

# EDIFICATION

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A MONTHLY  
MAGAZINE

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“Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of  
the Church” (I COR. xiv. 12).

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## EDITOR'S FOREWORD.

"Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord." (Jer. xlv. 5).

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." (Matt. vi. 33).

"Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." (Col. iii. 1).

**W**E believe that these three scriptures have at the present moment a very distinct voice to us as disciples of the Lord Jesus. From a practical standpoint so much depends upon our **objective** in life. What do we seek?

The word to Baruch was negative in its bearing, but if he obeyed it, it must have saved him much bitter disappointment. He was not to seek great things for himself: he would not then have much to lose when the judgment fell.

The application to ourselves is obvious. The day of judgment, spoken of in the prophetic Word, is drawing near. As regards the world system, which is under judgment, this is an hour of all hours in which we should not be **seeking** great things for ourselves. We can surely count

on God for the little things—things needful for our lives on earth—for He cares for us. There is no prohibition against our seeking **great** things in the interests of the Lord. But, **great** things for **self**?—NO.

As disciples, we are not to be aimless wanderers, but a people of very definite purpose, which expresses itself in earnest seeking. The things of God are to be our object.

When our Lord was on earth He set the kingdom of God and His righteousness before His disciples. When, redemption being accomplished, He had gone on high, the Holy Spirit set the things above, which centre in Himself at the right hand of God, as the objective to control them. God's purpose in His death and resurrection having been accomplished, this further advance in the ways of God with us had become possible.

To-day the men of the world have hearts that often fail them for fear of those things which are coming on the earth. We wait for the coming of our Lord, and we are to be marked not only by the negative virtue of not seeking great things for ourselves but by the positive virtue of seeking God's things.

"The kingdom of God," covers all that has to do with the authority of God being established in the souls of men. We are to seek that. "His righteousness," covers all that is right according to His standards, first of all in our relations with Him, and then in regard to any or all His creatures. That also we are to seek.

The things which are above, where Christ sitteth," is an expression of very wide bearing. The Christ who sits at God's right hand is the Administrator of all that God has designed, for the right hand seat is the seat of administration. Presently He will rise to act publicly. At present He sits, acting in quieter and hidden ways, far above the earthly things which create such a din about our ears. He is the Centre of heavenly things—of purposes which are heavenly, though they have to be wrought out on earth. At the present moment, for instance, He is working on earth, but calling out a people for heaven. These heavenly things are set before us as an object. We are to **seek** them.

It is right and good that we should seek them in the Scriptures, and we would like our little magazine to be a help in this. But when we have thus sought them, and become better acquainted with the heavenly things which God has purposed, we have to seek them in a further way. It is our happy privilege to make God's objects our objects, His purpose our purpose, and His things our things, **in a practical way.**

It is while on the earth that we are not to set our hearts on the things on earth, but on the things above. On earth we are to walk according to the **will** of heaven, and seek with all our spiritual energies the things of our absent Lord.

If we give ourselves with renewed faith and devotion to the "things above" we shall be blessed, and become channels of blessing to others.

## FIVE THINGS MISSING.

**W**E chanced to open a copy of H. V. Morton's book, "**In the steps of the Master,**" at random in a house where we saw it lying on a table. A remarkable statement met our eye to the effect that the Jewish rabbis were wont to say that five things were missing in the Temple rebuilt by Herod, viz.: the Ark, the Holy Fire, the Shekinah Glory, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the Urim and Thummin. **I-chabod**, the glory is departed from Israel, was written in greater force than ever in the days when our Lord was on earth.

We asked ourselves the question, What then had they left? We could only answer our own question by saying—An empty shell, a ritual without meaning, a priesthood with the spiritual left out, a priesthood whose office was degraded to the mere serving of tables and earning a living.

A line of thought was awakened. Is there no counterpart to this to-day? We think there is. Does not history repeat itself? It assuredly does. We believe these five things are missing in much that passes for religion in the present day, especially modernism.

## THE ARK.

The Ark, shittim wood, covered with pure gold, was typical of our Lord in His two natures—His deity and manhood. A Modernist refuses the verbal inspiration of the original Scriptures. The full and logical result of this is that they have

lost the real Christ, who was God. In losing Him we have lost everything. Did not our Lord assert that not one jot or tittle of the law (five books of Moses) should pass till all should be fulfilled? If He averred the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures and this is denied, there is certainly involved the loss of Christ Himself in such a system. Such a system becomes an empty hollow shell. It is mere hypocrisy or crass ignorance for a Modernist to claim to be a Christian.

#### THE HOLY FIRE.

The offering of strange fire is no new thing. The sons of Aaron—Nadab and Abihu—did so over three thousand years ago. History repeats itself. The Holy Fire had to do with the burning of incense, typical of worship. Modernism strikes a blow at worship. How can there be power for worship when doctrines fundamental to Christianity are denied? There may be scholarship but no spirituality, there may be oratory, but no getting into the realised presence of God. The Holy Fire is missing. Strange fire seeks to take its place with woeful consequences.

#### THE SHEKINAH GLORY.

This was the cloud that filled the holy of holies in the Tabernacle and Temple, the sign of the dwelling place of God Himself. Can God give His living presence to any system, however imposing, which refuses everything distinct and fundamental in Christianity? The question answers itself easily. At what a price men gain empty hollow applause for "the assured results of scholarship."

As the Modernists make their boast it reminds us of the striking words in Psalm lxxiv. 5—7:

**“A man was famous according as he had  
lifted up axes upon the thick trees,  
But now they break down the carved work  
thereof at once with axes and hammers.  
They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they  
have defiled by casting down the dwelling  
place of Thy name to the ground.”**

Modernism is destructive, not constructive. It deals in subtraction and knows nothing of real helpfulness. It robs and leaves one the poorer. It takes away the fine gold and leaves the dross. It is in short infidelity religionized—infidelity with a hypocritical veneer.

#### THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY.

How welcome was that in Old Testament times! It was the proof that God was caring for His people in spite of their wanderings and back-slidings. Times might be dark. The pulse of religious life in the nation might be feeble. God did not forget His people. An Elijah, an Elisha, an Isaiah, a Zechariah, a Daniel would be raised up. The Spirit of Prophecy would rouse the people from their lethargy, and call them to reality and truth. But how can Modernism have a Spirit of Prophecy? The deterioration of modernistic missionaries is proof that modernism and the Spirit of Prophecy do not go together. Modernism hamstringing evangelistic energy. It stifles gospel zeal. Instead of seeking the salvation of the lost,

Modernism seeks to find out how comparative are the religions of the world. With them Christianity is one of many, granted to be superior, but yet on a level, instead of being unique, the antithesis of heathen religions. Modernism resents the followers of other religions being unsettled in their beliefs. Evangelism says their belief are virtually wrong as to the way of salvation, and they must give up heathen beliefs to embrace Christ as the only Saviour, if they are to be blessed.

The modernistic missionary loses the spiritual and sinks down in the main to the level of a mere civilizer, a mere educationalist, one who seeks the betterment of mankind **for this life**, and who could carry out **his** programme without even the help of the Holy Scriptures.

The writer, on board ship, met a Y.M.C.A. secretary, who openly scouted the fundamental doctrines of Christianity and to all intents and purposes was a Unitarian seeking to uplift humanity by philanthropy and education. On the same steamer was a missionary whose Bible was borrowed down to the Sermon on the Mount, and that without its King. He accepted the precepts and ignored the King, for he said nothing of the atonement work on the cross; for was not the inscription on the cross, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Yet another lady missionary sat on her deck chair with scanty clothing and painted lips, a cigarette between her fingers. Could God speak through lips such as these? Could there be power with such?

## THE URIM AND THUMMIM.

This was an arrangement in the breastplate of the High Priest by which guidance could be obtained in times of national perplexity. We are not told how the oracle worked. Urim and Thummim are two Hebrew words meaning, "Lights and Perfection." It was typical of divine guidance. Modernism has lost this, for it has in reality flung away the Word of God which can give us the guidance we need. And further, if the Word of God is set aside, on what ground can guidance be sought? They have taken the ground from under their own feet. They have lost their Urim and Thummim.

Modernism is very subtle. It takes many forms and is exhibited in various degrees. These losses may be imminent where least expected. Our only safety lies in the knowledge of Christ, the eternal Son of God. If we have that, we know the Father, we know the absolute need of the atonement, and of faith in the One who died to satisfy the claims of divine righteousness and set God free to express His love to sinful men. For this we must have a reliable revelation, and this we have, thank God, in the Holy Scriptures, verbally inspired in all the sixty-six books. Inspiration binds them into one revelation of God, and of His will and mind for us. May the Lord preserve His own in these days of apostasy.

A. J. POLLOCK.



## THE FULL ASSURANCE OF SALVATION.

**I**S it possible for a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ to have full assurance of salvation? It is, and there are at least three reasons why doubts and fears as to this should be for ever banished from the mind of one who truly believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are (1) The greatness of the Saviour, (2) His resurrection from the dead, and (3) The testimony of God in His Word.

### (1) THE GREATNESS OF THE SAVIOUR.

If an angel, even the greatest of them, had come to save sinners, we might well have had doubts as to the results, for an angel is but a creature, and could not have measured the infinite demands of God's justice in order to satisfy them; nor could we have been sure that his power would be sufficient to overthrow the dominion of the devil and death, in order to set sinners free from them. But God did not send an angel, He sent His Son. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10). God knew the greatness of the work, and He sent the only One who was able to do it; so that we may say, "If the Son of God has taken up our cause we need fear no more, for He will carry it through to a successful issue. He cannot fail, and if He is my Saviour my salvation is eternal."

Think of the greatness of this Person. It is written of Him: "In the beginning was the Word,

and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John i. 1—3). He is the almighty and eternal Word, the Creator of worlds. It was He who became flesh and "dwelt among us," (verse 14), and to Him John the Baptist pointed saying, "Behold the Lamb of God" (verse 29). He only could tell the greatness of our sin against God and expiate it. He only could know to the full the demands of God's justice and satisfy them. He only could grapple with the power of death and overthrow it. All this He has done. To His Name be eternal praise!

How glorious is the light that breaks upon the soul when the greatness of the Saviour dawns upon it. Hope sure and certain drives dark despair from out the heart and fills it with gratitude and praise! Yes, we may have full assurance of salvation because of the greatness of the Saviour.

## (2) GOD HAS RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD.

The Scripture says: "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. xv. 17), so that the resurrection of Christ becomes a question of vital importance to us. If God has not raised Christ from the dead, it means that He has failed in His mission to earth. Sin has proved itself stronger than He; the work too great for Him; the judgment of God heavier than He could bear. If He has not been raised from the dead the devil has triumphed, and there is no

Saviour. We are yet in our sins, with nothing before us but a hopeless and woeful eternity. **But Christ is risen.** God has raised Him, and His resurrection is the proof that God has been glorified, and His righteousness vindicated, sin has been atoned for, the work of redemption accomplished, Satan defeated, and that salvation—full, free and eternal—has been secured for guilty men.

The resurrection of Jesus is God's seal upon His finished work; His divine and immutable attestation of the absolute perfection and atoning value of His sacrifice. That work was done for us, ungodly sinners, for "Christ died for the ungodly." He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans iv. 25—v. 1). We may have full assurance of salvation because our Substitute is now clear of all the judgment which was ours, having borne it for us. **"God hath raised Him from the dead."**

### (3) THE INFALLIBLE WORD OF GOD.

In the Word of God we have reliable authority upon which to base our confidence. What it states must abide eternally true; it is as stable and unchanging as the throne of God. In the Word of God we have the testimony of God as to the greatness of Christ and the completeness of His work. He tells us that it was for sinners that Jesus died, and we believe it because He says it. He tells us that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin, and we believe it be-

cause He says it. He tells us that Christ is risen from the dead and that through His name the forgiveness of sins is preached to men, and we believe it because He says it.

But God also tells that "By Him [Christ Jesus] all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts xiii. 39), and we must believe this also because God says it. If we can say that we receive God's testimony to Christ and His work, and that He is our only hope and trust, we are amongst the "all who believe," and God declares that they "are justified from all things," and we may have full assurance as to this because **God says it.**

J. T. MAWSON.

## GIDEON:

HIS CALL, CONQUEST AND CONFLICT.

### (1) His Call.

**T**HE Book of Judges might be called the Old Testament version of the second Epistle to Timothy, while the second Epistle to Timothy might be termed the New Testament version of the Book of Judges. Both have to do with a third generation, and this seems always to have been characterised by much weakness and great failure.

Moses had died; Joshua also, and the elders that outlived Joshua were dead. "There arose another generation after them, which knew not the

Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel." (Judges ii. 10). There was not another Moses nor another Joshua. "Nevertheless the Lord raised up Judges which delivered them [the people] out of the hand of those that spoiled them." (verse 16).

When we turn to the Second Epistle to Timothy we have no difficulty in seeing the analogy. Paul was about to pass into the presence of his much-loved Lord. Timothy would probably follow, as indeed he did, and there would not be another Paul nor another Timothy, but the Lord would raise up "faithful men." In the days of the Judges there was a state of lawlessness. "There was no king in Israel":—no recognition of authority—"Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." (xxi. 25). When Paul wrote his Second Epistle to Timothy a similar state of matters was already in evidence; he predicted that it would develop, and to-day we see it full-blown. As we read both portions we are comforted and encouraged by the fact that the Lord did not (Judges) and will not (2 Timothy) give up His people.

With this assurance, we turn to this book for guidance as to the path that the Lord has marked out for His own in the day in which we live; and with the prayer that by His grace we may seek to walk therein. We commend the study of the book to all our readers and to our dear young brethren in particular. It will show them, and indicate to us all, how we may be men of calibre,

"faithful men," men of God in days of difficulty.

We propose in these papers to deal only with Gideon, as he is brought before us in chapters vi. vii. and viii. This month we will consider chapter vi. Like Timothy, he seems to have been a young man (verse 15), but not too young to be exercised and distressed by the state of God's people. On our first introduction to him we find that he "threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites" (v. 11). He appeared to do it in secret.

We quite understand that he literally threshed wheat. We suggest however that there is a lesson for us just here. Will not the secret of our knowledge of God, His heart, His will, His ways, of our getting food for our souls, guidance for our path, power for our service, depend upon our threshing wheat in secret—in other words, feeding upon the Word of God? Not simply that which others have threshed, and which we may get in addresses, magazines, books, etc.—valuable as these are—but feeding upon that which we ourselves have threshed, our reading of the Word in our own room and in the secret of the presence of God. "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John ii. 14).

The totally unexpected visit of "the Angel of the Lord," and his remarkable salutation gave evidence of the divine appreciation of Gideon's distress as to the state of the people. Evidently it

bordered on despair. Then came **THE CALL**, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: **HAVE NOT I SENT THEE?**" (v. 14). Gideon's humility at this point showed that he was the right man, as indeed he must have been when the Angel of the Lord said, "Have not **I** sent thee?" He manifested his fitness by himself taking the low place: "the least in my father's house" (v. 15): also by making the trouble of the people his own. The Angel of the Lord had said "the Lord is with **thee**;" he replied, "If the Lord be with **us**, why then is all this befallen **us**?" (vv. 12, 13).

Now we learn that he who threshed wheat in secret, and who took the low place, was let into the secret of the Lord—which is "with them that fear Him" (Psalm xxv. 14)—that he was the one whom the Lord found to be usable, and that He was about to use him for the deliverance of His people.

Then we have that which would suggest communion and worship. At the word of "the Angel of God" Gideon laid his offering upon "this rock." It seemed primitive; it was unlike the order of service to which Israel had been accustomed; yet it was in keeping with the confusion of the day in which he lived. Similarly there came a time when Paul separated the disciples from the synagogue with its ornate ritual, and they gathered in "the school of one Tyrannus," a Greek (Acts xix. 9). In this day of failure, how we love our Lord's words, "For where two or three are gathered to-

gether unto My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew xviii. 20, New Trans.).

Next, "Gideon built an altar unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom" and this the margin tells us, means "The Lord send peace" (verse 24). Already he saw in prospect the emancipation of his brethren; the triumph of the Lord; and the vanquishing of the foe. How happy to be thus in the current of God's mind; the knowledge of His will; and the certainty that His power will prevail. Then came the time for action. "Cease to do evil; learn to do well" (Isaiah i. 16, 17), is the divine order.

Gideon was, first, to "throw down the altar of Baal," and next to "build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock **in the ordered place**" (vv. 25, 26). In the midst of all the breakdown and failure there was "a strong place" (margin), above all the lawlessness, and an "ordered place," where "in an orderly manner" (margin), the Lord should have His portion from those who recognised His claim, His authority, and His will. Gideon's courageous act brought to light those who preferred their own will to God's will, and also those who in face of difficulties, danger, and opposition, desired to be in the path of God's will. It was a searching, sifting, testing time.

We cannot but admire Gideon's caution. He would appear to have been a backward, timorous young man, such as we judge Timothy to have been. This spirit rather than its opposite is very



commendable in Christian young men to-day. God graciously granted him the two-fold sign which he sought (verses 36-40). Would not "the dew on the fleece only," suggest that God intended Israel to be as a centre of refreshment to those around, while the dry fleece might be indicative that sadly as Israel had failed and had come short of God's purpose for them, the very fact that they **were** His people meant that those around derived benefit from their being there.

The Assembly was, in its infancy, like the wet fleece. It was indeed the centre through which the Lord caused blessing in abundance to flow. To-day, as we see it, it is more like the dry fleece; and yet how much does the presence of the Assembly here, — notwithstanding its lamentable failure,—mean for the world. Gideon, now fully satisfied as to his call, proceeded to his conquest, and of that we hope to have something to say next month if the Lord will.

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(MARK i. i.—ii. 14).

Our review of this Gospel being more condensed than in the case of the Epistles hitherto before us, it is more than ever necessary to read it in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

**T**HE writer of this Gospel was that "John, whose surname was Mark," (Acts xv. 37), who failed in his service when with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey,

and who afterwards became a bone of contention between them. He first failed himself, and then became the occasion of further failure with others greater than himself. This was a sorry beginning to his story, but eventually he was so truly restored that he became serviceable to the Lord in the exalted work of writing the Gospel which presents the Lord Jesus as the perfect Servant of Jehovah, the true Prophet of the Lord.

He entitles his book, "Gospel" or "Glad Tidings" of "Jesus Christ, the Son of God," so from the very outset we are not allowed to forget who this perfect Servant is. He is the Son of God, and this fact is further enforced by the quotations from Malachi and Isaiah in verses 2 and 3, where the One whose way was to be prepared is seen to be Divine, even Jehovah Himself. The mission of the messenger, the one crying in the wilderness, is the very beginning of His glad tidings.

That messenger was John the Baptist, and in verses 4 to 8 we get a brief summary of his mission and testimony. The baptism that he preached signified repentance, for the remission of sins, and those who submitted to it came confessing their sins. They had to acknowledge they were all wrong. Very fittingly therefore John kept himself severely apart from the society that he had to condemn. In his clothes, in his food, and in his location, going out into the wilderness, he took a separate place.

Moses had **given** the law. Elijah had accused the people of their departure from it, and had **re-**

**called** them to a fresh allegiance to it. John, though he came in the spirit and power of Elijah, did not urge them to keep it, but rather to **honestly confess** that they had utterly broken it. This prepared them for his further message concerning the infinitely greater One who was just to come, who would baptise with the Holy Ghost. His baptism would be far greater than John's, just as personally he was far above Him. He who can thus pour forth the Holy Spirit cannot be less than God Himself.

The beginning of the Glad Tidings in the work of John being thus described, we are introduced next to the baptism of Jesus. This is condensed into verses 9 to 11. Here, as all through this Gospel, the utmost brevity and conciseness characterises the record. Jesus comes from Nazareth, the humble and despised place in Galilee, and submits to John's baptism; not because He had anything to confess, but because He would identify Himself with these souls who in repentance were making a move in the right direction. It was just then, ere He came forth in His public ministry, that Heaven's approbation of the perfect Servant was manifested, lest any should misinterpret His lowly baptism. The Spirit descended upon Him as a dove, and the Father's voice was heard declaring His Person and His perfection. The Servant of the Lord is Himself sealed with the Spirit; the dove being emblematic of purity and peace. Having become Man, He must receive the Spirit Himself; presently in His

risen estate He will shed forth that Spirit as a baptism upon others. In that Spirit He went forth empowered to serve. It is also to be noticed that for the first time there was a clear revelation of the Godhead, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The first action of the Spirit in His case comes before us in verses 12 and 13. Coming forth to serve the will of God, He must be tested, and the Spirit thrusts Him forth to this. Here for the first time we find the word "immediately" which occurs so often in this Gospel, though it is sometimes rendered as "anon," "forthwith," "straightway." If service be rendered rightly it must be characterised by prompt obedience, hence we see our Lord as One who never lost a moment in His path of service.

He must be tested before He publicly serves, and the test takes place at once. When the first man appeared he was soon tested by the devil and he fell. The second Man has now appeared and He too shall be tested by the same devil. Only instead of being in a beautiful garden He is in the wilderness into which the first man had turned his garden. He was with beasts who were wild because of Adam's sin. He was tested for forty days, the full period of probation, and He emerged as Victor, for holy angels ministered to Him at the close.

No details as to the various temptations are given to us here; only the fact of it, the conditions under which it took place and the result. The Servant of the Lord is fully tested, and His

perfection is made manifest. He is ready to serve. So in verse 14 John is dismissed from the story. The beginning of the Glad Tidings is over, and we plunge without further explanation into a brief record of His marvellous service.

His message is described as "the Gospel of the kingdom of God," and a very brief summary of its terms is found in verse 15. The kingdom of God had been spoken of in the Old Testament, notably in Daniel. In chapter ix. of that book a certain time had been set for the coming of Messiah and the fulfilment of the prophecy. The time was fulfilled, and in Himself the kingdom was near to them. He called upon men to repent and to believe this. With this proclamation He came into Galilee. For the moment He was alone in this service.

But He was not alone for long. Here and there His message was received and from the ranks of those who believed He began to call some who should be more closely associated with Him in His service, and in their turn become "fishers of men." He Himself was the great Fisher of men, as is revealed by the two incidents recorded in verses 16 to 20. He knew whom He would call to His service. Seeing the sons of Zebedee He called them "straightway," and it is said of the sons of Jonas that when He called them "straightway they forsook their nets and followed Him." As the great Servant of God, He was prompt in issuing His call: as under-servants they were prompt to obey.

It is worthy of note that all four who were called were men of diligence in their work. Peter and Andrew were engaged in their fishing. James and John were not lolling about during their time of leisure. They were mending the nets.

In verse 16, "**He** walked," but in verse 21, "**they** went." The men whom He had called were now with Him, listening to His words and seeing His works of power. Entering Capernaum, He taught "straightway" on the sabbath, and **authority** marked His utterances. The scribes were mere retailers of the thoughts and opinions of others, falling back on the authority of great Rabbis of earlier times, so it was this note of authority which astonished the people. It was so distinct that they at once detected it. He was indeed that Prophet with the words of Jchovah in His mouth, of whom Moses had spoken in Deuteronomy xviii. 18, 19.

And not only had He authority but also **power**—real dynamic force. This was manifested on the same occasion in His treatment of the man with an unclean spirit. Controlled by the demon, the man recognised Him as the Holy One of God yet thought of Him as One bent upon destruction. Thus challenged, the Lord revealed Himself to be the Deliverer and not the destroyer. It is the devil who is the destroyer, and hence the demon, who was his servant, did as much as he could in that line by tearing the poor man before he came out of him. He could not retain his grip

upon his victim in the presence of the power of the Lord.

Again the people were filled with amazement. They now saw "authority" expressed in His work, as before they had felt it in His word. Their question therefore was two-fold: what **thing**? and what **new doctrine**? These two things must ever be kept together in the service of God. Word must be supported by work. When it is not thus, or when, even worse, our works contradict our words, our service is feeble or vain.

In His case both were perfect. His teaching was full of authority, and with equal authority He commanded obedience even from demons; hence His fame spread abroad with a promptness which was in keeping with the promptitude of His wonderful service for God in regard to man.

We have not yet finished with the activities of this wonderful day in Capernaum, for verse 29 tells us that having left the synagogue they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew. This they did "forthwith,"—that same characteristic word, indicating promptness. There was no waste of time with our blessed Master, nor was there waste of time with His new followers, for they present to Him "anon"—the same word—the case of need in that house. Human need, the fruit of human sin met Him at every turn. It was as evident in the house of those who had become His followers as it had been in the syna-

gogue, the local centre of their religious observances.

Demoniac power was manifest in the religious circle, and disease in the domestic circle. He was more than equal to both. The demon left the man completely and at once. The fever left the woman with similar promptness, and no period of convalescence was necessary before she resumed her ordinary household duties. No wonder that very soon "all the city was gathered together at the door."

The picture presented in verses 32 to 34 is very beautiful. "At even, when the sun did set," the work of the day being over, the multitudes gathered bringing a great concourse of needy folk, and He dispensed the mercy of His healing power in all directions. He would permit no testimony to Himself to be uttered by the powers of darkness. The mercy and might displayed were sufficient witness to who it was that was serving amongst men. In his Gospel John tells us that there were many other things that Jesus did, which have not been put on record. Here some are indicated without details being given.

The story, as given to us by Mark, moves rapidly forward. Till late in the evening the work of mercy went on, and then long before day He rose up and sought solitude for prayer. We have just noted the authority and power of God's perfect Servant. Here we see His **dependance** upon God, without which there can be no true service. The Servant must hang upon the Master, and



though He who serves is "Son," he does not dispense with this feature: rather is He the highest expression of it in perfect obedience. We read that He learned obedience "by the things that He suffered" (Heb. v. 8); and this word doubtless covers all His pathway here and not merely the closing scenes of suffering of a more physical sort.

What a voice this has for all who serve, no matter how small our service! His day was so full of activity that He took a large part of the night for prayer: **and He was the Son of God.** Much of our powerlessness is occasioned by our lack in the matter of solitary prayer.

The next four verses (36—39) show us the **devotedness** of God's Servant. Simon and others appear to have regarded His retirement as unaccountable diffidence, or perhaps as a waste of valuable time. All were seeking for Him, and He seemed to be missing this tide of popularity. But popularity was by no means His object. He had come forth in service to preach the Divine message, and so regardless of popular feeling He went on with His service through the towns of Galilee. He devoted Himself to the mission with which He had been entrusted.

And now, in the closing verses of this first chapter, we have a lovely picture of the **compassion** of this perfect Servant of God. He is approached by a leper, in body about as loathsome a specimen of humanity as can be. The poor fellow had some faith, but it was defective. He was confident of His power, but had doubts as to His

grace. We should have been moved with disgust, considerably tinged with indignation at the aspersion cast upon our kindly feelings. He was moved with compassion. **Moved** with it, mark you! Not only did He view this miserable specimen with compassionate love but He acted. The deep fountain of Divine love within Him rose up and overflowed. With His hand He touched him and with His lips He spoke, and the man was healed.

There was no actual need that He should touch him, for the Lord cured many a desperate case at a distance. No Jew would have dreamt of touching him and thus contracting defilement, but the Lord did so. He was beyond all possibility of defilement, and His touch was one of sympathy as well as of power. It confirmed His word, "I will," and removed all doubt of His willingness from the man's mind for ever.

Again we see how our Lord did not court popular enthusiasm and notoriety. His instruction to the man was that he should allow the testimony to his cure to flow in the channel indicated by Moses. He however, filled with delight did the very thing he had been told not to do, and as a consequence for some days the Lord had to shun the cities and dwell in desert places. Very few things stir up human interest and excitement more than miraculous healing, but He was seeking spiritual results. There are modern healing movements which create considerable excitement in spite of the fact that their so-called "healings" are very unlike our Lord's. The actors in these movements most cer-

tainly do not retreat from the blaze of publicity, but rather delight in it.

Chapter ii. opens with another work of power that took place in a private house, when after some time He was again in Capernaum. This time faith of a very robust type comes into view, and that, remarkably enough, on the part of friends and not on the part of the sufferer. The Lord was again preaching the Word. That was His **main** service; the healing work was **incidental**.

The four friends had faith of the sort that laughs at impossibilities, and says, "It shall be done," and Jesus saw it. He dealt instantly with the **spiritual** side of things, granting forgiveness of sins to the paralysed man. This was but blasphemy to the reasoning scribes who were present. They were right enough in their thought that no one but God can forgive sins, but they were wholly wrong in not discerning that God was present amongst them and speaking in the Son of Man. The Son of Man was on earth, and on earth He has authority to forgive sins.

The forgiveness of sins however is not something which is visible to the eyes of men; it must be accepted by faith in the Word of God. The instantaneous healing of a bad case of bodily infirmity is visible to the eyes of men, and the Lord proceeded to perform this miracle. They could no more release the man from the grip of his disease than they could forgive his sins. Jesus could do both with equal ease. He did both, appealing to the miracle in the body as proof of the miracle as to the soul.

Thus He puts things in their right order. The spiritual miracle was primary, the bodily was only secondary.

Here again the miracle was instantaneous and complete. The man who had been utterly helpless suddenly arose, picked up his bed and walked forth before them all in a fashion that elicited glory to God from all lips. The Lord commanded and the man had but to obey, for the enabling went with the command.

This incident which emphasises the spiritual object of our Lord's service is followed by the call of Levi, afterwards known to us as Matthew the publican. The call of this man to follow the Master exemplifies the mighty **attraction** of His word. It was one thing to call lowly fishermen from their nets and toil: it was another to call a man of means from the congenial task of scooping in the cash. But He did it with two words. "Follow Me," fell upon Levi's ears with such power that he "arose and followed Him." God grant that we may feel the power of those two words in our hearts!

What a wonderful glimpse we have been granted of the Servant of the Lord, His promptitude, His authority, His power, His dependence, His devotedness, His compassion, His refusal of the popular and superficial in favour of the spiritual and the abiding; and lastly, His mighty attractiveness.

F. B. HOLE.

## LOYAL-HEARTED, THOUGH NOT LION-FACED.

**M**EPHIBOSHETH was a very different sort of man to the Gadites with "the faces of lions," who were "swift as the roes upon the mountains," and "could handle shield and buckler," and were "fit for the battle" (1 Chron. xii. 8). David needed such men as they were, for he was a man of war, but he was also a man with a heart, great and tender, and he valued above all things devotion to his person; and who shall say that the crippled son of Jonathan did not give him more pleasure in the long run than the fearless veterans of his old guard?

David was chosen of God to be the saviour, shepherd and king of His people Israel, and in these respects he foreshadowed our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Saviour of men and the coming King. It is this that makes his history so interesting and instructive. The men that came into contact with David shewed by their attitude towards him how far they understood God's thoughts and ways at the time; and in like manner Christ is the test of every man to-day.

"What think ye of Christ is the test  
To try both your state and your scheme."

It is from this point of view that we will talk about Mephibosheth and his relations with David.

One thing is certain. David found great pleasure in shewing him kindness "for Jonathan's sake." He called what he did "the kindness of God," and seemed happier in doing it than in slaughtering his foes. In this one incident he stood out prominently as the man after God's heart, for we know that God finds His delight in bestowing blessing upon needy, helpless men. That part of Mephibosheth's contact with David is beautifully told in 2 Samuel ix.

The question is. How did Mephibosheth react to David's great kindness? He could not do great and brilliant things, he would have been useless and a burden on the field of battle, yet there was something he could do,—he could appreciate David's kindness and he could keep a heart loyal to him. He certainly seems to have been grateful to David for all the benefits he bestowed upon him, but sometimes a man may appreciate favours and have very little true love for the benefactor. It may even be so with us; we may value the blessings that come to us through Christ and yet not have much loyalty of heart for Him. It is a sad thing to contemplate, but it may be so, and assuredly the test will come.

The test came to Mephibosheth. Absalom, the favourite and spoiled son of his father, rebelled against him, and David had to flee the city of Jerusalem. There never had been such a day of sorrow for David in all his chequered career, he reached then and there the very nadir of his fortunes, and the strange thing was that Jerusalem

seemed glad to see the back of him, and to welcome the traitor-son. What would Mephibosheth do? When the full story is told we learn that he would have shared the sorrow and evil of the King if he could have done so, but it was not to be. Robbed and slandered by his servant, he was forced to remain behind in the city that had cast off David. The city rejoiced, it held high revelry, but Mephibosheth did not join in the festivities; he held himself in strict separation from it all and mourned for the absent King. He "neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the King departed until he came again in peace." (2 Sam. xix. 24).

Do we realise, O Christians, that the true King is rejected by the world, that the devil has usurped His throne, and is both god and prince of the world? This the Scriptures teach most plainly, and since this is true, what should we do, who are left in it? If we are devoted to the Person of our Lord as Mephibosheth was to David we shall feel that a great moral gulf lies between us and it, that we have nothing in common with it, and that practical separation from it becomes us.

"Its grand fete days, and fashions and ways  
Are all but perishing things."

Yet not because of this only but because it is enmity against God and Christ, and lieth in the wicked one, we must go through it as Christian and Faithful went through Vanity Fair in John Bunyan's book.

It is exceedingly interesting to see what Mephibosheth said to David when he returned in triumph to his throne and city. He rejoiced that the King had come back to his own, and he wanted nothing for himself. The King's rights and not his own were everything to him. He claimed nothing for himself, but he made his boast in David's grace and in David's word. Hear what he says, "All of my father's house were but dead men before my Lord the King." Dead men have no place or rights; they cannot claim anything, especially when they are dead under the sentence of a righteous law. And it was this that this grandson of Saul, David's great enemy, meant, so it seems to me. But if he could claim no place in the King's palace and favour because of what he was, he could rely on David's word and boast in his kindness. "Yet," he said, "didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table." David had said that he should eat bread continually and always at his table as one of the King's sons, and he knew that the King's word would stand and he wanted nothing more.

He struck the right note, and it is happy for us if we can tune our boasting to the same key. We had no claim upon God, for we were all dead men before Him, but He is rich in mercy, and for His great love wherewith He loved us, **even when we were dead in sins**, He quickened us, and saved us, and set us among them that eat at His table. In the exceeding riches of His grace



and His kindness toward us He has made us His children in an unchanging, everlasting relationship. Shall we not boast in this? Mephibosheth could not forget David's kindness. In this last incident in his life's story it stands out as the one thing that dominated him and expressed his relationship to his King. And can we forget? It would be a strange and unnatural thing if we did.

As we consider Mephibosheth, his moral greatness grows upon us. He was no whining, time-serving sycophant, thinking only of his own advantage. His loyalty to David in rebellious Jerusalem was great; the entire absence of self-conceit and self-seeking on David's return increases our admiration for him, and his reliance on David's word and boast in what David had done for him were evidence of true gratitude. His joy at the King's return in peace was so great that he does not even ask that his slanderous, thieving servant should be punished. He desired no property, he sought nothing for himself. The person of the King was everything to him, and that the King should have his rights was all his desire. Everybody may not agree with me, but I set Mephibosheth, lame and apparently useless to the King, as the greatest of all the King's men, and I am inclined to think, that in those closing years of the King's life he found more pleasure in Mephibosheth than in any other.

We are looking for the time when our Lord will come into His rights, when the long years of

His rejection shall close, and the nations shall see Him and own Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. It will be the day of His glory, and a happy day for us if some of the traits of Mephibosheth are shewing themselves in us now.

J. T. MAWSON.

## THE OLD NATURE AND THE NEW.

**A** YOUNG man had repented toward God, believed the Gospel, and knew his sins forgiven. He was so joyful day and night, and so full of praise to God for His mercy, that he could scarcely eat, work, or sleep. After a time—genuinely converted to God though he was—he began to discover **in himself** certain things which greatly troubled him. He had supposed that in being born again his stony heart would be changed, and his sinful desires taken away for ever. But he still found within him a tendency towards wrong things. He was in downright earnest, and sought by all means in his power to crush the evil out and to repress these bad tendencies. Alas! the more he tried, the more unhappy he became. When he wanted to do good, evil was present with him. Then came the suggestion, “Ah, you were never **truly** converted, it was all excitement. Give it up.” He consulted his minister, who advised him to “strive harder, labour more for Christ, and give more to support His cause.” He did this but it did not lessen his misery. He was a mystery to

himself and as wretched now as he was happy before. He could not understand why these evil desires should be present with him when he wanted to go on right and keep the Ten Commandments to the letter.

Whilst passing through this experience an explanation of Romans vii. resulted in the removal of his difficulties, and the commencement of a new phase in his spiritual history. Should any reader be passing through a similar experience, may we ask him to turn to that chapter. It contains thirty-three "I's." Whenever a man uses a number of "I's," we may be sure he is occupied with himself. The man described there earnestly desired to keep the law, which is "holy, and just, and good," but in seeking to do so he learned there was something in him, which was the opposite of holy, just and good. He found first of all that he had **good desires but no power to carry them out, and evil desires which were ever present with him and which he could not overcome.** Then he discovered that these evil desires came from an **evil nature called "sin"** and the good desires from a **new nature called the "inward man."** Then by bitter experience he was compelled to come to this sad conclusion, that strive as he may he could neither eradicate nor improve the evil nature. The case was hopeless.

Have you made this discovery? Have you learned your utter powerlessness to eradicate or overcome the evil nature you possess? Do you see that it is so incurably bad that you can neither

alter nor improve it? When you have learned this lesson you will cease saying, “**I** will be different to day and do better than I did yesterday.” You will cease to look for goodness where God says there is none. You will say, “In me—that is **in my flesh**—dwells no good thing. After doing my best, after all my striving, trying, resolving, I am forced to confess I cannot keep God’s holy law. Oh, wretched man that I am, **who** shall deliver me?” Thank God there is a Deliverer!

We must travel onward to the eighth chapter to learn God’s way of deliverance. The One who has delivered us from our **sins** by bearing the judgment due to them is the One by whom we get victory over indwelling **sin**. How? “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus **hath** made **me** **free** from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [by a sacrifice for sin], **condemned sin** in the flesh.” This means that the old evil nature called “flesh” and “sin” was so bad that when Christ was crucified it was utterly condemned. Cease then to look for any good from it. Paul says, “I am crucified with Christ” (Gal. ii. 20). And you, too, must reckon yourself to have died with Christ. Your language should be:

Jesus died, and I died **with Him**,  
Buried in His grave I lay.

In the end of Romans vii. we find a man thanking God he had found a Deliverer. For this you

must look outside yourself, straight up to a glorified Man who is seated on the throne of the Majesty on high. His name is Jesus. Tell me, is He good enough? "Oh, yes," you say, "there is everything in Him to delight the heart of God. He is the very opposite of me: He always did those things that pleased God." Now, let me ask you, if you were perfectly sure that all the goodness treasured up in Him was **now made yours** would you give up yours and rest in Him alone?

That is how the man in Romans vii. got free. He turned away from his "wretched" self, and he began thanking God that in Jesus Christ the Lord he had found a Deliverer. He had come to a sober and right judgment as to self. He had learned to trace everything to its source. His will was on the side of the good, and if evil was there he could say, "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom. vii. 17). If he serves God's law, it is with the mind or "inward man." He had learned to look outside self for power, and that whilst the new nature is powerless, of and in itself, to keep the law, power was vested in Christ for him to draw upon.

Do not imagine that you cannot get out of the wretched condition described in Romans vii. When you have experimentally learned the lesson you will be able to say, "I have learned that I possess **two distinctly opposed natures**. Before I was converted I had only one, my **old self**, which God calls 'sin.' Sinning is doing what **I like** without reference to God. That sums up my uncon-

verted days. Since I was converted I have an entirely new nature called the 'inward man.' This has holy desires, but no power in itself to carry them out. I also see that these natures cannot mingle. I cannot **alter** the bad one, or **get rid of it**. Sin has its dwelling-place in my flesh, and it will dwell there until my natural death. I cannot evict it, nor can I reach a point where I can say I have no sin, for 1 John i. 8 says that 'if we say we have no sin we deceive **ourselves**' (not God, or other people). I have, however, learned that God has condemned sin in the cross of Christ and that He looks upon me as having died with Christ, so that I am to reckon myself as dead indeed unto sin, and count upon Him as a daily Saviour to care for me, support me, and give me the victory."

The lessons God would teach you are these:

In you, that is in your flesh, there is no **good**.  
All **good** is in Christ.

All the good in Christ Jesus is **yours** (1 Cor. i. 30, 31).

There is no power **in you**.

All **power** is in Christ.

All Christ's power is **at your disposal** (Phil. iv. 13).

Let me add another word. A clear conception of the **doctrine** of deliverance from this state is not exactly the same as an experimental knowledge of it. If you would know this practically you must walk in the Spirit; reckon yourself dead

indeed unto sin; not parley or dally with temptation, but look immediately to Christ.

Distrust yourself wholly. Trust Christ fully for power to walk each moment. Yield yourself to God. Reckon yourself dead indeed to sin. Live by the faith of the Son of God. If you are disappointed in yourself, **God is not**. He knew the **worst** about you before He met you in grace. Your worst has been provided for in God's **best**. **Christ is God's best**. Look to Him, and you too shall be able to thank God for deliverance; but this looking must be a continuous act. Do not ignore the evil in you, look ever, look always to Christ, reckoning yourself dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus. He alone can deliver you from the power of indwelling sin, but **He can and will**.

H.N.

## GIDEON:

His Call ; Conquest ; and Conflict.

(ii). HIS CONQUEST.

**P**ASSING on to chapter seven of the book of Judges—which it will be well to read before proceeding further—we have the story of Gideon's conquest. He had however still some lessons to learn, the chief of which was that his confidence was to be in, and his dependence upon, God.

Filled with enthusiasm, he had summoned many

of his brethren to the fray, (chapter vi. 34, 35), and he had a company of thirty-two thousand. That might have caused him to think that with such a number **his** success was assured. This seems clear from verse two.

“And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved Me.”

And the number was reduced to ten thousand. That may have been disappointing to Gideon, and may have upset his plans if he had formed any.

He had to learn however, from the lips of God, that,

“The people are yet too many: bring them down unto the water and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee: and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.” (verse 4).

The number was reduced to three hundred. They must have looked a contemptible little army when compared with “the Midianites and Amalekites and all the children of the east who lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seaside for multitude” (verse 12).

The three hundred men were divinely chosen. They had shown their sense of the importance of the Lord's work; of the urgency of it; and of the



necessity of putting it before even natural desires. While the majority, in leisurely fashion, bowed down upon their knees to drink, these were content to lap the water "as a dog lappeth" (verse 5), and these were chosen by Jehovah.

Is there not a lesson for us here? We need to avoid the restlessness of the flesh on the one hand. On the other hand we have to realize that we cannot take up the Lord's work as a pastime, as something merely for our leisure hours, to be taken up or laid down as we feel disposed. It is His work, not ours: those who engage in it should know that He uses those whom He chooses; those whom He chooses are those whom He approves, and those whom He approves are those whom He uses, however unsuitable they may appear in our eyes.

The Lord was very gracious to Gideon. First, He let him know that victory was certain:

"And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host: for I have delivered it into thine hand" (verse 9).

But probably, observing Gideon's hesitancy, the Lord told him to go down to the host with Phurah his servant, to hear what they said;

"And afterward shall thine hand be strengthened to go down unto the host" (vv. 10, 11). Going down, Gideon heard a man telling a dream to his fellow:

"Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Mid-

ian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along" (v. 13).

What could be more insignificant than a cake of barley bread? What could **it** do supposing it did tumble into the host of Midian? It actually did the impossible for it overturned a tent. The dreamer's fellow was quick to interpret the dream.

"This is nothing else," said he, "save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand **hath God delivered** Midian, and all the host" (verse 14).

Gideon was now satisfied. What could his seemingly miserable three hundred do against such an army? Nothing. But then it was God and the three hundred, or, we might rather say, God **through** the three hundred.

Let us now look at their weapons: "A trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers" (verse 16). That might be summed up as **Light and Testimony**. The three companies, into which the three hundred had been divided, were to blow the trumpets and break the pitchers. This was done. The trumpets were blown, the pitchers were broken, the battle cry was sounded "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon" (verse 20), and "the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow" (vv. 21, 22), and thus the foes were vanquished.

Let us try to visualise it. Three hundred men, trumpets, broken vessels, lamps. Could we

imagine anything, humanly speaking, more unlikely to effect anything. But bring **GOD** in and all difficulties disappear. There seems to be a New Testament parallel to this in 2 Corinthians iv. Let us turn to it before reading further.

In verse 4 we have light and testimony, and the opposition of the enemy. We quote verses 3 and 4.

“But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest **the light** of the glorious gospel [gospel of the glory, New Trans.] of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

Later we read

“But we have this treasure **in earthen vessels**, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (verse 7).

Could we have a finer commentary upon that which we have been considering? The remainder of the chapter shows how, in Paul's case, the vessel was broken. Trouble, perplexity, persecution, being cast down, were the divine ways of breaking the vessel. But, said the Apostle, we are not distressed; nor in despair; nor forsaken; nor destroyed. The breaking of the vessel only served to cause the light to shine more clearly, and that was “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” reflected in His servant. It was intended to make the trumpet call clear and distinct, and that was the testimony of “the glad tidings of the glory of Christ.”

It may be some of our readers are passing through a time of severe, almost unbearable trial. Be of good cheer, troubled heart! It may be the Lord's way of breaking the vessel in your case that in your life the light may shine, and the testimony may be rendered. In the light of His glory, the affliction becomes light and but for a moment, while the weight of glory is "far more exceeding" and it is "eternal" (verses 17, 18). As we learn this, our doubts and fears are dispelled; our questionings vanish; our murmurings cease; the enemy is defeated; and God is glorified.

To return to the story of Gideon. When the Lord had given him the victory, he called more of his brethren to work with him and the Lord allowed them to share in it.

All this shows us how the Lord would seek to give us to know His mind; to understand His plan; to own His authority; and thus to have the fellowship of our brethren in the carrying on of His work. Our danger—poor, failing creatures that we are—is independency. We strike out on a line of our own, that is pleasing to ourselves. We act independently of our brethren; this may lead to our acting independently of the Lord, and disastrous results follow.

We commend this part of Gideon's history to our dear fellow-believers. His timidity, his caution, were commendable features; the patience of the Lord was such as, we doubt not, we have all experienced. Gideon's confidence in God; his valour, his encouragement of the feeble few whom

the Lord had chosen to be associated with him are delightful to witness; while his desire for the fellowship of his brethren was something which we might well emulate.

In a concluding paper next month, if the Lord will, we hope to consider Gideon's conflict.

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

## ON TO GLORY!

The eye on the glory,  
The feet on the road,  
The end of the story  
The presence of God:  
Thus onward we travel  
The pathway to life  
Not **ours** to unravel  
Earth's myst'ries and strife!

Till joys everlasting  
Shall be our blest part,  
From earth's joys we're fasting  
With **Christ** in the heart.  
Where He's for us entered,  
There, there is our rest;  
On Him our hope's centred,  
In Him we are blest!

Thus keep us, blest Saviour,  
From earthliness free,  
So shall our behaviour  
Be pleasing to Thee;  
In Thee we're rejoicing---  
Our Star and our Sun---  
Thy praise we are voicing,  
Thou all-worthy One!

A. H. LYCETT.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(MARK ii. 15-—iii. 35).

Our review of this Gospel being more condensed than in the case of the Epistles hitherto before us, it is more than ever necessary to read it in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

**H**AVING risen up to follow the Lord, Levi soon declared his discipleship in a practical fashion. He entertained his new-found Master in his house, together with a large number of publicans and sinners, displaying thus something of the Master's spirit. He exchanged his "sitting at the receipt of custom," for the dispensing of bounty, so that others might sit at his board. He began to fulfil the word, "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor," (Psa. cxii. 9), and that evidently without having been told to do so. He began showing hospitality to his own set in order that they too might meet the One who had won his heart.

In this he is an excellent pattern for ourselves. He began to expend himself for others. He did the thing which most readily came to his hand. He gathered to meet the Lord those who were needy, and who knew it, rather than those who were religiously self-satisfied. He had discovered that Jesus was a Giver, who was seeking for such as should be receivers.

All this was observed by the self-satisfied Scribes and Pharisees, who voiced their objection in the form of a question to His disciples. Why did He consort with such low-down and degraded folk?

The disciples had no need to answer, for He took up the challenge Himself. His answer was complete and satisfying and has become almost a proverbial saying. The sick need the doctor, and sinners need the Saviour. Not the righteous but the sinners He came to call.

The Scribes and Pharisees may have been well versed in the law but they had no understanding of grace. Now He was the Servant of the grace of God, and Levi had caught a glimpse of this. Have we? Far more than Levi we ought to have done so, inasmuch as we live in the moment when the day of grace has reached its noontide. Yet it is possible for us to feel a bit hurt with God because He is so good to folk that we would like to denounce, as Jonah did in the case of the Ninevites, and as the Pharisees did with the sinners. The great Servant of the grace of God is at the disposal of **all that need Him.**

The next incident—verses 18 to 22—discloses the objectors again at work. Then they complained of the Master to the disciples: now it is of the disciples to the Master. They evidently lacked courage to come face to face. This oblique method of fault-finding is very common: let us forsake it. In neither case did the disciples have to answer. When the Pharisees maintained the exclusiveness of law, He met them by asserting the expansiveness of grace, and He silenced them. Now they wish to put upon the disciples the bondage of law, and He most effectively asserts the liberty of grace.

The parable or figure that He used plainly inferred that He Himself was the Bridegroom—the central Person of importance. His presence governed everything, and ensured a wonderful fulness of supply. Presently He would be absent and then fasting would be appropriate enough. Let us take note of this, for we live in the day when fasting is a fitting thing. The Bridegroom has long been absent, and we are waiting for Him. At the moment when the Lord spoke the disciples were in the position of a godly remnant in Israel receiving the Messiah when He came. After Pentecost they were baptised into one body, and were built into the foundations of that city which is called “the Bride, the Lamb’s wife” (Rev. xxi. 9). Then they had the place of the Bride rather than that of the children of the bridechamber; and that position is ours to-day. This only makes it yet more clear that not feasting but fasting is fitting for us. Fasting is abstaining from lawful things in order to be more wholly for God, and not merely abstinence from food for a certain time.

The Pharisees were all for maintaining the law intact. The danger for the disciples, as after events proved, was not so much that as attempting a mixture of Judaism with the grace which the Lord Jesus brought. The law system was like a worn-out garment, or an old wine skin. He was bringing in that which was like a strong piece of new cloth, or new wine with its powers of expansion. In the Acts we can see how the old outward forms of the law gave way before the expansive power of the Gospel.



Indeed we see it in the very next incident with which chapter ii. closes. Again the Pharisees come, complaining of the disciples to the Master. The offence now was that they did not exactly fit their activities into the "old bottle" of certain regulations concerning the sabbath. The Pharisees pushed their sabbath-keeping so far that they condemned even rubbing ears of corn in the hand, as thought it were working a mill. They contended for a very rigid interpretation of the law in these minor matters. They were the people who kept the law with meticulous care, whilst they considered the disciples to be slack.

The Lord met their complaint and defended His disciples by reminding them of two things. First, they should have known the Scriptures, which recorded the way in which David had once fed himself and his followers in an emergency. That which ordinarily was not lawful was permitted in a day when things were out of course in Israel because of the rejection of the rightful king. 1 Samuel xxi. tells us about it. Once again things were out of course and the rightful King about to be refused. In both cases needs connected with the Lord's Anointed must be held to override details connected with the ceremonial demands of the law.

Second, the sabbath was instituted for man's benefit, and not the reverse. Hence man takes precedence of the sabbath; and the Son of man, who holds dominion over all men, according to Psalm viii., must be Lord of the sabbath, and

hence competent to dispose of it according to His will. Who were the Pharisees to challenge His right to do this? — even though He had come amongst men in the form of a Servant.

The Lord of the sabbath was amongst men and He was being refused. Under these circumstances the solicitude of these sticklers for the ceremonial law was out of place. Their “bottles” were worn out, and unable to contain the expansive grace and authority of the Lord. The sabbath “bottle” breaks before their very eyes.

The Pharisees however were by no means convinced, and they re-opened the whole question a little later when on another sabbath He came into contact with human need in one of their synagogues. The conflict raged around the man with a withered hand. They watched Jesus anticipating that they would be furnished with a point of attack. He accepted the challenge which lay unspoken in their hearts by saying to the man, “Stand forth” (iii. 3), thus making him very prominent, and ensuring that the challenge should be realised by everyone present.

Another point concerning the sabbath is now raised. Is the law intended of God to prohibit good as well as evil? Does the sabbath render unlawful an act of mercy?

The question, “Is it lawful to do good. . . or to do evil?” may be connected with James iv. 17. If we know the good and yet omit it, it is sin. Should the perfect Servant of God, who knew the

good, and moreover had full power to execute it, withhold His hand from doing it because it happened to be the sabbath day? Impossible!

In this striking way did the holy Servant of God vindicate His ministry of mercy in the presence of those who would have tied His hands by rigid interpretations of the law of God. It is important that we should learn the lesson taught by all this, in case we should fall into a like error. The "law of Christ" is very different in character and spirit from "the law of Moses," yet it may be misused in similar fashion. If the light and easy yoke of Christ is so twisted as to become burdensome, and also a positive hindrance to the outflow of grace and blessing, it becomes a more grievous perversion than anything we see in these verses.

The hearts of the Pharisees were hard. They were tender enough about the technicalities of the law, but hard as to any concern for human need, or any sense of their own sin. Jesus saw the dreadful state they were in and was grieved, but He did not withhold blessing. He cured the man, and left them to their sin. They were outraged because He had broken through one of their precious legal points. They went forth themselves to outrage one of the major counts of the law by plotting murder. Such is Phariseeism!

Faced by this murderous hatred, the Lord withdrew Himself and His disciples. We see Him withdrawing Himself from the blaze of popularity at the end of chapter i. He did not court favour,

nor did He desire to stir up strife. Here we find the perfect Servant acting in just the way that is enjoined upon the under servants in 2 Timothy ii. 24.

But such was His attractiveness that men pressed upon Him even as He withdrew. Multitudes thronged about Him, and His grace and power were manifested in many directions, and unclean spirits recognized in Him the Master whom they had to obey, though He did not accept their testimony. He blessed men and delivered them, yet He did not seek anything from them. First He had a small boat on the lake into which He could retire from the throng; and then He went up into a mountain, where He called to Him only those that He desired, and of them He chose twelve who were to be apostles.

So not only did He answer the hatred of the religious leaders by retiring from them, but also by calling the twelve who in due time should go forth as an extension of His matchless service. He prepared thus to widen out the service and testimony. The chosen twelve were to be with Him, and then, when their period of instruction and preparation was complete, He would send them forth. The period of their training lasts until verse 6 of chapter vi. In verse 7 of that chapter we begin the account of their actual sending forth.

This being "with Him" is of immense importance to the one called to service. It is as neces-

sary for us as it was for them. They had His presence and company upon earth. We have not that, but we have His Spirit given to us and His written Word. Thus we may be enabled prayerfully to maintain contact with Him, and gain that spiritual education which alone fits us to intelligently serve Him. The twelve were first chosen, then educated, then sent forth with power conferred upon them. This is the divine order, and we see these things set forth in verses 14 and 15.

Having called and chosen the twelve upon the mountain, He returned to the haunts of men and was in an house. At once the multitudes came together. The attraction He exerted was irresistible, and the demands upon Him such that there was no leisure for meals. So the first thing to be witnessed by the twelve when they began to be with Him was this strong tide of interest and the apparent popularity of their Master.

They soon however saw another side of things, and firstly that He was totally misunderstood by those who were nearest to Him according to the flesh. The "**friends**" were of course His relations, and they were filled doubtless with well-meaning concern for Him. They could not understand such incessant labours and felt they ought to lay a restraining hand upon Him as though He were out of His mind. Light upon this extraordinary attitude on their part is cast by John vii. 5. 'At this point in His service His brethren did not believe in Him, and apparently even His mother

had as yet but a dim conception of what He was really doing.

But secondly, there were **enemies**, who were becoming even more bitter and unscrupulous. In verse 6 of our chapter we saw Pharisees making friends with their antagonists the Herodians in order to plot His death. Now we find scribes making a journey from Jerusalem in order to oppose and denounce Him. This they do in the most reckless way, attributing His works of mercy to the power of the devil. It was not just vulgar abuse, but something deliberate and crafty. They could not deny what He did, but they attempted to blacken His character. They looked His miracles of mercy full in the face, and then deliberately and officially pronounced them to be the works of the devil. This was the character of their blasphemy, and it is well to be quite clear about it in view of the Lord's words in verse 29.

But first of all He called them to Him and answered them by an appeal to reason. Their blasphemous objection involved an absurdity. They suggested in effect that Satan was engaged in casting out Satan, that his kingdom and house was divided against itself. That, if it were true, would mean the end of the whole Satanic business. Satan is far too astute to act in that way.

We must admit, alas! that we Christians have not been too astute to act in that way. Christendom is full of division of that suicidal kind, and

it is Satan himself who, without a doubt, is the instigator of it. Had it not been that the power of the Lord Jesus on high has remained unaltered, and that the Holy Ghost abides, dwelling in the true church of God, the public confession of Christianity would long since have perished. That the faith has not perished from the earth is a tribute not to the wisdom of men but to the power of God.

Having exposed the foolish unreasonableness of their words, the Lord proceeded to give the true explanation of what had been happening. He was the One stronger than the strong man, and He was now occupied in spoiling his goods, by setting free many who had been captivated by him. Satan was bound in the presence of the Lord.

Thirdly, He plainly warned these wretched men as to the enormity of the sin they had committed. The perfect Servant had been delivering men from Satan's grip in the energy of the Holy Ghost. In order to avoid admitting this they denounced the action of the Holy Ghost as the action of Satan. This was sheer blasphemy; the blind blasphemy of men who shut their eyes to the truth. They put themselves beyond forgiveness with nothing but eternal damnation ahead. They had reached that fearful state of hardened hatred and blindness which once characterized Pharaoh in Egypt, and which at a later date marked the northern kingdom of Israel, when the word of the Lord was, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone" (Hosea iv. 17). God would leave these

Jerusalem scribes alone, and that meant no forgiveness but damnation.

This then was the unpardonable sin. Understanding what it really is, we can easily see that the folk of tender conscience, who to-day are troubled because they fear they may have committed it, are the last people who really have done so.

The chapter closes with the arrival of the friends of which verse 21 has told us. The Lord's words as to His mother and His brethren have seemed to some unnecessarily harsh. There certainly was in them a note of severity, which was occasioned by their attitude. The Lord was seizing the opportunity to give needed instruction to His disciples. They had seen Him in the midst of much labour, and apparently popular; and also the centre of blasphemous opposition. Now they are to have an impresssive demonstration of the fact that the relationships that God recognizes and honours are those which have a **spiritual** basis.

Of old, in Israel, relationships in the flesh counted for much. Now they are to be set on one side in favour of the spiritual. And the basis of what is spiritual lies in **obedience** to the will of of God: and for us to-day the will of God lies enshrined in the Holy Scriptures. Obedience is the great thing. It lies at the foundation of all true service, and must mark us if we would be in relation with the one true and perfect Servant. Let us never forget that!



## THE GREAT ILLUSION DISPELLED.

**H**AVE you ever seen a mirage? It is a fascinating sight, not easily forgotten.

Travelling, some years ago, with a companion on the Cape Government Railway between De Aar Junction and Beaufort West we were fortunate enough to see one. Away to our left there appeared a large lake dotted here and there with islands. The contrast with the dry and scorched veldt was delightful. Just as we were wondering whether it could be a mirage or not our questionings and doubts were settled.

In an extraordinary way the whole picture began to move, and as it faded it became apparent that the waters of the lake were nothing more than the shimmering heat-waves, and the islands the tops of kopjes in the distance. A few more moments and the lovely lake vanished away, and

Like the baseless fabric of a vision  
Left not a rack behind.

Probably you have not seen a sight of this description, yet certain it is that you are perfectly familiar with the greatest mirage, or illusion, of all. The name of this greatest of all illusions is—**THE WORLD**. By this, of course, is meant, not the material earth, not the people comprising its population, but the great "world-system" with its supply of every imaginable gratification for human desires, **without God**.

In this fearful and wonderful organization, evolved by the master-mind of Satan, we have all had our share. Its favours fall to the few, its miseries are tasted by the many; but whatever may have been the particular part played, my reader, if unconverted, is inevitably involved in it with the prospect of sharing in its ultimate ruin.

If converted, you no longer belong to the world-system. As to this the words of the Lord Jesus are plain. He said of His disciples: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"—repeating these words twice (John xvii. 14, 16). Even so there is danger lest—though delivered from it by the work of God—you should be only half-alive to its true character. Easy then to become entangled in its meshes and greatly damaged in soul. It is for any in such peril that these lines are penned.

In his first epistle the Apostle John has some strong warnings on this matter. Will you slowly and thoughtfully read from the middle of verse 14 to the end of verse 17 of chapter ii?

He addresses himself, you will note, to "**young men,**" that is to Christians not in their earliest stage of Christian life and experience—these are classed as "**babes**"; not to such as have by long experience matured in their knowledge of Christ—these are "**fathers,**" but rather to those who have reached a kind of middle condition. They have gained such a knowledge of God's Word as has fortified them against Satan's wiles in the

matter of anti-Christian teachings, yet they have not such a deep and soul-satisfying knowledge of Christ as has made them, like Paul, to count all things but loss for it. They are, therefore, susceptible to the attractions of the world.

As a matter of fact, if converted young, as is the case with the great majority of Christians, and if normal progress is made, the "young man" stage of growth is reached when life is at its best and fullest; and relationships by marriage and parentage exert their greatest influence. Hence many a Christian, who as a "babe" has had a bright history, gets captured more less by the world in later life, and his light is obscured.

Let us pause, and, as to this, ask ourselves the disciple's question, "**Lord, is it I?**"

In the verses cited above, the Apostle John states certain facts which if really received will quite dispel the great world-illusion. We may approach them by asking a series of questions.

First of all we will inquire:

UPON WHAT FOUNDATIONS IS THE WORLD-SYSTEM BASED?

Mark the answer! "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. . . ." Here the three foundations are plainly named.

The "lust of the flesh" is **the desire of HAVING**—the restless longing to have or acquire everything than can minister to any desire having its seat in the body. The phrase covers the whole range of

such desires from the lowest animal passion to the highest refinements in the way of creature comforts.

The "lust of the eyes" is **the desire of SEEING**. The eye, be it remembered, is only the organ of sight. It is the brain that really sees. This phrase, therefore, covers the whole range of desires connected with the living, intelligent soul which man possesses, rather than with his body. The world provides every kind of spectacle and show to please the eyes or ears. You may visit the lowest kind of music-hall imaginable or the finest and most cultured theatre. If your desires are more intellectual you may wander in paths of science and philosophy, ever gratifying the lust of seeing mentally some new thing, though never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

"The pride of life" is **the desire of BEING**. The worst of the three, this lust lies most deeply ingrained in humanity. It covers every desire connected with the immortal spirit which was man's chief possession and glory in creation. It is essentially **one** desire, the desire of being supreme and first—first amongst the smallest and most insignificant coterie of humanity, or rising in its full height and daring impiety to challenge the supremacy of the God who sits on the circle of the heavens.

On these three foundations then, we repeat, is the world-system constructed. What must its character be?

Or, changing the figure, let us put it thus: This glittering bauble called the world, perfumed as it seems with otto of roses, is handed to us for analysis. We submit it to the simple test of the Word of God, and what results? Its glitter vanishes, its perfume dies away, and there is left only these three primitive elements of fallen humanity, hideous and malodorous: that is all.

But is this really so? Can it be true? Well, you have only to investigate a little with prayerful desire to know the truth and you will be convinced. SELF is the great motive spring of the world-system, and selfishness the great principle on which it is run. This being so, the great things that are in the world, though many of them innocent enough in themselves, are tainted, and must not be loved by the Christian any more than the world-system which has tainted them.

Now let us inquire:

IN WHAT WILL THE WORLD-SYSTEM EVENTUATE? or to what end is it travelling? The answer of our Scripture is very plain. **"The world passeth away and the lust thereof."** It eventuates in NOTHING, for its end is to pass away.

This is an amazing reply. "This is a hard saying: who can hear it?" we feel tempted to say. Yet it is true.

The field of human activities in connection with the world is vast indeed. There are worlds within worlds. Worlds of "thought," consisting in speculations, philosophies, and investigations:

worlds of "word," consisting in mighty literatures in many tongues and the records, bewilderingly extensive, of the results of human observations and activities: worlds of "deeds," some bright and gay, some dark and mournful. The worlds of society, fashion, politics, and pleasure are amongst the former. The worlds of labour, poverty, and vice amongst the latter.

And the sum total of these mighty activities, worked to their fullest extent and carried on from generation to generation to their climax, is. . . **nothing!**

An Oriental fable has it, that a tyrannical prince once bade one of his wise men to give him a motto which should be equally applicable to everything within his kingdom, under penalty of death. The wise man reflected for a moment and then replied: "You have but to write upon everything, O King, these words, '**And this, too, shall pass away**'."

He was undeniably right. His motto was eminently scriptural. The mirage will certainly dissolve. All human achievements will fade into nothingness. The time will come when the last remains of the great pyramid will have crumbled into sand and been blown by hot winds into the Sahara desert, when the very sites of London and New York will have been forgotten, when all human sciences and philosophies will have but entangled men in dreadful and self-inflicted catastrophes and ruin, and when all human greatness and renown will have been hushed in the presence of the Lord.

With all this in view there rings in our ears the apostolic injunction: "**Love** not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Lay great emphasis on that first word.

We are not asked to live like a hermit, or to follow a monastic life. We pass through the world, though not **of** it, and with the things in the world we have to do every day, following our callings and gaining our daily bread. And just because we **do** thus handle the world's things continually the exhortation "**Love not**" is so needful.

The world has rejected our Lord and Master. Its princes "crucified the Lord of Glory." Remembering this, understanding, too, the foundations on which it is reared, and knowing the nothingness in which it will eventuate, **can** we **love** it? Impossible!

But we can go a step further and ask another question:

IS THERE ANYTHING REAL AND SATISFYING THAT SUPPLANTS THE WORLD?

**There is:** It is "the love of the Father" (v. 15). The world-system took its rise directly after the fall of man. It has been evolved in the vain attempt to fill the void in man's heart made by the loss of communion with his Creator. Now nothing but the knowledge of and intercourse with God will satisfy the heart, and in Christianity we have such communion re-established, only in a far more intimate way than was possible when man was originally in innocence. We, Christians,

know God, not merely as an all-wise and beneficent Creator but as Father, and that in connection with His very **nature**—love.

“The love of the Father” is the very kernel of all that has been revealed by Christ. The Epistle of John opens with reference to all that the apostles came into contact with, revealed in “the Word of Life.” And that which they knew they communicated to others so that the circle of communion might be extended—communion “with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

Here then are plainly two great spheres or systems. The world-sphere filled with innumerable objects, the fruit of man's inventive genius, but all based upon lust and pride. The Christian sphere, filled with unseen and eternal things, all centring in the Father and His love. The former very imposing and noisily aggressive, like Bunyan's '**Vanity Fair**,' yet really unsatisfying and transient; the latter as yet only seen by faith, yet satisfying and eternal.

And mark this: It is impossible that both should hold the heart at one and the same time. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” The converse is equally true. If any man have his heart filled with the love of the Father it is impossible that he should love the world. For him the great mirage has no allurements. He not only knows its true character, but he finds himself possessed of positive good and blessing which supplants its vain show altogether.



And yet so deceiving is the world, so alluring, so insistent, that all too often we find the love of it creeping back into our hearts and dimming there the shining of the Father's love. How great our folly when this is so. Let us be on the watch as to this, lest, like the dog in the fable, in attempting to grasp the shadow we foolishly let go the substance.

To some minds, what we have just been saying may appear a little dreamy and mystical. Such would like to remind us that life is made up mainly of hard facts and multifarious activities. That is so. Let us therefore ask one more question. It shall be one asked first by Solomon three thousand years ago.

WHAT PROFIT HATH A MAN OF ALL HIS LABOUR WHICH HE TAKETH UNDER THE SUN?

To that Solomon had but a mournful reply. In his book of Ecclesiastes he was limited in vision to the world-system, already in his day highly developed. He could only say, "All is vanity!"

Now let us hear the reply of the Apostle John. Turning from the world, empty and fading, and with his heart rejoicing in the love of the Father, he says, "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." How great the contrast.

It is quite true that there is the active side of life as well as the contemplative and that for most people the former greatly overshadows the latter. It is equally true that in Christian life both sides are provided for and both sides are properly pro-

portioned and balanced. On the contemplative side there is the love of the Father to fill our hearts with joy. On the other side there is doing the will of God for the employment of our energies. The former is the spring of the latter, for only as we learn what the will of God is shall we be able to do it.

It is doubtless true that Spirit-given energies spent in doing God's will can never fail of abiding result. When the world's activities have come to nothing the results of labour for Christ according to God's will shall shine forth in their beauty, yet what is said here is rather that "**He** that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Such an one stands as an enduring exception to the transient nature of everything in the world.

Christian reader! do you realise this? You walk through this vain and fading world-system as one already put in touch with the heavenly system of things centred in God the Father and the Christ in whom His love reposes. You are left here to do His will and represent these abiding realities in the midst of the dying shadows, and not to attempt any reformation of the world and much less to associate with it. You are privileged to labour for the furtherance of Christ's interests with the certainty that time will not cause the fruit of such work to crumble into nothingness. The world's greatest things, compared with God's smallest things, look small indeed!

Again we ask, **Do you realise this?** Oh! wake, thou Christian that sleepest, and arise from amidst

the dead world that surrounds thee: then Christ shall shine upon thee.

Then, with the world-illusion dispelled, you will tread more firmly that abiding path of doing the will of God which is indeed a path of the just, which is "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The language of your heart will be:

'Tis the treasure I've found in His love  
That has made me a pilgrim below.'

## GIDEON:

His Call; Conquest; and Conflict.

(iii) HIS CONFLICT.

**I**T might be thought that conflict should come before conquest, but it is just the reverse.

We learn from the Holy Scriptures, and, in measure, from our limited experience, that the hour of conquest is the hour of danger. Just then the enemy is on the alert, and will seek to occupy us with ourselves and with what we have done, with a view to leading us to disaster. The Lord works in His grace to preserve us from this. When Abram returned from the slaughter of the kings, the King of Sodom went out to meet him and to reward him. But Melchizedek was there first to put him in touch with the Most High God, Possessor of Heaven and Earth, and thus to render him proof against the wiles of the devil

(Genesis xiv. 17-24). Similarly, when, "the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto to us through Thy Name," He at once put them in touch with heaven, saying to them, "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke x. 17-20).

Have we not found in our humble sphere of service that when there may have been cause for rejoicing, just then we were assailed from various quarters? Perhaps, praise from one direction, and the opposite of that from another direction, and we have learned that that was the Lord's way of preserving us from defeat, and maintaining us for His own glory. Peerless Master! There is none like unto Thee!

Before we proceed further, let us open our Bible and read Judges viii. In verse 1 we find that the men of Ephraim came to Gideon not to rejoice with him in the victory which the Lord had given him, but "they did chide with him sharply." The men of Ephraim seemed to have some idea of their own greatness. When Joshua divided the land and gave them their portion, they complained—chiding appeared to be part of their make-up. They said to Joshua, "I am a great people," and Joshua said, in effect, "If you are a great people you have abundant opportunity to demonstrate it, therefore prove that you are such" (Joshua xvii. 14-18). Gideon was most gracious, as was Joshua. How beautiful to hear him say,

"What have I done now in comparison of you? . . . God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb, and Zeeb; and what was I able to do in comparison of you?" (verses 2, 3).

"A soft answer turneth away wrath" (Proverbs xv. 1). "Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that" (verse 3).

He bore the impress of a true servant; of one who had threshed wheat in secret. He went on with his God-given work. In verse 4 we have the heartening words:—

"And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, **faint, yet pursuing them.**"

Not, faint and giving up, nor, faint and thinking of giving up; but, "**faint, yet pursuing.**"

Are these lines being read by a Sunday School teacher who has given up the work, or who is seriously thinking of doing so? Are we writing to some engaged in some work to which they thought the Lord had called them, and now they are not quite sure about it? They see no result, there is so little to encourage, in fact those from whom they might expect encouragement look down upon their service? You are faint, dear fellow-believer, are you not? So was Gideon, and so were his men. He had had a nasty rebuff when he might reasonably have looked for something very different. He was faint, but he pursued, will you do likewise? Has not the God of all encouragement caused his much-

tried servant to write. . . "Be not weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"? (Galatians vi. 9).

Gideon's next conflict was with "the men of Succoth" and "the men of Penuel." The former were Israelites (see Joshua xiii. 27) and the latter belonged to the place of Jacob's wrestling (see Genesis xxxii. 31). Both were content with things as they found them. Professing to be the people of God, they were comfortably ensconced in the world, and met Gideon's request for bread with derision.

History repeats itself. The ruin of Christendom to-day—the worm at the root that kills Christian effort—the obstacle to progress among saints enlightened above the average, is **the inroad of the world**. James, in his incisive, uncompromising way, and inspired, let us remember, by the Holy Spirit, has written, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James iv. 4). While Paul pathetically wrote of an erstwhile fellow-labourer "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Timothy iv. 10). Judgment fell upon "the men of Succoth" and "the men of Penuel" (verses 5-9 and 13-17), as it will inevitably fall upon all who, while professing loyalty to Christ, are hand-in-glove with the world.

Undeterred, Gideon and the three hundred men that were with him, went on their way, "**faint, yet**

pursuing.” We must not miss the instructive touch of verse 18. Gideon having captured the two kings of Midian, we read,

“Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, what manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king.”

What a splendid tribute this was to Gideon! If we know what it is to thresh wheat in secret; if we are feeding upon the word of God, then we may resemble “the children of a king.”

In sad contrast to this, we read in 2 Samuel xiii. of one of David's sons being asked by one of his friends “Why art thou, being the King's son, lean from day to day?” (verses 3-4). He was a king's son, but he did not resemble one, and indeed he was so unlike one that his friend noticed it. He was feeding upon that which ministered to the flesh, to the fulfilling of the lust of the flesh, and he had a wretched end to an inglorious career. Gideon on the other hand not only himself resembled the child of a king, but such was his influence and the result of his example that his brethren were like himself. Shall we ask ourselves, Upon what do we feed? Is it that which ministers to the flesh, and which has a defiling effect? or is it that which so feeds the soul that we unconsciously carry such a savour of Christ that those with whom we associate are influenced thereby?

Gideon again showed the mark of a true servant when he refused to rule over Israel but said, “The

Lord shall rule over you" (verses 22-23). Yet the divine record, with that transparent honesty that always marks it, does not omit to tell us that in the end Gideon failed in the conflict, and that just where at the beginning he seemed to be strongest. for he made an ephod which compassed the downfall of God's people, and "become a snare unto Gideon, and to his house" (verses 24-27). Let us realize that we will not be free from conflict so long as we are in this world. That which we may consider our strongest point may prove to be our weakest. We may conquer the enemies without, and fall before the enemy within.

The history closes on a note that shows how gracious God is, "Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age," in the retirement of his own house (verse 32). Might it be that there was recovery? We like to think that of him it could be said that he brought forth fruit in old age; and that he was fat and flourishing (Psa. xcii. 14). The Holy Spirit has included him among the heroes of faith in Hebrews xi., and as we read of his call, his conquest, and his conflict, we feel there is much to stir us; to encourage us; and to warn us.

Let us pray that we may know what it is to thresh wheat in secret; to hear the Lord's call; to be in communion with Himself; to learn His mind; to follow His leading; to go at His bidding; to be preserved by Him in the conflict; and to be fruitful fat and flourishing till He come.

W. BRAMWELL DICK.



## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(MARK IV. 1-41).

Our review of this Gospel being more condensed than in the case of the Epistles hitherto before us, it is more than ever necessary to read it in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

CHAPTER iii. ends with the Lord's solemn declaration that the relationships He was now going to recognize were those that had a spiritual basis in obedience to the will of God. This statement of His must necessarily have raised in the minds of the disciples some questions as to **how** they might know what the will of God is. As we open chapter iv. we find the answer. It is **by His word**, which conveys to us tidings of what He is, and of what He has done for us. Out of these things His will for us springs.

There were still great multitudes waiting upon Him, so that He taught them out of a ship; but it was at this point that He commenced speaking in parables. The reason for this is given in verses 11 and 12. The leaders of the people had already rejected Him, as the last chapter has made manifest, and the people themselves were in the main unmoved, save by curiosity and the love of the sensational, and of "the loaves and fishes." As time went on they would veer round, and support the leaders in their murderous hostility. The Lord knew this, so He began to cast His teaching in such a form as should reserve it for those who had ears to hear. He speaks in verse 11 of "them that are without."

This shows that already a breach was becoming manifest, and those "within" could be distinguished from those "without." Those within could see and hear with perception and understanding, and so the "mystery" or "secret" of the kingdom of God became plain to them. The rest were blind and deaf, and the way of conversion and forgiveness was being closed to them. If people **will not** hear, a time comes when they **cannot**. The people wanted a Messiah who should bring them worldly prosperity and glory. They had no use, as events proved, for a Messiah who brought them the kingdom of God in the mysterious form of conversion and forgiveness of sins.

We have the kingdom of God to-day in just this mysterious form, and we enter it by conversion and forgiveness, for thus it is that the authority of God is established in our hearts. We are still waiting for the kingdom in its displayed glory and power.

The first parable of this chapter is that of the sower, the seed, and its effects. Having uttered it He closed with the solemn words, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The possession of hearing ears, or their absence, would indicate at once whether a man belonged to the "within" or to the "without." The mass of His listeners evidently thought it was a pretty story and pleasant to the ear, but left it at that, showing they were **without**. Some others, along with the disciples, were not content with this. They wanted to ar-

rive at its inner meaning, and pushed their enquiries further. They belonged to the **within**.

The Lord's word in verses 13 shows that this parable of the sower must be understood or His other parables will not be intelligible to us. It holds the key which unlocks the whole series. The Lord Jesus, when He came, brought in the first place a supreme test to Israel. Would they receive the well-beloved Son, and render to God the fruit that was due under the cultivation of the law? It was becoming evident that they would not. Well then, a second thing should be inaugurated. Instead of **demanding** anything from them He would **sow** the Word, which in due season, in some cases at least, would **produce** the fruit that was desired. This the parable indicates, and unless we grasp its significance we shall not understand that which subsequently He has to say to us.

The Lord Himself was the Sower, without a doubt; and the Word was the Divine testimony that He disseminated, for the "so great salvation . . . at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him" (Heb. ii. 3). In John's Gospel we discover that **Jesus is the Word**. Here He **sows** the word. Who could sow it like He who was it? But even when **He** sowed the word, not every grain that He sowed fructified. In only one case out of the four was fruit produced.

It is equally certain that the parable applies in its principles to all those under-sowers who have

gone forth with the word as sent by Him, from that day to this. Every sower of the seed therefore must expect to meet with all these varieties of experience, as indicated in the parable. The imperfect servants of to-day cannot expect better things than those which marked the sowing of the perfect Servant in His day. The seed was the same in each case. All the difference lay in the state of the ground on which the seed fell.

In the case of the wayside hearers the word got no entrance at all. Their hearts were like the foot-path well trodden down. There was not even a surface impression made, and Satan by his many agents completely removed the word. Their case was one of complete **indifference**.

The stony ground hearers are the impressionable yet superficial folk. They respond to the word at once with gladness, but are quite insensible as to its real implications. It was said of true converts that they, "received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (1 Thess. i. 6). This affliction, which preceded their gladness, was the result of their being awakened to their sin under the convicting power of the word. The stony ground hearer skips over the affliction, because **insensible** of his real need, and lands himself into a merely superficial gladness, which fades in the presence of testing; and he fades with it.

The thorny ground hearers are the **preoccupied** people. The world fills their thoughts. If poor, they are swamped in its cares: if rich, in its riches

and the pleasures that riches bring. If neither poor nor rich, there are the lusts of other things. They have climbed out of poverty, and they lust for more of the good things of the world that seem to be coming within their reach. Engrossed by the world, the word is choked.

The good ground hearers are such as not only hear the word but receive it and bring forth fruit. The ground has come under the action of plough and harrow. Thus it has been **prepared**. Even so, however, all good ground is not equally fertile. There may not be the same amount of fruit; but fruit there is.

There was great instruction for the disciples in all this, and for us also. Presently He was going to send them forth to preach, and then they too would become sowers. They must know that it was the word they had to sow, and also what to expect when they sowed it. Then they would not be unduly affected when much of the seed sown appeared to be lost; or when, some result appearing, it faded away after a time; or even when, fruit appearing, there was not as much fruit as they had hoped for. If we know what is being aimed at on the one hand, and what to expect on the other, we are greatly fortified and strengthened in our service.

We must remember that this parable applies just as much to the sowing of the seed of the word in the hearts of saints as in the hearts of sinners. So let us meditate upon it with hearts very much exercised as to **HOW we ourselves receive the**

**word that we may hear**, as well as to how others may receive the word that we present to them.

In verses 21 and 22 there follows the brief parable of the candle, and then in verse 23 another warning word as to having ears to hear. At first sight the transition from seed sown in the field to a candle lit in a house may seem incongruous and disconnected, but, if indeed we have ears to hear, we shall soon see that in their spiritual significance both parables are congruous and connected. When the word of God is received into an exercised and prepared heart it brings forth **fruit** that God appreciates, and also **light** that is to be seen and appreciated of men.

No candle is lit in order to be hid under a bushel or a bed. It is to shed its beams abroad from the candlestick. The second part of verse 22 is rather striking in the New Translation, "nor does any secret thing take place but that it should come to light." The work of God in the heart by His word does take place **secretly**, and the eye of God discerns the fruit as it begins to appear. But in due season the secret thing that has taken place **must** come to **light**. Every true conversion is like the lighting of a fresh candle.

The bushel may symbolize the business of life, and the bed the ease and pleasure of life. Neither must be permitted to hide the light, just as the cares and the riches and the "other things" should not be permitted to choke the seed that is sown. Have we ears to hear this? Are we letting the light of our little candle to shine? There is nothing

hidden which shall not be made manifest, so it is quite certain that if a light has been lit it is bound to shine out. If nothing is manifested, it is because there is nothing to manifest.

This parable is followed by the warning as to what we hear. The dealings of God in His government of men enter into this matter. As we measure things out, so things will be measured out to us. If we really do hear the word in such a way as to enter into possession of it, we shall gain more. If we do not, we shall begin to lose even that which we had. In Luke viii. 18, we get similar sayings connected with "how" we hear. Here they stand connected with "what" we hear.

**How** we hear is emphasized in the parable of the sower, but **what** we hear is at least of equal importance. Not a few have had taken from them even that which they had by lending their ears to error. They heard, and heard very attentively, but, alas! what they heard was not the truth, and it perverted them. If through our ears error is sown in our hearts, it will bring forth its disastrous crop, and the government of God will permit it, and not prevent it.

Verses 26 to 29 are occupied with the parable concerning God's secret work. A man sows the seed, and when the harvest is ripe he gets again to work, putting in the sickle to reap. But as to the actual growth of the seed from its earliest stages to the full fruition, he can do nothing. For many a week he sleeps and rises, night and day, and the processes of nature, which God has or-

dained, silently do the work though he does not understand them. "He knoweth not how," is true to-day. Men have pushed their investigations very far, but the real **how** of the wonderful processes, carried on in God's great workshop of nature, still eludes them.

So it is in what we may term God's spiritual workshop, and it is just as well for us to remember it. Some of us are very anxious to analyze and describe the exact processes of the Spirit's work in souls. These hidden things sometimes exert a great fascination over our minds, and we wish to master the whole process. It cannot be done. It is our happy privilege to sow the seed, and also in due season to put in the sickle and reap. The workings of the word in the hearts of men are secretly accomplished by the Holy Spirit. His work of course is perfect.

Imperfection always marks the work of men. If permitted, as we are, to have a hand in the work of God, we bring imperfection into that which we do. The next parable, occupying verses 30 to 32, shows this. The kingdom of God to-day exists vitally and really in the souls of those who by conversion have come under God's authority and control. But it may also be viewed as a more external thing, to be found wherever men profess to acknowledge Him. The one is the kingdom as established by the Spirit. The other the kingdom as established by men. This latter has become a great and imposing thing in the earth, extending its protection to many "fowls of the air;" and



what they signify we have just seen—in verses 4 and 15—agents of Satan.

This closing parable of the series was full of warning for the disciples, as the others were full of instruction. They were with Him and being educated before being sent forth on their mission. We have seen at least seven things:—

1. That the present work of the disciple is in its nature, **sowing**.

2. That what is to be sown is, **the word**.

3. That the results of the sowing are to be classified under four heads; in only **one** case is there **fruit**, and that **in varying degrees**.

4. That the word produces **light** as well as fruit, and that light is to be **manifested** publicly.

5. That the disciple is himself a hearer of the word as well as a sower of the word, and in that connection must take care **what** he hears.

6. That the working of the word in souls is **God's work** and not ours. Our work is the sowing and the reaping.

7. That as man's work does enter into the present work of extending the kingdom of God, evil will gain an entrance. The kingdom, viewed as man's handiwork, will result in something **imposing** yet **corrupt**. This is the solemn warning, which we have to take to heart.

There were many other parables spoken by the Lord, yet not put on record for us. The others, spoken to the disciples and expounded to them,

were doubtless very important for them in their peculiar circumstances, but not of the same importance for us. Those that were of importance for us are recorded in Matthew xiii.

With verse 34 His teachings end, and from verse 35 to the end of chapter v. we resume the record of His wonderful acts. The disciples needed to observe closely what He did and His way of acting, as well as to hear the teachings of His lips. And so do we.

The crowd, who had listened to these sayings of His but without understanding them, was now dismissed, and they crossed to the other side of the lake. It was evening and He was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The lake was noted for the sudden and violent storms that disturbed it, and one of special violence arose, threatening to swamp the boat. Satan is "the prince of the power of the air," and therefore we believe that his power lay behind the raging forces of nature. At once therefore the disciples were confronted with a test and a challenge. Who was this Person who lay asleep in the stern?

Could Satan wield the forces of nature in such a way as to sink a boat in which was reposing the Son of God? But the Son of God is found in Manhood, and He sleeps! Well, what does that matter?—seeing He is the Son of God. The action of the adversary, raising the storm while He slept, was indeed a challenge. As yet, however, the disciples realized these things very dimly, if at all. Hence they were filled with fear as the resources of their

seamanship were exhausted: and they roused Him with an unbelieving cry, which cast a slur upon His kindness and love, though showing some faith in His power.

He arose at once in the majesty of His power. He rebuked the wind, which was the more direct instrument of Satan. He told the sea to be quiet and still, and it obeyed. Like a boisterous hound which lies down humbly at its master's voice, so the sea lay down at His feet. He was the complete Master of the situation.

Having thus rebuked the forces of nature, and the power that lay behind them. He turned to administer gentle rebuke to His disciples. Faith is **spiritual sight**, and as yet their eyes were hardly opened to discern who He was. Had they but realized a little of His proper glory they would not have been so fearful. And having witnessed this display of His power they were still fearful, and still questioning as to what manner of man He was. A Man who can command winds and sea, and they do His will, is obviously no ordinary Man. But, who is He?—that is the question.

No disciple can go forth to serve Him until that question is answered and thoroughly settled in his soul. Hence before He sends them forth there must be further exhibitions of His power and grace before their eyes, as recorded for us in chapter v.

We too, in our day, must be fully assured who He is, before we attempt to serve Him. The question, What manner of Man is this? is a very

insistent one. Until we can answer it very rightly and very clearly we must be still.

F. B. HOLE.

## A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO TRACT DISTRIBUTORS.

**H**OW interesting it is to have an unexpected and unsought illustration flashed upon one.

We were walking past an Australian fruit shop, when we noticed a paw-paw cut in two so as to display its inside condition. There were thick cushions of rich luscious fruit, but we noticed specially the prodigal arrangement of nature with a view to reproduction. There lay imbedded in the paw-paw scores of seeds. The most of them would never germinate. Perhaps only one of them would reproduce its kind.

Our thoughts immediately flew to tract distributing. Each tract is a potential seed. How often we have felt that possibly scores of the tracts distributed were wasted. But if only one tract were used in blessing to a soul, it was worth while distributing hundreds of tracts to accomplish that object.

Tract distributors, go on with your blessed service to the Lord and to souls. The day of manifestation, the day when results will be known, is near. Let us not slack our hands in this happy service.

A. J. POLLOCK.

## THE WORD AND THE TOUCH.

“And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.”—LUKE XIII. 11-13.

**I** WANT to deal as briefly as possible with a particular difficulty that affects many Christians, though happily not all. Some of us are naturally light-hearted, and manage to go on our way without much thinking of ourselves. Now that may be a danger. It is possible to go through life light-heartedly and miss the profit that these exercises yield. On the other hand, it is the tendency of some to turn in upon themselves and to be everlastingly scrutinizing their own feelings. They are always in a state of self-occupation, which neither tends to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ nor to their own spiritual good.

If you are suffering as a Christian from being occupied with yourself you are like a man who is ever looking at his own feet and stumbling just because he does so. Your thinking about yourself does not produce the power you would fain possess. The more you search for it in your experience and in your service the less there appears to be.

Now this poor woman is a striking type of souls in your condition. She was evidently a child of

God, and not an unconverted sinner, for the Lord speaks of her as a **daughter of Abraham**. There is a spiritual significance in those words, as we may learn from Galatians iii. 7, "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." This woman was a daughter of faith, for she walked in the steps of that faith which Abraham had, who was the father of the faithful. They are truly his children who follow in his footsteps spiritually, in other words, those who are believers. This woman was one of them, and the astonishing fact is that for eighteen long years she had been bound by Satan. From this we learn the power that Satan may have over one who is really a true child of God. In her case it was a physical infirmity. She was bent double, and so bent that she could see nothing but herself. You might perhaps go a long way before you find a Christian so wholly occupied with himself as to be unable to see anything else. Most of us have our bright times, when we seem to get away from ourselves. Then something happens, and we get again into the old rut.

Now the Lord Jesus was equal to this terrible case. The affliction which this woman had is spoken of as a **spirit of infirmity**, and the spiritual affliction of which I am speaking may be so described. Those who suffer from it seem to live always in the shade. They feel morally bowed down, and are occupied with themselves. They say, "I am such a failing creature and is it not right to be conscientious and to scrutinize my

motives and my behaviour?" Yes, but it is not right to allow this to become a continuous process.

This woman came into the synagogue. It was the custom for men to worship in the main body of the building and the womenfolk in a gallery, behind a sort of grille. You will agree with me that a woman who "could in no wise lift up herself" was a most unlikely person to come under observation. But such is the beautiful grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that she was the only person that He singled out. His eye rested on the sufferer. To her He said, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity." Then the Lord put His hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight and glorified God.

The same Saviour can deliver you from your unsatisfactory experiences or your fancied good experiences—the worst thing of all.

There are some verses in the Psalms which exactly describe this state. The Psalms give us every kind of experience. Sometimes we are carried down to the depths of despair. Then again we are on the mountain top, finding all our resources in God. Almost every experience that can be thought of may be found in the Book of Psalms.

Let us turn to Psalm lxxvii.: "I cried unto God with my voice, and He gave ear unto me." That is the theme of the Psalm. God did give ear. "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused

to be comforted." Evidently the Psalmist was passing through a very gloomy time. Then he makes this extraordinary statement: "I remembered God, **and was troubled.**" This is not the experience that is normal to a Christian. Properly speaking, he would say, "I remembered God, and my heart overflowed with joy." Here he says, "I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed." He felt crushed beneath a load that he could not support. "Thou holdest mine eyes waking; I am so troubled that I cannot speak." He could find no words to express his inward misery.

If you met a man with a doleful face you would say, "You look very down to-day. What is troubling you?" Now the mind has a very great effect on the body. The Psalmist was so troubled that he could not sleep. He could not pray, and he hardly liked to talk to his fellow-men. What has he been dwelling upon? He tells us. "I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times." People often speak of the good old days, and exaggerate the blessedness of them. He says, "I call to remembrance my song in the night." But that does not help him. He adds "I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search." He was trying to find something to lay hold of as a source of happiness in the old days. What will that do for him? The next verse shows us. "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? doth His promise fail for evermore? . . . Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?"



It seems as if these questions came out like a torrent, tumbling over one another. What is the man doing? He begins to judge God by his own miserable experiences. He doubts God. Will the Lord cast off for ever? Wherever is there anything to give the smallest idea of such a calamity as that? He asks these questions: Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Does His promise fail for evermore? We can answer these five questions and say "No" to every one of them. He doubts God because of what he finds in his own wretched heart. Now that is the tendency of us all, if occupied with ourselves. It may be that to-day you fear that you have deviated from the right path. The devil would like you to brood over that. It is right to confess this failing, but God desires that having confessed it you should have done with it, so that the happy link of communion between your soul and the Lord may be restored. The enemy would use these things to bend us double, to make us look morbidly within. Nowhere are we told to brood over our failures. We are told to confess our sins. God is faithful and just to forgive them, so that we may go on in communion and in power.

Is there any hope for a man like this? Look at verse 9 of our Psalm. That little word "Selah" marks a pause. Now stop and think. Think of the length to which a man will go in his doubting and questioning of God. Now the scales fall from this man's eyes, and the first thing he says when he comes to himself is, "This is my infirmity."

That is the very word that is used in regard to the woman in Luke xiii. Lay hold of that, and it will do you good. The spell is broken as soon as we label the thing with its right name. God's way is that you should judge yourself, and condemn yourself in thorough accord with the cross of Christ, where all that you are as a man in the flesh was condemned. God's desire is that you should confess and be forgiven, and go on in communion. In the days when the Psalmist was looking within, he remembered God, and he was troubled. Now he says, "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember"—not "my own miserable failures," but—"the works of the Lord. Surely I will remember Thy wonders of old." He thinks of better things.

Just as there are caterpillars which always take the colour of the leaf on which they are feeding, so there are Christians who are always characterised by that upon which their minds are dwelling. If you dwell habitually upon mournful things, you will have a mournful face. Do you want to be happy? Dwell upon happy things. That is a simple recipe, but a very good one. Do you know how to be miserable? Dwell always upon that which is dark. You say, "There are plenty of these things, and are we not to recognise them?" Of course we should. But having confessed them to God, let us dwell upon the things that are good and right and blessed. Let us re-

member the works of the Lord. Let us remember His wonders of old.

And now the Psalmist raises his eyes to heaven, and he says, "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?" You would hardly believe it was the same man. His heart and mind are dwelling upon God, and instead of mourning about his own feebleness, he is rejoicing and praising God. "Thou art a God that doest wonders: Thou has declared Thy strength among the people."

Well, thanks be to God, we can go a great deal further than the Psalmist. God had revealed Himself then in His greatness in creation, and in righteousness, but we know Him as revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the God that we know, and in whom, through infinite grace, we may rejoice.

Now for one moment I take you back to the woman. How did the Lord produce this wonderful change in her, so that instead of always looking at herself she could stand upright and give glory to God? By His **word** and by His **touch**. These, I believe, are symbolic. What liberates our souls and sets us in happy liberty before God? It is first the **word** of the Cross. The gospel comes to us with a word of forgiveness. It tells us most emphatically that all who believe are justified from all things. No one in the world is, on God's side, shut out from this great gospel offer of for-

givenness, but at the same time only they, who come in faith and receive it, actually have it. It rests in its efficacious and cleansing power upon all that believe. The gospel message comes to you pointing to the cross of Christ, not merely saying, "Behold in the cross of Christ the paying of your debt," but "Behold in the Cross the condemnation of all that you are in yourself." It settles not merely the question of the guilty things you have done, but of the guilty root from which they all come. The Cross is the great Magna Carta of the believer's liberty. I see the condemnation of all that I am in myself there. If I were speaking to some believer who has never yet stepped into this happy condition, I should say, "Here you are in this distressful condition. The cross of Jesus is the loosing of you from that dreadful clinging thing—**self**." Then came the **touch**. The Lord laid His hands upon her, and the work was done. There is the union of the two things, the word and the touch. You find in Romans vi. what answers to the former. There the cross of Christ is seen not only in relation to your sins, but to yourself. Then when you come to Romans viii. you have the indwelling Spirit, empowering us for happy occupation with God and with Christ. You can now go through this world upright and glorifying God. I look upon the word of the Lord as being similar to the word of the gospel that we have in Romans vi., and His touch as being symbolic of the blessed gift of the Spirit of God.

Well, may God grant that what has been said may be for the help and blessing of somebody. Since we have escaped the snare of the fowler, and are no longer in danger of hell, the adversary is set upon engaging us with something else rather than that which should normally occupy us. If he can get hold of a conscientious believer, and tie him up in a knot, if he can keep him always looking within, he has gained a victory. He has spoiled that Christian, so far as his witness for Christ is concerned. That poor bowed woman would have been no advertisement for the doctors, but a scarecrow to frighten away any likely patient. It may be that if you are a Christian of this kind your unconverted friends will say, "Look what religion has done for him! Look what a face he pulls!" That is no advertisement for the grace of your Saviour. You are somewhat of a scarecrow to frighten anybody away who is inclined to turn their attention in that direction. The Lord wants you to be bright and happy, to be in the enjoyment of His love, to glorify God. It is not a great mark of saintship to be in this miserable condition. Let your heart dwell on the glories of Christ and the fulness there is in Him, and the excellencies that are revealed in His word. The more you get your soul filled with these things, the happier, the brighter and more blessed it will be for you, and the more likely that those who see you will glorify God.

## AM I DECEIVING MYSELF?

**A**M I deceiving myself? A serious question, to be sure! Those who have reason to answer it in the affirmative seldom ask it. It is mostly young and ardent souls, converted, but needing to be settled and grounded in the truth and grace of God—these are they who ask the question and desire above all things to have a true answer.

And they set themselves to find one. Sitting in the judge's chair they call up their frames, feelings, and experiences and rigidly examine them. They are far more inclined to doubt their conversion than to believe in the reality of it, and the more sincere they are the more miserable they are likely to become. Nor can it be otherwise so long as they are engaged in that kind of business.

Let us survey the situation. If you confess yourself to be a sinner, guilty before God, a lost sinner, utterly unable to save yourself from your sins, then you certainly are not deceiving yourself as to **that**. If you have learned that your deep repentance, your fervent prayers, your changed life—all excellent things in themselves—can no more deliver you from the just consequences of your sins than the repentance and prayers of a convict can exempt him from the punishment his crime deserves, then clearly you are not deceiving yourself as to **that**. If you have found out that it

is only Christ who can save, only His precious blood that can cleanse you from every sin, if you have come to Him, saying from your heart—

“Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee—  
O Lamb of God, I come.”

then, most assuredly, you are not deceiving yourself. You have reason to be comforted. Has He not said, “Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out”? Is not that a true and faithful saying?

But you are not satisfied. You want to be an out-and-out Christian, a true follower of Christ, and this you feel you are not. What makes you think so? Is it not the sin you find in yourself and the imperfection you see in your daily life? This leads you to wonder whether you really are a Christian after all. I am not sorry that such experiences are yours. They are teaching you that you have no strength—a lesson rarely learned from books. The fact is that in our own strength we are no more able to live for Christ than we are to roll the stars along. It takes time to learn this. Some folks seem as if they never would learn it. And there is another lesson, too, that is to be learnt at the same time—the incurable badness of **the flesh**—that evil principle which we, children of fallen Adam, were born with. It may surprise you to be told that neither the new birth, the indwelling Spirit of God, nor any of His operations in the soul can ever make **the flesh** better. If you are trying to chain it up, to bind it with the strong

fetters of vows and resolutions, you are also finding out that your Samson will not be kept under control thus. But let us be thankful that we are **not in the flesh**, as to our standing before God. We are **in the Spirit**, we are **in Christ** (Rom. viii. 1—9).

Never let us mix up our experiences with our place before God in Christ. The latter is fixed and unchangeable. If our experiences were always on the highest spiritual range our standing would not be bettered. **Ye are complete in Him**, such is the blessed record in Colossians ii. 10. Nothing can add to that.

But the Comforter has come—the Holy Spirit of God. He has come to abide with us for ever. The body of the believer is His temple. He is with us to help us all along the road. Not in our own strength, but in that which He supplies, we are to overcome and hold on our way steadfastly. And how does the Holy Spirit minister strength to us? By occupying us with ourselves? Very far from that. No strength, no blessing, no comfort, no joy can ever reach us by that road. Self-occupation is the bane of the Christian life. A sick and dying man is not restored to health by dwelling on his ailments from morn till night. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit leads us to **mind the things of the Spirit** (Rom. viii. 5). What are these? Are our sins, our waywardness, our broken vows, and unkept resolutions “the things of the Spirit”? No, the things of the Spirit are the things which



are above—things unseen and eternal—things which God has prepared for them that love Him. And all these are revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It is with these things the Spirit would engage our heart and mind, leading us to see their beauty, their greatness, their grandeur, and their priceless worth. By these means our souls are fed and strengthened, and by them we grow in the divine life and are preserved from many a temptation and snare.

Another thing: the Holy Spirit never leads us to forget our entire dependence on divine help. We need it every hour. "I can do all things," says the Apostle Paul, but he makes haste to add, "through Christ who strengtheneth me." Yes, that is it. Not by strength of character, not by indomitable will, but through Christ. Hence that honoured servant gloried even in his infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him, "for," said he, "when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10). It must be so with us. Our song should ever be—

"As weaker than a bruised reed,  
I cannot do without Thee."

Simon Peter did not realize this. Strong in his own strength, he declared his readiness to follow his Master to prison and to death. Brave words! But in the hour of testing he fell at the challenge of a damsel in the palace of the High Priest. A needed lesson, but it cost him bitter tears. Long years afterwards, when writing to his converted countrymen, he reminded them that we are "kept

by the power of God through faith." No other power can keep us. Let us never, never forget it.

Be of good cheer, then. Do not yield to doubts and fears. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Forget yourself, in whom there is no good, in being occupied with Him in whom there is nothing but good. Let your constant cry be, *Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe*, and He will answer thee, saying, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness" (Isa. xli. 10). Is not that enough?

W.B.

## THE DELIVERER.

**T**HERE lies the helpless cripple, around him a mass of suffering humanity, but none worse than he; for thirty-eight years he had suffered, and through all those years no thrill of strength had stirred his palsied limbs. The doctors must have pronounced his case hopeless, and yet with a strange persistence he hoped, an example of the saying, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." But his hope was not in a doctor's skill, but in the pool by the side of which he lay.

It was a strange pool, a large reservoir inside the walls of the city of Jerusalem near the sheep market gate, and it was known as Bethesda, which means the house of mercy. It was well named,

for at a certain season an angel from heaven appeared and stirred the waters, then whoever stepped down first into the water was made whole, no matter what his plague might be.

What a scramble there would be at every season, and what disappointment, and amongst the disappointed ones was our cripple. How many times during those years he had fallen back in his misery we do not know, but at last he seemed to be reduced to despair. Did he think that Jesus was but a passing stranger interested in his helplessness when He asked him, "**Wilt thou be made whole?**" If He had been only that, such a question would have been a mockery; but, because of who He was, two things transpired: first, the confession of the man's despair; then the mercy of the Lord that met him there.

Yes, the man had lost all hope, and the Lord's question does not seem to have pleased him overmuch, for it did seem from the man's point of view, an unnecessary one. "Sir," he answers. "**I have no man**, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me" (John v. 7). My own efforts have all proved vain, and there is not a man who cares a straw for me. As he lay in his helplessness his language might well have been: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24). "**I have no man.**"

Does not this man's sad case illustrate that of many, whose struggles after holiness and good have

been long and earnest but in vain? The bitter cry of their souls is "I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not: but what I hate, that do I" (Rom. vii. 14-15). The lesson must be learned that there is no strength for good in the life that is paralysed by sin, and that every hope of overcoming this condition of continual defeat is a vain hope. Aye, but it is just here that the crisis is reached, for man's extremity is God's opportunity.

When the paralytic of John v. confessed that all his hopes were dashed, and that he had no resources either in himself or in any other man, and that the blessing of the pool was not for him because it was out of his reach, then the Lord spoke, and His word was a delivering word, "Jesus saith unto Him, Rise, take up thy bed and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked; and on the same day was the sabbath." Christ superseded the pool; His word did for the helpless cripple what neither angel nor man could do. He was a delivered man, and if he had had a grateful heart, which he does not seem to have had, he would have cried, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," and he would have followed Him and clung to Him.

I heard of an East Central African negro, who summed up this story in two sentences. They were these. The impotent man said to Jesus, "**I have no man,**" and Jesus answered "**I am your Man.**" And not only had this negro the art of going to the very kernel of the matter, but he

must have learnt the wonderful and soul emanicipating truth, that all life, virtue, power, blessing and deliverance for men lie in Christ, and that it is when the groaning, struggling soul ceases all his efforts and cries out, "Who shall deliver me?" that deliverance comes.

Deliverance from the power of sin does not come by efforts to keep the law. The weakness of our fleshly nature is not strengthened to do good by resolutions and vows. What has your spiritual history been, my reader? Have you to say:

"Oh the regret, the struggle and the failing!  
Oh the days desolate, and useless years!  
Vows in the night, so fierce and unavailing!  
Stings of my shame and passion of my tears!

"Oh thou poor soul, enwrapped in such a sinning,  
Bound in the shameful body of thy death!"

--there is hope for you. Lift up your eyes from self and sinning to Him who died for you, bearing the judgment, and has been raised up from the dead. He is your Man, your Deliverer.

If you have believed on Him, He is not only your Saviour but the Source of your power, and you have been joined to Him to bring forth fruit unto God. You have come under a new headship, you are in Christ, and a new life may work in you now. Not Paul only, but you also may say, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and

death" (Romans viii. 2). He is your Man: His Spirit dwells in you; and through Him that loves you, you may be more than a conqueror.

J. T. MAWSON.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(MARK v. 1—vi. 6).

Our review of this Gospel being more condensed than in the case of the Epistles hitherto before us, it is more than ever necessary to read it in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

**T**HE conviction, as to "what manner of Man" the Lord Jesus is, once having been reached by faith, it carries with it the assurance that He must be equal to meeting every emergency. Yet, even so, it is well for the disciple to actually see Him dealing with men, and with the troubles that have come upon them by reason of sin, in His delivering mercy. In chapter v. we see the Lord displaying His power, and thereby educating His disciples still further. That education may be ours also as we go over the record.

While crossing the lake, the power of Satan had been at work hidden behind the fury of the tempest: on arriving at the other side it became very manifest in the man with an unclean spirit. Defeated in his more secret workings, the adversary now gives an open challenge without loss of time, for the man met Him immediately He landed. It was a kind of test case. The devil had turned the wretched man into a fortress that he

hoped to hold at all costs; and into the fortress he had flung a whole legion of demons. If ever a man was held in hopeless captivity to the powers of darkness, it was he. In his story we see mirrored the plight into which humanity has sunk under Satan's power.

He "had his dwelling among the tombs:" and men to-day live in a world that is more and more becoming a vast graveyard as generation after generation passes into death. Then, "no man could bind him," for fetters and chains had often been tried to no purpose. He was beyond restraint. So to-day there are not lacking movements and methods intended to curb the bad propensities of men, to restrain their more violent actions, and reduce the world to pleasantness and order. But all in vain.

Then, with the demoniac another thing was tried. Could not his nature be changed? It is stated however, "neither could any man tame him;" so that idea proved useless. Thus it has always been: there is no more power in men to **change** their natures than there is to **curb** and **repress** them, so that they do not act. "The carnal mind. . . is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. viii. 7), so it cannot be restrained. Again, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John iii. 6), no matter what attempts may be made to improve it. So it can not be altered or changed.

"Always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs,"—utterly restless—"cry-

ing,"—utterly miserable—"cutting himself with stones,"—damaging himself in his madness. What a picture!

And we must add, what a **characteristic** picture of man under the power of Satan. This was an exceptional case, it is true. Satan's grip on the majority is of a gentler sort, and the symptoms are much less pronounced; still they are there. The cry of humanity may be heard, as men damage themselves by their sins.

When the man spoke, the words were framed by his lips, but the intelligence behind them was that of the demons who controlled him. **They knew** what manner of Man the Lord was, even if others did not. On the other hand they did **not** know the manner of His service. There will indeed be an hour when the Lord will consign these demons along with Satan their master into torment, but that was not His work at that moment. Much less was it the manner of His service at that time in regard to men. To the demoniac Jesus came, bringing not torment but **deliverance**.

The Lord had bidden the demons to come out, and they knew that they could not resist. They were in the presence of Omnipotence, and they must do as they were told. They had even to ask permission to enter into the swine that were feeding not far away. The swine, being unclean animals according to the law, ought not to have been there. The spirits being unclean also, there was an affinity between them and the swine, an affinity with fatal results for the animals. The demons



had led the man toward self-destruction, using the sharp stones: with the swine the impulse was immediate and complete. The man was delivered: the swine were destroyed.

The result, as regards the man himself, was delightful. His restless wanderings were over, for he was "sitting." Formerly he "ware no clothes," as Luke tells us, now he is "clothed." His delusions had ceased, for he is "in his right mind." The gospel application of all this is very evident.

The result, as regards the people of those parts was very tragic however. They displayed a mind that was anything but right, though no demons had entered into them. They had no understanding or appreciation of Christ. On the other hand they did appreciate and understand pigs. If the presence of Jesus meant no pigs, even if it also meant no raging demoniac, then they would rather not have it. They began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts.

The Lord yielded to their desire and left. The tragedy of this was very great, though they did not realise it at the time. It was succeeded by the even greater tragedy of the Son of God being cast right out of this world; and we have now had nineteen centuries filled with every kind of evil as the result of that. The departure of the Lord created a fresh situation for the man just delivered from the demons. He naturally desired the presence of his Deliverer, but was instructed that for the present he must be content to abide in the place

of His absence and there witness for Him, particularly to his own friends.

Our position to-day is very similar. Presently we shall be with Him, but for the present it is ours to witness for Him in the place where He is not. We too may tell our friends what great things the Lord has done for us.

Having recrossed the lake, the Lord was immediately confronted with further cases of human need. On His way to the house of Jairus, where lay his little daughter at the point of death, He was intercepted by the woman with an issue of blood. Her disease was of twelve years standing and utterly beyond all the skill of physicians. Hers was a hopeless case, just as much as the case of the demoniac. He was in helpless captivity to a great crowd of demons, she to an incurable disease.

Again we can see an analogy to the spiritual state of mankind, and particularly to the efforts of an awakened soul as depicted in Romans vii. There are many struggles and much earnest striving, but in result, "nothing bettered but rather grew worse" would describe the case delineated there, until the soul comes to the end of its searchings, and having "spent all," has "heard of Jesus." Then ceasing all efforts at self-improvement and coming to Jesus, He proves Himself to be the great Deliverer.

In the case of the man we can hardly speak of faith at all, for he was completely dominated by

the demons. In the case of the woman we can only speak of a faith that was defective. She was confident of His power, a power so great that even His clothes would impart it; yet she doubted His accessibility. The thronging crowds impeded her, and she did not realise how completely He—the perfect Servant—was at the disposal of all who needed Him. Yet the cure she needed was hers in spite of everything. The access she needed was made possible, and the blessing was brought to her. Satisfied with the blessing she would have slunk away.

But this it was not to be. She too was to bear witness to that which His power had wrought, and thereby she was to receive a further blessing for herself. The Lord's dealings with her are full of spiritual instruction.

The perfect knowledge of Jesus comes to light. He knew that virtue had gone out of Him, and that the touch had fallen on His clothes. He asked the question, but He knew the answer; for He looked round to see "her" that had done it.

His question also brought to light the fact that many had been touching Him in various ways, yet no other touch had drawn any virtue from Him. Why was this? Because, of all the touches, hers was the only one that sprang out of a consciousness of need, and faith. When these two things are present the touch is always effective.

A good many of us would be like the woman, and wish to obtain the blessing without any public

acknowledgment of the Blessor. This must not be. It is due to Him that we confess the truth and make known His saving grace. Directly virtue has gone out from Him for our deliverance, the time of witness-bearing has come for us. Just as the man was to go home to his friends, the woman had to kneel at His feet in public. Both bore witness to Him; and, be it noted, in the opposite way to what we might have expected. Most men would find the witness at home the more difficult: most women the witness in public. But the man had to speak at home, and the woman in the presence of the crowd. She spoke however not to the crowd, but to Him.

As the fruit of her confession the woman herself received a further blessing. She got definite assurance from His word, that her cure was thorough and complete. A few minutes before she had "**felt** in her body that she was healed," and then she confessed, "**knowing** what was **done in her.**" This was very good, but it was not quite enough. Had the Lord permitted her to go away simply possessed of these nice "**feelings,**" and this "**knowledge**" of what had been "**done in her,**" she would have been open to many a doubt and fear in the days to come. Every small feeling of indisposition would have raised anxiety as to whether her old malady might not recur. As it was, she got His **definite word**, "**Be whole of thy plague.**" That settled it. His **word** was far more reliable than **her feelings.**

So it is with us. Something is indeed done in us by the Spirit of God at conversion, and we know

it, and our feelings may be happy: yet, even so, there is no solid basis on which assurance can rest in **feelings**, or in what has been done **in** us. The solid basis for assurance is found in **the Word of the Lord**. Not a few to-day lack assurance just because they have made the mistake which the woman was on the point of making. They have never properly confessed Christ, and owned their indebtedness to Him. If they will rectify this mistake as the woman did, they will get the assurance of His Word.

At the very moment of the woman's deliverance the case of Jairus' daughter took on a darker hue. Tidings of her death arrived, and those who sent the message assumed that though disease might disappear before the power of Jesus, death lay outside His domain. We have seen Him triumph over demons and disease, even when the victims were beyond all human help. Death is the most hopeless thing of all. Can He triumph over that? He can, and He did.

The way that He sustained the faltering faith of the ruler is very beautiful. Jairus had been quite confident as to His ability to heal; but now, what about death?—that was the great test to his faith, as also of the power of Jesus. "Be not afraid, only believe," was the word. Faith in Christ will remove the fear of death for us as well as for him.

Death was but a sleep to Jesus, yet the professional mourners mocked Him in their unbelief. So He removed them, and in the presence of the

parents and those of His disciples who were with Him, He restored the child to life. Thus for the third time in this chapter is deliverance brought to one who is beyond all human hope.

But the beginning of verse 43 is in sharp contrast to verses 19 and 33. There is to be **no testimony** this time; accounted for, we suppose, by the contemptuous unbelief that had just been manifested. At the same time there was the most careful consideration for the needs of the child in the way of food, just as there had been for the spiritual need of Jairus a little before. He thought both of **her body** and of **his faith**.

After these things, leaving the lakeside He went into the district where His early life had been spent. Teaching in the synagogue, His words astonished them. They quite clearly recognized the wisdom of His teachings and the might of His acts, and yet all this wrought no conviction or faith in their hearts. They knew Him, and those related to Him according to the flesh, and this but blinded their eyes as to who He really was. They were not insulting in their expression of unbelief, as were the mourners in the house of Jairus; but it was rank unbelief nevertheless, so great that He marvelled at it.

The view that they had of Jesus was just that of the modern Unitarian. They were altogether convinced of His humanity, for they were so well acquainted with its origins as far as His flesh was concerned. They saw it so clearly that it

blinded them to anything beyond, and they were offended in Him. The Unitarian sees His humanity, but nothing beyond. We see His humanity no less clearly than the Unitarian, but beyond it we see His deity. It does not trouble us that we cannot grasp intellectually how both can be found in Him. Knowing that our minds are finite, we do not expect to explain that into which infinity enters. If we could grasp and explain, we should know that what we thus comprehend is not Divine.

As a result of this unbelief, "He could there do no mighty work," save that He healed a few sick folk, who, evidently, did have faith in Him. This emphasizes what we have just noted in connection with verse 43 of chapter v. As, in the presence of ribald unbelief, the Lord withdrew any testimony to Himself, so, in the presence of His unbelieving fellow-countrymen, He did no mighty works.

Now we might feel inclined to think that His action should have been just the opposite. But it does seem in Scripture that when unbelief rises to the height of **mockery**, the testimony **stops**—see, Jeremiah xv. 17; Acts xiii. 41, xvii. 32—xviii. 1. Also it is evident that though "Jesus of Nazareth" was "approved of God. . . by miracles and wonders and signs" (Acts ii. 22), yet the main object was not to convince stubborn unbelief, but to encourage and confirm weak faith. We are shown in John ii. 23-25, that when His miracles did produce intellectual conviction in

certain men, He Himself put no trust in the conviction so produced. Hence He did no great works in the Nazareth district. He "could" not do them. He was limited by moral considerations, not by physical ones. Miracles were **not suitable** to the occasion, according to God's ways: and He was the Servant of God's will.

What **was** suitable was the faithful rendering of a clear testimony; hence "He went round about the villages, teaching." A great display of miracles might have produced a revulsion of feeling and intellectual conviction, which would not have been worth having. The steady teaching of the Word meant sowing the seed, and there would be some worth-while fruit from that, as we have seen.

This brings us to verse 7 of chapter vi., where we read of the twelve being sent forth on their first mission. Their period of training was now over. They had listened to His instructions, as given in chapter iv., and witnessed His power, as displayed in chapter v. They had also had this striking illustration of the place that miracles should occupy, and of the fact that though there were times when they might be unsuitable, the teaching and preaching of the Word of God was **always in season**.

Miracles and signs of a genuine sort are not in evidence to-day; but the Word of God abides. Let us be thankful that the Word is always in season, and **let us be diligent in sowing it**.



## THE NEW BIRTH.

**W**E are introduced to this theme by the Lord Himself, who put it in the very forefront of His teaching when He had the talk with Nicodemus by night. It is alluded to by John in the preface to his Gospel (i. 13), but not in any way expounded until we come to chapter iii. Having heard of it more fully from the lips of the Lord, we find further details as to it both in 1 Peter and 1 John. We also discover from what the Lord says to Nicodemus that Ezekiel xxxvi. alludes to it, though the term, "born again," is not used there.

Nicodemus was amongst those who were convinced that Jesus was "a Teacher come from God," but he went further than the men spoken of at the end of chapter ii., by becoming an enquirer. Nicodemus himself was "a master [i.e. teacher] of Israel," and it was something that he should recognize in Jesus a Teacher, who spoke and acted with an authority far above his own. But recognizing it, he came as one who would make a very good scholar, being a privileged person, a member of the most favoured nation. To such a man as this the pronouncement was made that, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The word translated "again," in this passage has also the meaning of "from above;" it is so translated in John iii. 31, and elsewhere; but evidently Nicodemus did not understand it in this

sense, or he would hardly have asked the question recorded in verse 4. In Luke i. 3, the same word is translated, "from the very first," and in Acts xxvi. 5, "from the beginning," and that seems to be the force of it here. Nicodemus needed a birth which should be new in the very beginnings of its origin. Nothing short of that would do.

He had been born of the stock of Abraham, and so his pedigree was of the best. He was a very fine specimen of the Abrahamic strain of humanity, yet he would not do for God. The Lord's words clearly put the sentence of condemnation upon him as a child of Abraham, for if that first birth had sufficed there would have been no need for a new one. We Gentiles cannot boast of being children of Abraham, the friend of God: we are just the children of Adam, the man who disobeyed and fell. The new birth cannot be less necessary for us than it was for Nicodemus. He too, of course, was a child of Adam, just as Abraham was.

Adam's nature was corrupted by his sin, and all his race, generation after generation, partake of that fallen and corrupt nature. Spiritual blindness is one of the forms that the corruption takes, and so we are quite unable to "see the kingdom of God." When Jesus was on earth the kingdom was present amongst men, for He was the King; but men did not see this apart from the new birth. Nicodemus only saw a Teacher in Him, and needed to be born again to see Him in the true light. It is just the same to-day though Jesus is

no longer here. Men see in Him a religious Teacher or a Reformer, but they do not see God in Him, nor do they see the kingdom of God, unless they have come under that Divinely wrought process of cleansing which the new birth involves.

In verse 5 of chapter iii., the Lord carries His teaching a step further. We need not only to see the kingdom but to enter it, and for this we must be born "of water and of the Spirit." The water is the agent employed, and the Spirit the Actor who employs it. These further statements apparently only puzzled Nicodemus the more, and he asked incredulously, "How can these things be?" The Lord's reply took also the form of a question, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" His teaching on this point was not something entirely new—unheard of up to this point. It had its roots in what the prophets had testified, and notably Ezekiel in his thirty-sixth chapter, where both water and the Spirit are mentioned. The surprising thing was that Nicodemus had remained in ignorance of the prophet's meaning.

The meaning of the word, "water," in John iii. has been much in dispute. We believe its true meaning is to be discerned by referring back to the Scripture to which the Lord alluded. He doubtless used the word as being just that which ought to have put Nicodemus into possession of the key which should unlock his meaning. We ought to read at this point Ezekiel xxxvi. 21-33.

Having read it, we note that the passage speaks of what the Lord will do when at last He gathers Israel His people out of the lands of their dispersion and brings them into their own land. Then He will sprinkle "clean water" upon them and they shall be clean. All their filthiness and their love of idols shall be gone, for He will thereby have put "a new heart" and "a new spirit" within them. The cleansing effected by the water will be of so radical and fundamental a nature that their whole nature will be different. Once this mighty work has taken place they will look back on that which formerly they were with disgust—"Then shall ye remember your own ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations" (verse 31). A moral renovation will have been accomplished.

By discarding bad habits and acquiring good habits, men sometimes achieve a considerable measure of that kind of moral alteration which lies on the surface. The moral **renovation** which Ezekiel predicts goes down to the deepest foundation; putting a man into possession of a new heart and a new spirit, so that instinctively he desires what is good and walks in obedience. Verse 27 shows this. No wonder then that the Lord Jesus spoke of it as a new birth; inasmuch as it is not the altering of a nature already existing, but the impartation of a nature which is entirely new. The new heart is "**given.**" The new spirit is "**put within you.**" It is to **start anew from the very first.**

Verse 27 speaks of "**My Spirit**" which is to be put within born-again Israel in that day. Though not printed with a capital in our Bibles, it clearly should be, as it refers to the Spirit of God, and hence is to be distinguished from "**a new spirit**" in the previous verse. So the prophet clearly shows us that only when Israel is born again and receives the Spirit of God will they see and enter into the kingdom of God.

All this Nicodemus should have known, though the Lord's words to him carry the truth concerning it a good deal further. Now we discover that new birth is actually produced by the Spirit of God. He who is born again is born of the Spirit, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit as to its own nature and character. In other words, the new heart and new spirit, of which Ezekiel tells us, is the product of the Holy Spirit and partakes of His holy nature. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, in spite of all that may be done to it in the way of refinement, education civilization, or Christianization. When all is done, flesh it still remains: it cannot be transmuted into spirit. That alone is spirit which is born of the Spirit. It cannot be found apart from the new birth.

When Ezekiel prophesied of how God would "sprinkle clean water" upon Israel in the coming day in order that they might be clean, the mind of those who read his words would have been carried back to the book of Numbers where twice we get the sprinkling of water mentioned. In chapter viii. we get the way in which the Levites were

cleansed in order that they might enter upon their service. Moses was told to "Sprinkle water of purifying upon them." In chapter xix. we get the way in which the ordinary Israelite was cleansed from various defilements which he might contract. From the ashes of a red heifer "a water of separation" was to be made, and that water was to be sprinkled upon people and things that were defiled. The "water of separation" which purified was made from "the ashes of the burnt heifer"—typical of the death of Christ—and "running [or, living] water"—typical of the Spirit.

So we pass from the type in Numbers to the prophecy in Ezekiel, and from thence to the Lord's declaration in John iii. Putting all together, the significance of the "water" begins to appear. It is the Word of God which brings the death of Christ in its separating and purifying power to bear upon the soul. Of that Word, as well as of the Spirit, we must be born if we are to enter the kingdom of God. In later chapters of the Gospel we find the Lord connecting water with His Word in a way that confirms the matter. Compare the scene recorded in chapter xiii. 5-11, with His words, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (xv. 3). A further confirmation occurs in Ephesians v. 26, where "water" and "the Word" are brought together as identical.

Man needs, then, to be born anew from the very beginning. The agent used for this is the

Word of God, which applies to us the cleansing virtue of the death of Christ. And He who acts in this matter is the Spirit of God. In John iii. the water is mentioned but once: the remainder of the instruction concerns the action of the Spirit.

But when we turn to 1 Peter i. 22-25, we find that though the Spirit is mentioned, the main emphasis lies upon that which the water symbolizes—the Word of God. We have obeyed the truth by the Spirit, and thereby purification has reached us—verse 22 views that which is accomplished from our side. Verses 23-25 view it from God's side. The purification is effective by reason of His work in us by His Word, which, as we know from John iii., is wrought by the Spirit. We are born “by” the Word, but also “of” incorruptible seed; and we must not confuse these two things. “By” indicates **agency**; “of” indicates **origin**.

As children of Adam we were born of seed which is not merely corruptible but actually and fatally **corrupted**. We are born again of seed which is **incorruptible**, because Divine. Isaiah the prophet was given a glimpse of the Servant of Jehovah, who should die and rise again; and he predicted, “When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see **His seed**” (liii. 10). He shall see those who take their spiritual origin from Himself. A thought akin to this seems to lie in these words in Peter. As born again we have a new origin which is incorruptible in nature; and the Word by which we are born again, “liveth and abideth for

ever." That which is produced as the result of new birth is characterized by these wonderful things—**life, eternity and incorruptibility.**

From all that we have seen it is very evident that new birth is that work of the Spirit of God in us which is necessitated by the corruption of our nature through sin. It was not enough that a work should be wrought for us which should bring us justification and reconciliation; there must also be this work of moral cleansing, this lifting us out of the corruption of our nature. No external work of cleansing would meet the case; nothing short of our becoming possessed of a new nature springing from an incorruptible source. No deeper or more fundamental purification than that could be conceived.

From the passage in Peter, with its statement as to our being born of incorruptible seed, we pass on naturally to 1 John, where we read, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (iii. 9). This verse gives us perhaps the fullest development of the whole matter. No mention is made of the agent employed, the Word of God. Nor is the Spirit of God, who acts in the work, mentioned. The emphasis is concentrated upon God Himself as the Source of all. As born of God, His seed remains in us; it is irrevocable. And we partake of His sinless nature. The born again one cannot sin, just because he is born of God.



In so speaking John views us abstractly, according to the essential character of the new nature which is ours. He is entitled to do so, inasmuch as when God has completed His work concerning us we shall be this not merely abstractly but absolutely. The last trace of the Adamic nature will be gone when our very bodies are glorified. Elsewhere John views us practically, and insists that we have sin in us, and that we do sin:—see, i. 8—ii. 2. This practical view of things is very necessary of course; but so also is the abstract view, which we have before us. It is most important that we should know the sinlessness of the nature that is ours as born of God.

Not only is it **sinless** — for that is a negative virtue: it is also **righteous** (ii. 29), and **loving** (iii. 10, 11). It is marked by **faith** (v. 1), and by **overcoming the world** (v. 4). These are positive features of great worth. Only let these characteristics come clearly into display in the believer and it becomes manifest to all men that a mighty moral renovation has been effected: a thorough-going cleansing and purification has been accomplished indeed.

We read of cleansing by the blood of Christ in 1 John i. 7. Do you differentiate between this and the cleansing we have been considering? And, if so, how?

The blood of Christ signifies His holy life laid down in death for the bearing of the judgment due to us. Thereby we are cleansed **judicially**. The

cleansing wrought by new birth and presented as accomplished by water, touches our characters, and involves our having a new nature. We are cleansed **morally**. We could not do without either. Both are ours as having received the grace of God.

You do not think then that the "water," in John iii., has anything to do with baptism?

We are sure that the Lord did not allude to baptism in using the word "water." There would have been nothing surprising in Nicodemus not knowing about it, had that been His meaning. No, He alluded to Ezekiel xxxvi., which Nicodemus ought to have known, and that has nothing to do with baptism. John iii. 5 has no more to do with baptism than John vi. 53 has to do with the Lord's supper: though in both cases we may be able to discern in the outward ordinances some reflection of the truth stated in these passages. In both cases however we have not the ordinance but **the truth**, to which the ordinance makes some reference.

We have had before us different terms: — "born again," "born of water and of the Spirit," "born of God." Do they all mean the same thing?

They all refer, we believe, to the same great work of God, wrought in us by His Spirit. There is no such thought in Scripture as there being two more different kinds of "new birth," as though, for example, one might be "born again," according to John iii., and yet not "born of God," according to 1 John iii. On the other hand, each of these different expressions has its own significance

and force. The first emphasizes the new and original character of the birth. The second, who accomplishes it, and the agent employed. The third, the Source whence all springs. Indeed we think an orderly progress of doctrine may be observed in the four passages, beginning with Ezekiel.

New birth is evidently an act of God; but is it wrought by the Spirit altogether apart from the preaching of the Gospel?

There is a plain answer to that question in the passage in Peter. It says, "Born again. . . by the word of God. . . and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." Whatever may have been the word by which the Spirit worked in the past dispensation, in this day the word by which we are born again is that which reaches us in the Gospel.

Then are we born again by simply believing the Gospel? Some hold that we believe to be born again, others that we must be born again to believe.

That is so. He who inclines to Arminianism would hold the first view. He who inclines to Calvinism would hold the second. This raises the whole question of how to adjust in our minds the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. We should answer the question by saying, No, not by **simply** believing the Gospel; for, if by believing **only**, we should be shutting out factors of even greater importance. But of course we should be equally wrong if we said it was **simply** by the Spirit; for then we should be shutting out the

Gospel, which must not be excluded according to the passage in Peter.

The fact is we need to carefully note the word of our Lord in John iii. 8, where He warns us that the Spirit's work in new birth is something beyond us. We can no more gather it all together in our minds than we can gather the winds in our fists. The passage in Peter gives us a view of things from the human side—especially verses 22 and 23—and the Arminian seizes them. The passage in John's Epistle views things from the Divine side, and the Calvinist seizes it. For ourselves, we seize both, and are not troubled by finding that we can no more mentally adjust the two sides to perfection than we can adjust and explain the Divine and the Human in Christ Jesus our Lord, or in the Scriptures of truth.

But is not new birth the very beginning of God's work in the soul? Are we not absolutely dead, without the smallest motion Godward, until we are born again?

We all of us started in a state of absolute spiritual death: there was no hope for us except God began to work. The story of God's work in blessing men begins with God and not with man. We are as sure of this as we are that the story of creation began with God and not with man. God took the initiative with each of us, and His Spirit began to move on our hearts just as of old He moved on the face of the waters. But, in the light of the scriptures we have considered, we can hardly call that first moving of the Spirit new

birth. New birth is a larger and more comprehensive thing, if we take it as presented in Scripture.

And further, new birth is not the antithesis to a state of death, but to a state of corruption. The word which in Scripture stands in antithesis to death is quickening. By new birth we become possessed of a nature which cannot sin, and hence we have "escaped the **corruption** that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter i. 4).

Are new birth and regeneration—as in Titus iii. 5—the same thing?

They are not. The word translated "regeneration" only occurs twice in Scripture, and both times it has the significance of the new order of things to be brought about in the millennial age. Titus iii. 5 however speaks of "the **washing** of regeneration," and we believe that though the regeneration is not the new birth, the "washing" is; and that verse is just Ezekiel xxxvi. 25-27 put into New Testament language. Israel will be born again, and thus cleansed from their corruptions in view of the millennial age. We have not had to wait till that age dawns. The washing connected with that coming age reached the heathen Cretians, so that they might be cleansed—no longer, "liars, evil beasts, slow bellies,"—and should "live soberly, righteously and godly."

That same washing has reached us. We are no longer dominated by corruption, since born of incorruptible seed.

## GOD CARES FOR YOU.

READ I PETER V. 7, 10, 11.

**H**OW happy it is to remember all along our pilgrim way that we have to do with the God of all grace! I say our "pilgrim" way, for most of us know the light in which the Apostle Peter regards the saints. He speaks of us as strangers and pilgrims; strangers because our citizenship is elsewhere, and pilgrims because we are journeying on to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. Happy it is then to remember that whatever we may find in our pilgrim way, its lights and its shadows, its ups and its downs, its summer days as well as winter ones, we have to do with the God of all grace. It is the grace of God that has brought us salvation. It is the grace of God that teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. It is the grace of God that encourages us to lift up our eyes, and to look forward, and to think of that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The God of all grace is the One who has called us unto His eternal kingdom and glory by Christ Jesus. What a calling that is; how high! how wonderful! None but the God of all **grace** would have called such unworthy creatures to a portion like this. And there could have been no call to everlasting glory apart from Christ Jesus.

Through Him alone could that call be made effectual.

It is well for us to remember, moreover, how we are kept. The inheritance is reserved for us in heaven, but as we journey on to it, with dangers of every kind surrounding us, we are kept by the power of God, not apart from faith but through it; God keeping faith alive in our hearts, that faith which lays hold of Him and which enters into unseen and eternal things.

So then I would like to charge your heart and my own to remember all along the way that we have to do with the God of all grace. It pleases our God and Father to make Himself known under that sweet and blessed title. How this should embolden us to face the unknown future with calmness. We do not know what to-morrow has in its hand for any one of us. If we look beyond the horizon of time all is clear, for that is filled with the purpose of God, which no power can bring to naught, but as regards our earthly future we do not know what a day or an hour may bring forth. But whatever the future may disclose we shall have the God of all grace as our help and our resource.

The God of all grace in verse 7 encourages us to cast all our care upon Him, to roll upon Him that care, that burden, that sorrow, that source of anxiety, that fear, that anxious foreboding. We are invited to cast all our care—not a part of it, but all—upon Him. Then that word is added—

the sweetness of which who can tell?—"For He careth for you." How much there is in these simple words! Let them sink into your hearts. God cares for you. He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, He cares for you. He who long ages ago gave you to the Lord Jesus Christ that He might bring you safely home to glory; He who wrote your name in life's eternal book, **He** cares for you all along the way. "He careth for you." Do not carry your cares, roll them all upon Him. In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. Instead of groaning and staggering, like an overburdened man, with that load of care upon your shoulders, roll it over upon the God of all grace—He cares for you. So shall His peace which passes all understanding keep your heart and mind.

Brethren, this is the God with whom we have to do. He has helped us hitherto. Here afresh we can raise our Ebenezer and bear witness that this is so. And if with a mighty gracious hand, He has brought us thus far on our journey, how it should encourage us to have no fear as to the future!

We leave it to Himself  
To choose and to command.  
With wonder filled we soon shall see  
How wise, how strong His hand.

He may let our little boat sail across a summer sea, or lead it across a tempestuous one. We leave it to Himself, to choose and to command. The



God of all grace cares for us. "Put your future," He says, "into My hand. Leave it to Me to order, guide, and control." There is no room for us to give way to anxious thought or forebodings. Of course we have not to go through the circumstances in which we find ourselves as if our hearts were made of granite. We rightly have our exercises and feelings, but we are kept by the power of God through faith, that faith that trusts Him, that casts all care upon Him, and that listens to those gracious words, drinks them in, and finds sweetness and strength in them—"He cares for you."

He who rules in heaven and earth, who has His way among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth, and to whom none can say "What doest thou?" HE CARES FOR YOU.

W.B.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(MARK vi. 7—vii. 37).

Our review of this Gospel being more condensed than in the case of the Epistles hitherto before us, it is more than ever necessary to read it in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

THE sending forth of the twelve was the inauguration of an extension of the Lord's ministry and service. Hitherto all had been in His own hands, with the disciples as onlookers; now they are to act on His behalf. He was absolutely sufficient in Himself: they are not suf-

cient, and hence they are to go forth two and two. There is help and courage in companionship, for just where one is weak another may be strong, and He who sent them knew exactly how to couple them together. Companionship is specially helpful where pioneering work is being done; and so in the Acts we see Paul acting on this instruction of the Lord. Service is an individual matter, it is true, but even to-day we do well to esteem rightly fellowship in serving. "We are God's **fellow-workmen**" (I Cor. iii. 9. N. Tr.).

Before they left, they had power or authority *given to them over all the power of Satan*. They also had instructions to strip themselves of even the ordinary necessities, carried by the traveller of those days. Further, they were given their message. As their Master had preached repentance in view of the kingdom (see i. 15), so were they to preach it.

Those who serve to-day do not hold their commission from Christ on earth, but Christ in heaven; and this introduces certain modifications. Our message centres in the death, resurrection and glory of Christ, whereas theirs in the very nature of things could not do so. They discarded travelling necessities, inasmuch as they represented the Messiah on earth, who had nothing, but who was well able to sustain them. We are followers of a Christ who has gone on high, and His power is usually exercised in freeing His servants from dependence on props of a spiritual nature rather than from those of a material sort. We may cer-

tainly, however, take great comfort from the thought that He does not send His servants forth without giving them power for the service before them. If we are to cast out demons He will give us power to do it. And if our service is not that but something else, then power for the something else will be ours.

They—and we too—are to be marked by utmost simplicity: no running about from house to house in search for something better. They represented Him. He acted by proxy through them; and hence to refuse them was to refuse Him. His saying in verse 11 as to Sodom and Gomorrah is similar to what He said of Himself in Matthew xi. 21—24. Those who serve Him to-day are not apostles, still in a lesser degree the same thing doubtless holds good. God's message is not the less His message because it comes through feeble lips.

Their service, whether in preaching, casting out demons or in healing, was so effective that **His** Name—not theirs—was spread abroad, and even Herod heard His fame. This miserable king had so bad a conscience that he at once assumed that John the Baptist, his victim, had come to life. Others considered Christ to be Elijah, or one of the old prophets. No one knew, for no one thought of God as able to do some new thing.

At this point Mark digresses a little to tell us, in verses 17—28, how John had been murdered at the behest of a vindictive woman. Evil man though he was, Herod possessed a conscience that

spoke, and we see the masterly craft by which the devil captured him. The trap was set by means of a young woman with pretty face and form, an older woman attractive and revengeful, and a foolish vanity which make the unhappy king think much more of his oath than of God's law. Thus the vain and lustful man was manoeuvred into the act of murder, with ultimate damnation for himself. His uneasy conscience only provoked superstitious fears.

In verse 29, Mark merely records that John's disciples gave his mutilated body burial. He does not add as Matthew does that they "went and told Jesus" (xiv. 12). He passes on to record the return of the disciples from their journeyings, telling their Master of all that they had done and taught. It was then that the Lord withdrew them into a desert place, that apart from the crowd and the busy service they might spend quiet time in His presence. It is instructive to notice that the passage in Matthew makes it pretty certain that the distressed disciples of John also arrived just at that time.

Let us never forget that a period of rest in the presence of the Lord, apart from men, is necessary after a period of busy service. The disciples of John came from their sad service heavy-hearted and distressed. The twelve came from triumphant encounters with the power of demons and disease, probably flushed with success. Both needed the quiet of the presence of the Lord, which avails equally to lift up the drooping heart and check

undue elation of spirit.

However, the period of quiet was but brief, for the people sought after Him in their crowds, and He would not say them nay. The heart of the great Servant comes out most beautifully in verse 34, where we are told He was "moved with compassion." The sight of them, "as sheep not having a shepherd," only induced **compassion** in Him, not—as so often with us, alas!—feelings of annoyance or contempt. And He was **moved** by the compassion He felt; that is the wonder of it.

His compassion moved Him in two directions. First, to minister to them as to spiritual things. Second, to minister to them carnal things. Notice the order: the spiritual came first. "He began to teach them many things, though what He said is not recorded; then when the evening was come He relieved their hunger. Let us learn from this how to act. If men have bodily needs it is good that we should meet them according to our ability; but let us always keep the Word of God in the first place. The needs of the body must never take precedence over the needs of the soul, in our service.

In feeding the five thousand, the Lord first of all tested His disciples. How much had they taken in as to His sufficiency? Very little apparently, for in answer to His word, "Give ye them to eat," they **only** think of human resources and of money. Now any resources of a human sort that were present were by no means ignored. They were very insignificant, but they were appropriated by Jesus that in them His power might be displayed. He

might have turned stones into bread, or indeed produced bread from nothing; but His way was to utilize the five loaves and two fishes.

His work has been carried on in just this way throughout the present epoch. His servants possess certain small things, which He is pleased to use. And further, He dispensed His bounty in an orderly manner, the people being seated in hundreds and fifties, and He employed His disciples in the work. The feet and hands that conveyed the food to the people were theirs. To-day the feet and hands of His servants are used, their minds and lips are placed at His disposal, so that the bread of life may reach the needy. But the power that produces results is **wholly His**. The very feebleness of the means used makes this manifest.

As the perfect Servant He was careful to connect all that He did with heaven. Before the miracle took place He looked up to heaven and rendered thanks. Thereby the thoughts of the crowd were directed to God as the Source of all, rather than to Himself the Servant of God on earth. A word to ourselves, containing a similar principle, is found in 1 Peter iv. 11. The servant who ministers spiritual food is to do so as from God, that God may be glorified in it and not himself.

We may also extract encouragement from the fact that when the great crowd was fed, far more remained than the little with which they started. The Divine resources are inexhaustible, and the servant who relies upon his Master will never run

out of supplies. In this respect there is a very happy resemblance between the loaves and fishes placed in the hands of the disciples and the Bible placed in the hands of disciples to-day.

The feeding of the multitude accomplished, the Lord at once dispatched His disciples to the other side of the lake and gave Himself to prayer. He not only connected all with heaven by thanksgiving in the presence of the people, but He ever maintained touch for Himself as the Servant of the Divine will. From John vi. we learn that at this point the people were enthusiastic and would have made Him a king by force. The disciples might have been entrapped by this, but He was not.

The crossing of the lake furnished the disciples with a fresh demonstration of who their Master was. The contrary wind hindered their progress, and they toiled forward slowly. He again proved Himself supremely above both wind and wave, walking upon the water, and able to pass them by. His word calmed their fears, and His presence in their boat ended the storm. In spite of all this, the real significance of it eluded them. Their hearts were not yet ready to take it in. Nevertheless the people generally had learned to recognize the Lord and His power. Abundance of need was presented to Him, and He met it with abundance of grace.

As we commence chapter vii. the opposition of the religious leaders again comes to light. The disciples, filled with labour—as verse 31 of the previous chapter has told us—were not observing

certain traditional washings, and this roused the Pharisees, who were the great sticklers for the tradition of the elders. The Lord accepted the challenge on behalf of the disciples, and answered by a searching exposure of the whole Pharisaic position. They were hypocrites, and He told them so.

The essence of their hypocrisy lay in the profession of worship, consisting in outward ceremonials, when inwardly their hearts were utterly estranged. **Nothing counts with God if the heart be not right.**

Then, in carrying out their ceremonials they brushed aside the commandment of God in favour of their own tradition. The Lord not merely asserted this, but proved it by giving an instance of the way in which they set aside the fifth commandment by their rules concerning "Corban;" that is, things devoted to the service of God. Under cover of "Corban" many a Jew divested himself of all his rightful duties towards his poor old parents. And he did the thing with an air of sanctity, for did it not appear more pious to devote things to God rather than to one's parents?

The things that came under "Corban" were not things that God **demand**ed; had it been so His demand must have prevailed. There were things that **might be** dedicated, if so desired; whereas the obligation to support parents was a distinct **command**. Pharisaic tradition permitted a man to use a permissive enactment in order to avoid complying with a distinct command. They might try to support their tradition with sophistry which ap-



peared pious, but the Lord charged them with nullifying the Word of God. The **written words** of Exodus xx. 12 were to Jesus **"the Word of God."** There is no support here for that religious fastidiousness which declines to attach the designation "Word of God" to the written Scriptures.

We believe we should be right in saying that all human tradition in the things of God ultimately sets the Word of God at naught. The originators of the tradition probably have no such thought, but the master spirit of evil, lying behind the business, has **just that intention.**

Having unmasked the Pharisees as men whose hearts were far from God, and who dared to make of no effect the Word of God, the Lord called the people and publicly proclaimed the truth which cuts at the root of all religious pretension. Man is not defiled by physical contact with external things, but **is himself the seat of what defiles.** A hard saying this, and only they who have ears to hear will receive it.

The disciples had to ask Him privately concerning it, and in verses 18 to 23 we have the explanation. Man is corrupt in his nature. What comes from his very heart defiles him. Out of his heart proceed evil thoughts which develop into every kind of evil action. This is the most tremendous indictment of human nature ever uttered. No wonder the Pharisaic heart was far from God; but what a terrible thing that men with hearts like this should profess to draw near and worship Him.

These searching words of our Lord cut at the

root of all human pride, and show the worthlessness of all human movements, whether religious or political, which deal merely with externals and leave the heart of man untouched.

His disciples as yet hardly understood these things, and experience will show us that professing Christians are very slow to accept and understand them to-day; but we shall not get very far except we do understand them. However, it is one thing to expose the heart of man: something more is needed—the heart of God must be expressed. This the Lord proceeded to do, as the rest of the chapter shows.

To the very borders of the land which harboured so much of hypocrisy He went, and there came in contact with a poor Gentile woman in desperate need. His fame had reached her ears and she would not be denied. Yet the Lord tested her by His little parable about the children's bread and the dogs. Her answer, "Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs," was happily free of hypocrisy. She said in effect, "Yes, Lord: it is true that I am no child of the kingdom but a poor Gentile dog without any claim; but I am confident that there is enough power with God and enough goodness in His heart, to feed a poor dog like me."

Now this was **faith**. Matthew indeed tells us that the Lord called it "great faith," and it delighted Him. It also brought her all that her heart desired. Her daughter was delivered. How great the contrast between the heart of God and the

heart of man! The one full of benevolence and grace: the other full of every kind of evil. How happy for us when instead of harbouring hypocrisy we are marked by honesty and faith.

In verse 31 He again returns to the neighbourhood of the lake, there to meet a man who was deaf and dumb — a condition that was strikingly symbolic of the state in which the mass of the Jews were found. The poor Gentile woman had had ears to hear, and consequently found her tongue to utter words of faith, but they were deaf and had nothing to say.

In healing this man the Lord performed certain actions, which doubtless have symbolic meanings. He took him aside from the crowds, that He might deal with him in privacy. His fingers, symbolic of Divine action, touch his ears. That which came from His mouth touched the mouth of the dumb man. Thus the work was done, and the deaf and dumb both heard and spoke. If any ears are opened to hear the voice of the Lord, it is the fruit of Divine action which takes place in secret. And if any tongue can utter the praise of God or the Word of God, it is because that which comes from His mouth has been brought into contact with ours.

Nothing is said as to the faith of the man. What he felt he was unable to express, and others brought him to Jesus. He was met, however, in full and unstinted grace. Once more it was a case of the goodness of the heart of God being manifested by Jesus.

Evidently the people in some measure were conscious of this, and in their amazement they confessed, "He hath done all things well!" Coming where it does, this word is all the more striking. The early part of the chapter reveals man in his true character, and we find his heart to be a fountain whence proceeds nothing but evil — he has done all things *ill*! The perfect Servant reveals the goodness of the heart of God. He has done all things *well*.

With this verdict we too have abundant cause to agree.

F. B. HOLE.

"If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." People would like a convenient and comfortable means of knowing God's will, as one might get a receipt

for anything; but there exists no means of ascertaining it without reference to the state of our own soul.

Moreover, we are often of too much importance in our own eyes; and we deceive ourselves in supposing some will of God in such and such a case. God perhaps has nothing to tell us thereon, the evil being altogether in the stir we give ourselves. The will of God is perhaps that we should take quietly an insignificant place.

Further, we sometimes seek God's will, desiring to know how to act in circumstances **in which His only will is that we should not be found at all**; and where, if conscience were really in activity, its first effect would be to make us leave them. It is our own will which sets us there, and we should like nevertheless to enjoy the comfort of being guided of God in a path which we ourselves have chosen. Such is a very common case.

Be assured that, if we are near enough to God, we shall not be at a loss to know His will.

## QUICKENING.

ONLY when we take a wide view of our fallen estate can we realize in an adequate way the complete havoc that has been wrought by sin, or the fulness of God's answer to it all which reaches us in the Gospel. We have already seen that sin has brought in:—

**guilt**, and so **forgiveness** must reach us;  
**condemnation**, so **justification** is needed;  
**bondage**, and we need **redemption**;  
**alienation** from God, so we need **reconciliation**;  
**peril** of many kinds, so we need **salvation**;  
**profanation** and pollution, so we need **sanctification**;  
**corruption**, which has affected the deepest springs of our nature, so we need the **new birth**.

We have now to see that it has plunged us into spiritual **death**, and we must be **quickened** if we are to live to God.

Our state is set forth in Ephesians ii. 1, as "dead in trespasses and sins." The next verse remarkably enough goes on to speak of walking in those trespasses and sins; but that is because the death there spoken of is death **towards God**. Those who are dead Godward are very much alive to "the course of this world," and "the

prince of the power of the air," who operates in the "children of disobedience." To be dead towards God is entirely consistent with being alive towards the world and the devil: indeed the one springs out of the other.

This is the fact that underlies the solemn statement made in Romans iii. 11, that, "there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." That there should be none righteous (verse 10) is bad: it is worse that none should understand, for that means a state not only of ignorance but insensibility. It is worst of all that none should desire to understand or seek after God, with whom is righteousness and understanding and life. To the natural man there is nothing that is desirable in God. Man is **not** right: he does **not** understand that he is not right: he has **no** desire after God who is right. In one word he is **dead** towards God.

Once these solemn facts lay hold of us, we realize that our only hope is in God taking the initiative with us in His sovereign mercy. We are quite well able to take the initiative in evil, but as regards all that is of God we are dead; and hence all movement must spring from Him.

**God** then must act. But **how** must He act? Will reformation, education or instruction meet our case? By no means: there can be nothing until He quickens, for quickening simply means the giving of life. The very word translated

“quicken” in the New Testament is one compounded of the noun “life,” and the verb “to make”—to make to live.

Now it is a striking fact that Ezekiel xxxvi., which shows the **corruption** and moral filth in which Israel lay, and prophecies as to the **new birth** which consequently must be theirs, is followed by the vision of the valley of dry bones in chapter xxxvii. This sets forth the **death** towards God, in which Israel lies as a nation, and it prophecies concerning God’s work of **quickenings**, which must touch them before they enter into millennial blessedness. They will be brought up by Him out of the graves among the nations where they lie. There will be a national resurrection, and, says the Lord, “Ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it” (verse 14). Once they are quickened they **will understand**, and they will at once **seek** the Lord.

The “wind,” or “breath,” of verse 9 seems to be identified with “My Spirit,” of verse 14: Indeed, the same Hebrew word is translated, wind, breath or spirit, according to the context. It is interesting to compare these verses with John iii. 8. There the blowing of the wind is connected with the Spirit’s action in new birth. Here it is connected with His action in quickening. This should show us how closely new birth and quickening are connected one with the other, and that they must not be divided from each other,

though they should be distinguished and separately considered, as they are in chapters xxxvi. and xxxvii. of Ezekiel.

Now if John iii. answers to Ezekiel xxxvi., John v. answers to Ezekiel xxxvii. That chapter opens with the cure of the impotent man. It was as though a fresh stream of life entered his powerless limbs, and he took up his bed and walked. When challenged as to this miracle, the Lord Jesus proceeded to speak of far greater works than this which were His to do—the quickening of whom He will and the raising of all men. The former is a limited work. Those among the spiritually dead who hear the voice of the Son of God—and only those—shall spiritually live. The latter is universal. All in the graves shall hear His voice and come forth in two classes, to life and to judgment respectively. This will take place at different times, as we learn from other scriptures.

In verse 21 of this marvellous chapter in John, quickening is attributed to both the Father and the Son whereas in the next verse the work of judgment is said to lie wholly in the hands of the Son. The Son, and the Son alone, came forth into this world to suffer and be set at naught. To Him alone then shall the supremacy and majesty and honour of executing judgment belong. In the giving of life however the Son acts according to His own will equally with the Father and—we hardly need add — in fullest accord with the



Father. Equally with the Father is He the Source of life, for verse 26 is evidently parallel with verse 21 in its sense. As 1 Corinthians xv. 45 says, "The last Adam . . . a quickening spirit."

Verses 24 and 25 give us the way in which the Son acts in life-giving power at the present moment. He quickens by means of His word. There are those who really hear His word; that is, they hear in it "the voice of the Son of God," and consequently they believe on the Father who sent Him, and they live. Quickenings is not presented here as a work of the Son altogether apart from the use of means. Were it so presented we should read, "they that live shall hear." But what we read is, "they that hear shall live." Life is indeed His gift, but it reaches us in the hearing of His voice in His word.

In the light of this chapter we believe we may speak of quickening as the most deep-seated and fundamental aspect of God's work in us. Such is its importance that the Father and the Son act together as to it in a special way. A wrong use is sometimes made of our Lord's statements in verses 19 and 30; "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do;" and "I can of Mine own Self do nothing." These words do not mean that He disclaimed all power, just as a mere prophet might have done. They expressed in the first place the fact that in becoming Man the Son had taken the place of dependent service, acting wholly by the Spirit in subjec-

tion to the Father. This thought seems specially prominent in verse 30. But in the second place they also emphasized the fact that His essential place in the unity of the Godhead was such that it was impossible that He should act apart from the Father. This thought seems more prominent in verse 19.

From this inner and more hidden aspect of things it was as though He said, "I am so essentially one with the Father that it is in the nature of things impossible that I should act apart from Him." It was really the strongest possible affirmation of His essential Deity. The Father and the Son must ever act together as the end of verse 19 says. Thus did the Lord **accept** the charge of "making Himself equal with God," and not only accept it but **amplify** the thought of it. So both the Father and the Son act together in life-giving power.

In John vi. 63, we discover that the Spirit of God also quickens. The first occurrence of the word "Spirit" in that verse should evidently be printed with a capital, the second occurrence of the word is rightly printed without a capital. Comparison may be made with verse 6 of chapter iii., where the distinction is rightly made. The very words of the Lord are spirit and life but it is the Spirit Himself who quickens. We may say therefore that the whole fulness of the Godhead—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is involved in the work of giving life to such as ourselves.

One further thing has to be noted. We meet with it both in Ephesians ii. 5, and Colossians ii. 13: we have been quickened "together with Christ." Being "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii. 1), and "dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh" (Col. ii. 13), nothing short of quickening would meet our case. Quicken-  
ing was thus a necessity, but there was no necessity that we should be quickened **together with Christ**, that is the fruit of the counsels of God in grace.

Life "together with,"—in association with—Christ was His thought for us, and this goes far beyond the bare necessity of the plight we were in. Life of **some** sort we must have, if ever we were to be in conscious blessedness; but life of **this** sort is the highest and most intimate that can be known by the redeemed creature. Therefore it is that we read of this quickening as being the fruit of the richness of God's mercy, and because of His great love wherewith He loved us. **Rich** mercy and **great** love are thus expressed.

We have been made to live in association with Christ, inasmuch as our life as quickened is of His own order—His life is ours. Since this is so, it is possible for us to be raised up and made to "sit together in heavenly places" in Him. Having life of such an order as this, we are fitted for such exalted seats. The wonderful story of our quickening ends in our sitting in heavenly places in the life of our Quickener.

In the Old Testament we read of quickening. Ten times or more the Psalmist speaks of it in Psalm cxix. Are we to differentiate between that and what we find in the New Testament?

We believe that we have to do so. The Psalmist says that God's word has quickened him in verse 50, yet again and again he desires to be quickened. The word is evidently used more in the sense of being revived, of being restored to more vigorous life. In Old Testament times man was still under probation. The law had been given to test him, and life on earth was still proposed as the result of perfect obedience to the law. Only when we come to the New Testament is the probation period over, and man formally pronounced to be dead in trespasses and sins. Hence only in the New Testament does the full truth of quickening appear.

Some have thought that quickening is very advanced truth; that, for instance, a man may be born again and yet quickening lie ahead as something to be reached much later, as a kind of climax to God's work in him. Does Scripture indicate this?

It clearly does not. Until quickened by Divine power we are dead. It is the very beginning of God's work in us rather than the climax. It would however be true to say that it is truth into the full import of which we are slow to enter. Almost invariably we begin by understanding truth as to the forgiveness of sins and salvation. This matter of life, and more especially life together with Christ, begins to impress us later in

our spiritual history. We must not however attribute to **the thing itself**, what may quite rightly be stated as to our **apprehension** of the thing. The thing itself is the fruit of a Divine act: our apprehension of it the fruit of Divine teaching.

In John v. 26, we read that the Father (1) raises up the dead, and (2) quickens them. Are we right in differentiating between the two things? And, if so, what is the difference?

We believe that there is a distinct difference. In John xi. 25, the Lord Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life." Resurrection is one thing and life another; though **for us** they are very intimately **connected**. For the unconverted dead they will be **divorced**. They will be raised and their once dead bodies reanimated, though not quickened, since their resurrection will be that of judgment and not of life, as verse 29 shows. Colossians ii. 12, 13, also presents resurrection and quickening as quite distinct things. We are quickened already but resurrection in its fulness is before us. When that moment comes our bodies will be instinct with life, in keeping with what has already taken place as to our souls.

We have in Romans viii. 11, a word about the quickening of our "mortal bodies." Is that something that takes place in the present, or is it to be in the future?

That is in the future. It is that God "**shall** also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." In the previous verse we have, "The Spirit is life because of righteousness." Both

statements refer to the indwelling Spirit. He is life to us in an experimental and practical way now. He **will** quicken our mortal bodies presently, whether He does it in resurrection, for the saints who have died, or by the change of which 1 Corinthians xv. 51 speaks, for the saints alive when Jesus comes.

Some people however claim that this quickening of our mortal bodies has to do with the healing of disease; that it is what shall be done for us in the present, if only we claim the fulness of the Spirit.

Yes; and in so saying they read into the passage what is not there. There is nothing about disease or healing in the context. It is not our diseased bodies but our mortal bodies that are to be quickened. In our present condition our bodies are liable to death; when quickened they will no longer be subject to death. If the mortal body of the believer really were quickened now, he would be immortal as to his body; that is, **beyond death**, and not merely beyond disease.

So our reply can be twofold. First, there is an "if" in the verse; but it is not, if we claim the fulness of the Spirit, but, if the Spirit dwell in us—which He does, if we really are believers. Second, it is not healing that is in question but the giving of life from a Divine source. When quickened the mortal body is no longer mortal. It is perfectly obvious that this has not yet taken place with any saint living on earth. If Paul's mortal body had been quickened, for instance, the heads-

man's axe would never have laid him low. He would still be walking amongst us!

The Lord Jesus, as the Last Adam, quickens, according to 1 Corinthians xv. 45. We are right, are we not, in connecting this with the present?

Certainly. He stands in contrast to the first Adam in that verse; not merely in being "spirit," in contrast with "soul," but in that He is not merely "living," but the **Life-giver**. Verse 36 of this chapter reminds us that quickening only applies to that which is dead. Now we were dead spiritually, and quickening of a spiritual sort has already reached us from the last Adam. As the Head of a new race, He has already imparted life—His own life—to us who are of His race.

But then this chapter goes on to consider the case of our bodies which are still mortal. We must bear the image of the heavenly Adam even as regards our bodies, and so the great change will reach us at the coming of the Lord. Then "this mortal" will "put on immortality," and this will be the quickening of our mortal bodies, of which Romans viii. 11 speaks.

When that is accomplished, and "Death is swallowed up in victory" (verse 54), the work of quickening as regards ourselves will be carried to its final completion. Then the word that we "shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 17), shall be fulfilled. Not only **in** life, but **reigning** in it, and that **for ever**.

## FROM APE TO MAN.

**I**T is sometimes rather staggering to read the findings of men who call themselves scientists.

A bit of a jawbone with three or four teeth in it is found in one spot, a skeleton portion of a limb is found yards away, and these are definitely stated to have belonged to a man who lived 50,000 years ago.

When the young Christian reads such statements and remembers that, if calculations are made from the Bible narrative, they put the creation of man as taking place roughly some 6,000 years ago, he often feels puzzled and even troubled.

A simple calculation will show at a glance that the fixing of these fabulous dates of 50,000 years, or so, ago for the existence of man on earth is simply absurd.

The population of the United Kingdom in 1801 was over 16 millions; in 1901 it was 41 millions, or considerably more than double. Take that as a rough kind of standard, and assume that the human race as a whole doubles itself every century. Begin with 2 in the first century, and double—4, 8, 16, 32, and so on, for sixty centuries, that is for 6000 years. We know of course that the first nine patriarchs, as recorded in Genesis v., became parents at the average age of 117 years. Noah's great age (500) before he begat children was, no doubt, arranged by God in view of the flood, so that there should not be five or six



generations in the ark at the same time, but only two, viz., Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives. However that does not vitiate our calculation, as we shall see.

What then is the result of doubling the population each century for 6,000 years? We arrive at a colossal number represented by 1 with eighteen figures after it. If we calculate for 100 centuries, that is for 10,000 years, we should get a number represented by 1 with thirty figures after it. So we pass from 19 figures to 31 figures—a tremendous jump.

Yet, not long ago (April 8th, 1930) a London daily paper printed the following:—"The transition from ape to man appears to have taken a period calculated by geologists at fourteen million years;" that is, 1,400 times 10,000 years. If we could calculate up to that point we should arrive at figures that would take up the whole space of this magazine, if they were printed, and then we should not have enough space for our purpose by a very long way, nor live long enough to complete the calculations even though we became centenarians.

We are certainly in a position to calculate with greater exactitude the area of the earth's surface. We are told it consists roughly of about 50,000,000 square miles. This reduced to square yards would be 154,880,000,000,000 square yards, that is a matter of 15 figures. If the human race be doubled each century for 60 centuries our calculations show that there would at the end of

that time be only one square yard available for over 10,000 people.

It may be urged that the population of the earth has been greatly diminished by earthquakes, floods, fire, plagues, diseases, wars, bad seasons, producing lack of food, resulting in the death of millions by famines; and further that the effect of modern civilisation is to reduce the birth rate. On the other hand however, we know how civilised countries reduce the death rate by better sanitation, increased knowledge of hygiene and the laws of living, better medical knowledge and surgical skill, and the like. Still there can be no doubt that on the whole the death rate must have been much higher in the past centuries, and the rate of increase therefore lower.

But allowing for all this on a very liberal scale, our figures, by a very big margin indeed, convince the scientists of childish folly in their wild guesses, and point to the accuracy of the Bible. The Scriptures, be it remembered, show us that we have not to start our calculations, with the first two people—not from Adam but from Noah—so the number of centuries to be allowed for is about 43, rather than 60. The Bible is scientific wherever it makes statements that touch on facts within the domain of science.

A French savant truly said, "I am not credulous enough to be an unbeliever." If we had to believe the scientist as to the age of man on the earth we should have to disbelieve the Bible narrative. We find we can believe the Bible narra-

tive and our belief is not antagonistic to reason. To believe the scientist on this point would take a credulity that would be childish and foolish in the extreme.

“We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth” (2 Cor. xiii. 8). Young Christian, hold on to your Bible. It will never let you down.

A. J. POLLOCK.

## A CONFESSION.

**A** MARVELLOUS thing had meanwhile come to pass in the life of the author. Hitherto he had sought wisdom all his days, and sought it most earnestly: sought it in science, sought it in philosophy; sought it in art, sought it in letters; sought it in college, sought it in the world; sought it from professor, sought it from preacher; sought it laughing, crying; sought it yearning, sobbing. And many indeed were the things he learned in the search.

The physiologist told him how they make frogs' legs dance; the astronomer told him that Sirius does not really twinkle; and the naturalist told him that the serpent once had legs, and lost them in its attempts at evolution. The philosopher told him that the universe is a machine; the scientist, that men have only recently grown wiser than monkeys. The artist explained to him

how he writes merely for the sake of writing; the preacher, that one can be a Christian teacher even as an agnostic. Lastly, the Professor of Ethics convinced the writer that he was an excellent fellow. But not a soul even as much as whispered to him that, **The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and, Knowledge of the Most High, THAT is understanding.**

As upon these sentences he at last stumbled, as it were, in a book which is found indeed on many a parlour table of Christendom, but has to be dusted twice a week, the net sum of the writer's fruitless search after wisdom was that he began to look into that book in earnest. And what he found was this: he had faithfully and admiringly studied Homer and Plato, Virgil and Cicero, Epictetus, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, Aeschylus and Sophocles, Confucius and Buddha, Mahomet and Saadi, Shakespeare and Bacon, Dante and Rousseau, Descartes and Spinoza, Kant and Schopenhauer, Goethe and Herder, Strauss and Buechner, Emerson and Carlyle, Ruskin and Arnold, Darwin and Spencer, Proudhon and Tolstoy. In all these is held forth more or less the promise of **Life**. But the writer has sorrowfully found that though these do not indeed offer a stone for bread, yet they give shelter to the soul such as the dweller in the slum tenement of the city hath in comparison with the soil-tiller's homestead in the country. They give indeed food unto the heart, but it is the watered milk and the larded butter and the refrigerated beef of the

city with its consequent need of allopath and homeopath, rather than the creamy milk of the farmer, his pure butter, and the fatted calf of the country.

On Carlyle and Emerson, on Plato and Aurelius, on Ruskin and Tolstoy, one can indeed live, but the Accident policy must be carefully taken out before the journey, and a goodly supply of all manner of liniments, sarsaparilla, and otherwise, must ever be at hand for the mumps and measles of the soul, which, say what these teachers may, will not down for other than brief time. Not so, however, with **The Book**. For it tells of One who spake as never man spake, Who was the true Bread of Life, that which cometh down from the heavens, of which if a man eat he shall never hunger.

I. PANIN. (Extracted).

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(MARK viii. 1—ix. 16).

Our review of this Gospel being more condensed than in the case of the Epistles hitherto before us, it is more than ever necessary to read it in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

**W**HEN the five thousand were fed, as recorded in chapter vi., the disciples took the initiative by calling their Master's attention to the needy condition of the crowd. On this second oc-

casion the Lord took the initiative, and drew His disciples' attention to their need, expressing His compassion and concern on their behalf. As on the first occasion so again now the disciples have simply **man** before them, and think only of his powers which are wholly unequal to the situation. They had not yet learned to measure the difficulty by the power of their Lord.

Hence the instruction which was conveyed by the feeding of a huge crowd with earthly resources of the tiniest order, was repeated. There were slight differences, both as to the number of the people and the number of the loaves and fishes used, but in all the essentials this miracle was a repetition of the other, as once more He fulfilled Psalm cxxxii. 15, and displayed **the power of God** before their eyes.

Having fed the multitude, He dismissed them Himself, and immediately after departed with His disciples to the other side of the lake, just as on the previous occasion. On His arrival certain Pharisees came with aggressive intent requesting a sign from heaven. He had as a matter of fact just been giving very striking signs from heaven in the presence of thousands of witnesses. The Pharisees had no intention of following Him, and hence had not been present so as to see the sign for themselves, still there was ample witness to it if they cared to listen. The fact was of course that on the one hand they had no desire to witness any sign that would authenticate Him and His mission, and on the other hand they had no ability to see

and recognize the sign even when it was plainly before their eyes. Their utter unbelief grieved Him to the heart.

In verse 34 of the previous chapter, when He was confronted with human weakness and disability of a bodily sort, He sighed: here confronted with blindness of a spiritual sort, He sighed **deeply** in His spirit. Spiritual incapacity is a far more serious matter than bodily incapacity. They were blind leaders of a blind generation and groping about for a sign. No sign would be given to them, for to blind men signs are useless. This was the occasion when, as recorded at the beginning of Matthew xvi., the Lord told them they could discern the face of the sky, but not the signs of the times.

Let us not dismiss this matter as being something which only concerns the Pharisee: in principle it also concerns ourselves. How often has the true believer been troubled and disheartened, thinking God has not spoken, or acted, or answered, when really He has, only we have not had eyes to see. We may have continued beseeching Him for more **light**, when all the time all that was wanted was a few **windows** in our house!

The motive actuating these Pharisees was wholly wrong, since their object was to tempt Him. So the Lord abruptly left them and departed again to the other side of the lake, which He had left but a short time before, and the disciples

were without bread. Thus for the third time they were face to face with the problem raised in the feeding of the five thousand and the four thousand, only on a very small scale.

Alas! the disciples no more met the problem in the strength of faith when it was on the small scale than when it was on the great scale. They too had not so far had eyes to see the power and glory of their Master, as displayed twice in His multiplication of the loaves and fishes. True faith has penetrating vision. They should have discerned who He was, and then they would have looked not to their paltry loaves or fishes but to Him, and every difficulty would have vanished. In the small crises that mark our own lives are we any better than they were?

The Lord's charge about the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod is not explained to us here, as it is in Matthew, but we must note its significance. He referred to the doctrine of the two factions, which worked like leaven in those who came under the influence of the one and the other. That of the Pharisees was hypocrisy. That of the Herodians was utter worldliness. In Matthew we read of the leaven of the Sadducees, and this was intellectual pride which led them into rationalistic unbelief. Nothing does more effectually blind the mind and understanding than leaven of these three kinds.

The blind man of Bethsaida, of whom we read in verses 22 to 26, exactly illustrates the condition



of the disciples at that time. When the blind man was brought to the Lord, He took him by the hand and led him out of the town, thus separating him from the haunts of men, just as previously He had turned His back upon the Pharisees and those with them (verse 13). Outside the town the Lord dealt with him, performing His work in two parts—the only time, as far as we remember, that He acted thus. As the result of the first touch he saw, “men as trees, walking.” He saw, but things were badly out of focus. He knew that the objects he saw were men, but they looked much bigger than they were.

Thus it was with the disciples — **man** was too great in their eyes. Even as they looked at the Lord Himself it would seem that His humanity eclipsed His Deity in their eyes. They needed, like the blind man, a second touch before they saw all things clearly. The presence of the Son of God amongst them in flesh and blood was the first touch that reached them, and as a result they began to see. When He had died and risen again and was ascended to glory, He laid His second touch upon them in shedding forth His Spirit, as recorded in Acts ii. Then they saw all things clearly. We may well earnestly pray that our spiritual vision may not be near-sighted and out of focus, lest the great trees, we think we see, turn out to be merely feeble little men strutting about. Such a state is possible for us, as 2 Peter i. 9. shows; and there is no excuse for us, since the Spirit has been given.

The blind man, when cured, was not to go into the town nor testify to any in the town; moreover the Lord Himself now withdrew with His disciples to Caesarea Philippi, the most northerly town within the confines of the land, and very near the Gentile border. Clearly He was beginning to withdraw Himself and the testimony to His Messiahship from the blind people and their yet more blinded leaders. Here He raised the question with His disciples as to who He was. The people hazarded differing guesses, but all imagined Him to be some old prophet revived, just a **man**, and none had sufficient interest to really find out.

Then Jesus challenged His disciples. Peter became the spokesman and answered confessing His Messiahship, but this only produced a rejoinder which probably astonished them greatly, and may astonish us as we read it to-day. He charged them to be silent as to His Messiahship, and began to teach them as to His approaching rejection and death and resurrection. Any testimony that had been rendered to Him as the Messiah on earth was now formally withdrawn. From this point He accepted His death as inevitable, and began to turn the thoughts of His disciples to that which was impending as the result of it. This was the orderly progress of things on the human side; and it does not contradict nor clash with the divine side—that He knew from the outset that which was before Him.

Moreover, the disciples were as yet hardly fit to bear further testimony, had it been needed.

Peter indeed had some measure of spiritual sight, for he had just confessed Him as the Christ; yet the intimation of His approaching rejection and death raised a vehement remonstrance from this very man. In this Peter's mind was being swayed by Satan, and the Lord rebuked this spirit of evil who was behind Peter's words. Peter's mind was set on "the things that be of **men**," and so he answered very aptly to the man of whom we have just read, who saw men as trees walking. Though he recognized the Christ in Jesus, he still had men before him, and in this the other disciples were no better than he. So how could he go forth as an effectual witness to the Christ whom he recognized? No wonder, after all, that at this point He charged His disciples that they should tell no man of Him.

We may pause here, each to face the fact that we cannot effectually go forth in testimony unless we really know the One of whom we testify, and also know and understand the situation that exists, in the face of which the testimony has to be rendered.

In the closing verses of our chapter the Lord begins to instruct His disciples in the presence of the people as to consequences that would follow from His rejection and death. They imagined themselves to be following a Messiah who was to be received and glorified on earth; and the fact was, He was about to die and rise again and be for the present glorified in heaven. This entailed an immense change in their outward prospects. It

meant the denying of self, the taking up of the cross, the losing of life in this world, the bearing of shame as identified with Christ and His words, in the midst of an evil generation.

The force of "deny himself" is hardly expressed by "self-denial," which is the denying oneself of **something**. What the Lord speaks of is not that but the denial, or the saying of "no," to **oneself**. Also, "take up his cross" does not mean bearing trials and troubles merely. The man who in those days took up his cross was being led to execution. He was a man who had to accept death at the hands of the world. To say "no" to oneself is to accept death **internally**, on one's own spirit: to take up one's cross is to accept death **externally** at the hands of the world. That is what discipleship must mean, since we follow the Christ who died, rejected of the world.

This thought is expanded in verses 35—37. The true disciple of Christ is not aspiring to gain the whole world; he is ready rather to lose the world, and his own life in it, for the sake of the Lord and His Gospel. The perfect Servant, whom Mark depicts, gave His life that there might be a Gospel to preach. Those who follow Him, and are His servants, must be prepared to give up their lives in preaching the Gospel. If they should be ashamed of Him now, He would be ashamed of them in the day of His glory.

These words, if they at all realized their import, must have come to the disciples as a great blow.

Hence the Lord, in His tender consideration for them, proceeded to give them very ample assurance as to the reality of the glory that is to come. They had expected God's kingdom to come with power and glory in their lifetime, and that illusion being dispelled, they might easily jump to the conclusion that it was not coming at all. Hence the three disciples, who seemed to be leaders among them, were taken aside to the high mountain that they might be witnesses of His transfiguration. There they saw the kingdom of God come with power—not in its fulness but in sample form. They were granted a private view of it in advance.

In the first chapter of his second Epistle Peter shows us the effect that this wonderful scene had upon him. He was an eye-witness of the majesty of Christ, and thereby he knew that His power and the promise of His coming was no cunningly devised fable, but a glorious fact, and so the prophetic word was made "more sure," or "confirmed." He knew, and we may know, that not one jot or tittle, of that which has been foretold concerning the glory of Christ's coming kingdom, will fail.

The transfiguration scene itself was a prophecy. Christ is to be the shining Centre of the kingdom glory, as He was on the mountain top. Saints will be with Him in heavenly conditions, just as Moses and Elijah were: some of them buried and called forth by God, like Moses; some raptured to heaven without dying, like Elijah. In the king-

dom too there will be saints on earth below, enjoying earthly blessedness in the light of the heavenly glory, just as the three disciples were conscious of blessedness during the brief vision. It was "after six days," and only six were present, so all was on a small and incomplete scale; still the essentials were there.

Peter, ready to speak as ever, blurted out what he intended to be a compliment, but which in reality was far otherwise. The scene of glory could not then be prolonged upon earth, nor could the Christ—nor even Moses and Elijah—be confined to earthly tabernacles. But more serious than this mistake was the thought that Jesus was only **the first amongst the greatest of men**. He is not the first amongst the great, but "the beloved Son," of the Father, **perfectly unique, immeasurably beyond all comparison**. No other may be mentioned in the same breath with Him. He stands alone. This the Father's voice declared, adding that He is the One who is to be heard.

The Father's voice has been heard very rarely by men. He spoke at Christ's baptism, and now again at His transfiguration, this time adding, "Hear Him." Since then His voice has never been heard by men in intelligible fashion. The Son is the Spokesman of the Godhead, and it is to Him that we have to listen. God once spoke through the prophets, Moses and Elijah: He now has spoken in His beloved Son. This shuts Peter out, as well as Moses and Elijah, which is significant when we remember what the Romish sys-

tem makes of Peter and his supposed authority. In this incident Peter again showed that as yet he was just like the man whose eyes were out of focus, so that he saw men as trees walking.

No sooner had the Father's voice thus exalted His beloved Son than the whole vision was gone, and only Jesus was left with the three disciples. Saints disappear, but Jesus remains. The words, "They saw no man any more, save Jesus only," are very significant. If any of us approximate to that in our spiritual experience, we shall no longer be like a man who sees men as trees walking, but be like the man after the second touch, seeing all things clearly. Jesus will fill the picture as far as we are concerned, and man be eclipsed.

All this was made known to the disciples, as verse 9 shows, in view of the time when His death and resurrection should be accomplished. Only then would they really understand it all, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and be able to effectually use it in testimony. At that moment they did not even understand what rising from among the dead really signified, as the next verse shows. The rising of the dead would not have puzzled them in any special way: it was this rising "out of," or "from among," the dead — which first took place in Christ—that raised such questions. The first resurrection of the saints, the resurrection of life, is of the same order. Are there not many, calling themselves Christians, who are full of questions as to it to-day?

The disciples' question as to Elijah, and his predicted coming, was naturally raised in their minds by the transfiguration scene. The Lord used it to again turn their thoughts to His death. In regard to this first advent of His, the part of Elijah had been played by John the Baptist; and his murder was symptomatic of what was to happen to the greater One, of whom he was the forerunner.

The scene on the high mountain soon came to an end but not so the scenes of human sin and misery and suffering which filled the plains below. From the heights to the depths they had to come, to find the rest of the disciples defeated and anxious in the absence of their Master. Immediately He appeared the crowds were amazed, and all eyes turned from the distracted disciples to the calm and all-sufficient Master. A moment before the scribes had been heckling the disciples, now He questions the scribes, invites the confidence of the troubled father, and displays His sufficiency.

Happy is the saint who is able to bring something of the grace and power of Christ into this troubled world! But even so, we shall have to wait for His coming and kingdom to see fully accomplished what this scene foreshadows. Only then will He transform the whole world, and turn the defeat and disquietude of His tried and distracted people into **the calm of His presence** and into a **complete and manifested victory**.

F. B. HOLE.

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## THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

**W**E have considered many of the direful consequences of sin; there remains one further effect to be emphasized. It has reduced men to a state of powerlessness. Not only are we fallen into bondage to sin, as we saw when considering **redemption**, but we are totally without power to please God or to serve Him. Now one thing is certain: the creature should within its own limits perfectly serve the Creator.

Power we must have; both to deliver us from the paralysis **internal** to ourselves, which sin has produced, and to enable us to go rightly through **external** circumstances, as those who serve the will of God. Power is conferred upon us, and the wonderful thing is that it should be by the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Something much less than this might have sufficed for us, but nothing short of it has been given of God. The risen Christ, about to go on high, said to His disciples, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts i. 8). This promise was fulfilled ten days later on the day of Pentecost, as Acts ii. records.

In Ezekiel xxxvi. and xxxvii., as we have seen, there are prophecies as to the work of new birth and quickening, which will be wrought in the rem-

nant of Israel in a coming day, preparing them for millennial blessedness. In both chapters there is mention also of the gift of the Holy Spirit—"I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them" (xxxvi. 27): "And shall put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live" (xxxvii. 14). As a consequence of this there will be spiritual life in Israel, which will express itself in active obedience to God's will. As God directs, so they will do. Other Old Testament scriptures have similar predictions, notably the end of Joel ii., which Peter quoted on the day of Pentecost, saying that what had just occurred in their midst was a sample of what Joel had foretold. We shall see however that the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost has in it a fulness and permanence hardly contemplated in Old Testament times.

New birth is produced by the Holy Spirit, and in result we have, as John iii. 6, indicates, a new nature which is "spirit" in its essential character. That which is produced by the Spirit's action partakes of His own nature. This must of course be distinguished from the Spirit indwelling men already born again, which is what occurred at Pentecost; and it is very necessary to observe that power is connected, not with the new nature produced by the Spirit, but with the Holy Spirit as a Person, actually indwelling the believer's body. This is quite manifest in the passage, Romans vii. 7—viii. 4.

In Romans vii. we are given the experience of

one who is born again, for he possesses "the inward man," which delights in the law of God (verse 22). Consequently he approves what is good and earnestly desires it, yet finds himself unable to practise it. It is not until we reach the Deliverer in "Jesus Christ our Lord" (verse 25), and go on to read of "the law [or, control] of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," that we find power to overcome "the law [or, control] of sin and death" (viii. 2), and to fulfil those things which the law so righteously required (viii. 4). The **power** that delivers is found in Christ, and in His Spirit, who has been given to us.

This passage in Romans shows us the power that delivers us from the internal paralysis that sin induces, and this of course is a prerequisite, if we are to be marked by power in witness to our risen Lord, which is what is contemplated in Acts i. 8, and also in Luke xxiv. 49. It should be a very sobering thought for all of us, that even as saints no power is **vested** in us. All power for us is vested **in the Spirit of God**, who has been given to us.

The eleven men to whom the Lord spoke were Apostles, on whom as a foundation the church has been built. There had been a powerful work of the Spirit in them, and for three years or more they had been under special instruction, such as no men before had ever had. Yet none of these things conferred the necessary power upon them. However eager they may have been to start their great work of witness, they were at a standstill until the Spirit was given. Not one word of witness did they utter

until then. But **then**, immediately their mouths were opened, and with what astonishing results!

We must not overlook the fact that on the day of Pentecost the disciples not merely received the Spirit to indwell them, but "they were all **filled** with the Holy Ghost" (Acts ii. 4); and when a believer is filled with Him there is no force **active** within, as a check on His power. This filling of the Spirit is not permanent like His indwelling, for Peter was **again** filled with the Spirit in Acts iv. 8, and **yet again**, as we find in verse 31 of the same chapter. When the Spirit does thus fill a believer, the flesh in him is judged and quiescent, and His power is irresistible. Stephen illustrates this; for being full of the Holy Ghost, he was "full of faith and power," and his opponents "were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake" (vi. 8, 10). Unable to resist, they flew to violence, and their stones battered his body to death, thus destroying that "temple" of the Holy Spirit.

Though the history, recorded in Acts, shows that in practice the filling of the Spirit was occasional, even with the Apostles, we must not forget that all Christians are exhorted to be filled with the Spirit, in Ephesians v. 18. It may surprise us to find such a thing put in contrast with being "drunk with wine," but the fact is that when wine is taken in excess it assumes control of the man and carries him outside himself. All that is from beneath and is evil. The Spirit of God however can control, and carry a man outside himself, in

a way that is good and divine. The very good is contrasted with the very evil. If **filled** with the Spirit, all that is not Himself and of Him obviously must be excluded.

Now it is in these other things, that fill so much of our thoughts and time and energies, that the hindrances to the realization of power are to be found; and in this connection we have to contemplate not only things positively evil but many things that are trivial and profitless. Hence we get the word, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph. iv. 30). If we grieve Him, we do not lose His indwelling presence, for the verse continues, "whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." We do however lose much of the benefit of His presence. Both spiritual joy and spiritual power are lost until the grieving thing is put away. Some of the things which grieve are mentioned in the verses which precede and which follow. How much the Spirit of God has been grieved by malice, evil-speaking and bitterness amongst saints. The wonder is that His power is manifested at all!

The Apostle Paul was called and saved that he might be a pattern to us. This 1 Timothy i. 16 informs us. So in his life of service and witness we can see how the power of the Spirit wrought.

Romans xv. 15 shows the extraordinary **range** of his service. From Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum — the modern Albania — he fully preached the Gospel. Within about 25 years he

had fully evangelized peoples living in territories covering hundreds of thousands of square miles, travelling on foot with the occasional help of a boat on the sea and an animal on the land. A miraculous feat indeed! One only possible for him as energized by the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians ii. 1—5 shows the **simplicity** of his preaching. All merely human adornments were discarded, that the central fact of the Cross of Christ might be the more plainly revealed. What marked his preachings was "demonstration of the Spirit and of power:" so that as regards those who received his message, their faith should stand not in "the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

2 Corinthians iii. 1—6, and iv. 1—7, show us the **life-giving power** of Paul's new covenant ministry. His converts were "the epistle of Christ," written "with the Spirit of the **living** God," and, says he, "the Spirit giveth **life**." Both life and light are connected in this passage, for he says, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" shines through "earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

2 Corinthians x. 1—6 shows us the power of **spiritual weapons** in the aggressive conflicts of the Gospel. Satanic powers have entrenched themselves in human minds and formed strongholds of human reasonings and lofty thoughts, which can only be overthrown by such weapons as are employed by the Spirit of God.

1 Thessalonians i. and ii. give us a lovely picture of the **spiritual fruits** in the characters and lives of the converts, when the Gospel comes "not . . . in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." The Thessalonian believers became **followers** of the Lord, **ensamples** to all other believers, and **propagators** of the Word that had saved them; as they served the living and true God and waited for His Son from heaven.

2 Timothy i. shows us the Holy Spirit as characterized by "the spirit . . . of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (7); so that the believer is enabled to be a "partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God" (8), and also to "keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" the good deposit with which he has been entrusted (14). The Spirit of God is the power of **endurance** and for **fidelity**.

The gift of the Spirit on God's part, as well as the gift of His Son, may well be spoken of as "unspeakable" (2 Cor. ix. 15).

At the outset the power of the Spirit was very largely displayed in signs and wonders. Seeing that He is God and unchangeable, should it not be so to-day?

God is indeed the unchangeable One, but this does not mean that He cannot vary His ways and dealings according to His wisdom, as He meets the changing situations that arise amongst men. He has most evidently done so in past dispensations. The display of His power in miracles has

never been constant, indeed only in **three** great epochs has it been manifested thus. First, when through Moses He intervened to bring Israel out of Egypt and into Palestine, inaugurating the law system. Second, when He intervened through Elijah and Elisha, recalling the people to the broken law, and testifying of His goodness. Third, when He intervened in Christ, and the church was subsequently formed through the Apostles. Practically all the miracles that Scripture records come into these three periods. Of John the Baptist we read, "John did no miracle" (John x. 41). His lot was cast just before the third great miracle epoch began in connection with Christ.

But are not these miraculous signs the very greatest display of His power?

By no means. Most of these visible displays of miraculous energy were only **temporal** in their effects. In Acts ix., for instance, Aeneas was raised up from his sick bed, and Dorcas from her bed of death; but in both cases the passage of years brought them into death, and the miracles were as though they had never been. That chapter opens with the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. His fellow-travellers were speechless with amazement, yet they do not seem to have discerned the miracle. It was of course a spiritual miracle of the first order, the effect of which is felt all over the earth to-day—just nineteen centuries later. Every true conversion is a miracle which abides **to eternity**; and miracles of this sort are taking place to-day.



Paul's preaching was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Can we speak of modern preaching in this way?

Only in a very minor degree, we fear. The fact is that so much modern preaching is marked by the very things which Paul tells us he avoided, in order that his preaching might be in the power of the Spirit. He not only renounced the things of deceit and evil, as he tells us in 2 Corinthians iv. 2, but also things of a very reputable sort, such as excellency of speech, and wisdom according to man.

But even where the Gospel is faithfully preached, and that without reliance upon these human expedients, there does not seem to be much power manifested. How can we explain that?

There are two scriptures which may help to explain it—Ephesians iv. 30, and 1 Thessalonians v. 19. All too often the Spirit is grieved in the servant of God who labours, and hence there is little fruit in what he does. And even when this is not the case, the Spirit is grieved by the state of things that prevails amongst the mass of professing Christians. There is also a quenching of the Spirit by the introduction of much human organization, which gives no place to His free action. Then beyond this there is the terrible incubus of unbelief, and often utter infidelity, on the part of multitudes of professed servants of God, who deny practically everything they are pledged to uphold. The Spirit is **grieved** and **quenched** in the bosom of the church, and this fact alone would account for His withholding any great manifestation of His power.

However, it is happily a fact that He is still working, and souls are being blessed, though His work is proceeding in quieter and less noticed ways.

Power for service, though important, is by no means everything. How may we know the Spirit's power for victory in our lives?

By walking in the Spirit, as Galatians v. 16 bids us. We learn from Ephesians i. 13, that He is given to us when we believe the Gospel of our salvation. He marks us off as belonging to God. But also we are to **walk** in Him; that is, He is to be in a practical way the Source and Energy of our life and activities. Walking is the first and earliest activity of mankind, hence it becomes a figurative expression for our activities. Our thoughts, speech and actions are to be under the Spirit's control. Then we shall not be fulfilling the desires of the flesh, as otherwise we should. This is what verse 17 of Galatians v. says. The Spirit of God wields a power that is superior to the downward drag of the flesh; and we experience it, if we walk in Him.

Some of us would say, that though we desire to "walk in the Spirit," we hardly know how to set about it. How does it work out practically?

Galatians vi. 7—9, may help to answer this. Our lives in a practical way are made up of sowing and reaping. It is as though we go forth each day with a seed basket on either side of us. We may put our hand into the basket of the flesh on that side and sow to the flesh, or into the basket of the Spirit on this side and sow to the Spirit: that is, we may be

yielding to the things which merely gratify the flesh, and so scatter the seeds of the flesh, or we may give ourselves to the things of the Spirit, and sow seeds that will be fruitful to His glory.

This is not something that God does for us, but what we do ourselves. All day long we are doing it in one or other of these two directions. In which direction does our choice lie? Into which basket are we continually placing our hand? The resolute **refusal** of the one, and the **cultivation** of the other, is the secret. That is the way to set about it.

Still, many a Christian who is not guilty of serious lapses in outward conduct, is not particularly marked by the liberty or power of the Spirit. How is that to be accounted for?

Such are probably marked by lack of concentration upon the things of God, or by positive laziness. They are easily diverted to things of trifling worth. The Spirit is here to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, and He may be grieved by **inattention** or **sloth** on our side. If you went to an acquaintance with important tidings from a much loved friend, and in a few moments he were to interrupt your glowing story with irrelevant remarks about trivialities, or you found him inclined to sleep in his chair, you would cease your story, grieved and indignant.

The Spirit of God is sensitive as to that which concerns the glory of Christ. Inattention will grieve Him as well as open sin. Let us each ask God to show us how much of our spiritual poverty and powerlessness is to be traced to this.

## OUR GREAT LEADER.

**J**OHAN BUNYAN did not give the hero of his dream much fellowship on his pilgrimage to the Celestial City. His only companions were Faithful who suffered martyrdom in Vanity Fair, and Hopeful who crossed the river with him, and shared in the welcome he received when the bells of the City rang for joy, and it was said to them, "Enter into the joy of your Lord." He had advanced in knowledge when his fertile mind produced the second part of his book, for Christiana fared better than her husband. She had her boys for company, and had not travelled far before the pilgrim band had grown to a considerable company with the splendid leader, Greatheart, for instructor, protector and guide. I have a notion that if he had lived to add a third part to his immortal work, he would have improved upon the second part and given us an army marching to Zion with the Prince Himself, the Captain of our salvation, as the great and infallible Leader.

Anyhow that is the full truth of the Christian's pilgrimage to his home beyond the skies — the Father's house. It is not the will of God whose sons they are that they should travel alone—"He is bringing **MANY sons to glory**" and they should tread the way together and comfort one another as they go. This matter of **company** is important, but the chiefest question of all is that of **leadership**.

"All we like sheep have gone astray"; (Isaiah liii. 6), that was when we followed Adam along

the road of disobedience to death; "But are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Peter ii. 25), that is how we stand today. But unless we follow Him, and loyally accept His leadership, we shall still stray and our homeward journey will not be the triumphant march that God intends it to be.

The journey lies through an enemy's land, for the whole world lies in the wicked one, and he is the god of it, and the road is often rough and abounds with trials and temptations; and then what of death? It is as plain as can be that the dangers and conflicts through which Bunyan passed his pilgrim were not imaginary, he wrote out of his own experience. But let them be as bad as they may, if our great Leader, who has been tested by every trial, is near we shall not only come through all with safety but with triumph, more than conquerors through Him that loves us.

We must consider Him. He is the crowned Christ, but He was crowned on having suffered temptation, and gone down into the suffering of death. He became Man for this, and now we see JESUS, crowned with glory and honour. All this we read in Hebrews ii. He qualified to be the Leader of God's many sons by His suffering. Many enemies blocked the way; they stood, a formidable host, between us and the glory, for it was the devil's intention that God should have none of us; but Jesus has met every foe Himself, and without aid. He went before us. He stood up in the

face of the foe, and when arrows of death and judgment flew in a blinding cloud He bared His bosom to them all, and they found their mark there. He met the devil himself, who has the power of death and annulled his power, that He might deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage. He gave Himself for us and willingly died in our stead, and He has made a clear road for us right up to the glory of God, and on that road He leads us, His delivered brethren; for wonderful as it is, He is not ashamed to call us brethren.

God, whose sons we are, has committed us to His care for two reasons. **First**, He could trust no other. No man nor angel was equal to the task of leading God's sons home to glory. Jesus only could accomplish this great work; and will He fail because of the dangers, or be discouraged because of our fickleness? Never. He is not only our Captain, but our merciful and faithful High Priest, and not one of God's sons will be missing at that glorious homecoming.

**Second**, God's sons are too precious to Him to be committed to any other, their dignity is too great; they are the brethren of Christ, and loved with the same love that rests upon Him. We do not travel with uncertainty; we are not marching to disappointment and death. How glorious is our prospect! When we see Him we shall be like Him, and when He appears in glory we shall appear with Him. Then the crowned Christ will be the

Firstborn among many brethren all crowned with Him.

But that is not all. That same chapter ii. of Hebrews tells us that in the midst of the church He sings praises to God; that is, He sings in the midst of this travelling host. It is well-known that soldiers can do their long road marches with less fatigue if they sing as they go. Brethren, do we sing enough? Our Leader sings in His triumph and joy. Are we near enough to Him to catch the notes? It seems to me that we do not sing as much about heaven and home as once we did. Let us open our hearts to the glory that shines before us and sing,

“High in the Father’s house above  
Our mansion is prepared;  
There is the home, the rest we love,  
And there our bright reward.”

He leads and He sings, He sympathises and He succours.

“And though by storms assailed,  
And though by trials pressed  
Himself our life He bears us up  
Right onward to our rest.”

And what shall we do? Why follow Him and walk close to Him, speaking to each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord. So shall we make an even better pilgrims’ progress, than even the gifted and devoted Bunyan wrote.

J. T. MAWSON.

## THE LIGHT OF PROPHECY.

(Striking comments on Joel iii. 9—12, written over 60 years ago).

**P**REPARE war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up." Thus, instead of peace being brought about before the day of Jehovah comes, such a widespread gathering for war is to be as the world will have never yet seen. The desire to do great things, impatience of obligations, lust of conquest and military glory, will bring on men such a taste for war ere long that no restraints will suffice to keep them within bounds, especially as jealousy of each other will have led to the accumulation of vast stores for military purposes. So the closing scenes of this age will be found to be described in Scripture. I repeat, if one's conclusions were drawn from the thoughts of men, much might be said for the contrary. Some might think the age had gained better sense, that they had too deep a conviction of their forefather's sin and folly in this respect, and that henceforth remonstrance and arbitration would gradually supersede the more savage diplomacy of "blood and iron." But in vain is it hoped thus to control the passions and will of man. The time of peace is not yet.

Men may think that they are going to succeed, but it will be with the Gentiles as of old with Israel. The Jews will try to get back into their land, and the political power of some nations will



be used to establish them in peace. But when it is thought that all is going well, the work is arrested, and the Jews become once more an object of jealousy to the Gentiles. Before the harvest, as it is said in Isaiah xviii., the fair promise of fruit is nipped in the bud and comes to nothing. Instead of having Christ to reign over them in that state, they but prepare a throne for anti-christ. Such will be the speedy result of it, with unspeakable dishonour to God and unexampled ruin to all concerned. The fact is, that God means to bring His people Himself into His land. . . .

The proper task of Christians now should be in no way to restore Jews, but to point solely to Christ in order that they may be saved. There never can be blessing for the world as a whole till God restores Israel. Christ accepted by and reigning over that nation is the essential condition of universal peace and blessing. The Christian is called out of the world and even now associated with heaven. We know Christ risen from the dead and glorified, and are therefore waiting to be taken to heaven when He comes for us. Even God Himself does not yet undertake the work of regeneration for the earth as such, nor will He till that day. He is gathering out the joint-heirs meanwhile who will then reign with Christ.

Hence, before that day comes, the utter failure of philanthropic and other schemes of improving the world will be clearly proved. It will be seen that all such efforts of men, or even of Christians,

in ignorance of His mind and false hopes, must come to worse than nought. At best they are but nostrums that serve in no way the purpose intended, but keep up the delusion for a little while. They must soon answer the prophet's ironical call . . . . "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears."

W.K.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(MARK ix. 17—x. 27).

Our review of this Gospel being more condensed than in the case of the Epistles hitherto before us, it is more than ever necessary to read it in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

**T**HERE had been a singular manifestation of the glory of God in the peaceful scene upon the mountain-top, whilst at the foot of the mountain the dark power of Satan had been displayed, with all the distraction that it brings. The boy demon-possessed, the father disappointed and distracted, the disciples defeated and dejected, the scribes not at all averse to making capital out of the incident. The Lord walks into the midst and all is changed.

In the first place, He puts His finger upon the spot where the root of the failure lay. They were a faithless generation. The root was **unbelief**. This applied to His disciples, as well as to the rest. If their faith had fully laid hold of who He was, they would not have been baffled by this test, any

more than when confronted by the matter of feeding the multitudes. They were still like the man of chapter viii., before he saw all things clearly.

But now the Master Himself is in the midst, and the word is, "Bring him unto ME." However, the first result of the boy being brought was disappointing, for the demon flung him down in a terrible fit. Yet this was made to serve the purpose of the Lord, for on the one hand it made the more manifest the terrible plight of the boy the very moment before he was delivered, and on the other it served to bring out the feelings and thoughts of the anguished father. His cry, "If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us," revealed his lack of faith as to His power, whilst he was not too sure of His kindness.

The reply of Jesus was, "The 'if thou couldst' is [if thou couldst] believe" (N.Trans.). That is, He said in effect, "There is no 'if' on My side, the only 'if' that enters into this matter is on your side. It is not 'if I can do anything,' but 'if you can believe.' " This put the whole thing in the true light, and in a flash the man saw it. Seeing it, he believed, whilst confessing his former unbelief.

Having evoked faith in the man, the Lord acted. The object before Him was not to create a sensation amongst the people; had it been, He would have waited for the crowd to collect. His object evidently was to confirm the faith of the father, and of any others who had eyes to see. The

demon had to obey, though he wrought his worst before relinquishing his prey. This display of demonic power, after all, only gave an opportunity for a more complete display of Divine power. Not only was the boy completely delivered but also delivered for ever, since the demon was commanded to enter him no more.

Having thus manifested the power and kindness of God, the perfect Servant did not court popularity amongst the crowds but retired to a certain house. There His disciples in quietness enquired as to the reason of their failure, and got His answer. Again and again we ought to be asking their question, as we find ourselves weak in the presence of the foe; and as we do so we shall doubtless get just the answer they got, as recorded in verse 29. The Lord had already declared how unbelief lay at the root of their powerlessness: now He specifies two further things. Not only is faith needed, but also prayer and fasting.

Faith indicates a spirit of confidence in God: prayer—dependence on God: fasting—separation to God, in the form of abstinence from lawful things. These are the things which lead to power in the service of God. Their opposites—unbelief, self-confidence, self-indulgence, are the things that lead to weakness and failure. These words of our Lord play like a searchlight upon our many failures in serving Him. Let us consider our ways in the light of them.

In verses 30 and 31 we again see the Lord withdrawing Himself from publicity, and instructing His disciples as to His approaching death and resurrection. We first saw this in verses 30 and 31 of the previous chapter. It was the next great event in the Divine programme, and He now began to keep it steadily before the minds of His disciples, though at the moment they failed to take it in. Their minds were still filled with expectations of the coming of a visible kingdom, so they were unable to entertain any idea that controverted that.

The idea that Christ's kingdom would immediately appear appealed to them because they expected to have a large place of honour in it. They conceived of it in a carnal way, and it awakened carnal desires in their hearts. Hence on the journey to Capernaum they fell to discussing who of them was to be greatest. The Lord's question was sufficient to convict them of their folly, as was evidenced by their abashed silence; yet He knew it all, for He proceeded to answer them though they made no confession.

His answer appears to be two-fold. First, the only way that leads to real greatness is one that goes to the bottom as servant to all. This being so, we can see how the Lord Jesus is pre-eminent even apart from His Deity. In Manhood He has taken the lowest place, and become Servant to all in a way that is infinitely beyond the service of all others. The one most like Him is likely to be first.

In the second place, He showed that the personality of the servant is of small significance: what does count is the Name in which He comes. We have that beautiful and touching scene in which He first set a small child in their midst, and then took him up in His arms, in order to enforce His point. That child was an insignificant scrap of humanity, yet to receive one such in His Name was to receive the Lord Himself, and also the Father who sent Him. The reception of a thousand such in any other name or on any other ground would signify but little. The fact is that the Master Himself is so supremely great that the relative position of His little servants is not worth disputing about.

This teaching seems to have come as an illumination to John, and caused his conscience to prick him as to their attitude towards a zealous man who acted in His Name, though not following the twelve. Why he did not follow, we are not told; but we must remember that it was not open to anyone to attach themselves to the twelve just as they chose: the Lord's own choice decided that matter. Whatever it was, the Lord's reply again laid all the emphasis on the value of His Name. Acting in His Name, the man was clearly for Christ and not against Him.

As a matter of fact this unofficial individual had been doing the very thing which the disciples had just failed to do—he had cast out a demon. Office is one thing: power is quite another. They

should go together, in so far as office is instituted in Christianity. But very frequently they have not done so. And in these later days when offices have been unscripturally instituted, we again and again see some simple and unofficial person doing the thing which the official has no power to do. The power lies in **the Name** not the **office**.

Verse 41 shows that the smallest gift in the Name, and for Christ's sake, is of value in the sight of God and will meet with reward at His hands. Verse 42 gives us the converse of this: to be a snare to the feeblest of those who are Christ's is to merit and to get severe judgment. The losing of life in this world is a small thing compared with loss in the world to come.

This leads to the very solemn passage with which chapter ix. closes. Some of His hearers might have thought the Lord's word about the millstone a bit extreme. He adds yet stronger words, which have hell-fire itself in view. His thoughts at this point evidently broadened out beyond His disciples to men generally, and He shows that any loss in this world is very small compared with the loss of all that is life in the next, and being cast into the fire of Gehenna. Hand and foot and eye are very valuable members of our bodies, and not to be lightly parted with; but life in the coming age is beyond all price, and hell-fire an awful reality.

The Valley of Hinnom, the refuse dump outside Jerusalem, where fires always burned and

maggots continually did their work, was known as Gehenna; and this word on the Lord's lips became a terribly apt figure of the abode of the lost. Verily hell will be the great refuse heap of eternity, where all that is incorrigibly evil will be segregated from the good, and lie for ever under the judgment of God. This terrible fact reaches us from the lips of Him who loved sinful men and wept over them.

The first statement of verse 49 sprang out of what the Lord had just been saying. Fire searches and consumes and disinfects. Salt not only seasons but preserves. Fire symbolizes the judgment of God, which all must face in one way or another. The believer must face it in the way indicated by 1 Corinthians iii. 13, and by it he will be "salted," since it will mean the preserving of all that is good. The ungodly will be subjected to it in their persons, and it will salt them; that is, they will be preserved **in** it and not destroyed **by** it.

The latter part of the verse is an allusion to Leviticus ii. 13. Salt has been described as symbolizing that "power of holy grace, which binds the soul to God and inwardly preserves it from evil." We cannot present our bodies a living sacrifice to God if that holy grace is absent. It is indeed good, and nothing would compensate for its absence. We are to have in ourselves this holy grace which would judge and separate us from all that is evil. If each is concerned to have it **in one-self**, there will not be difficulty in having peace **amongst ourselves**.



The opening of chapter x. brings us near to the closing scenes of the Lord's life. He was on the farther side of Jordan but near the borders of Judaea, and the Pharisees appeared, opposing Him by tempting Him. By raising questions as to marriage and divorce, they expected to entangle Him in some contradiction of the things that Moses had commanded, and so find a point of attack. The Lord did not contradict Moses, but He went behind him to God's original thought in the creation of man and woman. The Pharisees were great sticklers for the law of Moses, but He showed them that in this instance the law did not enforce God's original thought. It is important to notice this, for it supplies us with one reason why the law is not made the rule of life for the Christian.

The law fell below the height of God's thought, but Christ did not: He fully maintained it. Verse 9 lifts the whole matter of marriage from the level of man and human expediency to the level of God and His action. It is a divine institution and not a human arrangement, and therefore is not to be tampered with by men. If God joins, man is not to put asunder.

This verse states a great principle which is true universally. The converse also would be true—man is not to join what God has put asunder. It is a sad fact that ever since sin came in man has been consumed with a desire to undo what God has done. It is so in natural things, and many of the ills we suffer come from our tampering with

things given of God, even in matters of food, etc., and generally upsetting the balance of things which He established. It certainly is so in things spiritual. Many a difficulty and much needless soul trouble springs from misunderstanding as to things which God has joined together in His Word, or things which He has sundered.

Having set marriage before them in the right light, the Lord deals, in verses 13—16, with children. As to these, the disciples share the ordinary thoughts of the world, which fall far below the thoughts of God. The disciples judged them to be too insignificant for the Master's attention, but He thought far otherwise. He received them gladly, took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them and blessed them. He also showed that the only way of entrance into the kingdom of God is by having the spirit and mind of the little child. If anyone approaches that kingdom as a **significant somebody** he finds the entrance barred. If he comes as an **insignificant nobody** he may enter.

Then, verses 17—27, we get the Lord's teaching in regard to possessions. It is striking how marriage, children and possessions follow one another in this chapter, for so much of our lives in this world is occupied with these three things. All three are perverted and abused in the hands of sinful men; and all three are put in their right place in the teachings of our Lord.

The one who came running to Jesus exhibited many commendable features. Matthew tells us he

was young, and Luke that he was a ruler. He was earnest and reverent and recognized in Him a great Rabbi, who could direct men to eternal life. He took it for granted that the life was to be obtained by human doings, according to the law. Evidently he had no idea of the Deity of Jesus, and hence the Lord's words in verse 18. He repudiated goodness apart from His being God, saying in effect, "If I am not God, I am not good."

As the young man asked his question with the law in his mind, the Lord referred him to the law, particularly to the commandments dealing with man's duty to his neighbour. He could claim to have observed these, at least as regards his acts, and Jesus beholding him loved him. This shows that his claim to correct observance of these things which the law enjoined was a true one. He was an exceptionally fine character, with features which in themselves were pleasing to God. The Lord did not belittle these pleasing features. He admitted them, and looked upon him with eyes of love.

Yet He tested him. One thing he lacked, and that was the God-given faith, which would have seized who Jesus was, and led him to take up the cross and follow Him; the faith which would have made treasure in heaven preferable to treasure on earth. He expected the Lord to direct him to some **work of the law** by which life should be reached; instead he was directed to a **work of faith**. Sad at heart he went away. He did not possess the faith, so it was impossible for him to show his

faith by his works. The same test comes to us. How have we answered to it?

This is a tremendous question. How slow we all are to give up law-keeping for Christ and earth for heaven! No wonder the Lord speaks of the difficulty with which the rich enter the kingdom. Verse 23 speaks of them "that have riches," and verse 24 of "them that trust in riches." The fact is, of course, that it is very difficult to have them without trusting in them. We naturally cling to riches and earth. Christ offers the Cross and heaven.

The disciples, accustomed to regard riches as a sign of God's favour, were very astonished at these words; they felt that they cut the ground away completely from under our feet. So, indeed, they do. "Who then can be saved?" is a momentous question. Verse 27 gives a definite answer. Salvation is impossible with men, though possible with God. In other words it was as though the Lord said, "If it is a question of what man can do, **nobody** can be saved: but if a question of what God can do, **anybody** can be saved."

We emphasize that word. Salvation with men is not improbable, but IMPOSSIBLE. The door, as regards our own efforts is barred against us. God has opened another door however, but that is by death and resurrection, to which the Lord was now turning the thoughts of His disciples.

## NEW CREATION.

**A**S we have considered in detail most of the features that go to make up the "great salvation" which has reached us, we have hitherto been able to point out how each is designed of God to meet and overcome some particular result or penalty of sin. But now as we reach the last, this feature has to be absent. We have left "new creation" until the last as it seems to be the ultimate thing to which the Gospel conducts us, but at the same time it is evident that God is going to establish it, not because it meets some definite need **on our side**, but because it meets the need of His holy nature — it is the thing which is suitable **to Himself**.

The havoc wrought by sin has been such that we **needed** forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, redemption, salvation, sanctification; and all these are brought to us in the Gospel as the fruit of the work done for us by our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. Equally did we **need** the new birth, the quickening, the gift of the Spirit; and the first two of these are ours by the work of the Holy Spirit in us, while His indwelling follows the other two, and is based upon the work done for us. We could hardly say however in the same way that we **needed** to be newly "created in Christ Jesus;" that wondrous event has taken place to satisfy the heart of God.

As in other cases so again here, we can go back to the Old Testament and discover prophecies which foreshadow the full truth, which can only be discovered in the New. For instance, we read, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth" (Isa. lxv. 17): yet when we examine the context we soon see that what is predicted in Revelation xxi. 1—5, is hardly contemplated in the passage, for the prophet goes on to speak of the new conditions that will prevail in Jerusalem in the millennial age, when death may possibly take place; whereas in the scene pictured in Revelation death is gone for ever.

The fact seems to be, that just as with new birth and quickening, so again here, God introduces His thought; but in a limited way as befitted a dispensation in which His government of the earth was the prominent thing. In this Gospel age, life and incorruptibility have been fully brought to light, and in connection with that His full thought and action, both as regards the work of Christ for us and the work of the Spirit in us, has been manifested. The New Testament does not stop at the millennial age but carries us into the eternal state.

The first mention of new creation in the New Testament is in 2 Corinthians v. 17, where we find that every one "in Christ" is brought into it. It is "new creation" in this verse rather than "a new creature," and the language of Paul here appears to be very vigorous and emphatic. He omits

the verb altogether, and exclaims, "So that, if anyone in Christ — new creation!" as one who exults in this glorious fact. Nothing short of this is involved in our being in Christ Jesus.

That the believer is in Christ Jesus and beyond all condemnation is made very plain in the Epistle to the Romans, but we are not carried on to the full implication of that fact until we reach this scripture. We are **in** Him because we are **of** Him, and this by an act of God Himself. This comes very definitely to view when we reach Ephesians ii. 10, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." The old creation of which we read in Genesis i., was God's workmanship and created by the Son. It was created **by** Him, but not created **in** Him, as the new creation is, at least as regards ourselves. Sin was able to gain an entrance into the old creation, but it will never enter the new, which derives its life and nature from Christ.

The passage in 2 Corinthians v. shows that there is a very close connection between reconciliation and new creation. The former is one of the fruits of the work of Christ for us; the latter the fruit of God's work in us. Yet of course the act of God in making "Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," with which the chapter closes, is the basis on which rests new creation no less than reconciliation. There must be the complete meeting of every liability and the whole state characterizing the old creation, if the new creation is to be introduced on a righteous basis.

There is no patching up of the old things in connection with new creation. They pass away, and new things which are wholly "of God" are introduced. Once even Christ Himself stooped into old creation circumstances, when He was amongst us "after the flesh," though His flesh was holy and without the least taint of sin. Now, in His risen glory, He has entered into new creation circumstances, and from Him as Head the new creation proceeds.

The main point in this passage however seems to be the subjective effect of new creation in ourselves. We know Christ in a new way, all things are become new to us, our lives are diverted into a totally new channel, so that we live not unto ourselves but unto Him—all this, because of God's new creation work wrought in us. As an illustration we might take the Apostles, as they **were** in the Gospel and as they **became** in the Acts. Between the two came the new creation in-breathing of the Last Adam, of John xx. 22, and the indwelling of the Spirit, of Acts ii. Formerly they knew Him after the flesh; now their knowledge of Him is according to the Spirit of God. There was undoubtedly a change in **His** condition, but we must not overlook the great change in **their** condition.

This side of things is emphasized by the fact that we are said to "know . . . **no man** after the flesh." Now with the great mass of men there is no change at all in **their** condition, the only change is in **our-**



**selves.** It is because we are a new creation in Christ that we know everyone in a new way. We look upon all men and everything with new creation eyes—if we may so put it.

What we have just been looking at is the new creation **mind** found in the saints; whereas Ephesians ii. 10 brings us to new creation **practice** and **action**. We are created “unto good works,” in which God purposes we should walk. James, in his second chapter, speaks not of good works but of the works of faith; that is of work energized by **faith**, and consequently manifesting **it** before the eyes of men. Here we do have **good** works; that is, works that express the goodness of God. Being God’s workmanship, created by Him in Christ Jesus, we have the inward capacity to do works of this exalted character, and the obligation to do them rests upon us. These good works were supremely and perfectly done by Christ, and as created in Christ, we are to walk in them—works of that order, though of course not in the same measure as He.

What we find in Ephesians iv. 21—24, and in Colossians iii. 10, is in keeping with this. The former passage agrees with the latter, for the New Translation renders it, “Your **having** put off . . . . and **being** renewed . . . . and your **having** put on;” that is, in both passages the great transaction is viewed as one **accomplished** in every believer. Formerly we belonged to the old order of man and wore his corrupt character: now we belong to the

new order of man and wear his character, marked by holiness, righteousness, truth. It is not something merely external, for the very **spirit** of our **minds** is renewed. The passage in Colossians corroborates this, though it has distinctive differences. It also speaks of the new man as **created**.

It is because we have put on this new creation character that we are to behave as indicated in the context of both passages. The things to be utterly repudiated, and the things to be cultivated, are all determined by the character we wear by God's new creation act.

We may go one step further, and in the light of Ephesians ii. 15, speak of the church as God's new creation production. By the Gospel, God is calling an election out of both Jew and Gentile, and of the two He is making "one new man." The word translated in that verse "make" is the word for "create." That one new man is God's creation by the Lord Jesus, for He is the Actor in that verse. And He creates this one new man, which is virtually the church, "in Himself." So we may speak of the church, as well as the individual saint, as a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Lastly, in Revelation xxi. 1—6, we are permitted to know that there are to be new heavens and a new earth, and amidst these new creation scenes the new creation church will have her eternal home, as the tabernacle of God, when He dwells with men.

Are we right, in dealing with the new creation, if we give the same literal and full meaning to the word "create," that we give to it when dealing with the creation of Genesis i.?

We believe that we are. Any difficulty that is felt about it probably springs from the fact that as yet God's new creation work has not touched any of the material things round about us. It has so far only affected **us** spiritually: we are renewed in the **spirit** of our minds. It is quite certain we are not yet newly created as to our bodies, and that probably accounts for the scripture saying, "renewed in the spirit of your mind," rather than, "renewed in your mind;" for the mind cannot be altogether dissociated from the brain, which is a part of the body. When we are in our glorified bodies, in the likeness of Christ, and dwelling in the new heavens and new earth, we shall see that no word short of "creation" will meet the case. But what we are to-day in a spiritual way, as the fruit of God's workmanship, is exactly of that order. God says it, and we may happily believe it.

The fact that we have been created "in Christ Jesus" has been mentioned. Are we to deduce from this the stability of the new creation?

We certainly are: but more than that also, we believe. Since it is created in Him, it will be as stable as He is; but also it will bear His character in other things. It originates in Him, for He is the Source whence it springs. He is "the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead" (Col. i. 18), "the

Beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. iii. 14). Even the inanimate things of the new heavens and the new earth will spring from Him, yet we are created in Him in a deeper sense. He has entered heaven in His risen Manhood, and we now are men of His order, participating in His life, "all of one" with Him, as we are told in Hebrews ii. 11. Hence the church is His body, for in it corporately He is to be expressed. The new creation will be expressive of Christ and as stable as He.

In Hebrews viii. 13. it is pointed out that the fact of a new covenant being introduced makes the first covenant old; and the deduction is, "Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." Can we reason in the same way in regard to the new creation?

We believe so; with this modification perhaps, that not all the heavens created in Genesis i., have been touched by sin, consequently not all will be newly created. All that has been spoiled by sin is old and ready to vanish away. Nothing less than new creation will meet the case, just as nothing short of it meets our spiritual needs to-day, because all has to be lifted to the level of the Divine thoughts. In principle it is so to-day, as we see in Galatians vi. 15. The Galatians were being diverted to the ordinance of circumcision as practised under the law. But any such ordinance or other fleshly observance is entirely beside the mark to-day. It might be all right so long as men "in Adam" were recognized as having a standing before God; but "in Christ

Jesus'' neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any account; a new creation alone avails. Because of what God is, once a thing has been touched and tarnished by sin, it has to go and a new creation take its place.

Are the new creation scenes predicted in the opening part of Revelation xxi. to be distinguished from the scenes of millennial blessedness, of which the prophets have so largely spoken?

The two scenes are clearly distinguished in that chapter in Revelation. Verses 1—8, deal with the eternal state, whilst verses 9—27, give us a more detailed description of the heavenly Jerusalem in its relations with the millennial earth. Hence in the second section we read about nations and kings of the earth, and walls and gates which shut out any defiling thing. This supposes of course that there are defiling things which might enter. In the earlier part all sin and sorrow and death are gone from God's fair new creation, and all evil lies under God's judgment, segregated in its own appointed place.

Nations, too, only exist as the result of God's judgment upon men at Babel; so they disappear, and God will revert to His original thought and just dwell with men. He will dwell as their God in holy freedom because righteousness will then be dwelling, as 2 Peter iii. 13 tells us, and not merely reigning as it will in the millennial age. As long as there is anything to challenge its supremacy it must reign: when the last challenge is met, it will dwell in undisturbed repose.

Will all differences between men disappear in the new creation?

It may be that on the new earth they will: as to that we cannot dogmatize. But at all events there will be the difference between those whose seat is to be in the heavens and those on the earth. In that day the holy city, symbolic of the church, will be the dwelling-place of God.

Again, in 1 Corinthians xv., where we find that already we have been quickened by the Last Adam, we also learn that His great work with us will reach its completion when we "bear the image of the Heavenly." It is a most marvellous fact that we, who belong to the church, shall enter those new creation scenes bearing the image of our Head even as regards our bodies. We do not find this asserted of others, besides the heavenly saints.

It is quickening which is actually mentioned in 1 Corinthians xv., though we have referred to it in connection with new creation. This rather raises the question as to what is the relationship between the two things; and indeed between all the things we have considered. How can we put them all together?

There are things connected with our most holy faith which are quite beyond our powers, and this is one of them. We contemplate our Lord Jesus, we confess His Deity, whilst recognizing His true Humanity, yet our minds are not equal to the task of explaining how both go together. We see the sovereignty of God plainly taught in Scripture, and the responsibility of man taught with equal

plainness, yet how exactly to adjust them together we know not. This inability of ours does not disturb us. We expect it, because the faith, which we believe, comes from God. Could we bring it all within the compass of our little minds we should thereby prove it was not Divine.

Now how can we put together all the things we have been surveying in cursory fashion? We may do so in part, but we cannot do so in any complete way, especially when we deal with the work wrought in us. The attempt to do so in the past has often led to unprofitable contentions, as might be expected. We can no more see all round the subject at the same moment than we can see all four sides of a house at once.

The truth is one, of that we are sure. It is given to us in parts, and as we trace out these parts in Scripture we are instructed and profited. If we fail to distinguish things that differ, and lump them all together in a kind of indiscriminate mass, we lose a great deal. On the other hand if we divorce and divide the various parts we soon run into erroneous notions, as also we do if we attempt to work out theories as to the order in which they take place.

Without dividing we distinguish, and thereby understand more fully how rich and varied is the great salvation which has reached us. And the more we do understand, the more our hearts are moved in praise and thanksgiving to God.

## A FIRST INTRODUCTION AND ITS RESULT.

**T**HE first entrance of our Lord into public service was apparently His journey from Nazareth to Jordan to be baptized of John. The day after the baptism, John seeing our Lord coming to him, exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). Again the day following, looking upon Jesus as He walked, John said, "Behold the Lamb of God" (verse 36).

Now two disciples hearing this, left John and followed Jesus — blessed result of the Baptist's ministry. Since he was the forerunner of our Lord, his ministry was to prepare souls for Him and point the way to Him, and in this case at least he was successful. We are then told that one of the two disciples was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

Now we know that Andrew and Peter were fishermen on the sea of Galilee. How then did it happen that they found themselves in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem? Is it too much to suppose that they were the subjects of God's gracious dealings, and that they were consequently seekers after light? Is it too much to suppose that news of the ministry of John the Baptist had reached Galilee, and that these two men were sufficiently interested to travel a matter of sixty miles, not by motor car over beautiful roads in a couple of hours, but laboriously on foot, over rough roads,



little more than bridle tracks in those far-off days? Is it too much to suppose that Andrew and Peter and the other disciple, possibly the writer of the fourth gospel, which describes the scene, were actual witnesses of our Lord's baptism? It was only two days following, that the two disciples left John and followed Jesus—the truest compliment that could be paid to the forerunner's ministry.

Be that as it may, it is clear that these two disciples had got to Bethabara beyond Jordan where John was baptizing, that they had become John's disciples, and that one of them was Andrew, the Galilean fisherman. In turn he left John and became the Lord's disciple. He then introduced his brother Peter to the Lord, who changed his name from Simon to Cephas or Peter, meaning a stone, proof that God had been working in new creation power, and our Lord recognised this, in Andrew's brother. There the curtain drops in John i.

The curtain is lifted in the narrative of Matthew iv. We can imagine how Andrew and Peter as they plied their lowly occupation on the sea of Galilee would speak much of John, the forerunner, but more, much more of our blessed Lord. Peter would often think of the new name he received, and of its significance.

One day our Lord left Nazareth, and journeyed to Capernaum to live there, and prosecute His work, where there was a big population and much

going to and fro. One day walking by the sea, our Lord saw the two brothers in the act of casting their net into the sea. He said of them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew iv. 19). They might have replied, "We are in the act of casting our net into the sea, and we cannot leave it. It is valuable to us, our instrument in earning our livelihood." But no, we read, "And they straightway left their nets and followed Him" (verse 20).

In John i. we get the introduction, in Matthew iv. we get the result. In John i. those who witnessed the baptism of our Lord would realize something of who He was when the Father's voice was heard, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and the Spirit like a dove lighted upon Him. Those who heard John say, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," might well appropriate the meaning of the sacrificial death that was to come. Just as the Procurator General said to young Martin Luther, "You believe the creed, when it says, I believe in the forgiveness of sins: whose sins do you 'believe' are forgiven?" In a moment Luther saw the **personal** application implied in the question. The light broke into his soul, and he replied, "I believe in this forgiveness of **my** sins." So if the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world, He may well take away my sins.

Then the presentation of our Lord, "Behold the Lamb of God" drew the two disciples to follow

the Lord, and He welcomed them, as He ever will any who would seek to follow Him.

Then we find Andrew and Peter evidently retracing their steps to their homes by Galilee's Lake and following their calling of fishermen. Then the wonderful day arrived, when our Lord called them to follow Him, and they "straightway" responded. What a blessed life-long result of their introduction!

We may well ask ourselves, are we disciples, are we followers of our blessed Lord?

John i. and Matthew iv. give us facts, as it were on the surface, but we know there must have been the Spirit's work out of sight with these men that led them to the happy response, the blessed sequel of lives surrendered to their Lord.

May their example stimulate each one of us, may there be that inward working of the Spirit of God in each one of our hearts!

A. J. POLLOCK.

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God has never been revealed in Trinity, save as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Hence we cannot even think or conceive of God as subsisting in Trinity, whether in time or eternity, save according to this holy relationship.

Anything beyond or different from this must have its source in the imaginations and speculations of the human mind, and not in the revelation of God.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(MARK X. 28—xi. 33).

Our review of this Gospel being more condensed than in the case of the Epistles hitherto before us, it is more than ever necessary to read it in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

**T**HOUGH death and resurrection were before the mind of the Lord, earthly glory was still before the mind of Peter, and he betrayed it by his remark recorded in verse 28. He referred of course to the test which the Lord had just presented to the rich young ruler. Peter felt that, though the ruler had failed before the test, he and his fellow-disciples had not: indeed, he actually added, as Matthew records, "What shall we have therefore?" His mind, enquiring and impetuous, wished to anticipate the good things to come. The Lord's answer indicated that in the present age there should be great gain, though with persecutions, and in the coming age eternal life.

This saying of our Lord is illustrated by Paul's life of service, as seen in such scriptures as, Acts xvi. 15; xviii. 3; xxi. 8; Romans xvi. 3, 4, 23; 1 Corinthians xvi. 17; Philippians iv. 18; Philemon 22. Houses were at his disposal in many a city, and many counted it an honour to fulfil the part of brother, sister, mother or child toward him. Persecutions certainly were his. Eternal life in the world to come lies before him. Such is the lot of those who follow and serve this perfect Servant of God.

Verse 31 was evidently uttered as a warning and corrective to Peter. Forwardness here may not mean the first place there. All depends upon the motive underlying the service. If Peter wished to drive a bargain—so much following for so much reward—that alone would show defective motive. Still it does not say that **all** that are first shall be last, and **all** last first. Paul went ahead of all in his day, and who can challenge the purity of his motive, or the reality of his devotion to his Lord?

The thing that Peter and the rest greatly needed was to realize and understand the fast approaching death and resurrection of their Master. There is nothing that we to-day, nineteen centuries after the event, more deeply need to realize and understand. Not only is it the basis of all our blessing but it imparts its own character to all Christian life and service. No intelligent service can be rendered save in the light of it.

Verses 32 to 34 give us the fourth occasion on which the Lord instructed His disciples in regard to it; and the request of James and John, recorded in verse 37, furnished the Lord with a fifth occasion. Their minds were still filled with expectations concerning a glorious kingdom on earth, and they wished to advance their own interests in that kingdom. Now the Lord Jesus was here as the perfect Servant of the will of God, and this involved for Him the cup of suffering and the baptism of death. Places of honour in the coming kingdom will be apportioned to those who have served this wonderful Servant, according to the

measure in which they had accepted suffering and death on His behalf. Yet, even so, He does not apportion these places of distinction. All that is at the discretion of the Father, for He remains true to the place of Servant which He has taken. Except we remain true to the place in which we are set, the place of identification with our rejected Lord, we cannot expect any place of special recognition in the glory of the kingdom.

This unblushing place-hunting on the part of James and John might incline us to blame them above the rest, were it not for verse 41, which shows that the same selfish desires were entertained by all, and that they objected, not because of the request the two had made, but because they had been forestalled in the way the two made it. Their annoyance however only gave further occasion for the display of the perfect grace of their Lord.

How easy it was, and is, for the disciples of Jesus to accept and adopt the standards and customs of the world that surrounds them, to take for granted that, because everybody seems to be doing it, it is the right thing to do. Again and again our Lord would say to us, "But so shall it not be among you." The nations have their great men, who exercise their authority in a lordly way. Amongst disciples of the Lord greatness is manifested in an entirely different way. There true greatness is displayed in taking the lowly place of service to others—serving the Lord in serving them.

The Son of Man Himself is the shining example of service of this kind. Who so great as He in His original estate? Then "thousand thousands ministered unto Him" (Dan. vii. 10). Who took so lowly a place, ministering to others? Who carried service to such a length as "to give His life a ransom for many"? For this reason alone, apart from other considerations, the place of pre-eminence must be His. They, who follow Him most closely in lowly service in this day, will be chiefest in that day.

In verse 45, the Lord not only brings His death before His disciples for the fifth time, but He explains its significance. Previously He had emphasized the fact of His death, so that the minds of the disciples might no longer be obsessed by expectations of a coming visible kingdom. Now the meaning of the fact appears. He would die to pay the **ransom price** for many. Here then we have a plain statement as to the substitutionary and atoning character of His death from His own lips. It is "many" here, for the actual, realized effect of His ransoming death is the point. In 1 Timothy ii. 6, where the bearing and scope of it is in question, the word is "all."

These dealings with His disciples took place "in the way going up to Jerusalem" (verse 32). In verse 46 they arrive in Jericho, and the closing scenes of His life begin. Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, furnished Him with a striking opportunity of setting forth the mercy of God. Mercy was what the blind man craved, though the people, who did

not understand mercy of a divine sort, would have silenced him. Mercy however he got, and it went beyond his thoughts, for it not only gave him **sight** but enlisted him as a **follower** of the One who extended the mercy. The faith of Bartimaeus was shown in that he addressed Jesus as the Son of David though others spoke of Him only as Jesus of Nazareth. His may only have been little faith, for he did not rise to the height of calling Him Son of God; yet little faith receives an abundant answer as surely as great faith does. Let us be thankful for that.

Jesus now drew near to Jerusalem. His disciples were in His train, not only those who had spent three years in His company but Bartimaeus also, who had spent perhaps three hours. Bethany was the home of some who loved Him, and there He found the colt of an ass, so that He might enter the city as Zechariah had predicted. The Lord had need of that colt, and He knew who the owner was and that His need would meet with a ready response. He was the Servant of the will of God, and He knew where to lay His hand upon all that was necessary to fulfil His service, whether the ass in the chapter, or the guestchamber in chapter xiv., or as on other occasions.

He entered as the prophet said He would, "just," "lowly," and "having salvation." There was a burst of temporary enthusiasm, but men had no lasting desire for what was just, and holiness made no appeal to them. Moreover the salvation they desired was one of a merely outward



sort: they would be glad to be free from the tyranny of Rome, but had no desire to be released from the bondage of sin. Their Hosannas had in view the kingdom of David which they hoped was coming, and hence their cries soon died away. The Lord made straight for the heart of things by entering the temple. As regards Israel's dealings with their God, this was the centre of all; and here their state religiously was most manifest. Everything came under His survey, for He "looked round about upon all things."

The incident as to the fig tree transpired the following morning. The fig tree is symbolic of Israel, and more particularly of the remnant of the nation which had been restored to the land of their fathers, and amongst who Christ had come. Luke xiii, 6—9 shows this. The whole nation had been the Lord's vineyard, and the restored remnant were like a fig tree planted in that vineyard. The King having entered, according to the prophetic word, the supreme moment of testing had come. There was nothing but leaves. Even though it was not the time of figs, there should have been plenty of immature figs, the promise of future fruitfulness. The fig tree was worthless, and should bring forth no fruit for ever.

Following this, verses 15—19, we have the Lord's action in cleansing the temple. God's thought in establishing His house at Jerusalem was that it might be a place of prayer for all nations. If any man, no matter what race he belonged to, was feeling after God, he might come to that house and

get into touch with Him. The Jews had turned it into a den of thieves. This was the appalling spectacle that met His holy eye when He inspected the house the evening before.

The Jews would doubtless have furnished good reasons for permitting these abominations. Did not the strangers need to change their varied monies? Were not the doves a necessity for the very poorest who could afford no larger sacrifice? But the whole thing had been debased into a money-making concern. The man who came from afar seeking God might easily be repelled when he got to the house by the rascality of those who were connected with it. A terrible state of affairs! The custodians of the house were a pack of thieves, and the Lord told them so. This roused the scribes and priests to fury, and they determined upon His death.

Exactly similar evils have long ago been manifested in Christendom. This is a terrible thing to say, but truth demands that it should be said. Again religion has been turned into a money-making concern, so much so that the would-be seeker after God has often been utterly repelled. This thing may be seen in its most extravagant forms in the great Romish system, but it may be seen elsewhere in a modified way. It is the error of Balaam, and many run after it "greedily," as Jude 22 tells us. Let us see that we carefully avoid it. The house of God on earth to-day is formed of saints—not dead stones but "living" ones—but we have to learn how we are to behave ourselves in it, and Paul's first letter to Timothy give us the needed

instructions. In that letter such words as these are prominent: "Not covetous," "Not greedy of filthy lucre," "Destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness. . . But godliness with contentment is great gain." If such words as these govern us, we shall be preserved from this snare.

Coming into the city the following morning the fig tree, to which the Lord had spoken, was seen to be dried up from the roots. The blight that had fallen upon it worked in a way that was contrary to nature, which would have been from the top downwards. This fact proclaimed it to be an act of God, and Peter was struck by it, and called attention to it, thus inviting the Lord to remark upon the occurrence. His comment appears to be twofold, since the word, "For," which begins verse 23 seems to be of doubtful authority.

The first thing is, "Have faith in God." Their tendency was to have faith in things visible, in the Mosaic system, in the temple, in themselves as a people, or in their priests and leaders. We have exactly the same tendency, and may easily pin our faith to systems, or to movements, or to gifted leaders. So we need to learn just the same lesson, which is that all such things fail, but that God remains. He is faithful, and He remains as the Object of faith when a curse falls upon our cherished little fig tree. Literally the word is, "Have the faith of God," it is as though the Lord says to us, "Hold on to the faithfulness of God no matter what may wither up and disappear."

But this led to the further word as to prayer, in which emphasis is again laid upon faith. "Who-soever shall say. . . and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe. . . he shall have whatsoever he saith." The **whosoever** and the **whatsoever** make this a very sweeping statement; so sweeping as almost to take our breath away. But this is connected with the prayer contemplated in the next verse, where we have, "**What things soever** ye desire. . . believe. . . and ye shall have them." In both these verses everything evidently hinges on the believing.

Now belief is faith, and faith is not just a human product, a kind of make-believe or imagination. Verse 24, for instance, is not that if only I can work myself up to imagine I receive my request, I do receive it. My prayers according to verse 24, and my words, according to verse 23, must be the product of genuine faith; and faith is the spiritual faculty in me which receives the divine Word. Faith is the eye of the soul, which receives and appreciates Divine light. If my prayer is based on intelligent faith, I shall believe that I receive, and I shall actually receive the desired thing. And so also with what I may say, as in verse 23.

Cases which illustrate the 23rd verse might be cited from present-day missionary service. Not a few times in heathen lands have the servants of the Lord been confronted with sad cases of demon possession challenging the power of the Gospel. With full faith in the Gospel's power they have

both prayed and spoken. What they said came to pass, and the demon had to depart.

Verses 25 and 26 introduce a further qualifying factor. Faith puts us into right relations with God, but our relations with our fellows must also be right, if we are to pray and speak effectually. As those who are the subjects of mercy, who have been so greatly forgiven, we must be filled with the spirit of mercy and forgiveness ourselves. If not, we shall come under the government of God.

Being again in Jerusalem and walking in the temple, the chief priests and other temple authorities came up challenging the authority by which He had acted in cleansing the building the day before. The Lord answered them by asking them to pronounce upon a preliminary question as to the validity or otherwise of John's baptism and ministry. They demanded the credentials of the great Master, but what about the credentials of the humble forerunner? It would be time enough to undertake the consideration of the greater problem when they had settled the lesser problem. Let them decide as to John.

They were betrayed by the way they handled this matter. They had no thought of deciding it on its merits; the only thing that weighed with them was expediency, and as to that they were impaled upon the horns of a dilemma. A decision either way would land them in a difficulty. They were sharp enough to see this, and hence they decided to plead ignorance. But this plea was fatal

to their demand that the Lord should submit His credentials to their scrutiny. They proclaimed their incompetence in the easier matter, and so could not press their demand in the more difficult.

“From heaven or of men?” this was the question as to John. It is also the question as to the Lord Himself. In our day we may go further and say it is the question as to Bible. John was but a man, yet his ministry was **from** heaven. The Lord Jesus was truly here by means of the Virgin, yet He was **from** heaven, and so also His matchless ministry. The Bible is a Book given us **by** men, yet it is not **of** men, for those who wrote were “moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1. 21).

Once we have in our souls a divinely given conviction that both the Living Word and the written Word are from heaven, their authority is well established in our hearts.

F. B. HOLE.

## HALLELUJAH!

We adore Thee, blessed God; Hallelujah!  
For the fulness of Thy love; Hallelujah!  
For our standing in Thy grace, Hallelujah!  
Which has made with Christ our place,  
Hallelujah!

For the hope like Him to be, Hallelujah!  
Sons before Thee, happy, free; Hallelujah!  
For our ent’ring into rest, Hallelujah!  
There to be supremely blest, Hallelujah!

A. H. LYCETT.

## ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT.

I would like your comment on Ephesians i. 18,—“His calling.” What is the import of the verse?—MINNEAPOLIS.

**I**N this verse the Apostle Paul puts on record that for which he prayed, as regards the Ephesian saints, both as to the calling and the inheritance, to both of which he had alluded in the earlier part of the chapter.

“His calling” refers particularly to verses 4 and 5, which show that we have been predestinated to “the adoption of children.” The actual word, **calling**, does not occur there, but predestination is followed by calling, as Romans viii. 30 shows. We have been called to this “adoption” or to “sonship.”

The “inheritance” refers to verses 9—12, which tell us of God’s purpose for the coming age; when all things will be gathered together in one in Christ, and in that same Christ we have obtained an inheritance. The whole inheritance is God’s; but Christ is the Heir, in whom it is all vested, and He will take it up by putting His saints into possession. The words in 1 Corinthians iii. 21—23 are true to-day, but in the coming age everyone will see them to be true. “All things” will be manifestly ours, even “**things to come.**” But then **we are Christ’s**, and therefore all things, ourselves included, are His; and **He is God’s**, therefore the whole inheritance is God’s.

Now the Apostle’s prayer is that we may have the eyes of our understandings enlightened, so that

we may really know these things; not only what the calling and the inheritance are, but what is the **hope** of the calling and the **riches of the glory** of the inheritance.

When God called Israel out of Egypt He set a hope before them, and they looked forward to entering the land flowing with milk and honey. The hope of our calling is heaven; and not only heaven as a place, but association with and conformity to Christ Himself in bodies of glory. We shall be before the Father, holy and without blame, in love, living together with Christ. All this speaks of that which is intimate and personal, a place of great nearness in the Father's home.

The inheritance speaks of that which is more public and a matter of display. When the full purpose of God comes to light in the coming age, the glory of it will be easily seen, and that glory will be rich. Our eyes are to be opened to see how rich its glory is before the display begins.

If the Apostle's prayer finds an answer in our experience we shall be greatly affected for good. The hope of God's calling and the riches of the glory of God's inheritance will then, **in our hearts**, effectually throw into the shade all hope and all glory connected with the present world.

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Those who profess to worship the Creator by means of the creature, soon come to lose sight of the Creator in the creature.



## THE LORD'S CHIEF INTEREST.

**H**OW perplexed those eleven men in Jerusalem must have been on that first day of the week, when it began to dawn upon them their crucified Master had risen up from among the dead. At first they would not believe it, the report that the women brought was a pack of idle tales, hallucinations of distraught women; and yet it did seem as though the impossible had become fact, for Peter and John had seen the empty tomb with their own eyes. What had happened? and if He was alive, where was He? and what would He do?

Thomas might say, "I don't believe a word of it," and go off to nurse his disappointed hopes and broken heart in moody solitude.

And Andrew, "He'll go to the temple and convince and confound the high priest and all our rulers. He will vindicate Himself and His words, but what of us?"

And Simon the Zealot, "He'll discard us, of course, but He'll strike terror into Pilate's heart and claim the kingdom."

And Philip, "He'll ask His Father and He will give Him the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost part of the earth for His inheritance. Oh, why were we so cowardly?"

And James, "Perhaps He'll forgive us. He was always so patient. We don't deserve it, but there is a hope. Why did we doubt?"

But where is Simon? For three times he denied that he had ever known Him, and then fell to cursing and swearing worse than ever he used to do before the Master called him.

So they might talk together, until they reach the upper room, perhaps the same in which their Lord had kept the passover with them. What memories are theirs, and within those closed doors they sadly discuss the situation. Then comes a rattling at the door, and Simon, impetuous Simon, bursts in among them, saying, "I have seen the Lord, He has appeared unto me." That of course convinced them. "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared unto Simon." The witness of the women was true.

But why should He appear to a few weak women and to Simon, who had been more cowardly than they all? Ah! light began to dawn upon them. It was just like Him. He had not changed; the weakest and the worst were always His first thought. They are rather shy of Simon and inclined to hold him at a distance, for he had fallen so low, and after all his boasting too, but the Lord had spoken to him, and if the Lord had spoken to Simon they all might hope. It would be a wonderful forgiveness, but it would be just like Him.

While they thus speak Jesus Himself stands in the midst, and that they might have no doubt that it is He, He shews them His hands and His side.

Then they had all been wrong in their ideas of Him, He had not confronted the high priest and vindicated His Name, He had not confounded the Roman judge, He had not claimed the kingdom and the crown, or even asked His Father for His inheritance. Why? Because those fickle, foolish men were more to Him than self-vindication, more to Him than kingdoms and crowns, more than glory and inheritance. Second only to His Father's love and approbation were those men in His estimation; they were His chief interest. His Father had given them to Him, and He had given Himself for them. And now in resurrection life He had come to claim them, for their faithlessness had not changed His love. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John xiii. 1).

But He did not love them more than He loves you and me; it gives Him just as much joy to manifest Himself to us as it did to manifest Himself to them. They were a sample company—the beginning of His church, and He loves the church and He gave Himself for it. We are part of that church, and have our part in His never-changing love.

We must notice that it was when they were gathered together to talk of Him that Jesus stood in the midst of them. He cared for them each apart from one another. He had proved this by looking after Mary in her sorrow, and Simon in his despair, and Cleopas in his doubts; but to

gather them together was His great purpose, and now that they were together He would not, He could not, withhold His presence, He could not stay away from them. They were glad when they saw the Lord, but His was the greater joy.

And so it is to-day. "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew xviii. 20), are His own words. They are familiar words, but they must not lose their appeal to us. How eagerly we ought to seek the company of those who love Him and delight to talk of Him, not for their sakes only, but for His, because He will meet us there. Love delights in the company of the loved ones. His love can be satisfied with nothing less than that.

Of course, He was supreme in the midst. His love, greater than all theirs combined, gave Him the supreme place there; and the great redemption work that He had done, to have them as His own without a rival claim, gave Him that place; and greater than all, He was supreme because of whom He is. When we gather together unto His Name, it is the Son of God who meets us there. To meet Him, to own His supremacy over us and all His own, to hear Him and to worship Him is our chief privilege and our greatest joy, if we are right with Him, if we have not left our first love.

"Then were the disciples glad, when they saw THE LORD" (John xx. 20). His own had not received Him, the world that He created had not known Him, He was cut off and had nothing, but

now He had a circle where His will and word were everything; and His disciples were glad to have it so. That circle has widened out until it has included us. May we be as ready to yield to Him His sovereign place in the midst of His saints—His own circle and chief interest—as were those men on that first day of the week.

J. T. MAWSON.

## AT JESUS' FEET.

(i) WONDERING—LUKE X. 38—42.

**A**LL that we know regarding Mary of Bethany is told in three well-known portions of Holy Scripture, and in each instance she is seen "At Jesus' Feet." What a delightful place in which to be found! A creature at the feet of the Creator; a humble woman at the feet of the Lord of heaven and earth. When He was in this world in lowly grace all were welcome at His feet, not one was repelled. It might be the Syro-phenician woman (Mark vii. 24—39); the penitent sinner (Luke vii. 36—50); or the cleansed leper (Luke xvii. 16). All alike were received by Him.

The fact that Mary was found three times at the feet of Jesus calls for our special attention, and has for us some precious instruction. Turning to the portion indicated at the head of this paper—will our readers kindly peruse it just now?—we find that the Lord Jesus "entered into a cer-

tain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house." It is worthy of note, by the way, how frequently the inspired evangelist Luke uses the word "a certain," as calling attention to typical persons, places, etc. Martha was obviously a kind-hearted, hospitable person, who felt honoured by having the blessed Lord under her roof. If she was "cumbered about much serving," was it not because of her desire to provide the very best for Him, who had so graciously deigned to come into her house?

Mary desired to receive what the Lord alone could minister. She was hungering for that which she seemed to know He could supply, and she appeared to think that the true way to show her appreciation of His condescending to come into that house was by sitting at His feet, and hearing His word. What follows shows that she was right. In reply to Martha's interruption, the Lord in His own inimitable way, spoke not of her "much serving" about which she was "cumbered;" but of her being "careful and troubled about many things." Doubtless He valued her service and the motive that prompted it, but He could not commend the worry that accompanied it. Then He uttered the exquisite words of verse 42, "**But one thing is needful:** and Mary hath chosen that **good** part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Is there not a lesson for us in this? Was there ever such a time of rush and bustle as the present?

Everything is worked at high pressure. Up in the morning, a hurried breakfast, no time for the Word of God and prayer, off by tram, 'bus, train, car, or other means of conveyance: a hectic day, home at night tired in body and wearied in mind. To sit "at Jesus' feet" seems to be out of the question. If the desirability of it is hinted at, the reply is, "That may be all right for those who have leisure for it but it is not for me, it is impossible." The result is spiritual decline, leading to a leaving of first love. To such, as to us all, there comes the Lord's word, "**one thing is needful.**" He knows all about our circumstances, our working conditions, our difficulty in finding time and all else. Yet, knowing it all, He gently whispers in our ear "**one thing is needful,**" and He knows, as no one else does, just what is needful for us.

There are those who are more free from the harassing cares of business, and who devote themselves largely to the Lord's work, but here also there is the danger of being "cumbered about much serving;" "careful and troubled about many things." Such is the natural make-up of some that they have to be always at it. They have no use for those who move more quietly, and who spend more time over the Scriptures. There is so much to do; so few are there to do it; and so little time in which to do it. The Lord says "**one thing is needful,**" but they do not seem to hear. He says, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile" (Mark vi 31), but they have not time. To sit seems to them to be sin-

ful; flesh cannot rest, and is it not possible to mistake fleshly activity for spiritual zeal?

There comes the time when our ever-gracious Lord "**maketh** me to lie down" (Psalm xxiii. 2).

"ON EARTH they say  
'LAID aside by ILLNESS':  
IN HEAVEN they say  
'CALLED aside for STILLNESS'."

His interests do not suffer and we gain. Instead of other people hearing our voice, we hear His voice, we hear His Word, and we discover that to be "that good part which shall not be taken away." What Mary heard that day we do not know. If the people in the synagogue at Nazareth "wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke iv. 22), we can well imagine Mary **wondering** when that day she had the blessed Lord all to herself and when at His feet she heard His word. As we shall see later, if the Lord will, what she heard affected all her after-life. The blessed Lord showed His appreciation of it when He said, "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Two things stand out prominently here, it was "that **good** part," and Mary had **chosen** it. Here is a choice that is open to every believer from the youngest to the oldest. Not to be "cumbered about much serving;" not to be "careful and troubled about many things;" not to rush about hither and thither; but to sit at His feet and hear His word. This will secure for us His commendation. Instead of making us slack in His service, as



some might fear, it will make us more intensely in earnest. We will serve in a way that will be agreeable to Him; we will be conscious of His guidance; we will have His smile; and, in a coming day, we will hear His "Well done."

May we know more of the secret, the luxury, the gain of sitting at His feet and hearing His Word.

"As ground when parched with summer's heat  
Gladly drinks in the welcome shower;  
So would we, sitting at His feet,  
Receive His word and feel His power."

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

TO BE CONTINUED IF THE LORD WILL

## GOING SLOW WITH GOD.

**G**OD is never slow from His standpoint, but He is from ours, because impetuosity and doing things prematurely are universal human weaknesses. It may not only be the result of our fallen condition, but one of the infirmities in our very nature as creatures to be in a hurry. When we begin to learn the ways of God, we have so many things to unlearn that there are some lessons which God does not begin teaching us till after we have passed the initial stages, and one of these deeper lessons is that of moving very slowly with Himself. It is not indifference, nor lagging behind; it is just the opposite of a dull and slovenly spirit, for it is a disposition entirely wide awake and energetic to keep in the order of God's will.

God lives and moves in eternity, and every little detail in His working must be like Himself, and have in it the majesty and measured movement, as well as the accuracy and promptness of infinite wisdom. When we deal with God we are not dealing with impetuous, short-sighted creatures. It is a great thing to really come to the knowledge as to who God is, and how we are to behave with Him. There is no hurry in a Being who sees and knows everything from all eternity. True, God often acts instantaneously, but it is the instantaneousness of mature and boundless wisdom, and not the quickness of a creature's hurry. It is also true that we are to "run the race set before us," and "run in the way of God's commandments," but we are to run with all our faculties calmly collected, with thoughtful deliberation. Running with God is a slow walk with the creature. We are to let God do the swiftness and we do the slowness.

The Holy Spirit tells us to "be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." That is, swift to take in from God, but slow to give the opinions, the emotions of the creature. We can never walk with God until we learn to go slow, to take time to pray, to think twice before we speak once, to watch the pace of His guidance, and measure our steps accordingly. Rebekah and Jacob were in a hurry to get God's fore-ordained blessing from the lips of Isaac, and paid the penalty of twenty years' separation and sorrow. Peter lagged behind Christ at the trial before Pilate, but his very tardiness was the effect of his previous impetuosity in

boasting of his fidelity. Had he gone slow in his avowals of heroism, and taken time to weigh his words, he would have gone faster, and closer to the cross. The very recollection as to whom God is, would produce a thoughtful, slow, quiet movement in all our dealings with Him.

**We miss a great many things from God by not going slow enough with Him.** It must be a secret joy in God to give Himself forth to those who love and appreciate Him, but God must always act like Himself, and if we fail to move in harmony with His attributes, and get the things He wants to communicate in His own way, He cannot change His perfections to accommodate our whims, and even if He should undertake to hear and bless us without regard to time and fitness it would do us no good, for the very blessings of God, if not conferred in God's way, would prove curses, like eating raw meat or green fruit. There are glimpses into God's perfection, insight into wonderful truths, quiet unfoldings of daily opportunities, gentle checks of the Holy Spirit upon our decisions or words, sweet and secret promptings to do certain things, the quiet solving of hard problems and mental articulations of special words of strength, which we have often missed because we took our ear from God's telephone a little too quickly or ran past the angle of vision, or wasted time by asking a question, or got in a feverish state of anxiety, or attempted to take God's work into our own hands. There is no telling how much we have

lost spiritually, mentally, and physically, by not going slow with God.

**There is a time for everything in the universe to get ripe.** All thoughts, words, prayers, actions, providences, opportunities, blessings, spiritual experiences, divine revelations, all avocations, all dispensations, whether in nature, grace, or glory, have a time in which they get ripe; and to go slow with God is the heavenly pace that gathers up all things at the time they are ripe. What can be greater than to see God, or to hear Him speak, and we miss both by not going slow.

**Going slow with God is our greatest safety.** It is dangerous to live with a thousand live wires around us, against which we may jostle at any time by not keeping calm and thoughtful in our movements. In factories of multiplied and complicated machinery a man must needs move cautiously, and especially when wheels, bands, electric motors, and sharp cutting instruments are running with lightning speed, and a wrong step, or a careless movement of the hand, may cause instant death. In many respects, we are moving amid just such unseen and complicated machinery; and walking quietly and slowly with God is the only safe way to escape the swift flying bands and pulleys of mighty laws, as well as demoniac snares.

**There are more religious delusions at the present day than since the fall of man, and every one of them could be traced to a rash, impetuous taking**

up with thoughts and things without taking time to wait on God in humility and teachableness of spirit. Doctrines are formed on one text of Scripture not half understood, while a dozen plain texts to the contrary receive no attention. New, wild, and extravagant teachers are rushed after like a Klondike gold field. All sorts of pious fads, religious delusions, and visionary theories are hastily swallowed down, because people do not keep humble enough to watch God and trace His slow and peaceful footsteps. It is not merely going slow that is our safety, but it is **loving** to go slow; it is to lovingly prefer the deep, quiet, peaceful river of God's life to the rushing, noisy, exciting and wild things which always characterize men's foolishness. The soul that has the itch of impatience in it will sooner or later champ the bit, break the traces, or run over a precipice. The very centre of the soul must be calm and peaceful, so that it can prefer God's way and God's time of doing things. Did we ever have to repent for taking time to wait on God, and did we ever fail to repent for not taking time to work in His order?

**We must needs go slow with God in order to keep in a reverent and worshipping spirit.** This is the way saints have turned their lives into a beautiful continual worship of God, by going slow enough to mix God in with everything, and tie all the events of life fast to His throne; by referring all things to Him, and with the eye of thought looking up to Him to dictate their services and their steps.

Some people pray too fast to get any answer from God, like nervous children that rattle away at their parents so rapidly that their words are not intelligible. They must quiet down and talk slow enough to be understood, before their wants or fears can be relieved. One of the curses put on Adam was that of "sweat," which expresses the hurried, over-heated or excited state of the body; and the Lord told Ezekiel that His priests must not enter the holy sanctuary with woollen garments on them, or "any thing that causeth sweat," because the God of eternal and unruffled peace wants us to worship Him with a calm, collected, reverent spirit, and not with the sweat of creature-hurry in our minds. How can we speak to God in a reverent way or look to Him with adoring love when we have run ourselves into a feverish perspiration and precipitation of thought? Whatever we do accurately must take time and collectedness of mind, and there is no accuracy in all the world like keeping company with God, and yet nothing so free from bondage or tediousness. By going slow with the Lord we accomplish more than by going with a rush, because what we do is done so much better and does not have to be undone. It is done in a better spirit, with deeper motives, and bears fruit far out in the future, when all mushroom performances have been dissipated for ever.

## “EDIFIED”—“MULTIPLIED”

“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were **EDIFIED**; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were **MULTIPLIED**.” (Acts ix. 31).

“**Edified**”—“**Multiplied**” — the words have a pleasing sound in our ears. They both mean increase. “**Edified**” signifies increase in size. **Multiplied**, increase in numbers. Would that these two words were true of every Christian assembly!

“**Edified**”! The word comes from a word, which signifies building. A building is an edifice. Stone added to stone or brick to brick, the building is edified, increases in size. Or we get the simile of the growth of a body, increase in size through the assimilation of suitable nourishment. So we read, “The whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the **EDIFYING** of itself in love.” (Ephesians iv. 16).

Of what does true edification consist? It is not the mere accumulation of Bible knowledge. That has its use, but if knowledge rests there and goes no further, all that is needed is a retentive memory, much reading, and lo! you may become a veritable encyclopaedia of Scriptural knowledge. If no more than that, your knowledge might fitly be

described by Scripture as the knowledge that puffeth up.

In contrast to the knowledge that puffeth up, we are told it is "love" that "**edifies**" (see 1 Cor. viii. 1). What an emphasis is laid in Scripture upon divine love! Love is the measure of our increase. Not increase of knowledge, useful and proper as that is in its place, but increase in divine love. In every book in the New Testament we are exhorted to divine love with one notable exception. That is John's third epistle. There we read of that undesirable character, Diotrephes, "who loveth to have the pre-eminence" (verse 9)—the wrong kind of love, springing from self-love and the flesh.

Divine love is faithful love. It is not sickly and sentimental, agreeing with everybody and everything, and never making a stand for the truth. On the contrary one filled with divine love would be under the guidance of the Spirit of truth.

"**Edified!**" We may well ask ourselves the question as to increase. Love is the measure of the Christian.

That a whole chapter should be devoted to the subject, and that it should come between 1 Corinthians xii. and xiv. is most arresting.

Chapter xii. is taken up with the subject of the Holy Spirit's place and activities in the assembly, and chapter xiv. with the way that it is worked out, even in **edification**. "He that prophesieth



speaketh unto men to **edification**” (verse 3). “He that prophesieth **edifieth** the church” (verse 4) “That the church may receive **edifying**” (verse 5) “Seek that ye may excel to the **edifying** of the church” (verse 12) “The other is not **edified**” (verse 17). “Let all things be done unto **edifying**” (verse 26).

May edification mark Christian assemblies, but it will mark them according to the place that divine love has in the hearts and practical lives of their members. Love will make a pastor of one man, a teacher of another, an evangelist of a third, a help of a fourth and so on.

“**Multiplied**”! Increase in numbers! Surely this will come about by the preaching of the gospel. Are we multiplying? We may be told that there is nothing in numbers. Such a platitude is probably a cover for lack of earnestness, initiative, fervour, prayerfulness. We read, “And the **multitude** of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul” (Acts iv. 32). “And believers were . . . added to the Lord, **multitudes** both of men and women” (Acts v. 14). “Then the apostles called the **multitude** of the disciples unto them” (Acts vi. 2). “A great **multitude** both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed” (Acts xiv. 1). “And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great **multitude**, and of the chief women not a few” (Acts xvii. 4). Blessed multiplication! We have the example of what this means in the early church, and we may well be exercised about it.

If believers are increasing in the true knowledge of the Lord and the truth, increasing in love to Him and to each other, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, then true edification will be the assured result, and multiplication, increase in numbers, will assuredly take place. Let those two words haunt our memories, “EDIFIED”—“MULTIPLIED,” till we turn them to intense and practical effect in our own lives.

A. J. POLLOCK.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(MARK xii. 1—xiii. 2).

Our review of this Gospel being more condensed than in the case of the Epistles hitherto before us, it is more than ever necessary to read it in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

**A**S we closed chapter xi. we heard the leaders of the Jews plead ignorance. Whether John's baptism was from heaven or of men they could not tell, and much less could they understand the work and service of the Lord. We open chapter xii. to see it plainly demonstrated that He perfectly knew and understood them. He knew their motives, their thoughts and the end to which they were heading. He revealed His knowledge of them in a striking parable.

The first verse speaks of “parables,” and Matthew's Gospel shows us that at this point He uttered three. Mark only records the middle one of

the three—the one that foretold what these Jewish leaders were going to do, and what the results would be for them. In this parable the “husbandmen” represented the responsible leaders of Israel, and a summary is furnished of the way in which through the centuries they had refused all God’s demands.

In speaking of a vineyard the Lord Jesus was continuing a figure which had been used in the Old Testament—Psalm lxxx.; Isaiah v.; and elsewhere. In the Psalm the vine is clearly identified with Israel, and out of it is to come a “Branch” who is, “the Son of Man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself.” In Isaiah it is very manifest that God was not getting out of His vineyard what He was entitled to expect. Now we find the story carried a good deal forward. The owner of the vineyard had done his part in providing all that was needful and the responsibility as to the fruit lay with the husbandmen to whom the vineyard was entrusted. They failed in their responsibility, and then proceeded to deny the rights of the owner and maltreat his representatives. Last of all they were tested by the advent of the owner’s son. So the leaders of Israel had maltreated the prophets, and slain some of them. And now the Son had appeared, who is the Branch of whom the Psalm speaks. This was the supreme test.

The position of the Jew as under the law is portrayed in this parable. Consequently the question was whether they could produce that which God demanded. They had not done so. Not only was

there an absence of fruit, but there was the presence of positive hatred for God and those who represented Him; and this hatred reached its climax when the Son appeared. The responsible leaders were moved by envy, and they wished to monopolize the inheritance for themselves, and so they were prepared to slay Him. A day or two before they had determined upon His death, as verse 18 of the last chapter told us. Now the Lord discovers to them that He knew their evil thoughts.

And He showed them also what would be the terrible consequences for themselves. They would be dispossessed and destroyed. This was historically fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem, and will doubtless have a further and final fulfilment in the last days. The One whom they rejected will become the dominant Head of all that God is building for eternity. When that prediction is fulfilled it will indeed be a wonder in the eyes of Israel.

The statement that the lord of the vineyard "will give the vineyard unto others," is an intimation of what comes more fully to light in John xv. Others will become branches in the true Vine, and will bring forth fruit: only they will no longer be under the law in doing so, nor will they be selected from amongst the Jews only. The Lord's words were a warning that their rejection of Him would mean their setting aside by God, and the gathering in of others, till ultimately the One they rejected would dominate everything. They saw that the parable pronounced judgment against them.

Not daring for the moment to lay hands on Him, they commenced a verbal offensive against Him, endeavouring to catch Him in His words. First came the Pharisees jointly with the Herodians. Their question as to the tribute money was skilfully designed to make Him an offender one way or the other—either against the national feelings of the Jew or the Roman. His answer however reduced them to impotence. He made them admit their servitude to Caesar by an appeal to their coinage. Their lips, not His, pronounced it to be Caesar's image. Then He not only gave the answer to their question which was perfectly obvious in the light of their own admission, but also used it as an introduction to the far more weighty matter of God's claims upon them. No wonder they marvelled at Him.

We may notice how, in verse 14, these opponents paid tribute to His perfect truth. In a way far beyond anything they realized—in the most absolute sense—He was the truth and taught the truth, wholly undeflected by man and his little world. Of no other servant of God could this be said. Even a Paul was influenced by human considerations, as Acts xxi. 20—26 shows. Jesus alone is the perfect Servant of God, and He was so poor that He had to ask for a "penny" to be brought to Him.

Next came the Sadducees, asking Him to unravel the matrimonial tangle which they propounded. He did this and convicted them of their folly; but before doing so He revealed its under-

lying causes. They did not know the Scriptures—that was ignorance. They did not know the power of God—that was unbelief. Their unbelieving error was upheld on these twin pillars. Modern unbelief of the Sadduceean type is supported by just the same two pillars. They continually misquote, misinterpret, or otherwise mangle Scripture, and they conceive of God as though He were anything but Almighty—as just a man, though of larger powers than ourselves.

The Lord proved the resurrection of the dead by quoting the Old Testament. The fact of it lies implicit in Exodus iii. 6. God was still the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob hundreds of years after their death. Though dead to men, they lived to Him, and that meant they must rise again. There the fact lay in the Scripture, and in denying it the Sadducee only convicted himself of ignorance.

Since the fact was there in Scripture the Lord, true to His Servant character, appealed to the Scripture and did not assert the fact dogmatically on His own authority. What He did state dogmatically is in verse 25, where he makes clear the state or condition into which resurrection will introduce us, thus going beyond what the Old Testament taught. The resurrection world differs from this world. Earthly relationships cease in those heavenly conditions. We are not **to be** angels, but we are to be “**as** the angels which are in heaven.” Immortality and incorruptibility will be ours.

The plain fact was therefore that the Sadducees

had conjured up a difficulty in their ignorance which had no existence in fact. Their discomfiture was complete.

One of the scribes who was listening perceived this, and he ventured to propound a question that they often debated amongst themselves, concerning the relative importance of the various commandments. The Lord's answer brushed aside all their elaborate arguments and quibbles as to one or other of the ten commandments by going straight to the word contained in *Deuteronomy vi. 4, 5*. Here was a commandment which brought within its scope all the other commandments. God demanded that He should be absolutely supreme in the affections of His creatures; if only He were so, all other things would fall into their right place. Here is the great master-commandment which governs everything.

In this commandment there lay an element of great encouragement. Why should God care about possessing the undivided love of His creature? Faith would answer this question by saying—Because He Himself is love. Being love, and loving His creature, even though lost in his sins, He cannot be satisfied without the love of His creature. Israel could not “stedfastly look to the end” of the law. Had they been able to do so, that is what they would have seen.

For the second commandment the Lord referred the man to *Leviticus xix. 18*, another unexpected passage. But this commandment evidently springs

out of the first. No one can have ability and inclination to treat his neighbour rightly except he first is right in his relations with his God. But love is the essence of this second commandment no less than of the first. To love one's neighbour as oneself is the limit under the law. Only under grace is it possible to go a step beyond this, as for instance Aquila and Priscilla did, as recorded in Romans xvi. 4. However, "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10), and this is said in connection with this second commandment.

The scribe felt the force of this answer, as verses 32 and 33 show. The series of questions began with the confession, "Master, we know that Thou . . . . teachest the way of God in truth." This was said by the Pharisees and Herodians in the spirit of hypocrisy. It ended with the scribe saying in all sincerity, "Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth." The man saw that the love which would lead to the fulfilling of these two great commandments is of far more importance than offering all the sacrifices which the law enjoined. The sacrifices had their place but they were only a means to an end. Love is "the end of the commandment," as 1 Timothy i. 5 tells us. The end is greater than the means. Thus the scribe approved of the answer that had been given to him.

The Lord's rejoinder in verse 34 is very striking. He pronounced the man as "not far from the kingdom of God," and this showed two things. First, that anyone who gets away from what is outward and ceremonial, to realize the importance



of what is inward and vital before God, is not far from blessing. Second, that important as such a realization is, it does not of itself suffice for entrance into the kingdom. Something further is needed, even the spirit of a little child, as we saw when considering chapter x. The scribe was near the kingdom but not yet in it. This reply, we judge, staggered the man, as well as the other listeners, and because of this no one cared to ask further questions. Such a man as this, well versed in the law of God, they took to be in the kingdom as a matter of course. The Lord's words challenged their thoughts. Yet, in seeing that God aims at, and values, that which is moral and spiritual beyond what is ceremonial and fleshly he had travelled a long way towards the kingdom. Romans xiv. 17 enforces the same thing as regards ourselves, at least in principle. Have we fully recognized it?

His opponents having finished with their questions the Lord propounds to them His great question, arising out of Psalm cx. The scribes were quite clear that the Messiah was to be the Son of David; yet here is David speaking of Him as his Lord. Amongst men, and in those days, a father never addressed his son in such terms, but the reverse: the son called his father, lord. How could the Christ then be Son of David? Were the scribes wrong in what they asserted? Or could they explain it?

They could not explain it. They were silent. The explanation was exceedingly simple, but face

to face with the Christ, and unwilling to admit His claims, they wilfully shut their eyes to it. He was the Son of David, and David called Him Lord by the Holy Ghost, so there was no mistake. The explanation is that it was the Son of God who became the Son of David according to the flesh, as is so plainly stated in Romans i. 3. When once the Deity of the Christ is fully acknowledged all is plain. These verses throw a good deal of light upon the statement in 1 Corinthians xii. 3, that, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

The Lord had now answered all the questions of His adversaries, and asked them a question which they could not answer. Had they been able to answer it, they would have been put into possession of the key to the whole situation. The mass of the people were still glad to listen to Him but the scribes were blind, and in verses 38—40 the Lord warns the people against them. Those who were being blindly led are warned against their blind leaders. The real motives and objects of the scribes are unmasked. The Word of God from His lips pierces between soul and spirit in an unerring way.

Their characteristic sin was self-seeking in the things of God. Whether in the market-place—the business centre, the synagogue — the religious centre, or in feasts—the social circle, they must have the commanding place, and to this end they wore their distinctive dress. Having gained the leading position they used it to feather their own

necks financially at the expense of widows, the most defenceless class in the community. The acquisition of power and money was the end and object of their religion. They followed "the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter ii. 15); and there are all too many in our day who still tread that evil way, the end of which is "greater damnation," or "severer judgment." The adjective, you notice, is not "longer" as though differences might exist in the **duration** of punishment; though there will be differences as regards its **severity**.

The adversaries had provoked this discussion with their questions, but the last word was with the Lord. The closing words must have fallen from His lips with the force of a sledge-hammer. He calmly took to Himself the office of Judge of all the earth and pronounced their doom. Had He not been the Son of God this had been folly and worse.

But the same Son of God sat over against the treasury and beheld the gifts of the crowd, and lo! He can with equal certainty appraise the value of their gifts. A poor widow approaches—possibly one who had suffered from the swindling of rapacious scribes — and casts in her little all. Two of the smallest coins were left to her, and she threw them both in. According to human thoughts her gift was absurd and contemptible in its smallness; its presence would not be noticed, and its absence would not be felt. In the Divine estimation it was more valuable than all the other gifts

put together. God's arithmetic in this matter is not ours.

With God the motive is everything. Here was a woman who instead of blaming God because of the misdemeanours of the scribes, who claimed to represent Him, devoted her all to the service of God. This delighted the heart of our Lord.

He called His disciples to Him, as verse 43 tells us, and pointed the woman out, proclaiming the virtue of her act. This is particularly striking if we notice how chapter xiii. opens, for His disciples were anxious to point out to Him the greatness and beauty of the Temple buildings. **They** pointed to **costly stones** wrought by men's busy hands. **He** pointed to the **moral beauty** of a poor widow's act. He told them that their great buildings would all crash into ruin. It is the widow's act that will be remembered in eternity.

And yet the widow gave her two mites to the temple chest that received contributions for the upkeep of the temple fabric! The Lord had already turned His back on the temple and now was pronouncing its doom. She did not know this; but in spite of being a little behind the times in her intelligence, her gift was accepted and valued according to the devoted heart that prompted it. What a comfort this fact is!

God was before her in her gift, and God abides even when temples are destroyed. Things material—upon which we may set our hearts—disappear, but God remains.

F. B. HOLE.

## “THOU ART . . . THOU SHALT BE.”

CERTAINLY Simon Peter would never forget his introduction to the Lord Jesus as recorded in John i. It is not difficult to visualize him coming in his eagerness with his more prosaic brother, full of questions, but suddenly arrested and silenced by the dignity and power of the Lord. Of course it was right and fitting that the Lord should speak first and that, as far as we know, Simon had no answer to His words. No wonder he had no answer, the words of the Lord were so strange, and of such authority and so final that question and doubt were out of place. Simon had never been spoken to in such a way before.

“Thou art Simon”—then the Lord knew him, and what he was, though they had never met before. “Thou shalt be”—then He was able also to foretell the future. Who could do these two things but God? Years afterwards Simon had to confess to the Lord, “Thou knowest all things.” His first experience of that was at this first interview. And who had the right to change his name?—but He who had the right to claim him altogether, and had the power to change his whole character and destiny.

“Thou art Simon the son of Jona”—that was what he was by natural birth. “Thou shalt be called Cephas”—that is what he was to be as born

of God. "Thou art—." What was he? Well, certainly he was excitable, mercurial, and in all probability fickle, "Thou shalt be called Cephas—." What was that? A stone, stable, settled, immovable. "Thou art—." What was he? Profane, a swearer, inclined to quickness of speech and even lying. "Thou shalt be—." What? A stone for God's spiritual house, having part in God's holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. What a change!

Who could bring all this about? Only the One in whom was divine creative power, the Saviour and life-giver, and Simon had come into contact with Him, never to be the same again for ever. I should call that **designation**. At that first interview the Lord revealed His ultimate purpose to Simon and designated him to his great destiny.

There can be little doubt that the second interview is that recorded in Mark i. "Now as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." Simon was no loiterer but a hard working man; the living of his family which included his mother-in-law depended upon his labours. I do not think that a lazy man would have had much peace in his home. But now a greater claim than that of his family confronts him. The One who had given him a new name claims him and commands him.

What shall he do? I am sure that he did not understand the full significance of the call, but he did not hesitate. He admitted the claim and abandoned all that his living depended upon and followed the Lord. But who is He whose claim is thus paramount, that must come before wife and children and home and self? God alone has that right. In this second interview the divine authority of the Lord appears, and I should call it **submission**. Simon bowed to the rights of the Lord over him.

The third interview seems to be that given in Luke v. Simon is back at his boat. That may be a little difficult to understand, but it seems to have needed this third interview to wholly separate him from his former life, and it had its place in the gracious ways of the Lord with him. Simon had owned the Lord's claim over him and consequently He had a right to all that Simon possessed, and now He appropriates his boat and makes it His pulpit from which to teach the people. When he had finished His discourse, He shewed that He would be no man's debtor, and just as when Simon followed Him at first, He healed his mother-in-law, which was a great compensation and blessing, so now He gives to Simon such a catch of fish as he had never even dreamed of taking. It was a divine intervention and Simon felt and acknowledged that he was in the presence of the Lord, the Creator. There is no doubt as to that, and the effect of it is such, that he falls down before Him,

and cries, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

I have often pondered those words and wondered what Simon's thoughts really were. Of course he did not want the Lord to go away, yet he felt his unfitness for His presence. I have wondered if at that time he remembered the Lord's first words to him, and feeling that they meant something very great, and realizing his utter sinfulness, and perhaps his neglect of the Lord's earlier call, he means, "It is no use, Lord, I am so sinful, such impossible material, you can make nothing of me, leave me to myself." It may be so, and if Simon was anything like me and you, such a thought must at some time have passed through his mind.

"And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not." That means, "It is not what you are Simon, but what I am; not what you can be to Me, but what I can be to you; not your efforts, but my grace." He added, "From henceforth thou shalt catch men." Let a man but own the truth as to himself, and the Lord does the rest. No wonder Peter wrote afterwards of the true grace of God. I should call this third interview **conviction and commission**. From this time Peter became the constant companion of the Lord and the chief spokesman for his brethren.

The Lord's service on earth was now nearing its end. He had done great works among the people, and spoken gracious words to them, and the time



had come for a response if there was to be any. So the Lord asked His disciples what men were saying about Him, as recorded in Matthew xvi. They were saying many things, but none of them right. These disciples of His, they too had to be tested and so the challenge comes to them, "But whom say ye that I am?" And Simon Peter—the Peter in him was beginning to shew itself—"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Certainly Simon had advanced in true knowledge, but it was not his own intelligence, nor was it by sitting at the feet of the doctors of the law. The Father in heaven had taken him in hand and had revealed the truth as to His beloved Son to him. What wonderful grace is this; and it is just as true of everyone of us, who has believed and owned the truth as to the Lord Jesus, that the Father has enlightened us: it is His work.

What joy must have been in the heart of the Lord as He answered Simon, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter." No longer, thou shalt be, but "thou **art** Peter." The truth was in his soul as light and substance, he was established in it by the Father's teaching and grace; he was attached to the Lord in his resurrection title, and was soon to take his place as a living stone that had come to the living Stone, chosen of God and precious. This incident in Matthew's Gospel is **revelation**. It is the

Father's answer to the Lord's choice; His seal upon the Lord's words, at His first interview with Simon—"Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone."

John gives divine choice; Mark, divine authority; Luke, divine grace; Matthew, divine teaching.

We may trace Simon's education in its further stages in another paper, if the Lord will.

J. T. MAWSON.

## A HOLY PLACE.

IT is remarkable that the statement, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" should occur twice in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians v. 6, and Galatians v. 9). The first time in connection with grave moral evil, and the second in connection with serious evil doctrine.

A very important truth is thus brought out, viz. : that the Christian assembly should be a clean place. It is **characteristically** this, and it should be so **actually**. In the exhortation to "purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump," the words are added, "**As ye ARE unleavened**" (1 Cor. v. 7). It then adds, "Even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" — this speaks of sin being dealt with, and gives the position **characteristically** and then urges the **practical**. "Let us therefore keep the feast [that is, taking this feast of unleavened bread as a figure] not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of

malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (verse 8).

An attempt has been made to teach that a Christian may be connected with an assembly which permits someone, who is guilty of gross moral sin or of holding serious evil doctrine, to continue among them unjudged, and yet be undefiled as long as he or she is not personally guilty of such sin, or of sympathizing with such. This is surely a very wrong way of looking at things, and quite contrary to Scripture. The Word of God says, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

When Achan sinned in taking of the spoils of Jericho a goodly Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold, fifty shekels in weight, the word went forth, not that one misguided individual had sinned and all else were innocent, but that "**Israel** hath sinned, and **they** have also transgressed My covenant" (Joshua vii. 11).

When judgment was pronounced on the actual guilty party, Joshua said, "Why hast thou troubled **us**? The Lord shall trouble **thee** this day." And we read, "**All** Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them [sons and daughters and all he had] with fire after they had stoned them with stones."

So it is with the Christian assembly. So it was at Corinth. A case of gross moral turpitude was knowingly allowed in their midst. The assembly

is a holy place—**characteristically** unleavened and should be so **actually**, and the matter had to be dealt with. The assembly had to be cleared.

On the other hand, there are degrees of evil. Narrow-minded men in the assembly might seek to purge out saints, not walking up to **their** ideas, putting them out for trivial reasons. There are usually things present, which exercise the minds of the older and more experienced Christians, but which need to be met with pastoral dealings, and not excommunication, which would be carrying things too far.

So whilst it was plain this evil man must be excommunicated in the most solemn way from the Christian assembly, we are given a list of sinful practices that would necessitate excommunication. The list is, “a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner.” A little thought over this list will show how comprehensive it is, and yet guarding against misguided men acting on trivial grounds in this serious matter.

Then in Galatians v. 9. we have the sentence, “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,” as a warning against evil doctrine being harboured in the midst of the Christian assembly.

If the Apostle Paul, in handling the matter, called for severe measures in the matter of serious evil conduct, his handling was still more severe in the matter of evil doctrine. He wrote, “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gos-

pel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed'' (Galatians i. 8). The next verse reiterates this, and we know that Scripture is not given to idle repetition. The thing being twice repeated shows that the matter is intensely serious. The Apostle could not have been more insistent.

Is it possible for saints to remain in fellowship where serious evil teaching is held, though not holding such teaching themselves, and yet not be defiled? There is nothing more deadening to the conscience than this. Such saints are defiled—"a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." In tacitly submitting to evil doctrines they become "partaker of his [the propagator of doctrines subversive of Christianity] evil deeds" (2 John 11).

It is not without significance that the command to refuse entrance into the home or pass the usual salutation to one who did not bring "the doctrine of Christ," was not given to strong Christian men, but to a lady and her children, young people (2 John 9—11). Does this not emphasize our points? Doubtless the Apostle's handling of the matter of Judaizing teachers in the Church of God brought clearance and deliverance. It is evident, after his vehement denunciation of the matter as subversive of the very Gospel, such leaven could not be allowed to work among the saints.

May each one of us be careful to maintain holiness of conduct and soundness in doctrine.

A. J. POLLOCK.

## AT JESUS' FEET.

(ii) WEEPING—JOHN XI. 1—45.

**S**HALL we, before we resume our meditation, read the portion indicated? How much had happened in the home at Bethany since the Lord's visit there. The loved brother had been stricken with illness and apparently his condition was critical. At once the anxious sisters sent a message to the Lord Jesus saying: "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick" (verse 3). They used a strong lever—"he whom Thou lovest." Nor were they mistaken, for the Holy Spirit has told us "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus" (verse 5).

We doubt not they expected He would immediately respond, but the hours passed, the anxiety increased, the tension became greater, and He did not come. Slowly the life ebbed out; Lazarus died, and the Lord Jesus had not come. What did it mean? **He** knew. It was "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (verse 4). **He** understood, they did not. At last He came. Natural reason would say "But too late." Yet **He** knew, and

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

Is this being read by some one who is watching over a loved one? The doctor holds out little hope. You have prayed, and prayed, and prayed,

but the sky is black. Listen troubled heart! It is "for the glory of God, that Son of God might be glorified thereby." Your strength is to sit still, and to glorify Him by your simple trust, manifested by your waiting.

"Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him: but Mary **sat still** in the house" (verse 20). Did Mary not desire to hear His word? Undoubtedly she did. Martha had much to say. She, like her race, believed in "the resurrection at the last day" (verse 24)—she made a fine confession of Him as "the Christ, the Son of God" (verse 27); she had the unique distinction of hearing Him speak of Himself as the "I AM," "The resurrection and the life" (verse 25)—and that therefore there was no limit to His power even over death; but she did not seem to grasp the immediate significance of it, and she went to find her sister.

Mary at once responded to the call of the Lord, for she "arose quickly, and came unto Him" (verse 29). At once she took the place that she seemed to like best. "**She** fell down at His feet," saying, as Martha had done, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (verse 32). Her attitude was right, her words were few; the only words the Holy Spirit has been pleased to put on record as coming from her lips, and these number just eleven. In the first instance, she seemed to be willing to sit still until the Lord called her, and, secondly, she appeared to be pre-

pared to leave herself, her sorrow, her entire case in His hand. Dear bereaved reader, can you do this?

“He knows, He loves, He cares,  
Nothing this truth can dim,  
He gives the very best to those  
Who leave the choice to Him.”

It is difficult to think thus at the moment, is it not? But at His feet you will learn it; and, as you see His tears, you will realize how true it is. As Mary looked up through her tears what a marvellous, never-to-be-forgotten sight she witnessed,

### “JESUS WEPT.”

(v. 35). There was a heart, and that the heart of the Son of God eternal, who, as Man, wept with those that wept, so that the Jews were constrained to say, “Behold how He loved him!” (verse 36). “Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever” (Hebrews xiii. 8). His heart beats in tenderest sympathy, and, through the eyes of “His own” He weeps with the broken-hearted now, therefore be of good cheer!

The remainder of the incident is well-known. To the grave He went; the case, humanly speaking, was hopeless (verse 39); Christ’s dependence as Man was expressed (verses 41, 42). His power as the Son of God was displayed (v. 43), and Lazarus came forth (verse 44). It is in Mary’s position that we are mainly interested. “At Jesus’ feet” she sat and heard His word, and, as we have



ventured to suggest, she **wondered**. "At Jesus' feet" she lay, she **wept**, she poured out her tale of sorrow, and, oh, sight of all sights the most wonderful! she saw His tears. Well might some one write:

"We know Him as we could not know  
Through Heaven's eternal years;  
We there shall see His glorious face,  
But Mary saw His tears."

Was it not well worth while for Mary to sit still in the house until she received the message "the Master is come, and calleth for thee?" As we know the secret of sitting at His feet and hearing His word, so shall we be fitted to face the trials, the burdens, the sorrows, the bereavements, that cross our Christian paths, and in the midst of them we will be maintained in quietness and in confidence. We shall learn the secret of sitting still; and have an increased sense of His love; a deeper appreciation of His preciousness; and better acquaintance with His heart that throbs with truest sympathy; and we shall see that all is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.

"Jesus—it speaks a life of love,  
Of sorrows meekly borne;  
It tells of sympathy above,  
Whatever makes us mourn."

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

## SOMETHING FOR TODAY.

READ PHILIPPIANS III. 17 TO IV. 9.

**H**OW important it is that we should keep in memory the fact that our citizenship is in heaven. There is so much in this poor world to make us forget it. The apostle speaks with tears of some "who mind earthly things," but, says he, **our** conversation—our associations in life—are all above. Here below we are but strangers and pilgrims.

Suppose you were on a visit to some distant land, having left all that you love most behind you here. In course of conversation you say to somebody, "I am only a stranger in your country and I have no thought of settling down. All that my heart loves best is over yonder." So is it here. Our conversation — our common-wealth — our associations in life are in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour.

Mark the intensity of that word **look**. Let us ask ourselves whether we are really looking for the Saviour. Of course we all know that the Lord is coming again. That truth has long been written down as an article in our creed and we would not surrender it no matter who summoned us to do so. And if any talk to us about the grave and a dying day, we say, "Not death, but the coming of the Lord is our hope." And yet all the while we might not be among those who **look** for the

Saviour. For this looking is not a matter of clear views, but of the state of our spiritual affections. Happy to be among those who are **looking** for the Saviour.

Then, mark, we look for the **Saviour**, not for the Judge. We look for the Saviour, to put the finishing touch to that salvation of which through grace we are already the subjects. When the Saviour comes again He will change those bodies of humiliation, and fashion them like unto His body of glory!

Let us challenge our hearts as to how far we realize that it is to heaven we belong, and whether we are really looking for the Saviour Himself to come. And let us pray God that these well-known truths may have a larger place in our hearts and exercise a mighty influence over our life. It is easy to hold these things in the letter, but they have no power when held in the letter only.

In the early part of the fourth chapter the apostle turns from these heavenly truths and comes down to commonplace things for everyday life. First of all, he says, "Rejoice in the Lord alway." Mark that little word **alway**. And to make the exhortation more emphatic, he adds, "And again I say, Rejoice." What a word that is! The Holy Ghost knows how to minister it in power to the soul apart from any human comment. The outlook may not be very bright and there may be much to fill the heart with sorrow. But there is

always a Voice saying to us, "Rejoice in the Lord **alway**, and again I say, Rejoice." **Rejoice alway**? Yes, even when the clouds gather across the sky, when some great loss seems to be imminent, when some pillar on which you lean is about to be taken away. Yes, rejoice in the Lord alway. What a word for us! Why then should all the sunshine go out of our face, and our heads hang down like the branches of a willow tree? Christ abides, the unchanging One. Nothing can separate us from Him, or deprive us of the solace and support of His presence.

Think of the sixth verse: "Be over anxious about nothing." Mark that word **nothing**. What a word! Who sends it to us? One who loves us perfectly, who knows our need, and the circumstances through which we are passing, who sees to-morrow as clearly as He sees to-day. "Be careful for nothing." It is a word for our present strengthening and comfort. Is there an anxious heart scanning these pages? I do not know the source of your anxiety, but I beg you to listen to this word, "Be careful for **nothing**." What more? "But in **everything** by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. What a word! It comes straight down from the heart of our God and Father, who loves us—oh, so perfectly and tenderly! It comes to your heart and mine. What a privilege that we can let our requests be made known unto God. Never is His door closed against us. He is never too busy to listen to our feeble, stammering words,

nor will He ever upbraid us for going to Him too often. Let your requests—whatever their nature—be made known to God. Does He not know them? Of course He does. But the heart finds relief in unburdening itself to God. And what shall be the result? Why, His peace which passeth all understanding—deep and unutterable—shall keep your hearts and minds **through Christ Jesus**. Yes, it is through Him, our living Saviour at God's right hand, the great Priest of His people, the One who is able to succour us in our hours of trial, to sympathize with us in our times of sorrow and to save us to the very end of our pilgrim days!

Of the verses that follow we need not speak. The apostle bids them think of things that are true, honest, just, and pure and lovely. Live in the atmosphere of the good, and what shall the result of that be? The God of peace shall be with us. There was, perhaps, among the saints at Philippi a little element of discord—a something. We see at the beginning of chapter iv. that the apostle beseeches two beloved sisters to be of the same mind in the Lord. How apt we are to have our thoughts engaged with that little something, until it grows and grows. Oh, says the apostle, do not let your mind dwell on that. Live in the atmosphere of the good, and the God of peace shall be with you. Brethren, may this familiar Scripture come home to our hearts with renewed power by God's grace.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(MARK xiii. 3—xiv. 25).

Our review of this Gospel being more condensed than in the case of the Epistles hitherto before us, it is more than ever necessary to read it in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

THE Lord's prediction that the Temple should be utterly destroyed led to His prophetic discourse. The disciples did not question the fulfilment of His words, they only wished to know the time of fulfilment and, true to their Jewish instincts, what the sign of it would be. His answer to their questions is very instructive.

In the first place, He fixed no dates: any answer He gave as to the time was of an indirect sort. In the second place. He went beyond the immediate scope of their questions to the larger issues of the last days and His own advent in glory. This feature is seen in many Old Testament prophecies, which were given in view of some impending event of history, and which definitely applied to that event, and yet were so worded as to apply with yet greater fulness to events that are to transpire in the last days. In the case before us, there was a fulfilment in the destruction wrought by the Romans in A.D. 70, which comes out more clearly in Luke's account of this discourse, and yet the fulfilment is connected with the coming of the Lord. This feature of prophecy is alluded to in the saying, "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Peter i. 20).

In the third place, He brought the full weight of His prophecy to bear upon the consciences and hearts of His hearers. If their question was prompted by a considerable measure of curiosity, He lifted the whole matter to a much higher plane by His opening words, "Take heed lest any man deceive you." The course of things that prophecy reveals runs counter to all that men naturally would expect. The attractiveness of the false prophets lies in the fact that they ever predict things which fall in with men's desires and seem eminently reasonable. We must be on our watch, for false prophets abound to-day in the pulpits of Christendom.

The first warning, in verse 6, concerns those who come, impersonating the Christ. The central point of the conflict is always here. The devil knows that if he can deceive men as to Him, he can deceive them in everything else. If we are wrong as to the centre we are bound to be wrong to the far circumference. To be rooted in our knowledge of the true Christ renders us proof against the seductions of the false ones.

Next we are warned not to expect easy times as to world conditions. Wars and turmoil amongst the nations, and disturbances in the face of nature are to be expected. These things must not be interpreted as indicating the great climax, for they are but the preliminary throes. Moreover the disciples of the Lord must expect to be confronted with special difficulties. They will be subjected to opposition and persecution, and their nearest relations will turn against them, and hatred from

men generally must be their portion. Against this however the Lord sets the fact that these adverse circumstances shall turn to occasions of testimony, and that they would have special support and special wisdom, as to their utterances, from the Holy Ghost.

Some have deduced from verse 10, reading it in conjunction with Matthew xxiv. 14, that the Lord cannot be coming for His saints until the Gospel has been carried to all the nations of to-day. But we have to bear in mind that the disciples, whom the Lord was addressing, were at that moment the God-fearing remnant in Israel, and had not yet been baptized into one body, the church: and also that the "Gospel" in this verse is a general term that would cover not only the Message that is being preached to-day, but also that "Gospel of the kingdom" of which Matthew speaks, and which will be carried forth by the God-fearing remnant, which will be raised up after the church is gone.

Verse 14 does give us the sign for which the disciples asked. Daniel speaks of "the abomination that maketh desolate" (xii. 11), and this is alluded to in our verse, for the word "desolation," we are told "is an active word," having the force of "causing desolation."

There is to be the public establishment of an idol in the sanctuary in Jerusalem—such as we have predicted in Revelation xiii. 14, 15—an insult to God of a most flagrant kind. That sign will indicate two things: first, that the time of special af-



fliction, of which Daniel xii. 1 speaks, has begun: second, that the end of the age, and the intervention of Christ in His glory, is very near. The remainder of the Lord's discourse is occupied with these two things. Verses 15—23 deal with the former; verses 24—27 deal with the latter.

The language of verse 19 shows that the Lord had the great tribulation in view, and the earlier verses show that its centre and most intense fury is found in Judaea. Verses 15 and 16 would indicate that it will set in with great suddenness. Instant flight will be the only way of escape for those who fear God. Its ferocity will be such that if it were permitted to run a lengthy course it would mean extermination. For the elect's sake it will not be permitted to continue, but will be cut short by the advent of Christ. From Daniel ix. 27 we gather that the tribulation will commence, when the head of the revived Roman empire causes "the sacrifice and the oblation to cease," in the midst of the last seven years. This being so, there will be only three and a half years to run before the Lord Jesus puts an end to it by His glorious appearing.

By the tribulation the devil will seek to crush and **exterminate** the elect. But this is not all, as verses 21 and 22 show. There will be at that time a special number of false Christs and prophets appearing, by whom he hopes to **seduce** the elect. He would accomplish it, "if it were possible." Thank God, it is not possible. The true saints will know that the real Christ is not going to hide

Himself in some corner, so that men have to say, "Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, He is there." He will shine forth in His glory at His coming, and every eye shall see Him.

The tribulation will come to its end in final convulsions that will affect even the heavens, as verses 24 and 25 show. Sun, moon and stars are sometimes used in Scripture as symbols of supreme power, derived power and subordinate power respectively; and "powers that are in heaven" are in view, as the latter part of verse 25 shows. Still this discourse of the Lord is not marked by a large use of symbols, as the book of Revelation is, so we think that literal convulsions affecting the heavenly bodies must not be excluded, especially as we know there was a literal darkening of the sun when Jesus died. The darkening of that day will serve to throw into greater relief the brightness of His shining forth, when He comes in the clouds with great power and glory.

The glorious appearing of the Son of Man will be followed by the gathering together of "His elect." These were mentioned in verse 20, and they are those who "endure unto the end" (verse 13), and they shall be saved by the appearing of Christ. These elect are the God-fearing remnant of Israel in the last days; for the Lord was addressing His disciples who at that moment were the God-fearing remnant in the midst of Israel, and they would without a doubt have understood His words in that sense. These elect ones will be found in all parts of the earth, and the instru-

ments used in their gathering together will be angels: gathered together, they will become the redeemed Israel who will enter upon the millennial reign. All this must be differentiated from the coming of the Lord for His saints as predicted in 1 Thessalonians iv., when the Lord Himself will descend from heaven and our gathering together will be unto Him.

The allusion to the fig tree in verse 28 is a parable, and therefore we must expect to find in it a meaning deeper than that which is connected with a simile or an illustration. The fig tree doubtless represents Israel, as we saw in reading chapter xi., and therefore the budding of her branches sets forth the beginning of national revival with that people. The "summer" represents the age of millennial blessedness for the earth. When real national revival sets in for Israel then indeed the appearing of Christ and the millennial age is very near.

The word "generation" in verse 30 is evidently used in a moral sense and not in a literal, meaning people of a certain type and character, just as the Lord used the word in verse 19 of chapter ix., and in Luke xi. 29. The unbelieving generation will not pass until the second advent, nor indeed will the generation of those that seek the Lord. The coming of the Lord will mean the passing away of the evil generation, and at the same time the full establishment of all His words, which are firmer and more durable than all created things.

Verse 32 has presented much difficulty to many minds because of the words, "neither the Son." We may not be able to explain them fully, but we may at least say two things. First, that in this Gospel the Lord is presented as the great Prophet of God, and that this was a matter reserved by the Father and not given to Him as a Prophet to reveal. Second, that if Matthew xx. 23, and John v. 30, be read and compared with our verse, we shall see that the three passages run on parallel lines, as to giving, knowing and doing, respectively. In Matthew we get the actual words, "Not mine to **give**." We might summarize Mark as "Not Mine to **know**," and John as "Not Mine to **do**." Unbelief has made great use of the word used in Philippians ii. 7, "made Himself of no reputation," or more literally, "emptied Himself," building upon it the theory that He divested Himself of knowledge so as to become a Jew with the notions of His time; and thus they are enabled—so they think—to impute error to Him on many points. He did empty Himself, for Scripture says He did so. The three passages we have mentioned give us a proper idea of what was involved in it, and lead us to bless His Name for His gracious stoop. The theory of unbelief would rob Him of His glory, and us of any regard for His words—words which, He has just told us, will never pass away.

The five verses which close this chapter contain a very solemn appeal, which should come home to all of us. In verse 33 we get for the fourth

time the words, "Take . . heed." The Lord opened His discourse with these words, and He closed with them, and twice between (verses 9 and 23) He uttered them. The prophetic revelations He gave are all made to bear upon our consciences and lives: He forewarns us that we may be forearmed. Knowing the infallibility of His words, but not knowing when the time is, we are to "watch," that is, be keenly awake and observant, and also to pray. for we are no match for the powers of darkness, and so we must maintain dependence upon God. We are left to do our appointed work in a spirit of expectancy, anticipating the coming of the Son of Man.

The threefold repetition of the word, "Watch," in these five verses is very striking. We must lay great emphasis on it in our minds, and the more so in that our lot is cast in the late days of this dispensation when His coming cannot be far distant. It is very easy to succumb to the lure of the world, when our minds become drowsy and unalert. A great and important word is this word—WATCH. And the last verse of our chapter shows that it certainly is intended to apply to us.

As we open chapter xiv., we come back to historical details, and reach the closing moments of our Lord's life. Verses 1—11 provide us with a very striking introduction to the last scenes. In verses 1 and 2, crafty **hatred** rises to its climax. In verses 10 and 12, the supreme exhibition of heartless **treachery** is briefly recorded. The verses between tell a story of devoted **love** on the part of

an insignificant woman—its beauty enhanced by the story standing between the record of such hatred and such treachery.

The hatred of the chief priests and scribes was equalled by their craft, yet they were but tools in the hands of Satan. They said, "Not on the feast," yet it was on the feast: and again, "Lest there be an uproar of the people," yet there was an uproar of the people, only it was in their favour and against the Christ of God. They little knew the power of the devil to whom they had sold themselves.

The woman of Bethany — Mary, as we know from John xii.—may not herself have fully understood the import and value of her act. She was moved probably by spiritual instinct, realizing the murderous hatred that was surrounding the One she loved. She brought her very precious ointment and expended it upon Him. Her action was misunderstood by "some"—Matthew tells us that these were disciples, and John adds that Judas the traitor was the originator of the censure—who were thinking about money and the poor, particularly about the former. The Lord vindicated her, and that was enough. He accepted her act and valued it according to His understanding of its significance and not according to her intelligence, even though she was, as we suppose, the most intelligent of the disciples. We may see in this a sweet forecast of the gracious way in which He will review the acts of His saints at the Judgment Seat.

His verdict was, "She hath done what she could," which was very high praise. Moreover He ordained that her act should be her memorial wherever the Gospel is preached. Her name is known and her act remembered by millions to-day—nineteen centuries after—with all honour. just as also Judas is known in dishonour, and his name has become a synonym for baseness and treachery.

These opening verses show us then that as the moment of crisis approached everybody came out in their true light. The hatred and the treachery of the opponents became blacker: the love of the true was kindled, though none expressed it as did Mary of Bethany. In verse 12, however, we pass to the preparation for the Last Supper, during the course of which the Lord gave far more impressive witness to the strength of His love for His own. There was some testimony to their love for Him, but it was nothing in the presence of His love for them.

The Lord Jesus had no home of His own, but He knew well how to put His hand on all that was needed for the service of God. The owner of the guest-chamber was doubtless someone who knew and revered Him. The disciples knew the sufficiency of their Master. They attempted nothing on their own initiative, but simply looked to Him for direction, and acted on it. Hence the One who had not where to lay His head had no lack of suitable accommodation for the last meeting with His own.

For many centuries the Passover had been celebrated, and those who ate it knew that it commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egypt; few, if any, realized that it looked forward to the death of the Messiah. Now for the last time it was to be eaten before it was fulfilled. What filled the minds of the disciples we know not, but evidently the mind of the Lord was centred on His death, and to it He turned their thoughts in announcing that His betrayer was amongst them, and that a woe rested upon him. Then He instituted His own Supper.

Brevity characterizes Mark's record all through, but nowhere is it more pronounced than in his account of the institution of this. The essentials however are all here: the bread and its meaning, the cup and its significance and application, which causes it to be designated by Paul, "the cup of blessing which we bless." For the Lord Himself the fruit of the vine, and what it symbolized, earthly joy, was all past: no more would He touch it until in the kingdom of God He would taste it in a new way altogether. All earthly hopes and joys on the old basis were closed for Him.

The lesson that we have to learn is in keeping with this fact. God may in His gracious providences permit us to enjoy on earth many things that are happy and pleasant, yet all our proper joys as Christians are not of an earthly order but of a heavenly.



## CONSCIENCE REAWAKENED.

"And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him."—Genesis 1. 15.

**T**HERE is something very touching in the little story of which this verse is but a part.

Seventeen years or more had rolled away since Joseph's brethren with their father had come down to sojourn in Egypt. And there they had seen the glory of Joseph and had received many and abundant proofs of his loving-kindness. He had nourished them in years of famine, settled them in Goshen, and poured the best of all the land of Egypt into their bosom. But now Jacob was dead, and thoughts arise in the heart of Joseph's brethren that show how little they really knew him—their brother. The recollection of their sin, their callous indifference to his anguish and tears when they cast him into a pit and eventually sold him as a slave to Midianites; the lie they forged and palmed off upon their father to hide their dark deed, all comes back to them in overwhelming force. For conscience when aroused is able to call from the grave the sins of bygone days and to set them before our eyes in terrifying shapes and threatening forms. And so they be-

lieved that the hour of retribution had surely come, and Joseph would avenge his wrongs. While Jacob lived they had naught to fear, but he was gone and there was nothing now to shield them from their brother's wrath. Therefore did they send a trusty messenger to plead for his forgiveness and to ask that their sin should not be remembered against them now, yea, they themselves "fell down before his face." Their prayer moved their brother to tears. What tears were they? Tears of sorrow that after all he had said and done their hearts should be so ill at ease. Seventeen long years and Joseph still unknown, the sincerity of his forgiveness doubted, and fear filling their hearts lest he should requite them all the evil they had done!

How many children in the family of God are like the brethren of Joseph? They have not perfect peace. Their conscience is not at rest as they think of their sins and themselves. Does God indeed love me? Am I truly His child? Are my sins actually forgiven—every one of them? These are the questions that force themselves to the front, especially at times when the soul is oppressed with the sense of indwelling sin.

And how are they to be answered? What can silence these questions so that they shall never more arise to trouble or disturb? There is one thing that can do it, and only one—**perfect love**—not ours, but God's.

Have you ever read and do you understand those words in 1 John iv. 18—"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love"?

How could you ever allow yourself to ask the question—Does God love **me**? Has the blessed Gospel been so clumsily framed as to leave room for doubts of that kind? Are we not told in John iii. 16 that "God so loved **the world**, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"? Are you not one of the world's inhabitants, or is it that you believe yourself to be the only unhappy individual out of all the world's millions whom that great love does not embrace? Is there a daisy or a blade of grass anywhere on the wide earth for which the sun in the heavens does not shine? Has not every buttercup in the meadows and every flower that blooms in the garden a right to say, "That is my sun, its warm beams are for me"? And if you object and mournfully plead against yourself that you are **such a sinner**, our answer is that your very sinnership is the proof that the Gospel is for you. But though we tell you this ten thousand times, though angels from heaven were to tell you so, yea, though the finger of God were to write it in letters of gold across the midnight sky, it would not bring a grain of comfort to your soul **unless believed**. Water quenches no thirst till it be drunk and food satisfies no hunger unless it be eaten. So God's

perfect love casts out no fear till we know and believe it.

The hearts of Joseph's brethren were not "made perfect in love." We should have thought that seventeen long years of unexampled goodness would have been enough to close the door against every fear. All that time they were experiencing the care and kindness of their brother, and yet when Jacob died they trembled like a criminal who knows that his guilt has been just found out! How base and groundless their fears! But Joseph bade them "Fear not," and said, "I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them." Thus he sought to make their hearts "perfect in love."

And God would do the same for you. His love is perfect, ours never is. He loved us when we were enemies, and **manifested** His love in sending "His only begotten Son into the world, that we might **live** through Him" (1 John iv. 9). This is love indeed, no tongue can tell it, neither can thought fathom its depths. It is immense and unsearchable.

Nor is that love content with bringing us **life**—there is more, as indeed there must be. And so we read, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10). **Our sins?** Yes, sins that towered mountains high, numberless as the leaves of the forest, black as

midnight, sins that would have sunk us into the unfathomable abyss. God is love; therefore did He send His only begotten Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins that we might be freed from that awful load. In the face of all this can one doubt remain? Shall not His perfect love release us from the fear that has held us in bondage far too long? Shall we not cease to grieve His heart as the brethren of Joseph grieved his by their needless and painful distrust?

May we henceforth fix our steadfast gaze upon the Cross of Calvary—let us look until we see inscribed thereon in imperishable letters, “*GOD IS LOVE.*” And looking again we shall discern in the Saviour’s sufferings, known and unknown, that “*GOD IS LIGHT.*” Blended, interwoven, joined so that none can separate them, are these two things—the love and the holiness of God. And there the weary find everlasting rest.

W.B.

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We look to our state and our fruit and our feelings to know if we are His, which cannot give rest, and ought not. Jesus does not say, “Find out your state and you shall have rest,” but, “Come unto ME all ye that labour, and are heavy laden,” as you are, “and I will give you rest.” Our rest comes not from our being what He wants, but His being what we want.

## JUSTIFICATION, AND JUSTIFICATION OF LIFE.

**T**HE one is complementary of the other. One cannot stand without the other. Justification without justification of life would lead to the Name of God being blasphemed. Justification of life without justification would be an utter impossibility. To make these statements plain is the object of this article.

Justification is the happy portion of the believer on the Lord Jesus. "By Him [the Lord Jesus] all that believe **are justified** from all things' '(Acts xiii. 39). God is "Just and **the Justifier** of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans iii. 26). Christ "was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our **justification**" (Romans iv. 25).

Justification is accomplished outside of and apart from the effort of the believing sinner in any shape or form. The believer is cleared from every charge of sin, as if he had never sinned at all. It is the portion equally of the babe in Christ as of the oldest saint of God—of the convert of to-day just as much as the Apostle Paul, who has been with the Lord all these centuries.

The believer stands before God in all the virtue of the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross, so much so that **God Himself is his Justifier**. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? **It is GOD that justifieth**" (Romans viii. 33).

This all being given to us on the authority of the Word of God, we will now make clear the statement that justification without justification **of life** would lead to the name of God being blasphemed.

Suppose a drunkard were converted, and learned the truth of justification. Suppose further the evil nature in him dominated him entirely, as it must, if the evil nature alone is his. The thirst for drink governs him. He has no conscience as to the allowance of his sin. He is seen day by day reeling drunk in the streets. In short his life is unchanged. What would the world say? Would the Name of God not be blasphemed because of him? Assuredly it would be so.

What is the remedy? A converted drunkard with nothing but a fallen evil nature dominating him would certainly be unhappy in heaven, and heaven would be unhappy with him. Of course this is a supposed case which can never happen, as we stated in our opening sentence. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans viii. 7, 8).

What is the remedy? we ask again. It must be the impartation of **divine life**—a life which can be pleasing to God and glorifying to Him before men. So we read of a **two-fold** result of the death of Christ for the believer. "God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might **live** through Him . . . . God . . . loved us, and sent His Son to be the **propitiation** for our sins" (1 John iv.

9, 10). Life and propitiation are the possession of the believer through the atoning work of Christ.

Now we would make clear our second statement that justification of life without justification would be an utter impossibility. If a man is without justification then he is in his sin and under the judgment of God. How could that man have justification of life? Impossible! But on the ground of the righteous claims of God being met at the cross God has a righteous basis on which to communicate life, and this is a necessity if a man is to know and enjoy justification, and the stirrings and actions of new and divine life are to be pleasing to God—in short, justification of life. “The Spirit is **life** because of righteousness” (Romans viii. 10).

The interesting expression, “**Justification of life,**” occurs in Romans v. 18. There we read, “By the righteousness of One [**The Lord Jesus by His sacrificial death**] **the free gift came** upon all men unto JUSTIFICATION OF LIFE.” It is clear that **all** believers must possess this life. A life must be ours before we can live it, or its powers and activities be put forth.

Life is given to be expressed. When life ceases to be expressed it means death. It was indeed sad that it should be necessary to say to the Sardis assembly, “Thou hast a name that thou livest, and **ART DEAD**” (Revelation iii. 1). Things must have got to a pretty low pass when this could be said. Sometimes we say of a sick man, who is alive, but his life at such a low ebb, that



the ordinary activities of life such as walking, attending to business and the like are suspended, "Poor fellow, he is more dead than alive."

So let it be clear that "justification of life" belongs to **all** Christians, and that the activities of that life are always pleasing to God. So that the Apostle John can write, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John iii. 9).

But what we are concerned with in this article is that all of us may be exercised as to **living** that life. Perhaps an illustration as to this may help. A gentleman has a beautiful garden, employing several gardeners. One day he is walking through his grounds, giving instructions to his head gardener. Suddenly he spies a self-rooted apple shoot. He looks at it and sees it is a crab-apple, a wild, sour shoot. He says to his gardener, "I won't have anything wild and sour in my garden. Please attend to that shoot." The gardener cuts the shoot down close to the ground, and grafts upon it a Cox's Orange Pippin. The graft takes, and develops into a fine tree.

One day the gentleman stops before this tree, admiring its shape, and the fruit upon it. The gardener says, "Do you remember, sir, the little crab apple shoot you condemned? I cut it down and grafted a good graft upon it, and you have enjoyed many a beautiful apple from that tree at your dessert."

The gentleman said, "I'll have nothing wild and sour in my garden," just as God may say, "I will have nothing wild or sour in My heavenly garden; I will have no flesh, no carnal mind in My presence." But just as the gardener implanted new life which bore beautiful dessert apples, so God imparts new and divine life to the believer.

There was no justification of life in the crab apple stock. Its fruit was displeasing to the owner of the garden. There was justification of life in the Cox's Orange Pippin stock. It bore fruit pleasing to the owner of the garden.

So the flesh in fallen man cannot please God, and the flesh in the believer is no better. It cannot be drilled, educated, improved, or bettered in any way, whether found in the dying thief, ending a life of sin at the hands of his fellow sinners, or in Nicodemus, the ruler of the synagogue, with all his religiousness and knowledge, or in the Apostle Paul, Pharisee of the Pharisees as he had been, and as touching the law blameless. No wonder our Lord said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again" (John iii. 7), and that the Apostle Paul in the light of God found out he was the chief of sinners (1 Timothy i. 15).

Now the gardener would be careful to cut off every sign of the old life below the graft on the shoot, and cultivate every sign of life above it. So the believer is called upon to put to death every stirring of the old nature, the flesh. We read, "Mortify [put to death] therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, unclean-

ness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians iii. 5). "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans viii. 13).

As for justification of life, wherever there is life there is action, motion, expression. If divine life, it is seen in "the fruit of the Spirit . . . love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance [self-restraint] . . . if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians v. 22—25).

Now wherever there is justification, it is the gift of God, procured by Christ's death at the cross, apart altogether from the sinner's merit or work in any way, but it is always accompanied by "justification of life" (Romans v. 18), which is the product of divine life, divine life in action, by the power of the Spirit of God, giving right desires, affections, will.

Justification cannot mark one believer more than another. We are justified or we are not. The youngest believer is as much justified as the oldest, the raw recruit in God's army as much as the oldest veteran.

But some believers are marked by justification of life in greater degree than others. Surely the Apostle Paul was more marked by justification of life than the Christians he wrote to in Corinth, saying, "Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is

among you envying, and strife, and division, are ye not carnal, and walk as men" (1 Corinthians iii. 3).

Now the great concern of the Spirit of God is to bring the state (justification of life) into correspondence with the standing (justification), and this will be accomplished surely when the Lord comes, when the flesh in us is left behind, and our very bodies are changed into likeness to Christ.

How beautiful and helpful it is to see that justification and justification of life are complementary. On the one line, "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ . . . is upon all them that believe" (Romans iii. 22). "Christ is made unto us . . . righteousness" (1 Corinthians i. 30). Could any judicial standing be fuller than that? On the lines of "justification of life" **holiness** comes in "without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews xii. 14). One can understand and rejoice in this. God will have no wild plant in His heavenly garden. There will be no weeds there.

Our illustration fails in one point. In nature the graft, the new life, is placed on the wild shoot, and gains its nourishment from the old root. In grace this is not so. The flesh is flesh. The divine nature is the divine nature. There is no connection between the two.

May we, believers, rejoice in the absolute justification that is ours, our perfect standing before

God, and be concerned that we do really walk in justification of life for God's pleasure and our own joy and comfort and the blessing of others for "none of us liveth to himself" (Romans xiv. 7).

A. J. POLLOCK.

## "AT JESUS' FEET."

(iii) WORSHIPPING—JOHN xii. 1—7.

THESE seven verses, which we trust all our readers have read at this moment, bring us to the closing chapter in Mary's history so far as the inspired narrative is concerned.

It is a charming picture of a remarkable gathering in the much-loved Bethany, a place so dear to the heart of the blessed Lord.

It happened just a few days before His death, and how grateful to Him it must have been. Was not this one of those occasions when He, who was the "Man of sorrows" in His lonely path, drank of "the brook in the way"? (Psalm cx. 7). Lazarus had been raised from the dead, and we see a united, happy family seeking to give pleasure to Him to whom they owed so much. "They made Him a supper."

Shall we pause here and ask ourselves, do we know the joy of making Him a supper? He had done great things for them: this was their response. He has done great things for us. What is our response? Do we seek to give Him joy by ministering to Him that which is grateful to His heart?

Everything was in order. "Martha served," and she did it well. She was silent, not "cumbered," nor "careful and troubled," but seeking to serve Him to whom her heart must have gone out in deepest gratitude. "Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him." How fitting that was! Raised from the dead, in company with Him, who was the centre and the commanding Object; and in fellowship with those that sat at the table. Not a word was spoken. They were with Him to minister to Him in a way acceptable to Him, and to give Him pleasure.

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

Once again we see Mary "at Jesus' feet." Not now receiving from Him, nor weeping out her tale of woe, but giving to Him. Silently yet eloquently, humbly and reverently, she expressed her delight in Himself. Not occupied with what she had got from Him, but as a result of it, it was now her privilege to give to Him. What she gave cost her much for the ointment was "**very costly.**" She "anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair." She laid herself, her glory, her all "at Jesus' feet." She was a true worshipper. "The house was filled with the odour of the ointment." What a fragrance! How grateful to Him was Mary's devotedness! What a lesson for us!

Judas Iscariot was a sample of the man of the

flesh. He had no appreciation of Christ, and saw in Mary’s act only that which, in his judgment, was to be condemned. The Lord’s reply lets us into a secret. “Let her alone; against the day of my burying hath she kept this.” That which the disciples never seemed to apprehend, she understood. Was not this the result of sitting at His feet and hearing His Word?

The devoted women, who came with Him from Galilee, prepared spices and ointments; and brought them to the sepulchre upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, but they were too late. They entered the sepulchre, they found not the body of the Lord Jesus, and upon their astonished ears fell the question, “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” (Luke xxiii. 55, 56; xxiv. 1—5). Mary anticipated this. She anointed Him **for** His burial before He entered the domain of death. Why did she do so? Surely, because she knew that He would rise again. Where could she have learned this save at His feet? It is at His feet that He communicates to us His secrets, yea that He reveals to us Himself, and thus it is that at His feet we worship.

How delightful was the experience of Mary! At Jesus’ feet—**wondering**, she heard His Word.

How unforgettable was the experience of Mary! At Jesus’ feet—**weeping**, the recipient of His sympathy.

How precious was the experience of Mary! At Jesus’ feet—**worshipping**, thus expressing her delight in Himself.

The blessed Lord showed how He valued it for in John xi. 2, we read: "It was **that** Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment." Surely we have been told this that we may know how the Lord prizes above all else the affection and the worship of "His own."

As we conclude our meditation may we point out that in Luke x. 38—42, we see the Lord Jesus Christ as **Prophet**, and as such He made known the mind of God, the secrets of His own heart, to the **wondering** woman who sat at His feet.

In John xi. 1—45, we learn of Him as **Priest**. The three persons in that family circle were the objects of His love, as verse 3 of that chapter declares. **He** knew—**He** loved—**He** cared. He exercised His priestly service "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (verse 4). He prayed (verses 41, 42). When the broken-hearted sisters were at the end of their resources, **He** came. He listened to them, He wept, and the **weeping** women learned, in a way that they could not have learned in any other circumstances, the sympathy of His heart.

It might be objected that He did not function as Priest till He entered Heaven (Hebrews ix. 24), and, generally speaking that is true. This is not the only instance, however, in which "in the days of His flesh" He anticipated the service that would be His in the day of His glory.

May we not also say that, set free from care, rendered superior to every distracting element,



the **worshipping** woman recognised in Him, at whose feet she again found herself, the **King**? The Nation refused Him, she owned Him, and, in proof thereof, she did that which the Nation refused to do, and which God has done; she anointed Him. True, it was His feet that she anointed showing that she knew Him as the Son of God, for such He was soon declared to be “by resurrection of the dead” (Romans i. 4). True, it was against the day of His burying that she did it, but, so it seems to us, knowing that He would rise again, and would be anointed and eventually acknowledged as King.

Shall we now seek to apply all this to ourselves? (i) We sit at His feet, and hear His Word, and we receive from Him that which He delights to tell us. (ii) We, in wilderness circumstances, benefit by His priestly service which is at all times available for us. (iii) We know Him as Son of God; we find ourselves under His beneficent sway; we gladly own His claim over us. As “He richly feeds our souls;” as He makes intercession for us; as we own Him—the Son of God; as we acknowledge His sovereignty, delight in Himself, and worship at His feet; the fragrance of His own adorable Person, His worth, His work, rises to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God.

“Praise we to the First-born bring,  
Christ the Prophet, Priest and King;  
Glad we raise our sweetest strain  
To the Lamb that once was slain.”

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(MARK xiv. 26— xv. 32).

Our review of this Gospel being more condensed than in the case of the Epistles hitherto before us, it is more than ever necessary to read it in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

**F**ROM the upper chamber, where He had instituted His supper, the Lord led forth His disciples to Gethsemane. A hymn or psalm was sung—Psalms cxv—cxviii. being the usual portion, it is said. It was for the disciples just the customary thing, no doubt; but what must it have been for the Lord? To sing, as He went forth to fulfil the Passover type by becoming the sacrifice; and Psalm cxviii., towards the end, speaks of binding "the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." He went forth to suffering and death, bound by the cords of His love; and the disciples to failure, defeat and scattering.

He warned them of what was before them, referring them to the prophecy of Zechariah, which foretold the smiting of Jehovah's Shepherd and the scattering of the sheep. But the prophet proceeded to say, "and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones," and this answers to verse 28 of our chapter. Those who were His sheep nationally were scattered, but the "little ones," elsewhere called by Zechariah "the poor of the flock," were regathered on a new basis, when once the Shepherd was risen from the dead. Hence He was to meet them not in Jerusalem but in Galilee.

Peter, filled with self-confidence, asserted that he would not stumble though all the others might

do so, and this in the face of the most explicit declaration by the Lord, foretelling his fall. The others did not wish to be outdone by Peter and so committed themselves to a similar assertion. What accounted for it was the unholy rivalry that existed amongst them, as to who should be the greatest. Mark makes this manifest with especial clearness, as may be seen if we compare, ix. 33, 34; x. 35—37, and 41. Peter no doubt felt that now had come the opportunity in which he might demonstrate once and for all that he was head and shoulders above the rest. And the rest were not willing for him thus to forge ahead; they had to keep up with him. Peter's fall seemed to come very suddenly, but all this shows us that the secret roots of it went back a long way into the past.

Peter's bold words were soon to be tested, and first of all in Gethsemane which was reached immediately after. He and his two companions were only asked to watch for an hour. This they could not do; though only to Peter, who had been so particularly boastful, did the Lord address His gentle words of remonstrance, using his old name of Simon. This was appropriate, for he was not true at that moment to his new name, but rather displaying the characteristics of the old nature that was still in him. Their Master was "sore amazed" and "very heavy," and "exceeding sorrowful unto death," and yet they slept, not once merely but thrice.

Against the dark background of their failure, however, the perfection of their Master only shone

the more brightly. The reality of His Manhood comes before us very strikingly in verses 33 and 34, and the perfection of it too. Being God, He knew in infinite fulness all that would be involved in dying as the Sin-bearer. Being perfect Man, He possessed every proper human sensibility untarnished—our sensibilities have been blunted by sin, but in Him was no sin. Hence He felt everything in infinite measure, and fervently desired that the hour might pass from Him. And yet again, having taken the Servant's place, He was perfect in His devotion to the will of the Father, and so though desiring that the cup might be taken from Him, He added, "Nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

We may summarize it all by saying, that being **perfect God** He had infinite capacity for knowing and feeling all that the approaching hour of death meant for Him. As **perfect Man** He entered fully into the sorrow of that hour, and could do no other than pray for that cup to be taken from Him. As **perfect Servant** He presented Himself to the sacrifice in whole-hearted subjection to His Father's will.

Three times did our Lord thus commune with His Father, and then He returned to face the betrayer with his band of sinful men. We may remember that three times was He tempted of Satan in the wilderness at the outset, and it seems certain, though not mentioned here, that the power of Satan was also present in Gethsemane, for when going forth from the upper chamber He had said,

"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John xiv. 30). This also helps to account for the extraordinary somnolence of the disciples. The power of darkness was too great for them, as it ever is for us, except we are actively supported by Divine power. Let us take note that not only does the power of Satan sometimes rouse believers to wrongful actions, it sometimes **just sends them to sleep.**

In saying to Peter, "The spirit truly is ready," the Lord evidently acknowledged that there was in His disciples that which He could appreciate and recognize. Yet "the flesh is weak," and Satan just then was terribly active, so that nothing but watchfulness and prayer would have met the situation. Let us take the word home to ourselves. As the end of the age approaches Satan's activities are to become more rather than less, and we need to be awake with every spiritual faculty alert, and also to be filled with the spirit of prayerful dependence upon God.

Verses 42—52, occupy us with His arrest by the rabble sent by the chief priests under the leadership of Judas. They were, of course, not Roman soldiers but servants of the temple and of the ruling classes amongst the Jews. What a story it is! The multitude with their violence, expressed in their swords and staves: Judas with the basest treachery, betraying the Lord with a kiss: Peter springing to sudden and carnal activity: all the disciples forsaking Him and fleeing: an unnamed young man attempting to follow, but ending only

in flight with shame added to his panic—violence, treachery, false and mistaken activity, fear and shame. Again we say, What a story! And such are we when brought face to face with the power of darkness, and out of communion with God.

As to Peter, this was *step number three* on his downward road. First came his entanglement in the ruinous competition for the first place amongst the disciples, which worked out into self confidence and self-assertion. Second, his lack of watchfulness and prayer, which led to his sleeping when he should have been awake. Third, his carnal anger and violence, followed by abject flight. The fourth step, which brought things to a climax we have at the end of the chapter.

As to the Lord Jesus, all was calmness in perfect submission to the will of God, as expressed in the prophetic Scriptures. His light shone as ever without the smallest flicker.

“Faithful amidst unfaithfulness,  
‘Mid darkness only light.”

Verses 53—65, summarize for us the proceedings before the Jewish religious authorities. All were assembled to sit in judgment upon Him, and so the thing as far as they were concerned was not done in a corner. This shows strikingly what depth of feeling had been aroused. A crowded council, and it was at the dead of night! The fire burned in the courtyard, and we are permitted to see Peter creeping in amongst the foes of his Lord for the sake of a little warmth.

There was no thought of an impartial trial. His judges were unblushingly seeking such witness as would enable them to pronounce on Him the sentence of death. However the power of God was at work behind the scenes, and every attempt to fasten on Him the trumped-up charges came to nothing. Many efforts were made; a sample of them is given us in verse 58, and we recognize a distortion of His utterance which is recorded in John ii. 19. Accusation after accusation broke down by the perjurers falling into confusion and contradicting one another. It seems as though God enveloped their ordinarily acute minds in a fog of confusion.

Driven to desperation, the high priest stood up to examine Him, but to his first question Jesus answered nothing—evidently for the sufficient reason that there was as yet nothing to answer. When challenged as to whether He was the Christ, the Son of God, He at once answered, saying, "I am." Both question and answer lacked nothing in definiteness. There stood the Christ, the Son of God, by His own plain confession; and not only this but He asserted that as Son of Man He would have all power in His hand, and that He would come again in glory from heaven. On this confession He was condemned to death.

The prophet Micah had predicted that "the Judge of Israel" should be made subject to human judgment. This came to pass: yet it is most striking that when the great Judge **was** brought into human judgment every attempt to convict

Him upon **human** evidence failed: **all human witnesses fell into confusion.** They condemned Him on the ground of the witness He bore to Himself; and even in doing this they broke the law themselves. It was written: "He that is the high priest among his brethren . . . shall not . . . rend his clothes" (Lev. xxi. 10). This the high priest ignored, so agitated was he in the presence of his Victim, so transported with anger and hatred.

The storm of hatred burst upon the Lord as soon as they had discovered a pretext upon which to condemn Him; but in their buffetings and spittings they were but unconsciously fulfilling the Scriptures. The mock trial before the Sanhedrim ended in scenes of disorder, just as confusion had been stamped upon their earlier proceedings—confusion made the more conspicuous by His serene presence in their midst. The only word He uttered as far as Mark's account is concerned, is recorded in verse 62.

Verses 66—72, give us in a parenthesis the climax of Peter's failure: the earlier steps which led to it we have already noticed. He was now warming himself in company with those who served the adversaries of his Lord, and three times he denied Him. Satan was behind the testing, as Luke xxii. 31 shows us, and this accounts for the skilful way in which the remarks of the different servants drove him into a corner. The first asserted that he had been "with" Jesus. The second that he was "one of them," evidently meaning one of His disciples. The third reaffirmed this,



and claimed that he had proof of it in his dialect, and this one apparently was kinsman to Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off, as John records.

As Peter saw the net of evidence with its fine meshes closing in around him, his denials became more violent: first, a pretence that he did not understand; second, a flat denial; third, an avowal that he did not even know the Lord, accompanied with curses and swearing. They were unwilling to accept his protestations of "unfaith," but they must have been convinced, by the sad "works" he produced, that Jesus was to him quite unknown. We have to contemplate the warning with which Peter furnishes us, and see to it that we have **faith** which expresses itself in the appropriate **works**.

But if Satan was at work in regard to Peter so also was the Lord, according to Luke xxii. 32. He had prayed for him, and His action brought back to Peter's fevered mind the very words of warning that He had uttered. The remembrance of them smote his conscience and moved him to tears; and in that work in his heart and conscience lay the beginnings of his recovery. When any saint is permitted so to fail, that his sin becomes public and a scandal, we may be sure that it has roots of a secret sort which go back into the past. We may be sure also that the journey back to full recovery is not taken all in a moment.

The first verse of chapter xv. picks up the thread from verse 65 of chapter xiv. The Romans

had taken away the power of capital punishment from the Jews and vested it wholly in Caesar's representative; hence the religious leaders knew they must present Him before Pilate and demand the death sentence upon some ground which appeared adequate to him. Verse 3 tells us that they "accused Him of many things," but we are not told by Mark what those things were. We are struck however by the way in which one phrase occurs over and over again in the earlier part of the chapter—"The King of the Jews" (verses 2, 9, 12, 18, 26). Luke tells us definitely that they said He was "forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ a King." Mark's brief account infers this, though not stating it.

Once more, before Pilate, the Lord confessed who He was. Challenged as to being the King of the Jews He simply answered, "Thou sayest it," the equivalent of "Yes." For the rest He again answered nothing, for the reason that in all the wild charges of the chief priests there was nothing to answer. It is worthy of note that Mark only records two utterances of our Lord before His judges. Before the Jewish hierarchy He confessed Himself to be the Christ, Son of God and Son of Man: before the Roman governor He confessed Himself to be the King of the Jews. No evidence prevailed against Him; He was condemned because of who He was, and He could not deny Himself.

Moreover Pilate had sufficient knowledge to discern what lay at the root of all the accusations,

“he knew that the chief priests had delivered Him for envy.” This led to his ineffectual attempt to divert the thoughts of the multitude to Jesus, when it was a question of the prisoner to be released. The influence of the priests with the people was too much for him however, and hence, desirous of pleasing the crowd, Pilate outraged what sense of justice he had. He released Barabbas, the rebel and murderer, and, scourging Jesus, delivered Him to be crucified.

The voice of the people prevailed over the better judgment of the representative of Caesar: in other words, autocracy on that occasion abdicated in favour of democracy, and the popular vote determined it. An old Latin proverb states that the voice of the people is the voice of God. The facts of the crucifixion flatly deny that proverb. Here the voice of the people was the voice of the devil.

Verses 16—32 give us in a very graphic way the terrible circumstances surrounding the crucifixion. All classes combined against the Lord. Pilate already had scourged Him. The Roman soldiers mocked Him in ways that were cruel as well as contemptuous. The ordinary people—just passers by—railed at Him. The priests mocked Him with sarcasm. The two crucified thieves—representatives of the criminal classes, the very scum of humanity — reviled Him. High-born and low-born, Jew and Gentile, were all involved. Yet in result they were all helping to fulfil the Scriptures, though doubtless unconsciously to themselves.

This is particularly striking if we take the case of the Roman soldiers—men who were unaware of the existence of the Scriptures. Verse 28 takes note that the crucifixion of the thieves on either side was a fulfilment of Isaiah liii. 12, but many other things they did also fulfilled the Word. For instance, His visage was to be “marred more than any man,” according to Isaiah lii. 14, and there was fulfilment of this in the crown of thorns and the smittings. The Judge of Israel was to be smitten “with a rod upon the cheek,” according to Micah v. 1; this the soldiers did, as verse 19 of our chapter shows. Verse 24 records the fulfilment by them of Psalm xxii. 18. “They gave Me also gall . . . and . . . vinegar,” says Psalm lxix. 21, and this also the soldiers did, though the fulfilment is not recorded here but in Matthew. We think we are right in saying that at least 24 prophecies were fulfilled in the 24 hour day when Jesus died.

All men in that hour were displaying themselves in their darkest hue, and in these verses we do not read of one thing that He said. It was just as the prophet had said, “As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.” It was man’s hour, and the power of darkness was at its zenith. The perfection of the holy Servant of the Lord is seen in His suffering in silence all that He endured from the hands of men.

## “ALL SUNSHINE MAKES A DESERT.”

**S**UCH is a striking Arab proverb. And those who have travelled in the East have seen how it is exemplified. Those parts of the earth, which have literally nothing but a magnificent deep blue sky without a cloud, and with a blazing sun shedding its light and heat day after day without interruption, are DESERT.

We may learn a wholesome spiritual lesson from this. Some Christians long for a life in which there are no drawbacks, no difficulties, no sorrows, no temptations. If they got what they long for, it would result in a spiritual desert in their souls. The very difficulties we have to face form Christian character, if they are taken in the proper way. “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews xii. 11). What a fine word is, “**NEVERTHELESS!**” There is always an “**Afterward.**” God knows what He is about.

For this reason we are exhorted to lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.

It has been noticed that whether in meat, fish or fruit, the best flavour is to be found in the

temperate zones. Those parts of the world that have little rain and therefore few clouds, that have extremes of heat or cold, do not produce the delicious flavour found in the foods of temperate climes.

And has this a counterpart spiritually? We think so. We find saints, that have had their bright days and their dull days, their days, as it were, of sunshine and their days of rain, are often of a spiritual flavour that would have been impossible had their lives always been on beds of roses, and one round of peace, plenty and pleasure.

So let us thank God for the sunshine and **equally** thank Him for the grey day. Let us believe that our sorrows and difficulties are working out for us "the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

When good King Hezekiah was sick unto death, and wept sore, in his exercise of mind he saw the true meaning of his affliction. He said, "O Lord, by these things men **live**" (Isaiah xxxviii. 16). We would naturally have imagined that he would have said, "By these things men **die**." No, he used the right word, "**live**." He recognized that there is a life which is life indeed—the only life that is accepted of God, the life that turns to Him in its nature. That life endures beyond sickness and trial and the grave. It enters into heaven itself, the presence of God; for it is lived in the presence of God NOW and therefore will be for evermore.

# "THOU ART...THOU SHALT BE"

## II.

**S**IMON PETER was the only one of the twelve to whom the Lord gave a new name as indicative of his future, and no doubt Satan made a special note of that, and watched him more than any of the other disciples. But he does not seem to have found an opening with him until the Father gave him that wonderful revelation as to who His beloved Son was. "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona," said the Lord, "and I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter." "Yes," Satan seems to answer, "we will see about that!"

Was Peter puffed up because of this great distinction bestowed on him? It would seem so, for otherwise Satan would have had no advantage. We remember it was when Paul had received great revelations from heaven that he needed a thorn in the flesh lest he should be exalted above measure. And Satan took a hand in that, for the thorn was Satan's messenger to buffet him. Simon Peter was elated; he was neither watchful nor sober. We can almost feel the sob that broke from him as he remembered it, and wrote to his younger brethren, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. v. 8).

The cross was before the Lord. He could not build His church until He had passed through the

sorrows and suffering of death, and overthrown its power in resurrection, and of these sufferings He spoke. And "Peter took Him, and rebuked Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee." Simon did not know that it was Satan who put that thought in his mind and made him blurt it out, but so it was. The man who had uttered God's revelation actually became within an hour the mouthpiece of Satan. And if Simon, so highly favoured, fell so soon through unwatchfulness and pride of heart, what need there is for us to be sober and vigilant. We realize, as we consider it, the need of the exhortation that he gives us.

The Lord knew from whence the attack came and exposed it. "He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto Me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." The latter half of that saying was probably for Peter very specially. He had not learnt then that the way, the only way, of glory to God and blessing for men was by the suffering of the cross. He learnt it afterwards, so that his Epistles are full of the necessity and the glory of suffering. Mark tells us that it was when the Lord "looked on His disciples" that He rebuked Peter. What a look of love and pity that must have been! How could they be saved if He did not suffer? He was going to the cross for them and for us. He looked upon them, and upon us in our need and died for them and us, that He might yet look upon us in His



Father's House, made fit by His blood and grace for that glorious place. With what self-judgment of himself and adoration for the Lord must Simon have considered it all afterwards! How thankful he must have been that the Lord was strong where he was weak, and wise and watchful where he was foolish and off his guard.

But Satan would not accept defeat at one rebuff. It seemed as though a special conflict was to be waged for the soul of Simon; the Lord who had chosen him on the one hand and Satan the adversary on the other; and Simon, alas, playing into Satan's hands. He was a boastful man, and seems to have paid no heed to the warnings of his Lord. Self-confidence was his undoing, and would have been his damnation if the Lord had not been greater than Satan. We have often sat in thought in the Supper Chamber and wondered that Simon was so little affected by the Lord's words to him, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke xxii. 31, 32). What a mercy it was for Peter, and is for us, that the Lord is always ahead of the devil: no matter how often the devil has got ahead of the failing saints, he has never yet forestalled the Lord. If Simon had been a wise man and not so full of what Simon was able to do, he would have cast himself at the feet of the Lord, and cried, "Preserve me, O Lord, for in Thee do I put my trust." But instead he answered, "Lord, I am ready."—If the devil ever laughs, he must have

laughed then—"I am ready to go with Thee both into prison, and to death."

The sad sequel is well-known. To show how strong and brave he was, he drew a sword to defend the Lord against His foes in the garden, and after striking one blow, fled away panic-stricken, and afterwards denied that ever he knew the Lord, with oaths and curses. What now? "Thou art . . . thou shalt be!" Did it not look as though all the Lord's teaching and training had been in vain, and the "thou shalt be" was as far off as ever, and a thing utterly unattainable, since Simon apparently still remained what he was, impossible material? **"And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter"** (Luke xxii. 61). Think of that, and at such a time! **"And Peter went out and wept bitterly."** Think of that!

All that the Lord had warned His disciples of had come to pass, and what days of darkness those must have been. The long night when He was in the hands of His enemies, buffeted, spit upon, scourged, and the more terrible day that followed when He was delivered into the hands of the Gentiles and crucified, and then that day—a sabbath day—in which He lay in the rock-hewn tomb! Who can tell the agony of darkness that those men and women endured, and Simon most and worst of all. But the first day of the week came at last and all was changed!

The women were the first at that tomb and what joy met them there. The tomb was empty, the

Lord was risen, and He had not forgotten them. He was not there, but He had delegated a servant of His, a young man, not girded for conflict but clothed in a long white garment, and He had instructed him to say to the women "Go your way, tell his disciples **and Peter**" (Mark xvi. 7). The Lord knew the men He had chosen. He knew that Peter would hold aloof from his brethren, miserable and conscience-stricken, and He knew too, that they would hold him aloof because of his terrible fall, and so he was specially named. The Lord had not given him up, nor will He ever give up one of "His own." Every thought of His heart for them will be infallibly fulfilled.

But Peter would need more than a message delivered through an angel and the women; everyone who has ever known what it is to backslide from the Lord will understand how keenly he would long to have a personal interview with the Lord. Nothing would satisfy him but that, and those of us who have learnt the tenderness of the Lord's love for even the most failing of His saints will know that nothing would satisfy the Lord's heart but that. And so it turned out. The Lord knew where Peter wept out his repentance and He appeared unto him. It filled the other disciples with wonder. His resurrection was a wonder—a joyful wonder. So they came together saying, "The Lord is risen indeed." But just as wonderful—"He hath appeared unto **Simon**."

The two wonders will be joined together for ever—His greatness and His grace. We know not

which to glory in the most, so we will still bind them together. He is great enough to meet the greatest foe that could assail us from outside and His grace is equal to the greatest failure that could arise inside. "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared unto Simon." But more as to that in another paper.

J. T. MAWSON.

## THE SONGSTER

SHE had always been such a delicate child, and in this respect she was unlike the rest of her family. Her brothers and sisters were strong and vigorous and able to enjoy all the games and fun of children, while her delicacy cut her off from their games. She was so often confined to bed through ill-health, and she was puzzled over God's way with her. Why had God allowed her to be always ailing when all the others were robust? She could not understand it.

We were chatting together quite recently, and she recalled her young days to me. She was now over fifty, still frail, and acute deafness had been added to her other disabilities. Presently she said; "An old Christian hearing how perplexed I was, sent me this message—'Tell her,' he said, 'they don't put ordinary birds inside a cage. The sort of bird that is shut up in a cage is a **song bird.**' "

Silence followed her remark and we fell a thinking. And oh, what thoughts they were that passed through our minds. And a big lump came into both our throats. "A song bird!" Was this the unravelling of her mystery? Was this the answer to her question, and the unravelling of God's plan for her? He had chosen her to be one of His song birds, to sing for Him His praises in this dark and dreary world.

After a pause she continued, "Ever since then, whenever illness has come along I just say to myself, This is another **singing lesson** to make the song more sweet."

Within a very short time God called His songster above, where she can

"Sing without ceasing sing  
The Saviour's present grace."

Though she may be dead, she still speaks, and I pass her message on that it may cheer all who are in sorrow. May God enable us all, when passing under His chastening hand to have like faith with her to realize that discipline is only a **singing lesson** to make our song sweeter.

"Many a rapturous minstrel  
Among the sons of light  
Will say of his sweetest music  
'I learned it in the night'  
And many a rolling anthem  
That fills the Father's Home  
Sobbed out its first rehearsal  
In the shade of a darkened room."

## HUMAN NATURE

THE "Modernism," which has swept in like a flood, is based upon a refusal to face the plain and elemental facts as to **human nature**. It assumes that mankind is on the upward grade and that further enlightenment and progress will banish all ills. The doctrine of evolution is just **assumed**, when it cannot be **proved**, and as the assumption panders to human conceit, it is allowed to pass unchallenged in many quarters. Modernistic theologians outdo modernistic scientists in their devotion to the theory, and they certainly far outrun the ordinary plain and more matter-of-fact man of the world.

As witness of this fact we quote some paragraphs written in one of the London daily papers not long ago. The leader writer had been stirred by a report of vandalism on Ben Nevis, and the fact that nothing of a religious nature was in his mind only makes his remarks more to the point for our purpose.

"If there were no other objections to the doctrines of Socialism, a conclusive one would be found in conduct; for conduct is fundamental to the Socialist hypothesis. Its advocates assume a human nature purged of all its baser elements—one by virtue of which everybody will behave in the best possible way. It is a fallacy, a complete illusion. Nothing will be changed except that the opportunities for misbehaviour will be less restricted. The means to

do ill deeds makes ill-deeds done. Take, for example, the bitter complaint that has just been uttered about the vandalism which is being practised by visitors to Ben Nevis—a spot whose majesty should forbid the show of violence. Yet it is asserted that unless something is done, ‘the summit of Britain’s noblest mountain will soon resemble a refuse dump.’ The joy-parties who visit Ben Nevis, it appears, not only leave litter and fragments of food, empty tins and broken bottles in and around the old Observatory. They use the pillars and indicator as pedestals for bottle-targets; and so depart. The only impulse inspired by the spendid vista which is opened out to their eyes, is to make an imitation Aunt Sally range, and indulge their instinct for destruction. . . .

“Is it not enough to change faith in human progress to despair, to know that in this Twentieth Century liberty can so easily result in vulgar and stupid licence, that in spite of the amenities and opportunities which modern life has made available for all, the heart of man remains so abysmally insensible to dignity and beauty and decency?

I held it truth, with him who sings  
To one clear harp in divers tones,  
That men may rise on stepping-stones  
Of their dead selves to higher things.

“So sang Tennyson; but the evidence is against his simple faith. Man remains, at bottom, the same primordial savage. He may

climb the dark brow of the mighty Ben Nevis; but only to make a cock-shy for his empty bottles on the summit. Possibly there is nothing to be done about it, except not to expect grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. Human nature is still elemental."

Now we certainly do not "expect grapes from thorns or figs from thistles"; but this, not because of the plain facts of life which we observe, whether in others or in ourselves, but, because we have been warned not to do so by the lips of the Son of God. He knows what is in man and He has plainly told us. The evil that fills the earth is not something imposed on man from without, but something that he generates from within. "Out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark vii. 21—23).

To accept the divine verdict against us is the beginning of all blessing; and it is a great day for us as saints when we cease to expect anything from the flesh within us, and we ratify in our own hearts what God Himself accomplished at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. There "sin in the flesh" was "condemned;" there "our old man" was "crucified with Him."

We have no faith in human progress, yet we have no despair for we know that all good is found



in Christ, and that God now has before Him a new humanity "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. ii. 10). Our faith and hope is centred in Christ and not in ourselves or any other man.

The evidence is in indeed against all faith in man. Yet we are abundantly optimistic as we fix the eye of faith on Christ.

F.B.H.

## OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(MARK XV. 33—xvi. 20).

Our review of this Gospel being more condensed than in the case of the Epistles hitherto before us, it is more than ever necessary to read it in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

**T**HAT which the Lord Jesus suffered at the hands of men was very great, yet it falls into comparative insignificance when we turn to consider what He endured at the hands of God as the Victim, when made sin for us. Yet all this far greater matter is compressed by Mark into two verses—33 and 34; whereas his account of the lesser matter covers 52 verses (xiv. 53—xv. 32). The fact is, of course, that the lesser could be described, whilst the greater could not be. The darkness which descended at midday hid from men's eyes even the externals of that scene.

All that can be related historically is that for three hours God put the hush of night upon the land and thus blinded men's eyes, and that at the end of the hours Jesus uttered the cry of anguish, which had been written as prophecy a thousand years before, in Psalm xxii. 1. The holy Sin-bearer was forsaken, for God must judge sin and irrevocably banish it from His presence. That utter and eternal banishment **we deserved**, and it will fall upon all who die in their sins. **He endured it to the full**, but since He possessed the holiness, the eternity, the infinitude of full Deity, He could emerge from it at the close of the three hours. Yet the cry, that came from His lips as He did so, showed that He felt the full horror of it. And He had a capacity to feel that was **infinite**.

That which He suffered at the hands of men is not to be thought of lightly. Hebrews xii. 2, says, "Who . . . endured the cross, despising the shame," but we must note the difference between **shame** and **suffering**. Many a man of great physical courage would feel the shame more than suffering. He felt the suffering but He despised the shame, inasmuch as He was infinitely above it, and He knew that He was, "glorious in the eyes of the Lord" (Isaiah xlix. 5). We believe that we may say that never was He more glorious in the eyes of the Lord than when He was suffering under the judgment of God as the Sin-bearer. Such was the paradox of Divine holiness and love!

The effect of that cry upon the onlookers is given to us in verses 35 and 36. They would hardly

have seen a reference to Elijah in His words if they had not been Jews: but then, how dense and ignorant not to have recognized the cry to God which lay enshrined in their own Scriptures.

The fact of His actual death is given by Mark in the briefest possible fashion. He breathed out His spirit into the hands of God directly after He had cried with a loud voice. What He said is recorded in Luke and John. Here we are simply told the way He said it. There was no gradual failing of strength so that His last words were in a feeble whisper. At one moment a loud voice and the next moment He was dead! His death was so manifestly supernatural as to greatly impress the centurion who was on duty and watching. Whatever may have been, in his own mind, the exact significance of his words, he must have at least felt that he was a witness of the supernatural. We endorse his words and say, "Truly this Man was the Son of God," in the fullest sense.

The truth of these words was also borne witness to by the rending of the veil of the temple. This great happening appears to have synchronized with His death. It was the Divine hand that rent it, for any human hand would have had to rend it from the bottom to the top. The elaborate typical system instituted in Israel, in connection with sacrifices and temple, all looked forward to the death of Christ; and, that death accomplished, the Divine hand tore the veil as a sign that the day of the type was over, and the way into the holiest was made manifest.

In every emergency God has in reserve some servant who will come forward and carry out His will. Stones **would** cry out, or be raised up to become men, if God needed them in an emergency; but they **never do**, because God is **never** in an emergency like that. He always has a man in reserve, and Joseph was the man on this occasion. This timid and secret disciple was suddenly filled with courage, and boldly faced Pilate. He was the man born into the world to fulfil in its season the prophetic word of Isaiah liii. 9,—“with the rich in His death.” Having fulfilled it, he drops completely out of the record.

He missed the opportunity of being identified with Christ in His life, but he did identify himself with Him when he was dead. This is remarkable, for it exactly reversed the procedure of the disciples. They identified themselves with Him during His life, and failed miserably when He died. The apparent defeat of Jesus had the effect of emboldening Joseph. It stirred the smouldering embers of his faith into a sudden blaze. He “waited for the kingdom of God,” and we may be sure that in the day of the kingdom the faith and the works of Joseph will not be forgotten by God. His kind of faith is just the sort we need to-day—the sort that blazes up when defeat seems sure.

Joseph’s action had the effect incidentally of bringing before Pilate the supernatural character of Christ’s death. No man could take His life from Him; He laid it down by Himself, and that at the suitable moment when all was accomplished.

The two thieves, as we know, lingered on for hours after, and their death had to be hastened by cruel means. Pilate marvelled, but the fact being corroborated, he yielded to the request. Thus the will of God was done, and from that moment the sacred body was out of the hands of the unbelievers. Hands of love and faith performed the offices and laid Him in the tomb. Devoted women too had stood as witnesses when even the disciples had disappeared, and they saw where He had been laid.

Love and faith were clearly there, but as yet their faith was dull and unintelligent as to His resurrection. Even the devoted women were full of thoughts as to the embalming of His body, as the opening verses of chapter xvi. show. But this dullness of theirs only enhances the clearness of the proofs that ultimately overwhelmed them with the conviction of His resurrection. At the rising of the sun on the first day of the week they were at the sepulchre only to find that the great stone blocking its entrance had been rolled away. They entered to find no sacred body, but an angel, in appearance like unto a young man.

Matthew and Mark speak of an angel: Luke and John speak of two. This presents no difficulty of course, since angels appear and disappear at will. The angel who appeared as "a young man . . . clothed in a long white garment" to the affrighted women had appeared a little before to the keepers as one with a countenance "like lightning, and his raiment white as snow," so that a kind of

paralysis fell upon them. He was one thing to the world and quite another to disciples. He knew how to discriminate, and that these women were seeking Jesus, though they thought Him to be still in death. Ignorant they were, yet they loved Him; and that made all the difference.

The angelic testimony however did not accomplish much for the moment. It impressed the women right enough, but mainly in the way of fear and trembling and amazement. It did not produce that calm assurance of faith which opens the mouth in testimony to others. They could not yet take up the words, "I believed, therefore have I spoken" (Psalm cxvi. 10; 2 Corinthians iv. 13). Presently they would share in this "spirit of faith," which was possessed by both Paul and the Psalmist, but that would be when they came into touch with the risen Christ for themselves.

Scripture clearly indicates that angels have a ministry to perform **on behalf of** saints—as witness, Hebrews i. 14. Their ministry **to** saints is infrequent, and usually alarming to those who receive it, as was the case here. However their message was very definite. "He is not here," was the negative part of it, and that the women could verify for themselves. The positive word was, "He is risen." That they could not verify, for the moment, and hence it does not seem to have very deeply impressed them.

There follows, in verses 9—14, a brief summary of the three striking appearances of the risen Lord,

accounts of which in more detail are given to us in the other Gospels.

First comes that to Mary Magdalene, which is given us so fully in John's Gospel. She was the first to actually see the Lord in resurrection: Mark puts this fact beyond doubt. This is significant as showing that the Lord thought in the first place of the one whose heart was perhaps more devastated by the loss of Him than any other. In other words, love had the first claim on His attention. In result, she did indeed believe, and therefore she was able to speak in the way of testimony to others. But, even so, her words had no appreciable effect. The others did indeed love the Lord, for they mourned and wept, and the very depth of their grief rendered them proof against any testimony which fell short of an actual sight of Himself.

Second, comes His appearance to the two going into the country, which is given to us in Luke with such detail. These had not denied Him like Peter, but they had so lost heart that they were drifting aimlessly away from Jerusalem, as if wishful now to turn their backs on a place filled for them with broken hopes and a most tragic loss and disappointment. Their sight of the risen Christ reversed their footsteps and brought them back to their brethren with the glad tidings. Even that however did not overcome their unbelieving dejection. It is just as well for us that it was so. Resurrection carries us outside the present order of things, and His resurrection is a fact of such immense import, that it

must indeed be established by multiplied evidence of an unimpeachable sort.

Third, His appearance to the eleven. This may possibly **not** be one of the occasions that are given us in more detail in Luke and John, for it says, "as they sat at meat," or, more literally, "lay at table." Take the account in Luke for instance—He would hardly have asked, "Have ye here any meat?" if they had been reclining at a meal. The presence of food would have been too obvious. It may therefore have been an occasion not noticed in the other Gospels. On this occasion He brought home to them their unbelief as a matter of reproach, and yet notwithstanding He gave them a commission.

It is remarkable how the commissions, that are recorded in the four Gospels, differ the one from the other. That which is stated in Acts i. 3, would prepare us for this. Many times during the forty days He appeared to them, speaking of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. During this time He evidently presented to them their commission from different points of view, and Mark gives us one of them. We may well wonder that, having had to upbraid them for their unbelief, He should send them forth to preach the Gospel so that others should believe. Yet, after all, the one who through hardness of heart has been stubborn in unbelief is, when thoroughly won himself, a valuable witness to others.

The scope of this Gospel commission is the largest possible. It is "all the world," and not



merely the little land of Israel. Moreover it is to be preached to "every creature," and not to the Jew only. It is, in other words, for **everybody everywhere**. The blessing that the Gospel conveys is spiritual in nature, for it brings salvation, when faith is present and baptism is submitted to. We must not transpose the words, **baptized** and **saved**, and make it, "He that believeth and is saved shall be baptized."

In no scripture is baptism connected with justification or reconciliation, but there are other scriptures which connect baptism with salvation. This is because salvation is a word of large content, and includes within its scope the practical deliverance of the believer from the whole world system, whether Jewish or Gentile in character, wherein once he was embedded. His links with that world system are to be cut, and baptism sets forth the cutting of those links—in one word, **dissociation**. He who believes the Gospel, and accepts the cutting of his links with the world that held him, is a saved man. A man may say he believes, and even do so in reality, yet if he will not submit to the cutting of the old links, he cannot be spoken of as saved. The Lord knows them that are His of course, but that is another matter.

When it is a question of "damnation," (or "condemnation"), baptism is not mentioned. This is very significant. It shows the ground on which condemnation rests. Even if a man **is** baptized, if he does **not** believe, he will be condemned. The outward ordinance is plainly prescribed by the

Lord, but it can only be administered as faith is professed; and profession, as we know only too well, is not synonymous with possession. Salvation is not effective apart from faith. Peter may tell us that, "Baptism doth also now save us" (1 Peter iii. 21), but note that it is "**us**," and the "**us**" are believers.

A good deal of controversy has raged around verses 17 and 18. The miraculous things mentioned are connected by some with the preachers of the Gospel, and it is asserted that they ought to be in full manifestation to-day. Two or three things may be helpfully noted.

In the first place, the things are to follow not them that **preach**, but them that **believe**.

In the second place, the Lord asserts that these signs **will follow**, apart from any previous conditions on the part of the preacher. There is no stipulation that he must experience a special "baptism of the Spirit," such as is often urged. If men believe, these signs shall follow; so says the Lord. All that could be deduced from their absence would be that no one has really believed.

In the third place, certain words do not appear in the statement, which some seem mentally to read into it. **It does not say**, that these signs will follow **all** that believe, in **all** places, and for **all** time. If it did we should be shut up to the conclusion that hardly anybody to-day has believed the Gospel: we have not even believed it ourselves!

· These words of our Lord have of course been fulfilled. We can point to four things out of the five occurring, as recorded in the Book of Acts. The fifth thing, the drinking without harm of some deadly thing, we have no record of, yet we have not a shadow of doubt that it happened. He said it would, and we believe Him. His word is enough for us. He gives the signs according to His own pleasure, and as He sees they are needed.

The two verses that close our Gospel are exceedingly beautiful. We remember that it has set before us our Lord as the great Prophet, who has brought us the full Word of God, the perfect Servant, who has fully accomplished His will. All has been related with striking brevity, as becomes such a presentation of Himself. And now at the close, with the same brevity, the end of the wonderful story is set before us. The Lord having communicated to His disciples all that He desired, "He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."

On **earth** He had been **cast out**, but He is **received up** into **heaven**. His works on earth had been **refused**, but now He takes His seat in a place which indicates administration and power of **an irresistible sort**. But it is put that He was "received up," and thus what is emphasized is, that both His reception and His session are due to **an act of God**. The perfect Servant may have been refused here, but by the act of God He takes the place of power, where nothing shall stay His hand carrying out the pleasure of the Lord.

The last verse indicates the direction in which His hand is moving during the present time. He is not as yet dealing with the rebel earth in righteous government: that He will do when the hour strikes for it, according to the purpose of God. To-day His interests are centred in the going forth of the Gospel, as He had just indicated. His disciples did go forth, preaching without boundaries or limitations, but the power that gave efficacy to their words and labours was **His**, and not theirs. From His lofty seat on high He wrought with them, and gave the signs which He promised, as recorded in verses 17 and 18. He gave these signs to confirm the word, and that confirmation was specially needed at the outset of its proclamation.

Though the signs of verses 17 and 18 are but rarely seen to-day, signs do still follow the preaching, signs in the moral and spiritual realm—characters and lives that are wholly transformed. The perfect Servant at the right hand of God, is **working still**.

F. B. HOLE.

Mark gives the servant-prophet, Son of God: Luke, the Son of man, the first two chapters affording a lovely picture of the remnant in Israel: John, a divine Person come into the world, the foundation (redemption being accomplished) of the new creation; the object and pattern of faith; revealing the Father; with the promise of the Comforter while away. Paul and John reveal our being in a wholly new place in Christ. But John is mainly occupied with revealing the Father in the Son to us, and thus life by the Son in us: Paul with presenting us to God, and His counsels in grace.