii. 6—9. Some Jews had been surmising that the sudden deaths that had occurred both through Pilate and Siloam's tongues were evidences of great sin. The Lord Jesus promptly told them it was not so but rather a warning to *them* to repent or *they* must perish. Judgment is no empty threat—without repentance it must come.

But the patience and longsuffering is seen lingering over the nation of fruitless sinners, testing them to the uttermost, reluctant to *cut them down*.

Matt. xxi. 18—21. This is no parable but a *fact*. Jesus hungering outside Jerusalem. The Messiah hungry for fruit from *that* fig tree! Here we see yearnings for the blessing of the sinner and the first fruits of repentance. But there was no fruit, only the leaves of an empty profession. The curse fell and the withering commenced. It was not cut down but left standing as a witness of God's judgment.

John i. 45—49. Here is another *fact*. Nathaniel under the fig tree in repentance. Thus he is seen, *without guile*, all has been confessed. He is a *true Israelite*, just as Jacob became *Israel* when he confessed his true name. Nathaniel seeks the dark shade of the fig tree not to hide him from God but from men. "We have found Him" say

these glad messengers, but the case is too serious for Nathaniel, he must be sure. He wants *a real* Saviour. "Come and see" is their gospel invitation, and as a result *He came—He saw—He confessed.*

Matt. xxiv. 32. Here is another parable. There is *hope* indicated here—hope of a bright summer which is to come.

When Israel, like Nathaniel, take their place in repentance, the Son of Man will appear for their deliverance, and the Lord compares it to a fig tree putting forth its leaves. "*Ye know,*" says He, "that summer is nigh." Signs of vitality in Israel will be manifested when they begin to repent and turn to God. Then the time of their blessing will be near. Our time of glory too is nigh when we shall leave the frosts and snows of earth's winter for heaven's perennial summer.

From notes by ART. CUTTING.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(*2 Corinthians xii. 1—10.*)

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

THE remark with which the Apostle opens chapter xii. again indicates that this speaking about himself was repugnant to him, though he found himself

impelled to do it. The New Translation renders it, "Well, it is not of profit to me to boast," so his thought may have been that what he had to say about himself brought no profit or credit to him. The beatings, the perils, the hunger, the thirst, the nakedness, the infirmities, of which he had just spoken were not the kind of experiences which are considered profitable, according to the standards of the world. And now that he proceeds to speak of what he had received of the Lord, in the form of visions and revelations, there was still no credit to him; for it was not exactly as an apostle that he received them, and much less as a man in the flesh, but as "a man in Christ."

In making this distinction we are not splitting hairs, for Paul himself makes it, and lays very definite stress upon it. Note how verses 2-5 carry on the thought, "A man in Christ . . . such an one . . . such a man . . . such an one . . ." These heavenly revelations were given to *such a man as that*. Who and what then is this "man in Christ"?

Without any question Paul was alluding to a marvellous experience in his own history, but he carefully eliminates the personal element from his story in order to impress us with the fact that the experience was only possible for him inasmuch as he was "such a man" as "a man in Christ,"

Eliminating the personal element he was able thus to abstract in his mind that which he was in the very essence of his being by the work of God in new creation. Elsewhere he has told us that, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. ii. 10); and in our own epistle he has already said, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (v. 17). It is evident therefore that every true believer in the Lord Jesus is "a man in Christ." Consequently every one of us ought to be very eager to take in its significance.

By natural birth we are men in Adam: that is, we enter upon his life, and are of his race and order, inheriting his sinful characteristics; though in different individuals they come out in different ways and degrees. By the grace of God in new creation the believer enters upon the life of the risen Christ, and is of His race and order. The new life he has received has its own characteristics, even those which in all their perfect beauty were seen in Christ Himself. True, in various individual believers these characteristics are only seen in differing ways and degrees, and only partially in the best. But that is because each individual believer, while under observation in this world, still has the flesh in him, and *that*, whenever permitted to operate, obscures and contradicts the features of the life of Christ. Still our

many failures must not be allowed to obscure the fact that a "man in Christ" is what each of us is; and that by an act of God.

When the Lord comes, and we are "clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," the last link that we have with the first Adam will have disappeared. Our very bodies then will be of a new creation order. There will be nothing about us which is not new creation, and hence all need for abstract thinking in connection with this matter will have passed away. We shall no longer have to differentiate and speak of "such an one," for there will be no other kind of "one" entering into the question. How glorious that will be!

Still at present we have to speak as Paul speaks here; and how delightful it is to find that a man in Christ can be caught up into Paradise, even the third heaven, and yet feel at home there and receive communications from God, of a character beyond anything that could possibly be known in this world. How great a contrast for the Apostle between such an experience as this and all those experiences he endured in his life of service, of which we have just been hearing. In them he was "let down," and that in the most undignified way. In this he was "caught up," and that to Paradise. Such an experience must have been in itself a big recompense for his

sufferings, and it was only a foretaste of greater things and eternal, which were to come. No wonder he spoke to us, in chapter iv., of the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," which awaits us.

That glory awaits us when we too are caught up as predicted in 1 Thessalonians iv. 17. When all the saints are thus caught up—the Apostle Paul amongst them—they will be clothed in bodies of glory; there is no shadow of uncertainty as to that. There was uncertainty about this experience of Paul's as he tells us twice over. He did not know whether it was supernatural experience, in the nature of a vision, granted to him while still in the body; that is, still a living man in this world: or whether he was out of the body; that is, that he died, his spirit passing into the presence of the Lord, and then subsequently he was brought back to life here. This remark of his, coupled with the date he gives us, makes it quite possible that the experience was granted to him when he suffered the stoning recorded in Acts xiv. He must have been in an insensible condition for some time; since all thought him dead, and his apparent lifeless body was dragged out of the town.

The wonderful experience was his, though he was uncertain what exactly was his condition when he had it. Incidentally this shows us that the "falling asleep"

of a saint does not mean the sleep of the soul. If the death of a saint involves his total unconsciousness until the coming of the Lord, then the Apostle would have been in no uncertainty. He would have said, "I must have been in the body for I was conscious: had I been out of the body I should have had no consciousness at all."

This man in Christ was caught up to the third heaven: that is, the immediate presence of God, of which the holiest in the tabernacle was a type. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and Paul found that as a man in Christ he had free access into the third heaven, which he identifies with Paradise, into which the thief went with Christ. During his sojourn there he found himself in touch with a range of things entirely outside anything known in this world. He heard, "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

This does not mean that he heard mysterious utterances quite unintelligible to him, but that the things he heard, and doubtless understood in some degree, were so exalted as to be beyond us in our present condition. The things spoken about in the third heaven cannot be communicated to us. We have no language in which they can be expressed. And further, if it were possible to convey to us a little of that "eternal

weight of glory" it would only crush us in our present condition of weakness. Hence Paul was not allowed to utter the things he heard, even if he could have found words in which to clothe the things revealed. This vision and revelation from the Lord was a special privilege conferred upon him, and for his own illumination and strengthening.

In all this there was nothing in which Paul could boast, as he makes so plain in verse 5. Circumstances had been permitted to push him into a position where he was constrained to speak of this wonderful experience, as to which he had kept silence for fourteen years, yet even so, though there was much that he might mention keeping strictly within the bounds of truth (which was more than his opponents always did), he would say nothing except as to his infirmities.

This leads him to reveal the fact that when he resumed his active life in this world he came under a special disciplinary dealing on God's part, of a kind that was designed to deliver him from dangers that threatened. The flesh in Paul was unchanged as to its evil tendencies even after such an experience as this. How easy for him to be lifted up with pride and self-exaltation, and thus invite a sorrowful fall. So the thorn in the flesh was given to act as a kind of counterpoise. Paradise and

its unspeakable words on the one hand, but the thorn and its buffetings on the other.

It is said that "thorn" hardly gives in any adequate way the sense, and that "stake" would be better. We do not think much of thorns and easily extricate them, but a stake in the flesh is a far more serious thing and thoroughly crippling in its effects. What in particular Paul alluded to we do not know, though a good deal of discussion has centred round the point. Probably it is purposely left vague in order that all our thought may be concentrated on the fact that any affliction, even of the most damaging kind, may be turned into an occasion of spiritual preservation and gain.

The thorn, whatever it was, affected his body for the good of his soul. Its action is described as a "buffeting." It came from Satan, for it is described as "a messenger," or "an angel" of Satan, and it is his mode of attack when a devoted and faithful saint is in question. He blinds the minds of the unbelieving as we were told in chapter iv. He aims at corrupting the simple and unestablished, as chapter xi. showed. But for Paul who had been caught up into the third heaven a different line of attack was followed, and the devil dealt him heavy blows that fell upon his body.

We should have said rather that the devil was permitted to deal him heavy blows, for all that happened was beneath the hand of God. It was with Paul as it had been long before with Job: three causes are discernible. The third causes were fire from heaven, whirlwind, evil men, in the case of Job, and the thorn in the flesh in the case of Paul. Behind these in each case lay the power and animus of Satan; but behind him as the first cause there was the hand of God. Job's safety and blessing lay in his turning away from the third causes, and even from the second cause, that he might accept all from the hand of God; and so too it was with Paul.

Very naturally Paul betook himself to prayer. It was *intense* prayer: he not only requested but besought. It was *repeated*, for he besought the Lord thrice. Yet for all that his desire was not granted. Instead of having the thorn removed he received the assurance of abundant grace; such grace that the thorn would become an asset rather than a liability, a means of blessing rather than a hindrance. The Lord answered his prayer, but not according to his thought. He gave him rather that which was better. The grace bestowed more than counterbalanced the thorn.

We must lay great stress in our minds upon the little word, "MY." The thorn was a messenger of Satan, but the grace

was Christ's. The Lord's reply to Paul was, "*My* grace is sufficient for thee." The Lord and His grace are infinite, sufficient for ten thousand times ten thousand of His saints—surely then sufficient for Paul, or for any one of us, no matter what we may have to face. But He added, "*My* strength is made perfect in weakness." If the thorn served to augment and emphasize Paul's weakness it thereby opened the way for a fuller and more perfect display of the grace of the Lord.

Without a question all this is right in the teeth of our natural thoughts. We should connect the thought of power and strength with every kind of mental and bodily fitness. We should say—I will glory in my fitness that the power of Christ may rest upon me. When I am tuned up to concert pitch then I am strong. Our thoughts however are wrong: the Divine way is right. We may wish to present ourselves to the Lord for service saying, "Just as I am; young, strong, and free" Paul had to learn to come saying, "Just as I am; old, battered, weak" It is very certain that the Lord accomplished a great deal more through Paul than He is ever going to do through you or me.

The thorn in the flesh, then, worked good in two ways. First, it checked that tendency to pride that otherwise might have

overcome Paul and wrought such mischief. Second, it cast him so fully upon the Lord that it became a medium through which abundant supplies of grace were received by him.

This being so, the Apostle had learned to take pleasure in these various forms of adversity. In Romans v. he tells us how he boasted in tribulations because he knew what they were designed to effect in the sphere of Christian character. Here he takes pleasure in tribulations because he had discovered them to be the way by which the power of Christ became operative through him in service. The very weakness into which he was plunged made him a suitable medium for the outflow of that power.

And in this, as well as in other things, Paul was a pattern to us who follow him. This was God's way at the beginning of the dispensation, and it is still His way at the end. Fashions and customs and many other things which lie upon the surface of affairs do indeed vary, but the underlying facts and principles do not vary. Consequently there is no other way of power for us. Does not this fact go a long way to explain the lack of power so sadly evident, and so often deplored, to-day?

JUSTIFICATION.

TO be justified is to be cleared from every charge that could be brought against us. That this is the meaning is very apparent in the Apostle's words, recorded in Acts xiii. 39, "By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." The law could most effectually impeach us. It could lay sins to our charge and bring a righteous condemnation upon us. Only by Christ can the believer be righteously cleared from every charge in the impeachment, so that the sentence of condemnation is lifted off him.

Condemnation then is the state and position from which we pass when we are justified. It is evidently the opposite to justification, just as guilt is the opposite to forgiveness. Yet justification, as set before us in Scripture, implies more than the negative blessing of our being completely and righteously extricated from the condemnation under which we lay: it involves our standing before God in Christ, in a righteousness which is positive and divine.

We must again turn to the Epistle to the Romans. In chapter iii. 19 we find that, "all the world" stands convicted as "guilty before God." In verse 20 we find that the law can only convict: there is no justification for us in it. In verse 21, begins the unfolding of God's way of justifying the ungodly.

Inasmuch as "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," it is not surprising that God should bring into manifestation His righteousness. Man having manifested his sin in all its blackness, it was to be expected that, by way of contrast, God would manifest His righteousness in all its brightness; condemning the sinner, and thus clearing Himself of the smallest suspicion that He in any way condoned the sin. What is so wonderful is that now God's righteousness has been manifested in such a way as to be "*unto*" or "*towards* all, and upon all them that believe." Righteousness, God's righteousness, is, as it were, stretching out its hands benignly towards all men instead of frowning upon them; and as for those that believe, it descends upon them as a robe, so that in the presence of God they stand invested in it. And all this is done without righteousness in any way losing its own proper character, or ceasing to be what it is.

Upon first hearing this, our impulse might be to exclaim, "Impossible! Such a thing

as this is absolutely impossible!" We might be disposed to reason that, while mercy might act in this fashion, but at the expense of righteousness, righteousness itself could never do so.

Yet righteousness does so act, since it has now been manifested in Christ, who has been set forth by God as a "propitiation," or "mercy-seat," (verse 25). When upon the cross His blood was shed, there was fulfilled the Antitype of the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat of Tabernacle days. Redemption was wrought "in Christ Jesus," (verse 24), and the greatest display of divine righteousness, which the universe will ever witness, took place. By and by the righteousness of God will be manifested in the judgment and everlasting overthrow of the ungodly. That solemn hour will witness no mean display of divine righteousness, yet not so profound and wonderful as in that yet more solemn hour when God judged and put to grief His own spotless Son for us. The cross of Christ will remain to all eternity the greatest manifestation of the righteousness of God. It manifested equally His love of course, as Romans v. 8 declares, but had it not manifested His righteousness it could not have manifested His love.

The death of Christ has displayed the righteousness of God in a twofold way.

First, as regards His dealings as to the sins of believers in the past dispensation (verse 25); and second, as to the sins of believers in this present age (verse 26). Before Christ came God passed over the sins of His people, though as yet no perfect satisfaction for them had been made to Him. In this present time He is justifying the believer in Jesus. Have all these dealings on God's part been conducted in strict righteousness? They have, and the death of Christ declares it; showing that when God passed over sins during the bygone dispensation He was absolutely justified in doing so, as also He is just in justifying the believer to-day.

The death of Christ was primarily the offering of Himself *to God* as a sacrifice of infinite value and fragrance. Propitiation was thereby effected, and satisfaction made, so that the claims of divine righteousness have been met and vindicated in regard to the whole matter of man's sin.

Secondarily, however, His offering was *for us*, i.e. for all true believers. Such are entitled to view the Saviour as their Substitute, and to translate Romans iv. 25 out of the plural into the singular, and say, He "was delivered for *my* offences, and was raised again for *my* justification." He was delivered to death and judgment with our sins in view: He was raised again from the dead with our justification in view.

Many there are who in this matter cut the Gospel in half, and ignore the second part of it to their own great loss. Full assurance cannot be enjoyed if the meaning of Christ's resurrection be overlooked. The bearing of our sins and their penalty was indeed accomplished in His death, but the declaration and proof of our clearance is in His resurrection. Without this second part settled peace cannot be known.

To illustrate the point, let us suppose a man condemned to six months imprisonment for an offence, and another as a substitute permitted to take his place. When the prison gates swing to, shutting the substitute within and leaving the offender in liberty without, the latter might well exclaim of his friend, "He has been delivered to prison for my offence," but further than that he cannot go for the moment. It would be premature for him to add, "and consequently it is impossible that I should ever see the inside of that prison, as the penalty for what I have done."

What if his good friend breathed his last at the end of two months, leaving four months of the sentence unexpired? The Authorities would righteously lay their hands on the original offender and demand that he himself should work out the remainder of his term.

But, on the other hand, if a week or so before the six months were up he should

suddenly come upon his kindly substitute walking in the street, and on expressing his surprise, learn that, having by good behaviour earned a small remission of the sentence, he was really discharged as a free man, he would instantly be able to say, "Why, you are released from prison for my justification!" He would argue in his own mind, *and rightly*, "If he is discharged from prison as free from all further liability, completely cleared in regard to my offence, then *I am discharged, I am free, I am cleared!*"

Viewed in this light, the resurrection of Christ is seen to be the divine declaration of the complete clearance of the one who believes in Him. It is, we need hardly say, much else besides.

Having said this much, we must now observe that God Himself is not only the Source of our justification but He who justifies us. "It is God that justifieth" (Rom. viii. 33). From His lips came the sentence against us as sinners. Equally from His lips comes forth the declaration of our clearance as believers in Jesus. Our justification therefore is complete and authoritative. No one can condemn us.

But on our side faith is necessary; for only believers are justified. In this sense we are, "justified by faith" (Rom. v. 1). Only as yielding "the obedience of faith" to our Lord Jesus do we come in under the

benefits of His work. He is "the Author of eternal salvation" *only* to "all them that obey Him" (Heb. v. 9). Faith is the link which connects us with Him and the justifying merits of His blood.

One further thought as to justification is presented to us in Romans v. 18. In nearly every other passage where justification is mentioned it stands in relation to our sins—"of many offences unto justification," as Romans v. 16 puts it. In verse 18, however, another view of the matter appears, and *sin*, the root, rather than *sins*, the fruit, is in question. The one righteousness of the cross has its bearing "towards" all "unto justification of life" (N. Trans.).

To understand this phrase, the whole passage—verse 12 to the end of the chapter—must be considered. By nature all men stand related to Adam, as the head and fountain of their race. By grace, and through Christ's death and resurrection, all believers stand related to Him, as the Head and Fountain of that spiritual race to which they now belong. As grafted into Christ, if we may so speak, they participate in His life and nature; and as in the life of Christ they are cleared judicially from all the consequences that formerly lay on them as in the life of Adam. A very wonderful thing, this, and one that is too often overlooked by us all.

Justification then, as the Epistle to the Romans presents it, not only means a complete clearance from all offences and the condemnation they deserve, but goes to the length of a complete clearance from all the condemnation attaching to our fallen Adamic nature, inasmuch as now, by God's act, we stand in Christ risen from the dead. Blessed be God, for such a clearance as this!

You have not alluded to the righteousness of Christ being imputed to us. Why?

Because that idea is not found in Scripture. There is no difficulty in finding there the righteousness of Christ. That was absolutely perfect, and hence, being without blemish, He was qualified to be the "Lamb" of sacrifice on our behalf. But we are justified by His blood and not by His perfect life. He died for us, but in no place is it said that He kept the law for us. Had He done so we should after all be standing in a merely *legal* righteousness before God; and by that we mean, a righteousness which merely goes to the length of keeping the law of Moses. Our righteousness before God would after all be just that righteousness of the law, of which Moses speaks, (see Rom. x. 5); though worked out, not by ourselves, but by Christ on our behalf.

The righteousness in which we stand is, "the righteousness of faith," described in

verses 6 to 9 of that chapter; and that is connected, not with Christ on earth keeping the law for us, but with God raising Him from the dead after He had died for our sins.

But surely righteousness is imputed, for we read in Romans iv. that, "God imputeth righteousness without works," and again that, "it was imputed to him for righteousness." What then do these expressions mean?

If that chapter be carefully read it will be noticed that the words, *counted*, *imputed*, *reckoned*, occur several times. They all three have the same force, being translations of the same word, which is most nearly expressed by the word, *reckoned*. "Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness." That is, Abraham *was reckoned righteous*, or *held to be righteous* by God, in virtue of his faith. The little word "for" is apt to mislead, as it may suggest the idea of faith being a kind of substitute for righteousness, something which may be transmuted into righteousness. "Reckoned to him *as* righteousness," more nearly gives the sense. If you have a *New Translation* (J. N. Darby) with full notes, turn up this verse and consult the footnote as to the translation, which is very illuminating.

The argument of Romans iv. then is that whether it be Abraham of old, or believers in Christ to-day, there is only one way by which we may be reckoned right-

eous before God, the great Judge of all; and that is, by faith without works. *Without works*, mark you! Not even the perfect works of Christ, everyone of them done in righteousness, come in here: another proof, if it were needed, that we are not made righteous by a certain quantity of His law-keeping being imputed to us. What does come in is His death and resurrection. This underlies the whole of the chapter, and is plainly expressed at the end. Read verse 25 and see.

That verse has been taken to mean that just as Jesus died because we were sinners, so He was raised again because we had been justified in His death. Is this a correct view of it?

You have but to read on into chapter v. to find that it is not correct. Our chapter divisions are sometimes not natural but artificial, breaking into the middle of a paragraph. This is a case in point. He "was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God."

The interpretation you mention presents our justification as an accomplished fact when Jesus died, and His resurrection to be the consequence of it. But this entirely eliminates our faith from the question; and our faith cannot be eliminated thus, in view of the first verse of chapter v. His death was in view of our sins, and is *the basis of our justification*; but that is another matter.

His resurrection was, in the first place, the declaration of the blessed fact, that He who stooped under the weight of God's judgment against sin, is for ever clear of it. In the second place, it was in view of the clearance of all who believe in Him.

This we have just been enforcing and illustrating. He was delivered to death with our sins in view: He was raised again with our justification in view. But the justification of each individual only becomes effective as and when they *believe*.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(2 *Corinthians* xii. 11—xiii 14).

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

HAVING let us into the secret, as to the revelations he had from the Lord on the one hand, and the discipline which came upon him from the Lord on the other, the Apostle utters his closing appeal. He ought really to have been commended of the Corinthians seeing they were his converts, instead of which he was forced into defending his apostleship before them. Though nothing in himself, he was behind the very chiefest apostles in nothing. As to this he could appeal to his whole career,

and more particularly to his life and service when amongst them.

Paul's estimate of himself was—I am nothing. Let us be instructed by this. We sometimes sing,

“O keep us, love divine, near Thee,
That we our nothingness may know.”

The desire is a good one. We never do realize our nothingness more effectively than when we are filled with divine love. In the passage before us the confession “I am nothing,” follows the setting forth of the all-sufficient grace of Christ.

Yet this man who was nothing had been called to apostleship in surpassing measure, and the signs of it were very evident; not only in wonders and mighty deeds but also and firstly in patience—a patience which he was now displaying in abundant measure in his dealings with the Corinthians. When he was in their midst he carefully abstained from being in any way a financial burden to them, though he had taken help from other churches. He speaks again with a tinge of irony in saying, “forgive me this wrong.” He purposed to continue on the same lines. Inasmuch as he was their spiritual father he proposed to provide for them, rather than counting upon their providing for him.

Verse 15 is very beautiful. Paul was indeed a father in Christ, his heart well

saturated with divine love, hence he could love the unloving, even as God does. The natural tendency of our hearts is just the opposite of this. We are perhaps kindly disposed towards certain persons, and show them various favours. They receive all, but are cool and unappreciative. We are annoyed, and declare we will have done with them! But it was not thus with Paul. Even if things got so bad that their response only decreased as love increased, he would go on expressing his love in the most practical way of all. He would spend and be spent for them. A little of this lovely spirit we see in 1 Samuel xii. 23. A good deal more of it we see in the passage before us. But the thing itself is seen supremely in God Himself, as displayed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The same spirit had been seen in those associated with the Apostle in his labours, as Titus and others. Yet this loving spirit did not mean indifference to evil, and a condoning of things that were not right; and so there follow very plain words as to the sin which he feared was still to be found amongst them, which would merit very severe judgment if he again came into their midst.

Sin breaks out in many ways, but two forms of it were very prevalent at Corinth, as verses 20 and 21 bear witness. First, there were all those disturbing features that

spring from self-assertiveness and the envy and jealousy thereby generated. Second, self-gratification and the licentiousness that springs from it, in its varying forms. The Apostle feared that both these things were still rife at Corinth and unrepented of; and that if he came on this proposed third visit he would be full of grief in their midst and have to act in judgment. We may observe that he speaks of his humiliation and sorrow (xii. 21) before he speaks of his authority in judgment (xiii. 2).

As an apostle he had special authority and power in this direction. When once the apostles had passed off the scene the only discipline possible was that exerted by the church or by the saints collectively; and that so often in these days appears to be singularly ineffectual. There are of course reasons for this. One reason is that it has been so often perverted to ends of a personal or party nature that the whole idea of it has fallen into disrepute. Another is that even when discipline has been rightly inflicted it has been done in a harsh judicial spirit instead of in the spirit of humiliation and sorrow which marked the Apostle here. We have made it the cold, heartless discipline of the court of law instead of the warm, affectionate discipline of the family circle.

Still, discipline there has to be: the discipline of God's house, which is not prejudiced nor unreasoning but founded on well

established facts. Hence when Paul came he intended that every word should be established in the mouth of two or three witnesses. All should be sifted with impartiality, so that if some reports were not based upon fact their falsity might be exposed, and their weight fall not upon the head of the accused but upon the head of the accusers. Some may have sinned by licentiousness as Paul feared; but others may have sinned by "backbitings" and "whisperings" of false accusations, because their hearts were filled with envy. All would be made manifest and judged, as we see in the opening verses of chapter xiii. We venture to think that, if to-day there were as much zeal in bringing discipline to bear against the backbiters and whisperers as against the licentious, it would be for the spiritual health and well-being of the church of God.

Paul's authority as an apostle had however been questioned, and the Corinthians had very foolishly given ear to these questionings. They were the last persons who should have done so, or should have had any doubts as to whether Christ had spoken through him. Since they had entertained such doubts, some kind of answer was needed, and a very crushing one Paul was able to give. He had simply to say, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." Since they were his converts, the fruit of his labour, they themselves were

the proof—unless indeed they were reprobates, just worthless frauds. If they were but frauds then indeed Christ might not have spoken in Paul; but if they were true men He most certainly had.

Verse 5 has sometimes been taken apart from its context and turned into a plea for continual self-inspection, and even doubt as to one's own salvation. This is because the parenthesis extending from the middle of verse 3 to the end of verse 4 has not been noticed. If we connect the early part of verse 3 with verse 5 the sense is quite clear. There is again a touch of irony in Paul's words, for the doubts they had foolishly entertained as to Christ speaking in him really recoiled upon their own heads. If indeed Christ had *not* spoken *in Paul* then—since they had professed conversion under his *speaking*—Christ would *not* be found *in them*. But if Christ was indeed found *in them* it was conclusive proof that Christ had spoken *in him*.

It is quite possible of course that in speaking thus the Apostle wished to convey to them the fact that he was not too sure of the genuineness of some of them, and thereby he desired to stir them up and exercise their consciences. At the same time he was quite confident as to the majority of them.

This is evident if we consider the parenthesis, the first words of which tell us that

Christ had not been "weak" toward them but rather "mighty in you." Looking back to the work that had been wrought when first he came among them, Paul was full of confidence that the power of Christ had been in it. The whole path of Christ on earth had been characterized by a "weakness" which culminated in His crucifixion. Yet He is alive in resurrection by the power of God. Now that which marked the path of the great Master marked also the path of the servant, who was following in His life and way. Weakness also characterized the external life and service of the Apostle but under the surface the power of God was vitally present with him.

The words at the end of verse 4 are remarkable—"by the power of God *toward you.*" These words indicate that what was in the Apostle's mind was not that he would live in resurrection in the time to come, but that, as associated with the living Christ, he would display in the present the power of that life toward the Corinthians. Christianity is marked by the power of a new life which operates in blessing. Nothing short of *that*, whether it be creed or ceremony or work, will do.

The whole passage shows once more that what God looks for is reality and power. It emphasizes also that, as far as outward appearances go, weakness has been stamped upon the true saints and servants of God

from the beginning, even when the Gospel was winning its earliest and greatest triumphs. We need not therefore be surprised if weakness is stamped upon us to-day. The thing to be concerned about is that we may judge and refuse all that would jeopardize that power.

The self-abnegation of the Apostle again comes strikingly to light in verse 7. He prayed that they might do no evil, and so be manifestly approved and not reprobate; and this, not that it might approve his work amongst them, and so be for his glory, but that they might do what is right, and so prove beyond all question that they were not reprobates. If that were so he would be content, even though he appeared to be a reprobate himself. That he was not a reprobate he knew very well, and he trusted they knew it too, as he says in verse 6.

So also we see his self-abnegation in verse 9. He was not only content but glad to be weak if it but led to spiritual strength in those to whom he ministered; the great object before him being the perfecting of the saints. He longed to see them led forward to completion—to full growth in Christ. As for himself, he knew that all the power in which he served was Divine in its origin, and so was only available for so long as he was labouring for the truth and in the truth. If he had turned against the truth he would instantly have

been shorn of *that* power. There are powers antagonistic to the truth, but in the long run they cannot prevail. Hence against the truth he was powerless, whilst for it he was powerful.

In all this a note of sharpness or severity has not been absent, and in verse 10 we have the explanation of why he had written in this strain. He anticipated being amongst them for the third time and desired to overthrow and clear away the evil by means of this letter, and so have only the happy work of building up what is good when he came. He had authority given of the Lord, but it was primarily for building up. Overthrowing is necessary, as we saw when reading the early part of chapter x., but only 'in view of building up, which is the great thing the Lord desires for His people.

Verse 11 gives us *the closing desires*. If we are perfected, of good comfort (or encouraged), of one mind, and at peace, we shall indeed do well. It is easy to see that these were things much needed by the Corinthians. But we need them just as badly. The church of God to-day, as a whole, is in a condition very similar to them. There is plenty of immaturity, of discouragement, of disunity, of strife: indeed these things seem very much to flow one out of the other. They are met and countered by a true ministry such as Paul's; and maturity, encouragement, unity and

peace are promoted. May it be so with us, and we too shall know the presence of the God of love and peace.

Verses 12 and 13 give *the closing salutations*. Verse 11 being fulfilled in them, there would be no difficulty amongst themselves, no jealousies and strifes and evil speakings, which would prevent their saluting one another in holiness. The spirit of faction, the desire to boast of being of Paul or Peter or Apollos, would be cast out. Moreover "all the saints" saluted them, for their affections had not been alienated from them by reason of their blameworthy condition of unspirituality. The saints elsewhere had not formed a party against them, or what is even worse, fallen themselves into parties as the result of hearing about the schisms at Corinth. *All the saints* saluted them, in spite of their failures.

Verse 14 gives *the closing benediction*. Here we have indicated the great realities which are calculated to produce the things desired in verse 11—grace, love and communion, proceeding respectively from the three Persons of the Godhead. Let us notice in passing that the Lord Jesus, who is so often spoken of as the Second Person, is put in the first place here, just as the Holy Spirit is put in the first place in 1 Corinthians xii. All such terms as First, Second or Third Person must therefore be used with a considerable measure of reserve.

The grace of the Lord Jesus was *known* by the Corinthians, as the Apostle had acknowledged in chapter viii. It is another and a further, thing for it to be *with us all*. Then we shall *all* be pervaded by its blessed influence. So with the love of God; and so too with the communion of the Holy Spirit. In this benediction the grace is put first, for if that fails with us all will fail.

Heaven will be filled with the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit, but we shall not need grace—at least, not as we need it here. It is in the circle of the church on earth that all kinds of trials and testings occur. It is here that we have to do with perverse men and trying brethren, all the while possessing wayward hearts ourselves. Nothing but the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ can preserve us in a way that is pleasing to God. But the grace of the Lord *can do it*.

And if the grace of the Lord does preserve us, then the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit may have full course and be with us all. The Spirit being holy the communion which He inspires must be holy. We shall be found in happy partnership and fellowship as to the whole range of things which He reveals to us, even the deep things of God.

The love of God *shines upon us* as His children, even when our practical condition

is not at all pleasing to Him. But when it is *with us all* its benediction is felt throughout the great circle of all saints. Indeed it overflows that circle and goes out to the world beyond. A lovely picture is thus presented of what the church is according to the thought of God: a circle governed by grace, overflowing with love, and filled with a holy communion concerning the things of God.

We cannot say that the church is that practically; but we can say that it may and should be that. We can say also that if any of us approximate to this, even in a small degree, we shall be greatly blessed, and be a benediction to others.

So may it be then with all of us.

F. B. HOLE.

WORK AMONGST CHILDREN.

Dear Mr. Editor,

I read "Save the Children" in the October issue of "Edification" with **much** appreciation.

I write to suggest another avenue of approach to children, which we have found an effectual one. Let two go into the back streets, or to new housing estates, on Sunday evenings, and collect small groups of children. Speak **very** simply, with plenty of repetition, and only for a few minutes. Bear in mind that an increasing number have never been to a Sunday School. In-

timate another Gospel talk, preferably on the following Sunday evening, weather permitting. Singing may usually be dispensed with. Have some children's Gospel papers to distribute after the meeting. An intimation that those who remain will receive something to read is enough to keep the little group together.

If adults are within hearing, speak somewhat louder, but continue speaking as though none but children were near. What you are saying to the young people is probably none too simple for the grown-ups, so ignorant is the average individual as to even the simple elements of the Gospel.

Between 6 and 8 o'clock six or eight little groups can easily be spoken to—often all one has to do is to get into the next street. Stand on the kerb-stone, or on a vacant bit of land where children are playing about. Do not begin straight away exhorting them to "Come to Jesus." Many are practically heathen, and need very simple **instruction** as a foundation to work upon. Do not overlook the fact that children, as well as adults, need the change of mind Godward called repentance.

Where more than two workers are available, think of neighbouring towns and villages.

Do not make the common mistake of supposing Gospel work among children is of **less** importance than that among adults. Long experience in open-air work has led the writer to consider it of **more** importance.

One does not find, with young people, the self-will, nor the indifference, nor the hardness of conscience all too apparent in this pleasure-loving day among men and women. **They** are

much more impressionable, whereas the older people get, the more difficult it is to make impressions upon their minds.

Open-air work is left **too** much to **young** men. Age brings moral weight (or **should** do so) as well as experience. If a young worker accompanies one with long experience in the work, the novice is getting useful ideas.

A final suggestion—Go out on **mild** nights in the winter as well as in the summer and autumn, but only speak for a very few minutes at each spot.

One likes to say “**Lord** Jesus” when referring to our adorable Saviour. Simply “Jesus” is much too commonly used, sometimes in too light a manner. The writer makes a point of bringing out the grace and attractiveness of the Lord Jesus, so that young hearts may be drawn to Him. Remember that human beings, young and old, have **hearts** as well as consciences.

And, even when speaking to children, do not fail to speak of **God** as the grand Source of the Glad Tidings. Some preachers, although constantly referring to Christ, seldom do so—an unintentional slight upon the God of all grace.

A. H. LYCETT.

CHOSEN TO BE A SOLDIER.

The devotion of the cloisters is by no means equal to that of the man who is engaged in the battle of life; the devotion of the nunnery and the monastery is at best the heroism of a soldier who shuns the battle; but the devotion of the man in business life, who turns all to the glory of God, is the courage of one who seeks the thickest of the fray, and there bears aloft the grand old standard of Jehovah-nissi. C.H.S.