

Food for the Flock.

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“ THE WORDS OF THE WISE ARE AS GOADS,
AND AS NAILS FASTENED BY THE MASTERS OF ASSEMBLIES,
WHICH ARE GIVEN FROM ONE SHEPHERD.”

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“THE ELECT OF GOD, HOLY AND BELOVED.”
WHO ARE THEY?

GOD has never left Himself without a witness to Himself, or without a testimony to the world, since the fall. In fact, these are the abiding proofs that He has neither given up His sovereign rights to creation through sin, nor His control over it through Satan, even when man and the world gave Him up.

Enoch was perhaps the earliest example of this, for “he pleased God,” and was both a witness for God, in the day when he was not found, because of his translation, and a testimony to the world, because they were all left behind him upon the earth.

The call of Abraham, by the God of glory, became a still further witness on the one hand, and a testimony on the other. This “calling out” was also on the ground of holiness and truth, and was yet more gracious than Enoch’s translation to heaven, because it left Abraham, as “the friend of God,” still upon the earth as His witness, in their midst; though it likewise put him as a living testimony against mankind, on account of the idolatry out of which God called him. This difference is plain: Abraham

was kept here below, as a witness for God, in his daily walk before the world; whilst Enoch was taken away from it by translation, and "was not found." The heavens were to become his home, and they received their first man, as "the elect of God"; and, as the precursor of those who are presently to "be caught up to meet the Lord in the air." Both these principles are of immense importance. The translation of Enoch abstracted him from the world; whilst the calling out of Abraham separated him from its evil, and its awful departure from God afterwards at Babel.

It is of consequence to notice, likewise, that Noah and the ark filled an intermediate place, between Enoch's translation, and the calling out of Abraham, being neither akin to the one, nor to the other. It brought in another principle of action, and declared the sovereignty of God, in saving out of universal judgment, an elect family for the re-commencement of the earth which is now.

These are the three great and distinguishing circles, which contain "the elect of God" (before that Christ came), and include the various ways of God towards them, in different ages of the world. They make manifest, also, the respective and diverse revelation of His thoughts and intentions concerning each and all, in the times and seasons which He has

appointed for their accomplishment, to His own glory, and their full and everlasting blessing.

The first in this primeval order, and the most glorious in fulfilment, is the circle of "God's elect" of which the translated Enoch was the exemplar, and represents those who are Christ's at His second coming. A heavenly family who will then be caught up to meet Him and be presented in the presence of His Father "faultless, and with exceeding joy." The second is the circle of "God's elect," in which the called out Abraham appears, as the head of a family of faith, to walk with God upon the earth, in separation from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Still he lived under the power of a calling, by virtue of which he looked forward to a city, even a heavenly, whose builder and maker is God. The third is the circle of "God's elect" in which the spared Noah, with the "two and two of all flesh, wherein was the breath of life," came forth from the ark, having been saved out of the terrible death and judgment of God upon the world before the flood. He represents those who will be redeemed from amongst men, to replenish the millennial earth, according to its new order of peace and prosperity, under the Lord of lords and King of kings; after the wrath of God has cleansed the world again from its corruption and blasphemies, as by a flame of fire.

4 "THE ELECT OF GOD, HOLY AND BELOVED."

We may now pass away from "the elect of God" under these general and world-wide considerations of our subject, to the special and peculiar character of "the elect" in this dispensation, as those whom God has "predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Marvellous as this definition of God's elect is, both as to its manner and object, yet *because* it is so wonderful, it must needs be sustained by an analogous power, whether for our present communion with the Father's love, or in its full accomplishment to the glory of God by us; and for the joy and satisfaction of Christ eternally. And so it is; for who can gainsay the one or the other, who reads its infinitude and height of blessing, on the part of God, in the words that follow, "to the praise of the glory of his grace?" or our own meetness and title for it, as "the elect of God," under the assurance, "wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved?"

Another principle is to be observed by us, as regards our election: that, when God acts towards us, according to His own counsels in Christ, He always makes Himself the rule of "His wisdom and power" in their accomplishment. There is a double blessedness in this fact, because it connects indissolubly His own glory, which is always His object, with our

own portion in Christ by His own grace ; so that these two are concurrent, and reach their accomplishment together. Were it not so, "the exceeding riches," or "the love which passeth knowledge," or "filled into all the fulness of God," or "the joy unspeakable and full of glory," might well overpower us by their immensity, and leave no more spirit in us. But observe how every purpose of God is carried out to perfection towards us, as "His own elect," by our being first created anew in Christ Jesus, "according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him, in love." Indeed we shall only add what completes the circle of our own distinct blessing, if we observe that the Spirit of God has no other form, by which to address us whilst upon this earth, than as "the elect of God, holy and beloved." To whom else could He say, "Be ye imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us?" Or, "Put on *therefore* bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering?" Or again, "Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye?"

As we have observed, God must needs be, and *is*, a rule to Himself, whenever His counsels come into operation in the new creation (because they are apart from all creature

responsibility), just as truly as in the material one, when He said, "Let there be light, and there was light," for it is Himself who must produce it.

There is, however, this difference, and a very great one it is, between the two, for in the old creation there was innocency in Adam, and love in God, without any existing divergence, and therefore nothing to judge. Grace and truth would have been out of place before the fall, but have come in since by Jesus Christ, because the holiness of God and the sin of man are in antagonism, and are as wide asunder as was the light from the darkness. Nothing short of grace would serve for the guilt and ruin of a sinner: and nothing but truth could be the basis for the action of God in holiness. Who was to bring these two strangers to one another into the world? and if they came in, how could they be substantiated, and where, and when, between God and man, as a turning point for the requirements of each? For such a crisis, and for such an hour as this, the cross was in waiting, that by the sacrifice and death of Christ upon it, "mercy and truth might meet together, and righteousness and peace embrace each other."

If sin, and death as the wages of sin, had entered into the world, and passed upon all men, because that all had sinned; grace and

truth had likewise come in by Christ, and had established themselves at the cross, by the blood of atonement, and were confirmed in their exercise by His resurrection to the right hand of God. Grace, to the full extent of all that the sinner needed for pardon and redemption, flowed forth even from "the mercy seat" where God sat. Grace, to the uttermost of all which a Father's love had purposed to give forth to us for His eternal glory, found an open way, through the righteousness of the exalted Son of man in heaven, for its bestowment. Truth likewise, in its majesty and power, had been vindicated in righteous judgment, up to the wrath of God, in the vicarious sufferings of our Substitute; and down to death and the grave when passing through the power of Satan. Truth was now set at liberty, in the ascended Son of man, to make good every thought of God for His own glory, and the glory of His Son, in the everlasting blessedness of all for whom Christ died. Such is truth, and such is grace, as learnt in Christ upon the cross!

That cross was the door of entrance by which grace and truth could make themselves a home, and abound, where sin and death reigned; and that cross with its sepulchre were the royal paths for the mighty One to pass through, on His way up to the "throne

of the Majesty in the heavens." The grace in Christ, and the truth in Jesus, made sure by His own death, and by the act of God in raising Him from the dead, are the foundations of God's glory, and a believer's blessing, and they travel on in company.

We have thus viewed "the elect of God, holy and beloved" upon the high ground of the counsels of God towards us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and concerning which, as we said, God must be a rule to Himself. We have now to consider the other ground laid for God's actings, by Christ's sufferings and death, in this scene of enmity and sin, and the devil's hate; by which He might come down and take a new place in this lapsed world, as the "just" God, "and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." It is in these wondrous ways that God has come back again into the midst of men, because of the full and final settlement of all questions touching sin and holiness, by the substitution "of the just one, for the unjust ones, that he might bring us to God."

The Father, who had counselled the cross and its triumphs, with the Son of His love, through the Holy Ghost, from before the foundation of the world, has carried out these purposes of glory by the mystery of God manifest in the flesh. He has, in the glory of the

incarnation, passed through the length and breadth of this groaning creation, as a witness to Himself and to men; for "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." In effectual and divine operation, by the blood of Christ on the cross, God has brought down into time, and carried out as a matter of fact (and what a fact!), in the very midst of men, all that He had counselled before time, and the world, and Adam, were in being. Concerning "the depth of the riches both of this wisdom and knowledge of God" with His elect, we may recall the challenge by the Spirit in Paul: "For who hath *first* given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" How blessed for us, in all these eternal counsels, as well as in their fulfilment on the cross and in the coming glory, to join issue with our own apostle, and know nothing to rest upon outside God; "for of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

It is a great source of strength, even to an awakened conscience, when as a sinner he discovers that "the glad tidings" proclaimed for "the obedience of faith" in Rom. i. are declared to be "the gospel of *God*," concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. The great truth we have before our souls in the gospel

is this: that God is the first to act towards us in "grace and glory," upon the new ground of eternal redemption, accomplished by Christ on the cross, and accredited to us by the fact, that God has raised Him from the dead.

It is by this stupendous act of glorious and yet righteous power, that God takes the initiative with His elect in Christianity, by crowning Christ, our Lord and Saviour with honour and glory, "that our faith and hope may be in God." He has glorified Himself by raising the righteous Son of man, to His own right hand, "having put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

It is into this inner circle of the eternal counsels with Christ, that we are thus carried by His death and resurrection, and sealed by the Holy Ghost, as the "elect of God, holy and beloved." We are the fruit and result to God *now*, of the accomplished work of Christ in time, and gathered out from this ruined creation. The counsel of God is substantiated to us in *fact* by the Spirit.

We may, whilst upon the ground of the "gospel of God" to sinners in their sins, pass on to the blessed knowledge of Christ "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," and from thence to our

standing in grace, and to where we meet, and worship God in peace, and rejoice in hope of His glory. All His paths drop fatness, as we follow on, out of darkness into light, to where He leads "the elect of God" in Rom. viii. We may perhaps, for others, dwell further on the fact, that in the previous chapters the guilty sinner of chap. iii., is justified by God from all that he has committed, and freely forgiven by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The cross has enabled God to change His place of judge, for that of a justifier, and this change of places with God and the sinner is the grand issue.

It is He who bids us "joy in God, by whom we have received the reconciliation" through the blood of his Son; whilst, on His own part, He sheds his love abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. What changes are these! The "wretched man that I am" of chap. vii. is likewise delivered from "the law of sin in his members," and all that he is by nature, as still having "the flesh" in him. He is set at liberty by "the body of Christ" in death, and free to be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, "that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

Such are the plants of this new planting, and their changes too, as they pass out of death into life. These are the trees which grow in

this Paradise of God, by the rivers of water, "that bringeth forth his fruit in its season, and whose leaf also shall not wither." As the "elect of God" they gladly pass out of the chaos and groanings of the old creation, and the old man's sin and wretchedness, into the garden of the Lord. This new enclosure of chap. viii. is where the tree of life welcomes us, and in which God comes forth to hand its fruit to us. In it, He is the beginner of another creation, with the second Man whom He has raised from sin, and death, and the grave, and Satan's power.

"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," had long ago been counselled in the godhead, and was declared by Jesus when in the flesh, and walking amidst the ruins, or viewing the range of the desolator, as the only power that could reconcile all things in heaven and earth to Himself. "The Father quickeneth, and raiseth the dead," has likewise come forth in its new creative character, because "Christ has been made sin for us who knew no sin." This foundation, which God has laid for His eternal glory in His Son, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, is no longer a reserve in the counsels of the godhead, but has come out into manifestation at the cross, and been accomplished for "the elect of God," in the death and resurrection of Christ. Adam the sinner is no

longer the rule of God's action towards us, but Christ, in whom the purposes of God, both for present grace and future glory, have been made yea and amen from the gates of Hades up to the right hand of the Father, where He is crowned with all power who did it.

The triumphs of the cross below in clearing all away that was against us, and the victories of the Son of man in the glory above, by which we are made one with Him, are become the two centres of God's operations towards "His elect," and are the unchangeable rule of all His acts and deeds towards us. "As Christ is, so are we in this world," is no longer a counsel in godhead wisdom and grace, or a purpose hidden in God, till "the time was come to send forth his Son, made of a woman," but witnessed by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

The Epistle to the Romans becomes, indeed, the veritable reception of the repentant prodigal (no longer in parable, but in fact) by the Father. In this view, chap. iii. 24, 25, is the kiss given; chaps. iv. & v. may be the cordial embrace, and the welcome home in peace and joy; if not, what are they? The chaps. vi. & vii. reveal the secret by which all upbraidings are judged, and "*reckoned*" to be out of place, and kept under the silence of death in this home of love. In the "liberty"

of chap. viii., he must be introduced in the best robe, with the ring on the finger and the shoes on his feet. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which maketh *free* from the law of sin and death, and brings us into conscious relationship with the Father, can only be under the witness of "the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba." Christ, as the life; and our being alive in Christ, who is our life; and the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, setting us in the relationships of this life with God the Father, and in the conscious enjoyments which belong to us as the children of God, by the Spirit's operations in us, fill the house with music and dancing. The Son of God's own love, is become the model and rule of the Father's actings in the house; "no condemnation," is upon the threshold, and meets the eyes of the "elect of God" as he enters; and "no separation" is the order and law of the family circle, into its highest and happiest delights. This divine life, and its relations with the Father and the Son, as "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," together with its enjoyments in the house, are all founded, and maintained in communion, upon "the fatted calf." "Bring it forth, and kill it," is the secret of "Let us eat, and be merry."

I judge it to be on this account that in this Epistle, and in this chap. viii., the Father for

the first time takes His place in the midst of those who are "*in Christ*," to hand over to "*His elect*" this marvellous charter of their new rights and privileges by grace and adoption. The earth and the heavens are given forth after another pattern, and for higher purposes with Christ; the former to suffer in, as one with a rejected Lord; and the latter to reign in with Him. "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." This wonderful chapter, with the second Man for its head and centre, is thus the record and witness by the Spirit of our complete emancipation and deliverance from every giant power, that once held us in captivity. It is the great charter of our Christ-life and Christian liberties; and is a summary of our immunities and privileges as in Him. Before God the Father, we are no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit, and only wait for the redemption of the body.

It is further to be observed, and of immense moment too, that, in this circle, God utters that mighty challenge to the whole universe around Him and us: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" In all His counsels He must be a rule to Himself, as we have seen, but in His operations, Christ, and the work of Christ, becomes the rule of His actings towards *us*. For example, "it is God that justifieth," silences every accuser, and shuts

every mouth; and it follows, as a blessed fruit of Christ's one sacrifice, that if we are free and uncharged before God (who alone could bring a charge against us), He must be our justifier against all accusers.

Again, we listen to another challenge by God, in the midst of His elect ones, "Who is he that condemneth?" And let us now see, as to this, how God makes the cross of Christ a rule of his own proceedings; for He answers the challenge by the reply: "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." The elect of this election are thus neither in their sins, nor in the flesh, but in Christ, and in the Spirit, and there is no condemnation, or power of separation from any creature, be they principalities above or beneath. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" is the challenge that grace puts into our mouths, in the face of all our enemies, and "we are more than conquerors," over those who once held us captive by sin and by death.

Not only does God take this marvellous place "for us," as regards every claim which His own holy nature demanded, on the one hand; or our state and condition as sinners required on the other; but He is free to proclaim in this blessed chapter His own

eternal purposes about these elect as accomplished facts. See how Christ is made of God, "to us," the model and rule of His own action from everlasting to everlasting : "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." And now see how these counsels are accomplished in time, and made good to us, as "the elect of God, holy and beloved." Moreover, "whom he did predestinate them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified them he also glorified."

We may doubtless have to pass, as "the elect of God," chosen out of the world, into other circles of blessing with the Father and the Son ; and ascend into higher glories with Christ, as in other Epistles ; but the attractions of this chapter, and its revelations of life, by the in-dwelling Spirit in us, will gladly be carried by us, as our title, up to any height. God seems to be so close to us here, as to be doing everything with His own hand and according to His own mind, in this first circle of redemption, with His elect. One can almost feel Him touching us, as when He originally made the "coats of skin," and clothed Adam and Eve. Or again, like the Father with the prodigal, we are conscious that we are kissed, and know right well who He is that falls upon

our neck in grace, and folds the lost one to His bosom.

We are fully conscious, in this Rom. viii., that everything is out of God Himself, and brought to us from the Father's house, and proof of the Father's love. Not only this, but all is put on us to His own satisfaction, and to suit His own heart. We have the joy of knowing it is ourselves who are clothed in the best robe, and are presented before His eye in the perfectness of Christ. Nowhere else does the Father seem so one with us as here, though "the far country" in this Epistle, be not very far away, and even in sight. May be "the heavenly places," or much more the "being raised up, and seated there," together with Christ, may be very distant, and unknown as yet by those who go no further on. Nevertheless, the knowledge of God, so very near to us, as to pardon and justify us when ungodly, by faith in Jesus crucified, is a grand elementary lesson, and lies as a firm foundation stone for all else in the superstructure.

It would have been a great omission to have passed over the early operations of grace, and of such an acquaintance with God as this is, in writing upon the maturer subject in Col. iii. of "the elect of God, as holy and beloved," and dead and risen *with* Christ. Rom. viii. is the grand circle, in which God appears before the

whole universe with His elect, challenging heaven, and earth, and hell, to lay anything to their charge. This was a great and necessary preliminary to their positive and ultimate blessing in those self-same heights, to which Christ has ascended. Certainly if Christians were more at home "as the elect of God," with the God who justifies them, on the ground of the Christ who died, they would follow where He is. If they were equally at home with the Christ who is risen again, and is even at the right hand of God to make intercession for them, they would see how they are upheld and kept by His grace, to glorify God on this earth. They would also be better qualified for communion in the heavenly places themselves, where their Lord is already seated as Head over all things to the church, and from whence the Holy Ghost has descended, as the glorifier of Christ to take of the things of Christ and to shew them to us as our birthright and portion.

Indeed it is the presence of the Holy Ghost, as sent down from the Father in answer to the prayer of the ascended Lord, which is the last distinguishing gift to "the elect of God" in this economy. The action of the Holy Ghost, in correspondence with the Father's counsels, and the Son's finished work, is formative of this dispensation (if indeed it can be rightly called one at all), and gathers out the

members of Christ into the unity of His body.

This door opens likewise into that marvellous ministry of the Son, comprised in the central group of chapters in John's Gospel, which gives out to us the revelation of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in their several and combined relations: It is *this*, which contributes our own portion in the new creation and in the Father's house as "the elect of God." "At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you;" and this is characteristic too; but we must not enter through this door now.

J. E. B.

The restoration of the sinner is the object of divine love; but he is only restored when the origin of the evil is judged. Christ does not reproach Peter with denying Him, but He does say, "Lovest thou me more than these?" He will have to judge all that led him away from God.

(J. N. D.)

READINGS ON SOME OF PAUL'S EPISTLES.

I PROPOSE that we should look through two or three of the Epistles; for so many read detached portions of Scripture without getting at the scope of it.

It has been asked, "What is a Roman? What stature would a man who only studied Romans come to?"

In Romans we have "the gospel of God." To see this, we must begin at the third chapter. In the previous ones we get man ruined; here we see how that ruin is met. But I would notice, in passing on to it, the very important statement in chapter i., that this gospel is "concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." It is the gospel of the seed of David *risen*; and that leaves no hope for the Jew on natural grounds.

This, and the four following addresses, at Quemerford, 6, 7, and 8, June, 1878.

But to see the stature to which you come in the Romans, we pass on to chapter iii., where we find the value of the blood, and, because of it, find that we get shelter—that “God is just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” I want an ark first to save me from judgment; but I do not get to Rom. v. until I am in the sweet savour of Gen. viii. 20; until I know that as He is, so am I in this world. Noah could say, Though I am not a better man than I was before the flood, yet I am now in sweet savour before God; in the place where I was in fear of judgment, I am now in favour. “Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I am in favour on earth; and then I rise to “joy in God.”

But then some one says, “I am very unhappy.” What! after being so happy? After knowing peace with God, and joy in Him? Yes. Oh, then you have found out there is sin *in* you. But there is a release from that: “Our old man is crucified with Christ;” there is an end of it before God. Romans takes you thus far, but it does not take you on to crucified to the *world*. And the consequence is, that Romans are very nice people; they are just like Frenchmen in England. They say: We are strangers here; we do not speak the language, nor do we follow the manners; but

we get all the good things we can, out of the country we are in. And, moreover, they are always ready to learn Ephesian truth too.

You are not dead in Romans, but in chapter vi. you are dead to *sin*; and in chapter vii., dead to the *law*. God has "condemned sin in the flesh" for you, but *you* are not rid of it in yourself, though you are to reckon yourself dead to it.

It is "*through*" Christ all along till you get to chapter vi. 11-23.; it is not "*in*" till then. Then it comes in, because, if you move away Adam, which has been done in chapter vi. 6., you must put the believer in somewhere. Now no longer in Adam, he is in Christ. It is an important thing for the believer to know that he is *in* Christ; because, if he sees himself there, he knows that he is not in Adam's state any longer before God.

So a good Roman has "joy in God" in chapter v., and now, in chapter viii. Christ is the spring of all to him, and the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in him as he walks not after the flesh but after the Spirit; and he has not only resurrection with Christ through the Spirit, but through Him he also "mortifies the deeds of the body." In this he comes very near Colossians, but not quite to it. He has come to "Abba Father," and he is an "heir of God," but there is not a word of being *in*

heaven as in Ephesians, though he is looking forward to it, "waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body."

"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," is an abstract statement. There are only the two standings before God; if you are in the standing of the flesh, you will die; if you are in the standing of the Spirit you will live.

The Roman is not only then clear of everything that stood between him and God, but he is a son. And I hold it impossible for a man to have a cloud when he has the sense that he is a son of God. Talk of a cloud! Impossible! But there is great vagueness in the state of souls as to their relationship. They speak of God truly as *a* Father, but in doing so they are not really beyond the Lord's prayer, "Our Father which art in *heaven*." They just know that He is *like* a Father to them, but they do not know sonship. There is no question as to their being converted, but they do not know that they are His *sons*. A Roman is a son and heir; but it does not say what he is heir to. I do not think he has got so far as what Paul is told is the gospel: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins,

and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

He sees that creation is vanity, and that all here is to be removed; but that is not sitting in heavenly places in Christ, nor anything like it.

Thus in chapter iii. we get shelter; chapter iv. forgiveness of sins, and sin not imputed; chapter v. peace and joy; chapter vi. dead to sin; chapter vii. dead to the law, but with sin in you; chapter viii. life in Christ in resurrection. It is not the *man's* death; it is *Christ's* death. I am a live man going through the darkness, not out of it yet. It is Christ who has risen; I am not risen. In Romans it is a question of sin, and I want *death* to get out of that. Chapter vii. is the most painful experience that a believer can pass through; I find that I am not in keeping with the life that is in me. The real Roman would be very glad to find that this world was a grave; but it is not. He knows that God is *for* him. And at the end of chapter viii., we find priesthood. And thus we are even "more than conquerors through him that loved us;" we get a touch of the power that is in us; and nothing is able to separate us "from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Many souls fancy that they are in a state in

which they are not; because they have great aspirations they suppose themselves in some higher place spiritually than a Roman, whilst they have really never yet known what it is to be one. Souls that have got into Ephesians and Colossians without going through Romans, are not established.

And then we get chapter xii. the presenting of the body "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God"; a being "not conformed to this world." For this I do not want peculiarity in dress or other things. I am not non-conformed, but I am transformed.

In Galatians the first verse gives the character of the Epistle, and has been often commented on. "Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man." There is no antecedent to it on earth. It is a thing that comes out *de novo*, and in which man is totally ignored. Paul was a man himself who had thought much of man, who had so kept the law that he could say, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless;" but, when he came to see Christ in glory, he never spoke to Him of man at all; he never alluded to Adam, as we see where he recites his conversion a little lower down in the chapter. It is just the opposite

to what we get in Hebrews, where everything is traced right down from "the fathers."

This ignoring of man helps the Galatians, for they had gone back to Adam. A Galatian is really a Roman who has gone back from Rom. viii. It is no longer true of him that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made him free;" he "desires again to be in bondage." It is really the new school of "holiness by faith" that has come up. In that, law is the standard, and perfection in the flesh the aim. Doing good things merely is not Christianity; Christ working in me is.

The law was given to suit a servant, and therefore cannot suit a son, but he is a very bad Christian who does not go higher than the law. Here Paul is "dead to the law." His great point is, I do not recognise myself; it is His Son in me; "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." As soon as he was converted, he preached that Jesus was the Son of God; and now, he says, that *He* is revealed in me, *I* go into the background. In speaking of his conversion here, it is not simply the mode of salvation that is brought forward; it is that Paul had now to do with this blessed One, whom he had seen in glory, and that he had to learn how this could be effected. It was through God revealing His Son *in* me, so

that Paul had the same life as He; it was "not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Every believer has the same title, though every believer does not enjoy it. There are three witnesses to the fact that all possess it, as John tells us: "The Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree" in one testimony: that God "hath given to us eternal life, and this life is *in His Son*." It is wonderful the way in which John and Paul thus help one another. John brings God's Son down to earth, and Paul takes us up to Christ; therefore a man who teaches Paul's doctrine, dwells much on John's. And, what is very interesting in Paul and John, is that, in speaking of the same truth, they reverse the way of stating it. If John says "Father and God," Paul says "God and Father." If John says "peace and life," Paul will say "life and peace." Talking of washing and of sanctification, Paul will put the sanctification before the washing, and John the washing before the sanctification. Just as you constantly find help in different brothers' teaching: one will take one side of the truth, and another the other.

However, to return to our Epistle. In chap. ii. he says, I will not give up this truth, neither for the youngest saint nor the oldest; neither for a young disciple like Titus, nor for an old apostle like Peter. "I am crucified with

Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," is what he holds to. This the Galatians had given up; they had gone back to the flesh; they were not seeking to be justified before God "by the faith of Jesus Christ." It is strange how perfectionist people are by nature. I mean they will put themselves under law as to a certain point, and then take liberty on every other. There is a difference in the apostle's manner with a Corinthian, to what there is with a Galatian; he is hopeful of a Corinthian, of a Galatian he says, "I am afraid of you." I have more chance of getting at a man who is out-and-out enjoying the world, than I have at one who is legally trying to make a fair show in the flesh.

In chap. iii. he brings in Christ crucified to meet their state. It is not Christ's death as such; it is the ignominious putting of His person out of the world. He says, Jesus Christ is set forth *crucified* before your very eyes. And, besides this, how did you get the Spirit? Was that by the law and flesh? It is just the new school: made perfect in the flesh after beginning in the Spirit.

Then he brings them back to Abraham, who got the promise of the Seed four hundred years before the law, and we date from that Seed. We are not tenants as we should have been under the law, when we never could have paid

the rent ; but we date four hundred-and-thirty years before it, because we belong to the heir. The law was just a master, a pedagogue. The thought is that of a master walking on, and all the scholars following after. So the law led on until it brought to Christ. It is a wonderful argument ; no jury could refuse the title. I belong to the promised Seed ; faith comes in in connection with the Spirit of promise, and links me on to the new line, and that line is the Spirit line ; it is not the flesh ; I inherit under another line altogether. All this is to prove to them that they cannot go back to the old line without losing the inheritance.

As to those who would like to be under law, he says, chap. iv., Let us look at these law keepers ; what happened in that case ? As soon as the one after the Spirit was grown up, the one born after the flesh had to go out. I ask, Have you put him out ? You say, Yes ; but he comes in again. Never mind that ; the great thing is, whether you have come to the point that you do not tolerate him." The thought of the new school is that Isaac is to come in and make Ishmael a good boy. Ishmael *mocked*, we are told ; and Paul calls that persecution.

In chap. v. we get a very interesting thing : that the Spirit is stronger than the flesh. The words in verse 17 ought to be, " that ye *may*

not do the things that ye would." It is a wonderful thing to find out that, if we walk in the Spirit, we shall *not* fulfil the lust of the flesh; it is an immense comfort to the heart. If I were talking to the new school, I would say I have no right to do a wrong thing, but you want me, not to be a *new* man, but an improved one.

Chap. vi., 14, is the grand finale of the Epistle: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." "To *me*" is the point; it is not that God is left out, but that the point is where *I* am placed with regard to the world, and the world to me, by the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. As to what the world is, there is no harm in anything in itself, if it does not influence you: it is the power that it exerts over you that is the evil.

Ephesians takes us up in exactly the opposite way to Romans. There man is seen as alive in sin; here as dead in it. It is all downwards from God to man. It is the "water of the rain of heaven."

It is in this Epistle where we are set "in heavenly places in Christ," that we find the gifts to the church; chap. iii. I do not

believe a man really understands gifts at all until he has got on to heavenly ground. It is in the place of death in trespasses and sins, in the place where our weakness is brought out to the utmost, that we know the power of "the living God." This is Joshua iii. This power, which has first worked out from God to me, chap. i., now works out of me, as I am "strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man;" beginning with the church, in the first part of chap. iv; then in my social surroundings—in connection with my neighbour. Many a one gets on with those at a distance, who cannot get on with people close to. So it is "truth with your *neighbour*," not with some one far away. And lastly this power comes out in the domestic circle. If a man has not power at home, he has no power anywhere.

We find three forms of the power which thus comes down into all the difficulties of this scene. First it comes down from God Himself, it is "the working of his mighty power." Second it is in *me*: "strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man." And when I talk of power in *me*, I never get the Holy Ghost dissociating me from Christ in any action that He energizes. As we have seen, it is not a question of my doing a nice thing, but of Christ coming out in me. I am a dead man, but I am made to act in the power of God.

And third, it acts out in chap. vi. against Satan.

Thus, the true answer to an Ephesian is a Philippian. And it is very difficult to be a Philippian, though every believer has title to be an Ephesian. I find my heart is a long way ahead of my feet; and it must be so; just as in a man climbing up a ladder. If you are satisfied with having your head only in advance, you will become enthusiastic; whereas if you are set upon climbing up, you will become laborious. I have a residence in heaven, and I ought to occupy it. There are the three steps in Joshua: there is the entering, the possessing, and the dwelling. A good many of us have entered, a good many have possessed, but dwelling is the grand thing.

And lastly, I am so to walk that I may be approved of Him, as I stand here against all the wiles of the devil, "strong in the Lord, and the power of His might."

In Philippians we find Paul in prison telling out the path of a heavenly man upon earth. In the hands of the Gentile power, shut out from the people of the Lord on earth, he is able to set before them in himself the type and example of a heavenly man upon earth; so that the things that fall out to him are only "to the furtherance of the gospel." He can

look upon the earth in a new way; all his expectations from it are closed; and now heaven opens to him. It is not that it was not opened before, but that he was not in a position equally to enjoy it.

Saints have to be thrown into circumstances where the things of God can be made good to them, for the circumstances we are in conduce largely to the carrying out in us of the truth God has committed to us. John had to go to Patmos to get his line of things, and Paul to a prison to be able to teach his fully.

We see the apostle, then, deprived of everything; and we find him in it the very opposite of Hezekiah, who, when all his links to earth were about to be broken, still could not die. Fourteen years a most perfect servant of God on the earth, still he says, What shall I do if I die? In the grave no one praises. But here is Paul, everything gone from him, he only longs to depart and be with Christ. He has the blessed sense in his soul that he would like to die, that he might know what it would be to be in that solitude with Him. In ch. i. he seeks to die himself in order to be with Christ; in ch. ii. he dies as a servant; in ch. iii. he dies as a martyr; and in ch. iv. he dies to circumstances.

This does not put death in opposition to the

coming of the Lord. If I long to be with Him I long for Him to come. *Our* side is in the first chapter; *His* in the third. Anyone who is really longing to be with the Lord is longing for Him to come; and anyone who is really longing for Him to come is longing to be with Him. But you will not be in the moral power of the coming of the Lord if you are not in a state of heart to meet Him. The mere historical event is often associated with sentiment. Nothing so answers the question: Am I in a state to see Him? as another question: Would you *like* to see Him?

Men are forming for things, fitting for them, all through their lives. The first circle of a man's life is the expression of what the whole of it will be. Paul was always a leader, both before conversion and after; but the thing he was most for in nature, he is most against in grace. The greatest Pharisee becomes the greatest anti-Pharisee.

Our circumstances then conduce to our power. If you were in prison you would be much more able to talk of heaven than I. Our prison very often is sickness. There are two great lessons we have to learn; and in this school Paul is a graduate here, as Jonah was a learner in the Old Testament. First, I myself am dead, and I am saved from death; but then I have to learn that everything is

dead to me. The gourd is dead; I have not a single thing to shelter me from the east wind; I have not a single thing left to lose. I have to learn these two deaths, for through sin I have brought myself into these two conditions. When people are first converted, though they see themselves saved out of their own death, they have not the sense that death is on everything around them. Many have to learn this by going through loss; happier to learn it like Abraham going up Mount Moriah, by surrender. Abraham was going on to the resurrection morning as he journeyed to Mount Moriah: Paul had reached it.

The spring of devotedness is being completely done with myself, so that I can be completely for God. Nothing does so much damage to souls as walking before others in an appearance that is not true. Then there is guile. It is sanctimoniousness. As Paul says, "That no man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be." A verse that humbles one immensely, and comforts one too, is: "Thy Father, which *seeth in secret*, himself shall reward thee openly."

The Lord allowed him to get into prison. Paul took a great interest in the Jews: he was greatly occupied with his earthly nation; now he has a trial in connection with them; he suffers from their hands, and ends with a prison

in Rome. The Lord says, You have borne witness of me in Jerusalem, and you shall in a Gentile city also.

Many brethren are in the place that Luke and Acts educate them to, without knowing how they got there. They have got to a place outside Jerusalem on earth without knowing how. Luke shows Christ going up from Bethany; and, in the Acts, I soon lose the twelve apostles, to follow the course of one who was not of them at all. After the offer of the kingdom had been made to the Jews by the twelve, I find one "born out of due time," who offers "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" to the Gentiles. Thus earth is over. And the apostle longs to leave it; he desires to depart and be with Christ; but one thing keeps him; he stays for the church. So it is only *with* or *for*.

Two objects ought to mark our life: I am wishing to be the first, but I stay for the second. Then how are you going to stay? I am going to stay like Christ. There is a greater thing than *servi*ng Christ: He can be *expressed*. Christ has left the world, but He has not left it without some one to represent Him in it. And if anyone be representing, he will certainly serve when the time comes. One who represents is sure to serve, and to serve well.

If I had asked Paul what he was going on to,

he would have answered, I am going on to be poured out; and as I do so, "I-joy and rejoice with you all." I do not mind dying for you. There is no dying for himself here; it is for others. He looks forward to martyrdom; he will do anything to get into fellowship with Christ. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." This is a martyr, not a servant now.

And then he says, "Rejoice in the Lord!" I do not tell you to rejoice in anything else, but I do say, let nothing hinder you in that; do not two women lose it by quarrelling. And lastly, Paul, dead practically, the things that affect a man do not affect him. How do you get on in bad circumstances? They do not move me. How do you get on in good ones? They do not move me. Of those two circles into which the world is divided—attractions and afflictions—neither move me. I am content in the one, I have power over the other. I know how to abase and how to abound.

In Colossians, the first thing we have is the two headships of Christ: He has the headship of creation, and the headship of the church.

We ought not to forget that Christ has the headship of creation: it tells in all directions.

We also get two reconciliations and two ministries. One we are in, the other is coming. The one is of the gospel, the other of the church; and you will not be very effective in the first, unless you have the second; for, as has been said, if a person is really earnestly preaching, he will bring souls where he is himself; he will bring them up to the headship of Christ. As soon as the apostle has made us complete in Christ, he turns about and, like the old emigrants, burns the ship. He says, Complete in *Christ*, then *man* is gone. The body of the flesh is gone in the circumcision of Christ. The words "of the sins" are not there. It is to be no more, "Touch not, taste not, handle not;" I am to hold the Head, and that alone. If I tell you not to do this thing and that, then you must be alive; but you are to die all round.

We have, in Colossians, the religious man on the earth, which is formed of two things: Judaism and spiritualism. This makes religious men in the flesh. Galatians was more subtle in its character: they wanted to make man perfect in the flesh. But take the whole character of things that men are running after here, I have something infinitely superior to it all in Christ. The two lines run side by side in society now: the characteristic of the upper

classes is ritualistic, whilst the lower is rationalistic. They combine and work together.

But the believer is "risen with Christ," and is therefore to "set his affection on things above, not on things on the earth." The life of Christ is to come out of, and infuse, every member of His body on the earth; everything is to be done in connection with the Head; man has become a beautiful musical instrument, answering to the leading voice; but the saints often go before the voice. Thus I, who am in myself but a poor failing thing, am made the living expression of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. *Habits* are things that I have to "*put off*." Nothing but *death* will do for *members on the earth*; no education in the world will get rid of them.

The difference between Ephesians and Colossians is this: that in Ephesians I am coming down, in Colossians I am looking up to heaven.

A person in Ephesians may rejoice in knowing that he is set in Christ; but to get to Philipians, you must go through Colossians. I have the Spirit of God now to put all the members in their right place—a divine person here on the earth; and I am not in heaven. In Romans the believer is in the Spirit of sonship and heirship, and delights to find that place; but in Colossians he is quickened together with

Christ, and he gets the taste and the power that fits him for being there with Him, though he has not dwelt there yet. Gilgal is his residence in heaven: he is "circumcised with the circumcision made without hands." It is after the thing is *done* the place is called Gilgal. He has got into the moral condition to enjoy it. He knows something that is up there which he did not know in Romans. He is risen, but he has not yet got the place. The Roman is one who is ready for it; he has got the Spirit, but he is not yet risen. The Colossian is risen, but he is not yet in the place. Now it is an immense thing to get a place, because then I can give up the old place. A Colossian is risen with Christ, quickened together with Him, and what then? I am looking up for a new place; I seek the things that are above; I follow out all the character of thing which fits me for being in heaven, where I am not as yet, but where I am going.

(J.B.S.)

IN THE WILDERNESS.

Ex. xv. 20-25.

THE true way to enter the wilderness is in the words of Ro. v. : " We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." That is the song of Moses—the chorus of it: " The Lord hath triumphed gloriously." It does not say that *we* have done so. It is not yourself that has triumphed, as you very often find out; but the chorus is a thing that you never can lose. You can say, No matter what *I* am, *He* has triumphed. And for whom? For me! Well, have *you* triumphed? No, but He has, and we triumph in His triumphs. The natural thought of the people when they got across the Red-Sea would have been, We have done something now to be proud of. But no; it is all the Lord. Thus I enter the wilderness—enter it with a song.

Now, none of us but is conscious how different he is in the presence of the Lord, to what he often is in the midst of his daily circumstances. Many a one enjoys the corn of the land in the quiet of his own room, who, when he comes down, has not the manna. Many a one has said before now: " I am sorry I ever came out at all; I was happy in my room, and now I cannot get on with men at all. What I want is wilderness truth. I can go in, and find

myself very happy with God, but see how vexed I am, how ruffled, the moment I step down into my daily life."

Now it was not that the joy was not real. Was not this song real? They had really crossed the Red Sea. The very fact of the women singing proved that the burden of their song had permeated society. Men work in a line; but the women singing proved it was no theory—that it had pervaded the whole.

But now a word before I go further. People say "What is the wilderness?" It is what the world, in which a man is, becomes to him as soon as he is in Christ here. He has the same house, the same business; but yesterday he was in the world, to-day he is in the wilderness. Yesterday, as he went about his business, he comforted himself with the thought that he could depend on the political condition of the state—that he was in a safe country—that his business could go on without risk. The next day he has done with all this; he has now no resource but in God; he has nothing but God. He is very glad the political atmosphere is calm, but he does not depend upon it. In the same way, the man selling apples at the corner of the street says, "A very good town this; very well regulated; plenty of policemen; no disturbances to hinder me in my work." The next

day he sells his apples in the very same place, but he says now, "I have no dependence on what I trusted in until now; it is my Father who cares for me, and none else." I will tell you a very extraordinary thing, though, about that man selling the apples; that is, that if he is knocked down himself for speaking of the Lord, he will perhaps look to God only to stand for him; but if his *apples* are knocked over he will exclaim, "I cannot stand that; I must call the police."

What is power? It is equanimity. But it is more than that; it is doing things properly. It is not a question of exploits, but it is that everything is done rightly, and at the right time; just as a man in writing will not put a little letter instead of a big one. That is power. The Lord breathed on His disciples, after He said, "Peace be unto you." He brings peace in now down here; it is not peace up there. It is quite one thing to have peace there, and another to have it here. He obtained the first for us, and He left us the other. We are to walk in peace: "Peace always and by all means."

Well, we are in the wilderness, and what do we find there? The first thing the saint finds is that himself is his trial. He cannot drink the water. It has been said these waters are the waters of the Red Sea; it is death, and you cannot

drink it. While you rejoice that the death of Christ has put an end to the Egyptian, you do not like that death on your mere self. That is Marah. It is bitter work, and you do not like it; no one does. But the Lord shows Moses a tree, "which, when he had cast upon the waters, the waters were made sweet." That changes the whole aspect of things. It is bitter work, but Christ's cross takes the whole bitterness out of it. Peter says: "Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh; arm yourselves likewise with the same mind."

Now mark: what makes all the complaints is, that you cannot put up with the circumstances in which God has placed you. And what has God said to you? My Son has gone into death to suffer for that very selfishness that makes you complain. When you see your circumstances in the light of this, the cross sweetens them all, for the cross gets rid of my selfishness. I can now say, I thought these were very painful trying circumstances, but I see they are just the very thing for me. And so there is no "complaining in *our* streets," for the things that we have are just the right ones. How could my Father put me anywhere but in the right place? The character of His love is like the air I breathe: it is always attentive, always waiting on me, never officious, always trying to get rid of the bad and bring in the

good. There is no more beautiful figure of what love is than the air.

But man does not understand the love of God for him in his circumstances. Man says, I have bad health, great trials, no matter what. I ask you, if you had passed by the prison of Paul and Silas that night, what would you have said? Why, they have fine times in there! Fine times? Yes, they were in the wilderness indeed; their backs smarting with stripes; but their selfishness is set aside, and they can sing. Is there anything tries a father more than his child doubting him? and what must it be to the God of all mercies when I doubt His love for me? Oh, I beg of you, as you honour that heart of love, *never* to allow a single complaining in your streets. Instead of saying these circumstances are bitter, say they are sweet—they are the very best that I can have. I am sure I never could have perfect happiness myself, but on the principle that I am God's favourite child. I have no objection to your feeling the same, but I could not go through the world without it. You say, I am breathless with such a statement, but I do believe it. Then why do you complain? Well, things come very unpleasant at times. And so they do; but I have found that things that are very trying at the time, turn out to be glorious opportunities. You may miss a

train, and think, as many a one does : " Well, the Lord might have kept that train for me one minute." But you may find in the next one a soul waiting for a word from God. The Lord went out hungry in the morning, and found a barren fig tree ; was He put out ? Not at all. It was exactly what He wanted for a figure of the nation.

John xvii. ends with the world and begins with the Father, and that is just our place. Are you satisfied with the exchange ? The man may upset my apples, and he may not be punished for it either, but God will set it right somehow or other. So the waters of Marah were the first trial in the wilderness. The apostle says, " I bear about in my body the dying of Jesus." The Corinthians had the knowledge of the glory, but they would not have the cross. But the cross is my friend ; it clears all away that stood between me and God ; it is all gone there. It is not that I have to do it myself ; it is done. And am I going to hold the thing that Christ died for ? No, certainly not ! This, then, is our first lesson.

But I pass on to the sixteenth chapter, and ask, How am I to act in the wilderness ? In the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is manna. The corn of the land is Christ in glory ; the manna is Christ in humiliation. I am united to Christ in glory, but I manifest

Christ on earth, and I get it by being in concert with Him who is out of it. I am not only in union, but I am in concert with Him to whom I am united. So I may be united to Christ, and yet be practically defective when I come to present Christ on earth. It is the life of "Jesus" that I am to bear about; the word "Lord" should be left out there. But if you are not in concert with Him in glory, you will not be what He was on earth. I believe many a person is earnestly trying to be like Christ as He was on earth, who has not the power for it, because he has not to do with Him now in glory. As Elijah says, "If thou seest me taken from thee." There is no "when" there; it is a question of seeing Him. If you do not begin with the fountain, the spring Himself—if you do not *see* me. It is not a question of union at all; it is not a question of the Spirit dwelling in you; it is a question of what is said in Philippians: "The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

Three things are stated as to the manna. First, I get it before I require it. Second, I get as much as I require. And third, I must gather it before the sun is up—before earthly influences affect me. The manna, as we have seen, is Christ as He walked down here. Now He is glorified at God's right hand; but what He reproduces in me, is that which He was upon earth. So the apostle speaks of "the

life of *Jesus*," though he never saw Him on earth. But he wants it reproduced here. I do not see that the sealing of the Holy Ghost is, in itself, simply power; but He brings out what is Christ in me, and, when that is wrought out, it is power. "Without me ye can do nothing."

Well, they gathered it every day. I do not hold that a day here is twenty-four hours, but that it is every separate event. Many a person may read and pray every morning, and yet not get manna. Manna is the sense in the soul that Christ is sufficient for every exigency in the day. For instance, suppose I began business forty years ago, I might have done so with the sense that Christ would be sufficient for every exigency that might occur. If a man knows there is bread in the cupboard, he does not want to go to the baker's shop for it. In the boat Jesus said to His disciples when there was no bread, *I am here*. And I believe no soul really knows what the church is who has not been in that boat. It is the step that leads you to the Rock, to the new ground on which the church of God is built. Your soul has learnt this wonderful thing, what it is to be with Him alone in the ship where there is no bread.

And it is blessed that it should be so. Suppose you are going to see a sick person, and,

before going, pray that you may be useful, probably you will not be ; but, if you seek the Lord *Himself*, you will be useful, for He is adequate for everything. It is marvellous the simplicity with which I acquire ! Do you suppose any great earthly person would say to me, If you *look* at me you shall have some of my greatness ? It is just as with a mirror ; there is nothing in it, but I take it up to an object and immediately it receives it.

And just the same as to peace. The moment I make my wants known to God I have peace. I may go a dozen times before I really do it, but, as surely as I do, I get His peace. Were you more devoted than usual to get such a favour ? No ! I was very small ; I was indeed more perturbed than usual, more worried, but I went to Him with all my troubles, and I came away a surprise to myself, to see what God could do in such a poor creature, in such a world too as this.

“ When the sun waxed hot it melted.” Many a man fritters away his grace by talking of what he is going to do. If a man only comes down to his own table, and talks of what he is going to do, he is bringing the manna out into the sun, he is frittering it all away.

It is wonderful to see how low the manna comes to suit us. It is wonderful to think of the Lord in His daily life ; in the compass of

a man, that wonderful One! First an infant of days, then a child, then a young man going into business; and man trying to write of it! How paltry all his thoughts of such a One! It is not what man in his poor ken can measure, but what He was in the sight of God.

People are often put in straits, but I believe that, where there is walking with God, there is always this confidence, that, whatever meets me, the Lord is adequate. As has been said, the Lord, coming straight down from the glory, can pay the taxes. The man of real spiritual power can pass with evenness from divine things to the smallest detail of domestic life. Some people are so stilted that they cannot come down to little details of life at all; but I do not believe that such are spiritual.

I make one remark about the Spirit, and that is, that He always carries me beyond myself. The same is true of an evil spirit. A person often says, "I went further than I intended." Than *who* intended, I ask? Judas never intended to implicate Christ's life. So, when John begins to speak of spirits, he says, "Try the spirits."

We now go on to Ex. xvii., where we find the enemy of the wilderness. The enemy in Egypt is Pharoah. In the world, Satan says, You shall be so overwhelmed with cares that you shall not be able to do anything. But now I

get into the wilderness, and there I find Amalek. I pass on out of the wilderness, and there is Balaam. And then in the land there are wicked spirits. It is all one battery, but with guns of a different calibre. And I will say this, that though the enemies are greater as we go on, the power is greater too, and a power that is greater than a difficulty makes nothing of the difficulty. In the land *I* am the aggressor; in the wilderness it is *Amalek* that is. Where is the man that has set out to be for God in the wilderness, who does not find some plot laid for him?

I will give you an illustration of what Amalek is. Jesus says to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Satan got Judas, and then he laid a snare for Peter. What we have to meet Amalek with is, on one side, the priesthood of Christ, which is Hebrews; on the other, "Resist the devil," which is Peter. Peter himself had the first, but he had not the second. Priesthood never fails; but ours is a very different Priest to what a priest in Christendom is. Man sets up a priest to bring him to God; God's Priest is exactly the other way; He brings grace from God to us. And He is able to meet us and to succour us, for He has gone the road Himself before us.

And He says to me: If an enemy attack you on the road I will defend you; but for me to do this, you must be in my Spirit; you must resist the devil; you must use my grace actively.

Thus I am going through the wilderness. All my time on earth I am in the wilderness; and, though there be grace for every day, there are also peculiar trials, and the enemy also each day. Thus patience is to have its perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

(J. B. S.)

Priesthood is that I *may* behave well. Advocacy is when I do *not* behave well. Priesthood keeps my heart in constant dependence in my walk. Its exercise is that I may *not* go wrong. Advocacy is when I *have* gone wrong.

(J. N. D.)

THE WILL CURBED.

JAMES i.

I am sure we have all felt deeply that word of our brother's touching our selfishness; that, if our selfishness were out of the way, our path through this scene would be a very different one.

I have read this passage from an Epistle which insists in a marked way on the curbing of the will, and the submitting ourselves to God as the only way by which we are enabled to "Count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations." It looks at the world from God's stand point, brings us into it from God and for God, and fits us for it by curbing our will. God, above, the source of every good and perfect gift; man's heart, the source of corruption, Matt. xv. 19. It is very humbling to see how little we know practically of this one verse (James i, 2.).

If we come into the world feeling what sin has done, if we come into it from God, we can give an arm to the fatherless, and in the same way comfort the widow who has been deprived through sin and death of her stay. But, to do this, our selfishness must be got rid of; then only can we be here for God and with Him.

There are two classes of temptation spoken

of: one, the believer is to count it all joy when he falls into it; in the other he is tempted by his own lusts and drawn away. In prayer one desires that one's conscience should be so clear before God that we can look to Him with certainty to be for us in that only in which He *can* be for, and not in that which He must resist; leave God, if I may say so, free to come in and help us. When James speaks of asking and having not, he says; "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." In prayer, have we the sense that what we are asking of Him is entirely for Himself?—is *bona fide* for God? We are enabled to count it all joy to fall into the trials that we meet in *thus* going through the wilderness.

It is not the trying of our *temper*, it is not the trying of our *patience*; it is the trying of our *faith*. And it is the one who is going on right with God who meets these trials of faith which bring out the need of curbing the will. Do not try to get out of them. Do not try to escape them. I want God to come in; I want to "let patience have her perfect work." If we are seeking to carry out what has been pressed upon us, instead of trying to run away from the thing that is trying and troubling us, we are able to be in it for God, at leisure from ourselves.

How often you and I have broken our hearts over our selfishness and its effects upon others; but there is a place where we get even a worse estimate of it than any that we can form from our own failures, and that is in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see there what it cost Him; we see there how much was needed, to deliver us from its present power and from the eternal consequences of going on in it.

Then we read of a man looking in the glass, and going away and straightway forgetting what manner of man he is; but, in contrast with this, is the continuing in the perfect law of liberty. James insists on the liberty, but for what? To have my own will? No, but, liberty to have *no* will but God's. That is James' liberty; all else is bondage. How much our hearts know of this bondage, how little of this liberty! and truly humbling it is, and we are without excuse; for we know that Satan gets the advantage over us only through the working of this will of ours; *while* it is curbed, and we wait on God, the malice of the enemy is powerless to hurt, and our walk is the practical expression of what I John v. 18. says abstractly of us: "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." But the ways of God in bringing us into this liberty, and the provisions of His grace for our walk in it, are not the subject of this Epistle.

The simple test for our hearts as to what they are set upon is: Am I desiring and seeking to obtain this because the Lord has put His finger on it for me? It is one thing to set my heart on an object and then to ask the Lord to get it for me; quite another to seek His help in obtaining that which has been presented to me in communion with Him.

He *forms, energises, and satisfies* the desires of the true heart: "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." We feel how such truth cuts us, but it is blessed that it should. The grace that deals thus with us invites our submission, having won our confidence. In the Lord's desires for *me*, there is nothing lacking—nothing left for me to supply. What is not found *there*, and may be found in my heart, is not good, and His grace has often to allow us to learn this by the leanness in soul which accompanies its possession. Thus walking "we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust," and the "divers temptations" become occasions of blessing, and grace gets spoil from them for God.

But how sweet to consider Him of whom the volume of the book testified that He came to do His Father's will—yea, delighted in it. In Him the Father was well pleased: He did always those things that pleased Him. In

Him the prince of this world had nothing, but found in Him a dependent and confiding man, who lived by every word of God, whose perfect will could say in Gethsemane, "Not my will but thine be done." "Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put my trust," marked each step. He could bind and destroy the strong man, and now has left us to triumph in His triumphs; and, though we see not yet all things put under Him, we read in that crown God's answer to the path of the dependent and obedient One, and seek grace to be imitators of God as dear children, and to walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.

(J. B.)

You cannot separate power from the state of the person; you must be near God to have power. He will not allow the effectual activity of Christians to be independent of their spiritual state.

(J. N. D.)

THE NEED MET.

PHILIPPIANS i. 9-11.

I HAVE read these verses more particularly, because I think they show us the difference that there is between the Old Testament and the New, in this matter that we have been considering.

When God was leading the children of Israel out of Egypt into Canaan, He elected the circumstances to suit the people; but when we come to the Epistles, we find He elects the man to suit Himself. It will occur to all of us, who are familiar with the Philippians (see chap. ii. 6; 7, 8), that it is so. In the Old Testament there is no such opportunity for God. True, He opened the heavens and fed them, but He suited Himself to what *they* were, and wanted. He fed them even with angel's food, and He clave the rock, and gave them drink; there was not an old shoe in their midst, not a foot that was weary; He took care of them in all that was external. But that is man as he is in himself only; it is a people passing through the world as a wilderness, in which God sustains them in sovereign goodness.

But now all is changed. And what is the change? We have a *heavenly* man, when Christ comes in. And as I think of *this*, I

dare not take a step, were it not that the very beginning of the Philippians tell me, "He who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." What a blessed assurance for us, who are His!

In connection with what has been said as to Elijah and Elisha, suppose I take that story out of type, as God will soon take everything out of type, and as we all love to do *now*, and read it in the light of the Acts. In Acts I see the One go away whom I love; and I say He is "departed," and God has called me to be here in this world, a representative of the One who has gone, in the power of the Holy Ghost who has come. I am called to trust and live in all the sufficiency of God for a new object: "To me to live is Christ." God has come out to glorify Himself in the most wonderful way: He says, I will make you as like the glorified Man as I can, even while down here. In chap. ii. we get how this power works itself out in a man, "For it is *God*, which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." It is this that we must look at. In chap. i. I get, besides this, the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and God working in Paul. And then he says: Do not pray me out of prison; everything "abounds"; pray for me, but do not pray me out. And the effect of your prayer will be, that I shall, through the supply of the

Spirit of Christ, be able to glorify Him exactly where I am.

You get the same in Acts, where the "prison" history is so wonderful. Satan does his worst against the disciples of Christ, at "the right hand of God"; and then an angel of the Lord delivers them, or else prison doors open of themselves, and out they come. Or, if Paul and Silas are there, it serves only as an occasion to express the melody of their hearts, the more brightly at midnight.

As to setting aside self, we start from the fact that God has done it in the death of Christ; and then, I think, in the Philippians we have to take part with the indwelling Spirit in mortifying its members. We must, in that way, keep pace with the revelation of God, as we said when conversing on the Romans. Look at a Philippian. What a wonderful man! Christ has left a vacant place for "His own" on earth, just because He has gone to heaven, and now what place can the Father's love put us into? Surely into none but His! Well, in Philip-pians we *have* the mind of Christ, and the pattern of Christ, as to what a heavenly man is.

It is not Solomon. God provided a man on earth up to that height, and said, There shall not be a man after you, that shall be like *you*. Well, then, we may say, Good-bye to the world, with its great men and all the great

cities; for there is nothing left open at all between God and you. "What can the man do, that cometh after the king?" God has not left it to the nineteenth century man to settle things. The cross of Christ settled them, and what a settlement too, if I look on to the coming of the Lord! We may talk of the cross, and, thank God, it is the foundation of everything, but to think of Him as putting down all oppression, and reconciling the whole world to God! Majesty, dominion, power, and might, He says, I will put it all into connection with myself as the Son of man, and with Him—lay it all at the feet of Him who created it, that God, and none but God, may have his full sway and purpose, and finally "be all in all."

Now where are *we* upon this earth, in view of this? And if it be a puzzle as to *where* we are, it is really because we do not know *what* we are. I look at this man in Philippians—a man upon the earth; and I say, It is marvellous! If I look at Paul, he is tossed about after a new pattern; for the wilderness of Israel's history does not measure Christian suffering. When Christ came in, there was a new measure: "If we suffer with *Him*." It is extreme, truly; but all that is extreme below only calls out what God is above in His sufficiency. If there be the need here, it is

met according "to the riches in glory, by Christ Jesus," of my God up there. What an opportunity for God! A man upon the earth says, "My God shall supply all your need." How? According to *your need*? Not at all! But "according to his riches in glory." And now, I ask, who would not be encouraged to go into the need? What an encouragement to accept the pathway that Christ Himself trod—to go into it led by the Holy Ghost, and to be in it like Christ, and with Christ, strengthened in the inner man, because with Christ in a totally different way to saints in Old Testament times.

For the coming in of Christ made a change in everything, not merely in the first man himself and the bringing in of a new creation, but I get the Son of God gone up, and the Holy Ghost come down, to witness to the One who has departed to the Father. If He do not witness to me, I do not see Him who is gone; and, if I do not see Him, I cannot display Him in the place where He is not. We have the new pattern of this "second" Man upon earth, who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but who made himself of no reputation." How walk with such an one as this? I must have His life. He emptied Himself, took upon Him the form of a servant, and then went down by obedience into death, to destroy the power of the devil. He overcame all that had

to be overcome. At the cross there is nothing left but the ashes of the sacrifice, under the judgment of God for sin, and in the grave there is nothing left but the linen clothes. At the cross of Christ everything wound itself up; everything came to a crisis, followed by the light of resurrection and eternal glory.

In chap. iv. 10, Paul is again like Elijah. It might not have been thought creditable for such an one as the prophet of Jehovah to be fed by a raven. It certainly was not to any who judged after the flesh, and yet what an assurance to Elijah! And just so this wonderful man in Philippians: "I rejoiced," he says, "in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again." It is, in principle, like Elijah and the ravens. When you take in the whole circle of the circumstances of the earth, sufferings with Christ, loss of all things here, desiring but one thing, and that to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, is not all that new? It is new in its nature; it is new in extent too. Who could take a step in the path had not God presented Himself as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and of all those who come out, and follow in His footsteps? What is earth to the apostle? It is just God's school-time of life and death, which he goes through in the Philippians. And has he got his ups

and downs? No, because he does not go into the circumstances to be ruled by them. He says, The ups and downs are just what God needs, that He may show out in me the power that can carry me through them as though all were smooth.

Nothing could so properly close such an Epistle as the way in which he looks at the whole world, faces "all the need" in it, and says, This need is but the opportunity for God supplying you; He wants it. We thus not only prove the sufficiency of God, but find that God reveals Himself in an entirely new way, according to the Man at His right hand in glory; so that we can go on with Him through all here that is contrary to us, and not be moved by it. "I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be content." This is the school in which the apostle graduates, and the only school in which those are who have the life and "mind of Christ."

It is on my mind to say a word *in contrast* with this Philippian state, and its need, by turning to "the time of need" in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In chap. iv. we

read: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Now it is because of this fact of "need," of which we have been hearing this morning, whether in the Old Testament, or in the New, that we want this High Priest. When He was upon earth Jesus could, and did, always meet their need. If they wanted bread He could give it them, and feed them by thousands: "Lacked ye anything?" But, where He *now* is on high, there is a link, on the other side of the dying love of Christ. Here I find this living love in "the great High Priest" that has proved itself by death. It is wonderful! I see the love on earth, the dying love; but I look up in Hebrews, and I see the living love of my living Lord. And I love to look up into the heavens, and I say, There is the loving Lord in His living love, and He has a *feeling* about my every infirmity. He is "*touched*." How in the Gospel narratives, He liked the touch of one poor thing and another; and if any say, I

cannot touch you now—No, He says, but *I* am touched about you. It may be kind of you to give a poor man half-a-crown, but you are not thereby necessarily touched at all about his feelings. It is relief to him, no doubt. But *here* I get one who is able to succour, and who *is* reached, and touched with such a feeling of my infirmities as none can have but Himself; and that comes to me from Him; and that not during a time of twenty-four hours, but through all “the time of need” till He comes again to take us into the glory.

Now I do not say this is like Philippians. It is not. That is forming and fashioning the man into what Christ on earth personally was; this is Christ as Priest, saying, I will go into an office of priestly intercession in the heavens for you—for you who need some one to enter into all your infirmities, and to sustain, and succour you in them. I will accept such an office for you, who are on your way to “the rest that remaineth for the people of God.” And this is part of Christianity. The people of Israel in olden time could not have got on without the grace of priesthood, for by means of it, the relations of Jehovah were witnessed and maintained for them in sovereign goodness, though in earthly connections, and in a worldly sanctuary.

When we come to the new order of our

standing, and relations in Christianity, we do well to observe, and with great carefulness, that priesthood is out of the question. In our church relations for example, we are the members of Christ, and are united to Him as "the head of the body," by the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

So likewise in our relations in life; as "the sons of God," with the Father and the Son of His love, by the Spirit of adoption, how can there be any place for a priest? Indeed, this contrast is maintained by Jesus, with "His own" who are in the world, by the words He spoke in John xvi. 26: "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father *for you*, for the Father himself loveth you." There can be no room for priesthood in order to maintain relations and intimacies such as these. So likewise in our worship of the Father, by the Son of His own love.

Nevertheless, as a people on their way to God, we have a High Priest passed into the heavens, the Son of God Himself. And being now called with "a heavenly calling" we must need have a Priest higher than the calling (Hebrews vii. 26, 27, 28.) But be sure not to confound the heavenly calling of Hebrews with the session and sitting "in the heavenly places" of Ephesians, or with Christ as the Head of His body, the church.

Of course there is much more in this passage, but, in this limited view of it, I get Christ, touched with our feelings, and who in grace accepts an office for us. Besides what is relative and personal to God and to man, to heaven and to earth, He accepts an office, lives on the "right hand of the Majesty on high," to make intercession for us, is able to succour us in every time of need, and enters more largely than any of us can into all our feelings; takes us up and ministers to us, so that we have to thank Him for the succour that He gives in the consciousness of His grace.

May God give us "the mind of Christ" in order to be Philippians. I do not want you to be limited to this Epistle to the Hebrews, though the personal glory of Christ, as our Priest, be its subject; nor do I want to be a Hebrew myself; but this great High Priesthood belongs to Christianity, to us who are "partakers of the heavenly calling," and we may thank God that it does: and this Epistle teaches it. Still may the Lord help us, to not only look to Him as the One who can succour us in need, and be touched with our infirmities, as our Priest, but to know God as "*My God*," who, in another circle, supplies it all "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." As the blessed counterpart of this power that worketh in us, "may the peace of God, that

passeth all understanding, keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

(J. E. B.)

God looks for *might* now, not in doing, but in suffering; as one of our poets has said in prose, "The irresistible might of nothingness;" to take scorn in a day when not only man but Christendom has departed from God. There is no triumph so great as that of suffering, when it is God's own people who have departed. Nothing gives such power to do and to suffer, as the certainty of what the will of the Lord is. We have all, as children of God, as bright, and brighter, opportunities still for victory as had any who have gone before us. Oh may we win victories! The only victory He values is one won under the shadow and in the power of the cross.

(J. N. D.)

THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD AND THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD.

1 PETER ii. 5-9.

It is of great importance that we should understand what is due to God and to man; I might say what it is to be *responsible* to God and *responsible* to man. Some do not like the word, as being too legal, but I do not object to it. There is a holy priesthood, that is to God; and there is a royal priesthood; that is to man.

Peter never speaks of the body; it is the house; and in Hebrews we get the same side of truth: fellows of the Holy Ghost, and tasting of the heavenly gift. We have greatly lost the fact of the wondrous power and manifestation of the Holy Ghost present in the house. Have you a grave sense in your soul that the Holy Ghost is here? I do not mean Christ in the midst. It is brought out very definitely in 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. It is not the Holy Ghost Himself there; it is the activity of the Holy Ghost. The word there translated "unlearned" is *layman*, thus proving that all the rest are *priests*. The man comes in, is convinced, it does not say converted. And this explains that

very difficult passage in Heb. vi. He is judged, the secrets of his heart are made manifest by the power of the Holy Ghost, and he falls down and acknowledges that "God is in *you*," not in *himself*. The Holy Ghost is acting on the man. We sometimes lose this fact in the gathered company; I do not say the assembly, because I wish to distinguish between the house and the body. All who profess form the house, those who join the table the body. At first all professing came up to the table. Satan's great effort is to keep saints from getting to the right place. The place is everything with a good churchman; he is always trying to get a man to church. On the other hand a dissenter proper has no thought of the place: he has a vague thought of the body; membership is his aim; but it is membership of a *congregation*.

But whilst, on one hand, there is a forgetting of the presence of the Holy Ghost, there is sometimes, I fear, on the other hand, a kind of superstitious feeling, a certain sense when entering a meeting room such as you find in Christendom generally; a sort of feeling that the place itself is sacred, even when there is no activity going on. I need not say that none of us hold this in theory, though sometimes it may be dropped into a little. Getting in early so as to collect oneself is very nice, but some-

times people overstep that. However there should be the sense that the presence of the Holy Ghost is there.

And now a plain question: What do you go to the meeting for? I find in Peter that the saints are "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

Now if I turn to the Old Testament I find there a very simple thing: that no person was to appear empty before the Lord. It would not have done for anyone coming before the temple to be asked, Well, have you not a lamb? No. Not even a pigeon? No. They were not to come empty handed, neither were they to offer to the Lord that which cost them nothing. Now what is this to me? It is that I am to bring up something of the preciousness of Christ to offer to God. I am not doing anything visible, but I have, as it were, one or more senses of Christ in what He is before God in my heart. Instead of this the thought generally is that I am to hear something which will stir me up to worship, which is right in its place, but that is not meant here.

Look at Lev. vii. The priest's part of the sin offering is so great that I have not come up fully to its meaning. I pass on to v. 8. "The priest that offereth any man's burnt offering, even the priest shall have to himself the skin

of the burnt offering which he hath offered." Here we have both the holy and the royal priesthood. He is first so occupied with the burnt offering, with Christ in the presence of God as wholly offered up to Him, that he can come out in a new style to man. I go to a meeting, and what do I dwell on? My heart is delighting in what Christ is to God. And what have I as the result of this? I have the skin. What is that? Well, it is the outside colour, the beauty, if you like, of the animal. Just as Moses came down from the mountain and his face shone, so I have got near God, delighting in what Christ is to Him, and now I come down to man and I have the skin.

It is not because of my *devotedness*. There is a reward for devotedness, and I am not making little of it, would to God there were more; but people do not get on, and the reason is that *they will not give up*. There are two ways of getting: the one is being a poor widow; I have nothing, and so I get: the other is giving up what I have; then I get "manifold more." It is not by service that I acquire the skin, though service has its own reward. "If any man serve me, him shall my Father honour." But this is not either reward for devotedness or for service. It is priesthood; it is because of being occupied with Christ before God; it is that blessed thing which is only known to the soul

when it is entranced with the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then he gets some of it ; he does not get it all ; he gets the skin—the beauty of the precious One that he delights in. I am not only captivated with that beauty, but I get a part of it myself. Just as children who love their parents get to do things like them, thus I have got so near to that blessed One that I have caught something of His likeness, and now I can come out from Him to show forth the virtues of Him who hath called me out of darkness into His marvellous light. How different would our meetings be did we thus come together as a holy priesthood and a royal priesthood !

Then in v. 33 : “ He that offereth the blood of the peace offerings, and the fat, shall have the right shoulder for his part.” How do I get it ? By looking ; by drawing near : “ Set your affection on things above ;” and that not only on things there, but “ where *Christ* sitteth on the right hand of God.” I am priestly in my action, and now what is the effect ? I have the right shoulder, I am participating in that which Christ is ; and, having participated in Him, I now come down to be an expression of what He Himself was here.

The apostle says “ That *Christ* may be my gain.” It is not that I want to be an amiable man, but that I want to be Christ. He says,

I had once a great many things here to boast of, but I do not want them now : I have suffered the loss of all things ; it is not only giving up certain things in themselves, but I count *all* things but rubbish that Christ may be my gain. Surely such words should touch every heart ! There is nothing delights the heart more than love ; there is nothing so dignifies the heart as loving an object worthy of itself ; what then can so dignify me as loving this blessed Object of God Himself ? I do not believe there is ever progress where there is not personal affection to Christ. It is not merely the Jonathan character : a Jonathan loves David for what he has *done* for him ; but Ruth loves Naomi for what she *is*.

If I really love Him I shall be like Him : I never admire anything without desiring to be like it. But here I am not an imitation merely ; I get a part ; yet I am not in power like Him. When Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus he never did it with the equanimity that Christ did ; so, when it comes to be the consecration, I find that I do not get the right shoulder ; it is heaved up, and I feed upon the left ; for I never can be like Him, though I do get here the right as my part. Is there a heart present that does not say, Would that I had more of it !

I turn now to Phil. iv. I do not know anything that spoils our prayer meetings more

than people coming to them burdened with their own needs. I sometimes go saying to myself, "I cannot pray to-night; I am too much pressed; I must wait till I am clear." If my interests interest the saints, that is another thing. I may have a sick child that I may ask the assembly to pray for, but I myself should not be the individual to do it, for I must lose my individuality in the assembly.

"Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Here it is put in the simplest way. Though I am clear with God in chap. 3., I am not always clear with man in my own circumstances. God says to me, You are clear of everything this way; now go down and make all clear that way. As to man, be yielding: "Let your moderation be *known* unto all men." If a man wishes to push me off the flags, I say, Very well, push me off. I do not proclaim it, but this is the character of my action; I make no secret of it. In the next verse I do *make known* unto God; I studiously, pertinaciously, do it, until I know that I have told Him.

Now if I am not priestly I cannot do this. If I am not in the full sense of acceptance with God, I cannot get near at all. I believe there is nothing in the present day like prayer. Nine tenths of the troubles in the assemblies come

from there not being prayer. There has been *effort*, and that is not prayer. When Samuel cried to the Lord he offered up a sucking lamb; that is he was accepted; and, as soon as he has done it, the Philistines are upon him. Then God interferes. He thunders. He may not use me in answering my prayers; I ask Him to convert my child, and He gets some one else to be the channel of it. Prayer is the great thing. Whatever the difficulty, you will be carried through, if you have started there with God. It would take away a wonderful deal of distraction, if saints looked to be provided with the needful grace before the emergency came.

As I have touched on the subject of prayer I must just turn to one passage before leaving it. It is Ps. cvii., which is for the remnant, but it includes every class of trial that man can be in. And what is the one remedy? *Cry!* Look at this Psalm. The first we read of is hungry and thirsty, his soul fainting in him. There is no sin there. And what does he do? "They cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses." How does he get the deliverance? By fretting? By roaming up and down? No, but by *crying*. The second has done his own will, and he is reaping the fruits of it. There is a difference between a perverse person and

a careless one. The careless person gets into depression; he will not go on, so he slips out of the activities of life. But here there is despising the counsel of God, and you get down to the depths; it is exposure. What is to be done? *Cry?* The third is transgression. You cannot be worse than this. And what can I do? Wonderful! I never can sink so low in the mire and sin of this wretched world but that God will deliver me from it if I cry! The fourth is a man who has got entangled with things here. Have you gone into business, have you done *anything without God?* Then you will come to your wits end. But what am I to do when I do? *Cry!* and He will bring you to the desired haven. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." And which of us has not tasted this loving kindness?

However, to return to Philippians. None of us need ever be discouraged about what we pray for. It is just when we least expect it that God comes in: "The darkest hour is the hour before dawn." And why? To prove to us that it is all of God. The great point in our education as we go on is: "Hitherto hath *the Lord* helped us." "Let your requests be made known unto God." I want to know that I have *told* Him. He may say, as **we**

do to our children, I will see to it. But very often He will do the desired thing and you may not know that he has done it; for it is not your words that He acts by, but the intention of the Spirit in the words that you say. I believe that He gives us everything that we value, not in this world's things, but in divine things. If He did not, you would be better than He, and your aspirations greater than His. So I go, a poor heartstricken, woe begone one, into His presence, to tell out the groans of a broken heart. Truly poor things to hear! But it is not the *hearing*, it is the *telling of it out* to Him that is the point. And the result is, I come out from Him with the peace of God Himself. My circumstances are no better than they were, but I can now be unperturbed, unruffled in the midst of all the trouble: thus I show forth the virtues of Him, who hath called me out of darkness into His marvellous light.

Again, as "we behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory." If there is any one thing that strikes me more than another in the present day, it is the amount of spiritual information that there is without formation. If I really come to Him I get the mark of Himself upon me. Like a mirror held up to Him I get His reflection, and

thus am formed into the likeness of His glory. When the Lord walked to Emmaus with the two disciples, what wonderful information He gave them. Have you not often longed to have been there? But see how little it formed them. You always discover a man's power in his act. If you want to find out what a man is, ask him to *do* something. I have felt at times afraid to act; I have felt that if I did I should make a blunder. I believe that acting at such times accounts for many of the mistakes a man makes, even in his business, because "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own devices"; a man who is away from God is off the line about everything. But, with these two, when the Lord is known of them in breaking of bread, immediately they are formed; action comes out. They go the same way that He does. As they were communicating to the others the instruction they had received from Him, He comes into their midst.

But many a one reads the word without connecting it with the One who is the model. Many saints are like branches torn from a beautiful hawthorn tree; they look all fair for the moment, but they soon fade away. I say, Leave the branch on the tree. "Abide in me," then there will be growth and power. As you behold Him you are transformed. Many a saint has the metal, but has not the mould in which it is

to be cast. Of course every figure falls short, but I account for the state of many who have got much scriptural knowledge but who yet make no progress, that they have never got near to the model after which they are to be fashioned—not yet got the mould in which to cast the metal. I am confident that, if you do not connect your knowledge of Scripture with the One who is the impersonation of it, you never can be an exponent of Him here.

For instance, how many are well acquainted with Scripture who have never yet even found the spot where Christ meets His people on earth. To such I say, It is not too late to go to Jerusalem. The two disciples are a pattern to us. Having learned of Christ they go direct to the very spot where He would have them be; they bring with them a fresh supply of knowledge; and, as they are telling it out, as Luke beautifully says, “Jesus stood in the midst of *them*.” Down on this very earth where Christ was crucified, Christ the Son of the Father, I get the presence of that blessed One, get Him standing in the midst of His own, telling out to them all the blessedness in which He puts them before His God and Father.

The Lord grant that we know more distinctly what it is to meet together as the holy priesthood; then we shall better know what it is to show forth the royal priesthood upon earth.

(J. B. S.)

“THE THINGS THAT ARE FREELY
GIVEN TO US OF GOD.”

1 COR. II. 12.

Two principles are commonly found working on human lines of action : first, that a man may be known by what he values ; and second, that what he values he acquires. The same principles hold good among saints. In proportion as I appreciate divine things am I controlled by them, and the higher my estimation of them the more am I bent on their acquisition ; in result, “the soul of the diligent shall be made fat” (Prov. xiii. 4.).

Every spiritual taste is a divinely given thing, and belongs in its very essence to the new creation. It has its own legitimate field of exercise and enjoyment, and the more I cultivate it, the more I give evidence that I belong to that new order of things of which it forms part. And, as in human things, when a man's taste changes he loses the appreciation of pursuits he once valued, so, in those things which are divine, unless we preserve and cultivate the tastes which through mercy we have acquired, we lose the sense of value which eternal realities before had to our hearts, and

we sink into spiritual pauperism, a condition which is, alas! not more painful than frequent.

Surely no one walking with God can fail to be sadly impressed, when visiting saints, by these often-recurring instances of a lack-lustre state of soul which indicates religious beggary; a ready enough assent being given to anything said about Christ, and the believer's portion in Him, but yet so given as to create the most discouraging conviction as to practical condition. These souls are the most difficult and unsatisfactory to deal with, and their influence is seriously damaging to the testimony we make. For as a well-made mirror gives a true definition of its object, while a poor one only presents us with a hideous distortion; and as a good portrait, though but a portrait, is valued because it reproduces and commends its original; so do we, although human copies of a divine person, either truly portray and commend Him, or otherwise produce a mere travesty, dishonouring to His name and character by the poverty and feebleness of its conception.

Now God in His precious grace has not simply opened to us infinite resources for faith to draw upon, but, by the Holy Ghost, He seeks to conduct our souls into an ever-deepening appreciation of their intrinsic and extrinsic value, that we may be moulded by them as men in Christ, to whom He "is all" (literally,

“everything”), as well as “in all” (Col. iii. 2.).

And there is this difference, that, while every earthly acquisition is generally less valued when possessed than before, the Holy Ghost when ungrieved and unhindered, leads our souls to discover in divine things such fresh and varied charms, that they are increasingly appreciated, growingly enjoyed, and more and more tenaciously grasped. But if, on the contrary, my spiritual tastes get perverted by the world and its attractions, or by the cares and anxieties of this life clogging their exercise, that, which the Holy Ghost had once endeared to my soul as of priceless value, continues to receive an unqualified mental assent, yet as heartless and superficial as it was once cordial and profound.

Persons in this state of soul sink in many cases into mere formalism, being generally found at the breaking of bread (mistakenly regarding its observance as a command to be obeyed), and but seldom, if ever, seen at week-meetings. How little have they understood that it is a real joy to the heart of Christ to gather His saints together around Himself, as a shepherd doth his sheep! How little have they entered into the delight of the Father in blessing His children! How little know they of “the things that are freely given to us of God!”

Such souls gradually surrender the power of faith, or cease to exert it, in conquering hin-

drances to practical fellowship, speaking of their difficulties in a way bordering on fatalism, and as though they were martyred to the insurmountable! They lose sight of the fact, that faith and love are fertile in inventions for accomplishing fervently-desired ends, and they lapse into submission to circumstances (another thing altogether to subjection to God), taking shelter in the subterfuge that the Lord gives them His presence just the same, and the Holy Ghost unfolds the word to them just as much at home as at the meetings.

It ought not to be necessary to say, that no fallacy can be greater than that God puts a premium upon negligence, or that Christ can sanction our under-valuing the assembling of ourselves together. That in the exigencies of His saints the Lord comes in to succour, and gives a comforting sense of His presence out of consideration to their need, in an incidental way; as well, also, as in the general sense He never leaves nor forsakes them, is unquestionable; and it is equally true, that those, who from personal love to Him keep His word, have precious individual experiences of His presence to their souls (John xiv. 23.). But nothing of this is at all comparable with the joint or corporate realization of His promised presence in the assembly of God, as made known to those who have responded to the

action of His Spirit in gathering together His saints around Himself. Nor can even the best instructed of His servants, or the most devoted, or the most gifted, count upon the activity of the Holy Ghost in opening up the word to the understanding or the heart in private; as He is pleased to do when the saints are found together for edification. Our common and mutual blessing in fellowship, one with another, is what the Lord has ordained for us, and every departure from this principle, however we may deceive ourselves about it, involves (1) no less loss to our own souls than (2) dishonour to the Lord, and (3) discouragement to His true-hearted and earnest saints—three weighty considerations for the luke-warm and half-hearted.

As in the natural creation, by the goodness of God, the most essential and most valuable things, such as the light of the sun, pure air, and good water, are precisely those which are most widely diffused and most abundantly supplied; so does the same principle hold good in the new creation, where the most invaluable blessings, those in which the precious grace of God shines with the greatest lustre, are exactly those in which He has abounded towards us "freely." Being as invaluable as they are indispensable, they are, in the divine goodness, freely and abundantly bestowed for

faith to use and to enjoy. But it is only as we are impressed with the immeasurable magnitude and grandeur of the things given to us of God, that we discern the force and value of the connected word "freely."

The apostle says elsewhere, that when a child, he spoke, he felt, he reasoned as a child, and when he became a man, he put away childish things. There it was the natural advance, but here it is the spiritual; the contrast not being between childish things and those suited to a man but between man's things and those which are of God. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Then he adds, "Now we have received not the Spirit of the world," suited to man's things, "but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." The spirit of man, the spirit of the world, and man's things, belong to the same category, in a word, the old creation; the things of God, freely given to us of God, and made known to us by the Spirit of God, belong to the new creation. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." Here the point is, that it is only consistent after so great a gift, that every minor

thing in character with it should follow in its wake. The title and the estate must needs go together; we are both ennobled and enriched in "the creation of God."

"Let no man glory in men, for all things are yours," he says in another place; "things present or things to come; all are yours". Of "things present," good, bad, or indifferent, as men speak, he can say, "all things work together for good to them that love God." And of "things to come," he can say, "the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, he hath revealed unto us by his Spirit."

It is noteworthy how, in each of these Scriptures, the saints are characterised as *them that love God*. Connecting this with what we get in 1 John iv. 19, "we love him because he first loved us," it is clear that our love to Him is but the fitting response to His own first and precious love to us, and both the one and the other denote a peculiarly blessed and unique relation to God. This incomparable blessedness which *we* enjoy, deserves a fuller recognition than has generally been accorded to it. Let the reader reflect upon this, that the angelic creation, so far as we learn from Scripture, knows nothing of what it is to love or be loved of God, and neither was it experienced by man in innocence. But His typically-redeemed family were privileged to learn in the

wilderness that He had love in His blessed heart to man, and sought and valued man's love in return (Ex. xx. 6; Deut. vii. 7, 8.).

The apostle John bases our love to God upon two grounds. We love Him because we know Him (1 John iv. 7, 8), for it is impossible to have such a revelation of Himself to our hearts as we have, without loving Him; there being everything in Himself, as revealed by Christ the eternal Word, to inspire divine affection. Further, we love Him because by His primary love to us He has endeared Himself to our hearts, and started within us a spring of affection for eternity which finds its suited exercise, not only in responsive love to Himself, but in embracing within its range all those who are begotten of Him (1. John. iv. 19; v. i.).

How sweet to know that for us the "*beloved of God,*" whose love to Himself He delights both to cause and to encourage, He mingles the "all things" of the wilderness way so dexterously together, that only good can come out of them; as David says: "So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands." Psalm lxxviii. 72. And further, that He has so prepared our future portion as to be transcendentally beyond the natural eye's or ear's perception or human heart's conception; yet has both revealed it to us by His Spirit, and

has given us in the same Spirit the earnest thereof, enabling us to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

The heart that has learnt the grace of God in the person and work of Christ, loves to say "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" For eternal life, too, in the knowledge of the Father and the Son! For the word, also; the imperishable food of that imperishable life! For the Holy Ghost, the power for intelligent apprehension of the word, and the earnest of the future inheritance! For divine relationships formed in resurrection, and for union with Christ eternally established, Himself the daystar risen in our hearts, and the tree and water of life, for food and for refreshment! And, may we not add as sweetest dower of all, that ever-flowing and incomparable love of the Father's heart of which He said: "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me!"

Surely, these are among the things of which even now we can say, they are "*freely* given to us of God." They are the rich and substantial pledges of that wondrous and precious order and sphere of blessing, of which it is written, "All things have become new, and all things are of God."

Nor must we omit to note that the Spirit of God has through divine favour been received by us *in order* that we should know these

things which have been so freely given to us of God. Nor this only, but that they should be expressed in words not of human wisdom, but such as are Spirit-taught, these spiritual things being recognized as communicated *only by spiritual means* (see new trans.). And thus, without reflecting upon those who are "otherwise minded," knowing that "God shall reveal even this unto" them, it is worthy of serious consideration by the servants of God, whether having recourse to mere human ways of furthering the Lord's work, such as public notices, programmes of subjects, placards, posters, models, pictures, and the like, does not savour of the old creation rather than of the new. Whether they are among those things which have been "freely given to us of God," or among those spiritual means by which spiritual things are to be communicated. Whether they evince spiritual taste and divine acumen, and are worthy of our high commission as representing and serving Christ during His absence.

May He enable us to occupy for Him here (in deep humility, but with worshipping hearts) the wondrous elevation on which He has set us as having "the mind of Christ," not only as to present blessing and future glory, but as to the nature of service peculiarly gratifying to Himself.

W. R.

D.

“ MY THOUGHTS ARE NOT YOUR
THOUGHTS.”

2 CORINTHIANS xii. 1-10.

IT is an interesting fact that there are three instances in Scripture, two in the Old Testament and one in the new, of saints making requests to God earnestly, which God did not answer; three distinct instances of unanswered prayers; and these too, as I say, offered by His own beloved servants.

But, while He did not answer them in their way, He gave them, as He ever does, that which was better for them, and at the same time infinitely glorified Himself; and that is far beyond merely meeting our need. So that, whether it be desires of the heart that are expressed in His hearing, or unexpressed longings, His thought for us is to bless us according to the measure of His own glory and His affection for us the children of His love; and if He bless us according to this measure, are we not blessed? If God gives, He gives as God. It is not only One who hears and answers, but One who meets me after the desires of His own heart; and the love in which He has revealed Himself to us in Jesus Christ is the spring from which it all flows.

Let us look at the three instances to which

I refer. The first is Deut. iii. 23—27. “I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O, Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand; for what God is there in heaven or in earth that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? *I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.* But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me; and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes; for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.”

“*I besought the Lord:*” it is very remarkable; almost the very same words as those used by the apostle in the Epistle to the Corinthians. But his earnest prayer was not granted; the only answer was, “Speak no more unto me of this matter.” There was a double reason, no doubt, why His servant Moses should not cross the Jordan and enter the land of Canaan. Dispensationally the law could never bring the people of God, such as they were, into the rest of God; it remained for Joshua, the type of Christ in resurrection, to do this. And the moral reason, of course, every one is acquainted

with: "he spake unadvisedly with his lips." You may ask, How did God do a better thing for him than giving him his request, when He took him up to the top of Pisgah, instead of letting him go into the land, allowing him to see it all, which could only tantalize him? But do you not remember how in the New Testament we read, that, when the Lord Jesus Christ was seen on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses was seen there with Him; there he stood in the land; he saw it in company with Christ in glory, and was not that far better than if in Israel's days he had crossed the Jordan? He did not say one word about it now; he could only speak about Christ. He got a far better thing than his heart could have conceived or his lips uttered. And it is just the same principle with God and His people now.

The second instance is in 1 Kings xix. "And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a

juniper tree ; and he requested for himself that he might die ; and said, It is enough ; *now, O Lord, take away my life ;* for I am not better than my fathers.” Here we find Elijah, the servant of God, having lost all courage through the difficulties that connected themselves with the people of God, not his own difficulties. It is not trial in the world ; it is trial in the midst of God’s own people. And let me say affectionately, that nothing tests the saints of God like the troubles of the people of God ; people who can meet their own difficulties, are often overcome by difficulties connected with the testimony of the Lord, and give way before them. It is these that bring out the true strength of the heart. We can meet our own personal difficulties in the strength and power of God, but these try the heart in an *extraordinary* way. Whilst all was smooth with Elijah—whilst he could call for drought at one time and plenty at another—all went well ; but if a Jezebel come in and threaten to put the iron heel of oppression on him, why, then he goes to God and says, as many a man has done since, Take away my life ; I cannot go on. What a contrast is Elijah in the nineteenth chapter, to what he is in the eighteenth ! In the one he is a man remarkably above his circumstances ; he has neither chariot nor driver, but he has God, and everything under his feet in the power of God. In the other he

is exactly like a disappointed child; he goes under a juniper tree and prays that he may die. And does he die? God takes him up by a whirlwind into heaven—a chariot of fire and horses of fire! Nothing had ever entered into his heart like it! And when Moses stands on the Mount with the Lord Jesus, Elijah is there too. He, too, is in the land, and that in the scene of the glory of Christ, when He reaches the highest point that it is possible for a man to reach on earth. Thus both these petitions were set aside, and far more than that which was asked was given; they were answered according to God's thoughts about them.

And now in this passage of Corinthians, that we have read, God does not take the thorn away. Let us look at the chapter for a moment; there is in it a point or two most important for our souls. The first thing we find is, what is true of every Christian; every Christian is "a man in Christ." There is no such thing as a Christian not being a man in Christ; the moment I can say of one that he is a Christian, in the sense in which it is spoken of here, there is a man in Christ—a man who has entirely parted company with man in the flesh. Flesh and Spirit are contrasts; if I am in the flesh, I am not in Christ; if I am in Christ, I am not in the flesh. Of course if I be not watchful, and self-judged always, the flesh will get power over

me; but there is a great difference between being what is called overtaken by the flesh, and being a man in the flesh. As a man in Christ, I am in a new place altogether.

It is often treated in this way as if the cross of Christ does something to elevate the man. What a delusion! So far from the old nature being improved, the moment a person enters into the blessed relationship of a child of God the virulence of his old nature is ready to shew itself. Who are those most worried by Satan? No doubt Christians are, and that because they are in a place where they are out of his grasp, and where all he can do is to worry. Those who are in his power he ministers unto. So that instead of anything like a diminution of the virulence of that which is opposed to God in a Christian, Satan seeks by it more than ever to worry him just because he is out of his power. We must see the difference between standing in the old thing, and standing before God in a new condition in Christ. He refers to the time when they were in the flesh: “When we were in the flesh;” but now he says, “Ye are in the Spirit.” So it is “I know a man in Christ”—not I *knew*.

Observe he does not speak of himself as Paul; this is very blessed. If he has anything humiliating to say of himself, he speaks of Paul; he will say, “through a window in a basket I was let down by the wall;” there was nothing very elevating

to a man in that ; it was a humiliating position ; so he says " I." But the moment he comes to speak of that which is elevating, it is no more " I," it is " a man in Christ"—that which is true of every Christian. " I know a man in Christ."

After this he speaks of that which is not true of every Christian. Every Christian is a man in Christ, but every Christian is not " caught up into paradise." The first is the *real* state of every Christian, the last is the *possible* state of a Christian. None of us have been caught up as Paul was ; it was a distinct thing, peculiar to himself. And then he heard " words not possible for a man to utter." " Possible" is the word, not " lawful." He means to say, that as soon as he returned to the consciousness of being in the body, he found that he had no vehicle of communication so as to express the greatness of the things that he had witnessed. And so it is ; the deeper a thing is in our souls the greater the difficulty we find in speaking of it ; we cannot convey to another the sense, the impression, of that which we have got for ourselves. How difficult it is when we have received anything from God Himself to convey to another anything like what it is to our own heart.

This is one thing. And then comes another which brings out the watchful care of God for

His servant, and is most solemn to see. The blessed God, knowing that the flesh in Paul was just the same as before, his having been in the third heaven did not alter it in the least, it was there ready to rise on the first opportunity, anticipates the working of it. I do not know anything in Scripture which gives a greater idea of the preventive watchfulness of God. We all know that He restores our souls when we fail, but do we ever think of all the little things that occur in our daily life that He has prepared and arranged to the end we may *not* fail? It is "*lest* I should be exalted above measure," not bringing me back after failure, but preventing its occurrence. It was a grievous thing for Paul; a messenger of the devil. Who but the blessed God could use Satan against Satan? This very thorn, this messenger of Satan, took away from Satan the power to work upon Paul's flesh. Is it not a blessed thing to think that God can do it? We are very prone to use the language of the infidel—to say, This or that *happened* to me. Would it not be much more blessed to say, God sent me this or that? Is there not a sweetness about anything, however grievous, when I can say, My Father's hand in watchful love brought me this thorn? "There was *given* to me a thorn in the flesh;" it was not a crushing trial that happened to me; it was *a given mercy*.

Now the first thought with the apostle was, Could not I get out of this difficulty? Saints think if they could only get out of their circumstances. But do you not know that, if you did, you would take with you the nature that makes the circumstances in which you are so trying to you? That which makes your present ones so trying would soon make just as great difficulty in the new ones. Here the apostle goes to *God* to change his circumstances; we often change them for *ourselves*. He said, Take it away, Lord, three times. What a contrast between the thrice repeated prayer of the blessed One to His Father, ending with, "Not my will, but thine be done." It was the perfection of Christ to shrink from drinking that cup. Paul imperfect, feeble, prayed, Lord, change my circumstances. The answer came in this; Do you want me to put you in circumstances where you will not need my power? "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

To any pressed one here I would say, Would you take from God occasion for displaying His power in your weakness, and from yourself all opportunity for turning to and leaning upon that power? This is really the answer of God here. He says, I will not take away the thorn, but I will give you my power. It is not merely relief; it is that I am positively put in the

place of power at His own side. "My grace is sufficient;" weakness is the platform on which it displays itself: the thorn becomes the blessed occasion for Christ to show how His strength comes in. What a wonderful thing to move through the world leaning on the power of Christ! Such a poor wretched creature, if I go on at all, people can but say, What wonderful power to take such a one through! When did Jacob get the blessing? When he was crippled. He prepared for Esau, he prepared for every one save the mysterious One he was to meet, and who touched him in the hollow of his thigh, in the very place of his *natural strength*. And then he would not let Him go. I cling to the One who has withered me up, crippled me, so that he might have His place in my heart. Then it shows that it has done its work. He says, I glory in being crippled, I glory in being made nothing of, I glory in being broken down, I glory in my weakness. Why? "That the power of Christ may rest upon me"—may tabernacle over me.

Thus we get in the apostle an instance of the two great parts of Christianity; a man in Christ, man taken out of his old standing altogether, and then Christ in him manifested before the world. I, in Christ before God up there where He is, and Christ in me down here before the world.

Is it so with us? Or are we struggling against God's guidance? We often pray God to make us what He would have us, and then when He begins to answer we draw back. I do not think there is anything more unreal than we are in our prayers. We pray to be made like Christ and then are afraid of the way He will take to do it. I know it is often said, If I were to say such things, God would take everything away from me: He would strip me like a tree from stem to stern. Is *that* the thought you have of God? I tell you that He would not take away a single thing from you that would be good for you. It is in His heart to give you everything that He sees best. I know that I must get my motives, my springs, my ability from God. But God says, If you want to get spring, power, ability, everything from me, then I must set aside that which is contrary to it in your heart. The antidote to Christ in us is our own will, and God helps us practically to get rid of that. What a wonderful thing, that poor creatures such as we are, should be left here that the grace of Christ may be shown out in us as we pass through this world!

The Lord grant that His own Son may be displayed in us according to the power of His blessed Spirit for His Name's sake.

(W. T. T.)

“HE DWELT AMONG US.”

JOHN i. 14-18.

I HAVE read these verses to fix our minds on the person of the blessed Lord, the foundation of all our hopes. Through the Holy Ghost given to us we can say, though no man can see God at any time, yet, if we dwell in love, “God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us;” and this gives strength, and practical state of soul, and everything.

The point here is that He was *manifested*: not only that He was God, as at the beginning of the chapter, “the same yesterday, and today, and for ever,” but that He was made flesh. He was ever God’s delight, and *His* delight was with the sons of men; and so he became a man to bring men back to God. He became a man Himself, that all God’s goodness might be manifested in the evil of the world. God was here in all the sin and ruin and misery; in the midst of it “He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows,” dwelling “*amongst* us;” and we are right to speak of the sorrows because He speaks of them. We see Him in it all, and we get this blessed truth, that *God* has come into the midst of all the griefs and sorrows, bearing them far more than we.

I am not speaking of His death now, but of His life. As at the grave of Lazarus it was, “ Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” He was in this world just to express all that God is in the midst of it ; and that, not as He appeared for a moment to Abraham, or at Sinai to Moses, but He came and *dwelt*; it was a constantly living and moving in the midst of men. It is not as being in the midst of angels up there, but He came down here, in the midst of everything here, to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And when we think that that was God Himself, what a thought it is !

He came as the truth, and man rejected Him. Still that was part of the truth. But I get grace first, for grace brought Him into it, and He was *full* of it, as it says here. It is a wonderful thing that God should come down thus and sit beside me ; that God should thus come down in grace because I was in sorrow.

But there is another thing, and that is that we are in direct communication with Him : “ Of his fulness have all we received.” There is not a saint here that has not received, and is in that way in direct communication with, all the fulness of Christ. What a responsibility that is ! It is enough to humble me when I say, Here am I receiving from this infinite fulness of blessedness, I am receiving now, and

where is all this fulness of grace manifested in my ways? We have to seek to keep continually before us the remembrance, that, "of his fulness have all we received." There is not a saint here, I repeat, that is not thus in direct communication with all the fulness of Christ, that he may bring it out in all his ways.

But there is another truth connected with this: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father;" mind it is *is not was*, "He hath declared him." In knowing Him I know the Father, the Father in whose bosom He dwells. It is often said, "The only begotten Son left the bosom of the Father to come into the world." That is not it at all. He never left it. The bosom is the expression of all the nearness of affection, and in that He always was. All the delight that the Father has in Him He reveals to us. He makes us know what the Father is as He knows Him.

Then, besides that, I get that no one has seen God; but the One who is enjoying all the love that is in His bosom, He has made Him known. He says "My Father and your Father." That is through redemption. And the Holy Ghost is given to us that we may know Him. And, as another Scripture says, "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected

in us." It is still the Son as dwelling in the bosom of the Father, enjoying His love as He is, and declaring the Father as He knows Him Himself, who brings us into this blessed nearness and knowledge of the Father. What a place! I am sure it would make us feel how little we are, but it opens out the heart of God to us, and lets us feel that, if any how we are little, He is great, and He has brought Him near to us so that we might know it.

† † †

UNBELIEF is the root of all sin in Christians. What kept the children of Israel from entering into the promised land? Unbelief. They sent spies, for they thought their testimony would corroborate God's word to them. It is true the spies brought back a bunch of grapes so big that it took two of them to carry it; but, when a heart sends spies to corroborate God's word, a bunch of grapes is not enough to make a soul that is not true go into the land.

People may come and show you their grapes in proof of the goodness of that land, but you must go in and cut bunches for yourself. We are too fond of looking at other men's grapes.

On the other hand what a power to give character to my walk is oneness with Christ. If I am one with Him do you think I shall be picking up bits of cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop by the way? These all belong to the world. In the fourteenth of Leviticus the man who wanted them would have had to take them out of the bason in which was the blood of the bird that had been killed. This world has the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ upon it, and I am walking in the very scene in which He was rejected; not a single bit of mingling with it then can I allow; I can admit no thought of delight in the cedar, the scarlet, or the hyssop, whilst I seek to manifest Him below.

(J.B.)

I. CORINTHIANS.

It is interesting to notice the particular circumstances in which we find these Corinthians. They were an assembly highly favoured of God. Paul says : " I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ ; that in everything ye are enriched in him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge, so that ye come behind in no gift," and they were " called unto the fellowship of God's Son." It was not possible to get any higher than that. Everything that could be done was done for them on God's side. But on their own side they were not " dead to sin," as Romans says they should have been ; they did not walk in self-judgment.

The great subject of the Epistle is in v. 29 : " That no flesh should glory in his presence." The point, therefore, that he presses between these verses, 9 and 29, is the cross. It is " Christ crucified," and that not in connection with sin ; indeed, except in chap. xv., I do not remember that the word " sin " occurs in the Epistle ; but it is "*no flesh*" is to glory, hence he dwells upon the *cross* : " We preach Christ crucified."

They were seeking wisdom ; they sought a mental view of divine things. Wisdom was

the great desire of the Corinthians. Hence it is, If you would have the wisdom of *God* you must reach it through crucifixion. It is "Christ Jesus, who from God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. That, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in *the Lord*." If you seek divine wisdom, wisdom of God, *we* preach Christ crucified; and if you learn Christ crucified, you then learn that He is the wisdom of God. They were looking for wisdom without the cross. He proposes to them wisdom through the cross. So he puts wisdom the first on the list.

In chap. 2. he opens out the subject more fully: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Now this is a very large subject. It is "*Jesus Christ*." It is no longer a subject but a person. The great aspect of His ministry, the speciality of it is "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The more you dwell upon this, the greater you find it. If you try and describe Jesus Christ you will find what an immense subject is before your mind. When you think of the person of the Son of God, you are *lost*. But when you bring this person down to a certain practical point, then that is a speciality. And that is what Paul does here.

In verses 5 to 10, he contrasts man's wisdom and God's wisdom, beginning with the former. And then comes the great point of his argument. But, before touching on this, just a word in explanation of the state of the Corinthians.

There are three steps in Christian infancy. The first is that everything that was against me is cleared away from the eye of God by the work of Christ; not a thing has God against me; He has placed me in His favor. That is the Epistle to the Romans. The second is that the Holy Ghost has come down and united me to Christ in glory. This is the Epistle to the Corinthians. The apostle was not at Corinth between writing his first two Epistles to the assembly there. What he speaks of in the second Epistle he had taught them when there. The third step is, that I go back to the cross of Christ to get rid of, in myself, everything that hinders the life of Jesus in me. Many saints only get so far as the second step. They are like the children of Israel, who, when they came through the Red Sea, got a sense of perfect deliverance, but who, when they got to Marah, could not drink the bitter waters—those waters which only the tree, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, could sweeten. Do you bring the cross into your circumstances? If you do, your selfishness goes out, and they

become sweet to you. It was in this that the Corinthians had failed, they had not "suffered in the flesh."

The first point of the apostle's argument is, The wisdom of God cannot be reached by the natural mind. "Eye has not seen it." How then can you glory in the flesh? It cannot reach it. You will see a person in the first stage of infancy trying by his natural mind to grasp and be an expositor of the great things of God, and, as the result, failure comes in. They have "not entered into the heart of man, but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." It is the most conclusive argument. If I cannot grasp the truth of God with the natural mind, then the natural mind is of no avail here.

The first point then is, that the natural mind cannot grasp God's wisdom (chap. 3.); and the second, that if the material be not divine, the fire of God will consume it. Take care what you bring into the church. Let the builders see to it what they do. If anything of the flesh be brought into God's building, the day will destroy it. That carnal thing that is brought into the building, it will not stand the fire. I, as a builder, may bring in that which is not sound; if so, it will come to nought. If it be not divine work it will not stand the fire.

In chap. 4, the ministry itself is of God, and man only to be thought of as coming from God.

If the ministry be of God, all those who are fruits of that ministry ought to be in keeping with it. But, says the apostle to the Corinthians, you are the very opposite of this; in plain language, you are not a bit like your father; not at all like us; you are full, you are rich; God has set forth us, the apostles, as it were appointed to death. "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honorable, but we are despised." "I beseech you, be ye followers of me." That they had not been. They were not like the stewards of the mysteries of God. Contrast yourselves with those that brought you the truth. See what you have got to through allowing the flesh to work. *What they had lost by not bringing in the cross upon the flesh, by not going on to the third stage of Christian infancy: not only being clear before God, not only united to Christ by the Holy Ghost, but arming themselves with the same mind (see 1 Peter iv.).*

In chap. 5. he turns to another side: how their moral sense of what is due to God's house is lost. To show them how this sense had declined, he is actually obliged to give them a list of the people from whom they must separate (v. 11.). Their moral sense had become so blunt through not judging the flesh, that they were content to go on in association

with such. But if Christ has borne the judgment of the flesh, the flesh cannot be tolerated. The body really is to be the exponent here of the life of Christ; this body that used to be the exhibition of all the natural things of man's life, now becomes the exhibition, through divine grace, of the life and ways of the Lord Jesus Christ. He does not include in the list the worst characters; he does not say, you have no moral sense at all; for instance a murder is not mentioned; the grosser crimes are not alluded to. It is just a list to quicken their moral sense, but not one that supposes them entirely deficient of any.

Next comes out that, because they are wrong in their relations with God, they are not able to get on among themselves. Chap. 6 opens: "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?" They cannot judge the things of God in His own house, and, when all was so defective there, it was no wonder that they went to the world to settle their own private difficulties.

This leads to a very important truth at the end of the chapter, which is little known. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" The *body* is the member of Christ.

Now the body is looked at in three aspects in Scripture. First: "In the day thou eatest

thereof thou shalt surely die:" death is its portion. Second; the Son of God comes in and redeems it, so that that which Satan used to use as his own, Christ says is now mine. Therefore it is, "Glorify God in your body." The word "spirit" should not be read there. That we are members of the body of Christ is corporate truth; but that our body is the member of Christ is individual. Take care then what you do with your body; do not take it to a flower show; do not put a beautiful dress on it. We, in our bodies, are all members of Christ, but that does not make us members of one another. That which makes us members of one another is the baptism of the Holy Ghost; that makes us members of the body of Christ, which is another truth. Here it is my own individual responsibility to represent Christ. Thank God I am a member of the body of Christ too, but this framework of a body is not a member of the *body* of Christ, though it is a *member* of Christ, and is to express His life here below, and I am to receive according to the deeds done in it.

In chap. 7. comes failure in your own house. If you allow this dreadful intruder, the flesh, in, it will come out everywhere.

In chap. 8. they have fallen into the greatest snare that is possible, social intercourse mixed with false worship. It is Balaam. And the

only cure for Balaam is Jordan: death. I say, I am a dead man; I cannot go to your feasts.

And now (chap. 9.), the apostle says, I go exactly in the very opposite way that you do. I might marry, but I do not; I might be paid for my services, but I am not; you indulge yourselves, but I do not. I waive my rights; those things that I might have I do not take. "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." A man might be greatly gifted and yet not be converted. They were boasting of their gifts, but, he says, Take care; you might have wonderful gifts, and yet be lost. He has shown them seven distinct ways in which they have given way to the flesh, and he says, I do not ask you to do what I do not do myself; I show you that I waive even my positive rights, not indulgences. I reduce myself. It is a path of self-reducement that I may win others.

Lastly, (chap. 10.), he adds, do not trust to your privileges; the children of Israel came out of Egypt and passed through the Red Sea, but their carcasses fell in the wilderness.

And now he turns the subject: "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say." I have shown you how foolish you have been not to judge the flesh, and now I speak to you as *wise* men. And mark where the start is from. It

is from the Lord's table, not baptism, as in Romans, but the Lord's table; a word not used anywhere else in Scripture.

I turn to chap. 11 first, for many more saints understand the eleventh chapter than the tenth. Verses 23 to 26, each individual at the Lord's supper ought to know. The Lord comes into the midst of His gathered people. Man slew Him and turned Him out of the world. Now He says, I come back into the midst of my people to listen to the *memories* of my people, to see how they "*remember me.*" Many spoil the Lord's day morning meetings by dwelling on the remembrance of what He did; but it is *Himself*, in what He did, that is before us. When the soul is awakened, first it looks at the death of Christ to get to Him. Now I have got to Him, I look back at His death, as the way in which he suffered for me. If a soul is at a distance from Christ, he is always dwelling upon His death as the way to Him; but if he is close beside Him, he thinks of how Christ went through that death for him. Many true hearted in themselves are occupied with thus remembering how Christ has cleared them before God, but such are deficient in the knowledge of grace. I am so at leisure from myself that I can be occupied not merely with what He has done, but with the One who has done it. So the twelve stones were placed

on the other side of Jordan, not beside the Red Sea. I am on God's ground, on God's territory; there is not a single charge against me; and there I remember Him.

In chap. 10, it begins with the cup, not the bread first, as in chap. 11. It is the responsibility that is looked at here, and not so much the heart as in chap. 11, though the heart likes this too. In chap 11 you are very happy; and nine out of ten who are very happy at the Lord's supper have no sense of the responsibility as we find it in chap. 10. But if you are identified with the death of Christ here, how can you go on indulging the flesh? The Lord says to us: I am entitled to everything on the earth, but I give it all up for you; Well then, the soul answers, I can give it all up or Thee, and I have not a regret as I see human hopes all end. I used to be burdened with my *own* death; He has relieved me by His cross from that burden, and now I go about this world *bearing company* with his death. It is in the communion of the blood and of the body of Christ. This comes in as a corrective to the liberty and self-indulgence in which the Corinthians were walking.

In chap. 12 we have an entirely new subject; it is the Spirit now, no longer the flesh. It is all important to understand that at all times it is with us either the flesh or the Spirit. We

may try to make excuses for ourselves, but there are but the two, and everything we do is either the one or the other. We start from the Lord's table on new ground; fellowship of the death of Christ; this is the responsibility of being at the Lord's supper.

The Corinthians were boastful of their gifts, and so they made way for the flesh. The flesh is in us; we are relieved from it by the death of Christ, but still it surrounds us; and notwithstanding this I am called to live out the life herein the Spirit. There is no excuse for walking in the flesh at all, because there is a greater thing in me than the flesh. We start here with this truth, but in reality we do not get practical life at all in this Epistle, or very little, for they are not up to it. When showing how they had been damaged by the flesh he just refers to their house, but that is all.

He starts then with, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord." Now there are diversities of gifts all over Christendom; gifts are to be found in every system where Christians are. Where then is the failure? It is in the administration. It is not enough to have gift; two other truths must be taken in connection with it. "The same Spirit" gives the gifts, but it is "the same Lord" who administers them. "The

Lord” is for the individual. For instance, I might have been preaching in some other place this evening; I must know whether the Lord would have me *here*, and I must know whether the Lord would *have* me preach at all.

But in Christendom everything is upside down. I see a young man beginning to do some little service for the Lord; his delight is in visiting a poor sick old woman, reading to her, and leading her soul on in the things of God. Presently I hear that he has been sent out to China as a missionary. His gift is all right but the administration is wrong. Then I hear of another young man whose delight has been talking to navvies in a lane, seeking to bring sinners to Christ; and presently I hear that he has been set as minister over a congregation in London. Just as if in a house where there are many different candles, I were to take a dip into the drawing room, and a wax candle into the stable. It is all wrong administration. You may have a gift, but the question is, are you using it in the right place?

Thus individually with the saints Christ is *Lord*; when I speak of Him corporately, in connection with the church, He is *Head*.

Everything, even in my private life, should be determined by my relation to the church. If you are wrong in your relation to the assembly, you will be wrong in your own house.

And if wrong at home you must be wrong in the assembly. The assembly is the first circle of interest. In every Epistle it is so. Ephesians begins with "keeping the unity of the Spirit," and ends with the "servants" in the home. Romans in like manner. We begin with "one body in Christ," and end with "living peaceably with all men."

These gifts are "given to every man to profit withal;" not for his own profit, but for another person's. You have not only drunk into this Spirit for yourself, but for others; for the one body. See then, how you stand in relation to it.

When you come into the assembly your gift is a member of it, because you drop into the corporate thing; you leave your individuality, and become a member; it may be a month or an eye. If a man be a teacher he is a gifted member. He may, at any time, ask his fellow members to come together to hear what he has to say, but this is not in the assembly. The moment he comes into the assembly he is simply a member of the body, though a very useful one.

Suppose a man says, "I have been reading and enjoying during the week a portion in the 2 Chron; I will read it now." He is acting as an individual if at the time he is not consulting for the good of the

assembly. Suppose he comes with a hymn marked in his hymn book ready to give out, he comes into the assembly as an individual, and not as a member. He says perhaps, "I have it on my heart," but that is no reason for giving out a hymn. I hope sisters have hymns on their hearts as much as brothers. It was this thought that gave rise to Quakerism. Suppose he says "I thought there was a pause." A *pause!* Is *that* the way to minister in the assembly of God? It is little understood how responsible a thing it is to give out a hymn. To avail yourself of a silence without faith, is the most terrible thing, for it is intruding in the most holy place.

A stranger, in the power of the Spirit, will walk into an assembly, and bring out the very truth that is needed in the place. He will not need to be told of the state of things there, indeed he will prefer not to hear it, for he will be guided. In all my service for Him, I may walk in the confidence that the Lord would have me do it. You ask me why I give out such a hymn. I answer, Because the Lord would have me. And in all this I have a certain proof from Scripture whether it is so or not, and that proof is whether it edifies the body.

If you see a person very anxious to minister in the assembly, you may be sure that person does not know the responsibility of it. Those

who really do know what a grave thing it is will more likely err on the side of timidity, though timidity may be as much nature as forwardness. By keeping back I may give an opportunity to some person who is not in the Spirit to make an intrusion.

In one way, there is nothing happier than being in a meeting where one is not called upon to take any part, for the sense of responsibility in a certain way checks one's happiness. Of course, one is happy after it, but I mean at the time. But I would add that when taking no part it is not that one has no responsibility, but rather that the responsibility is in another direction, for hearing is as much responsibility as seeing; it is simply the difference between being an ear and a mouth for the body. So that sisters do not escape the responsibility.

Health in the body is when it is "fitly joined together, and compacted by that which *every* joint supplieth." To have health, both food and exercise are needed. If you say you do not need gifts, then you do not need food; and if so, there cannot be health.

But while, as we have seen, when a soul is wrong in the assembly he will be wrong at home, it is equally true that if his own house be in a disorganised state he must bring wrong elements into the church. If he can but get right with God in the assembly, he will go back to his house and say, I can no longer allow

things to be as they are ; I have judged them in God's presence. There never was a man who was unfaithful to God that he was faithful to anyone. You may hear it said, "What a nice man So-and-so is," but I tell you if he has been unfaithful to God, you need not expect that he will be faithful to you. If he does not love the greater, how can he love the lesser? The relations of a man with God in the assembly affect all his other relations.

There are then the two sides to the ministry in the assembly : there is the responsibility of caring for the Lord in His body, and there is the danger of intruding in His holy things.

In chap. 13. he goes on to say, while it is very good to have gifts, one who has them cannot in consequence take a prominent position, cannot take leadership ; he must be the servant of the assembly, and nothing more. My eye is the servant of my body ; it does not assume to *lead* my body. The more excellent way for this is charity. If we were divested of our own selfishness we should become useful to the assembly of God. Two or three things may perhaps occur to me to say in the church. I wait then on the Lord ; I turn to Him to get His support, and then I do not trouble myself about how I shall get it out, how I shall express it. It is not a question of long prayers or long sermons. People often think that by

making long prayers they shall make great impression. But, says the apostle, it is not the possession of gifts, but it is the getting rid of yourself that is charity. You are then like a well trained horse ready to go in any direction it is required; you have got rid of the selfishness which prevents your being useful to others, and in the grace of Christ you become a great benefactor. The most charitable man in the world is the man who is self-divested. Charity is generally supposed to consist in doing for another that which he wishes; but charity in God's thought is removing from another that which hinders his communion. If I remove a little wordliness from you, that is charity; also if I remove anything from myself that hinders my being useful to you, and I cultivate all that will, that is charity.

I have not much to say on chap. 14, which is the working of the gifts in the assembly. One interesting thing we may notice in verses 23-25. The Holy Ghost is actually dwelling in the house of God on earth; but it is not the simple fact of His dwelling there that affects people; it is His activity in the house.

A teacher is one who expounds the word. A prophet is one who brings out the character of the word so as to expose one to oneself. It is the opening out of the word so lucidly and so effectively that the heart is searched by it. It

is not great eloquence; there may be nothing very striking or stirring in what is said, but people are nevertheless subdued into quietness and attention, listening, and the conscience is reached. Let everything be done to edifying is the great point of chap. 14.

In chap. 15 a very important thing comes out. The apostle goes into the exposure and correction of the heresy that was held in Corinth. This heresy is very current in Christendom without being openly avowed. All self-indulgent people hold it without avowing it. They may profess to believe in resurrection; but that this very same body in which they now indulge self, shall one day stand before the judgment-seat of Christ to receive all that has been done in it, that they do not believe. In this very body, though not in its present state, we shall receive from Him the reward of all that has been good, whilst all the bad will be burnt up. But man's thought is, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Paul does not say a word about the idol that was in their midst; he just says it was something that was not God.

As to the beginning of the chapter we read: "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." Many evangelists

stop here, but this is not all: "And that he was buried," to show that He was actually dead; "And that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." It is not only that He died, but that He was buried, and that He rose again according to the Scriptures. Now "If Christ be not raised ye are yet in your sins," "But now *is* Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept."

And then comes the question, "What body?" I only touch it for a moment. "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him." You lay the seed in the ground and the grain comes up as we see it. So, though you are raised in a different way, it is still the same thing that comes up. So he goes on, "To every seed his own body.....as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead." Not that there are different states of glory, but that there are different conditions in which you may be in that glory. Not that there are varieties of glory, not "different degrees" of it, as people say, but that there are distinctions in it. There are natural bodies and there will be

heavenly ones. It is the same body, the same person come up again in a new condition. I cannot explain it to you, but I see in the Lord Himself in resurrection a body that can walk in through closed doors, that can pass any way, and yet there are the marks in His hands and His side. And we shall be like Him. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." If Christ were to come into this room at this moment we should all have spiritual bodies: "When he shall appear we shall be like him, and we shall see him as he is."

In chap. 16 we get a little, but very little, practice; and that connected with the church. He lays down a general rule as to collecting for the saints. If this laying by as God prospered had been carried out, it would have prevented any accumulation of wealth. It is sometimes asked where there is Scripture for handing round a box. I say here it is. I have here a general principle. It is always those at a distance from God who want direct precepts for everything. There may at times be reasons why people are unable to give, but I have no doubt it is the mind of the Lord that there should be a weekly gathering. This was for saints at a distance, but if for those at a dis-

tance how much more for those who are near? If I do not care for those who are near to me, I certainly shall not for those at a distance.

He lastly presses on them to respect the ministry of God, and also lets us into a very interesting thing connected with his own private history: that, while he would not be a recipient from the Corinthians as an assembly, as a whole, he was glad of the coming of Stephanas, who was a Corinthian, and who ministered to him. An individual going on faithfully with God is not shut out from happy individual service because of the state of the assembly in which he is.

The Lord lead us to see what a blessed place it is to be in the assembly, to belong to His body here on earth.

(J. B. S.)

II. CORINTHIANS.

A VERY different tone comes out in the second Epistle. The apostle now comes in to comfort them, for they are cast down. It is "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." The grace of God comes out. Everything has been going wrong, but now I find that, the more diminished I am in myself, the more I receive from God. What a premium there is on smallness! Paul had got comforted in persecutions and deaths, as comes out in chap. 11. God had comforted him in the midst of suffering for His name, and now he was able to comfort the Corinthians when they were cast down because of their failure.

He had been so grieved (chap. 2) at having had to grieve them; but now he rejoices that he can comfort them because they are cast down and made small. True, I do not deserve to be comforted, since it is my failure that has brought me into this state; but the secret of it is, that, no matter how you have been made small, or self-diminished, you will then be comforted by God.

It was the same with Job. He says, I abhor myself, I am self-diminished ; then God comes in and shows that it is then only that he was in a fit state to receive His favour. Practically it is when one is reduced, put out, nothing, that Christ is everything. Many a one talks of Christ being everything to him, who has never yet found himself nothing. I have to take the place of the Syrophenician woman and say, I am not entitled to anything ; I am a dog ; but yet His grace will reach me.

The first Epistle was man's perverseness ; this is man's weakness. The great point is that you are brought to the lowest point: "We had the sentence of death in ourselves." The apostle himself had been reduced to it by his faithfulness to Christ. He shows too how small he himself was, for he left even an open door, turned his back on everything, because of his feelings about the Corinthians. He owns how small he was. He says, I had no rest in my spirit when I could not find Titus. But God made his servant's weakness the opportunity to show out His own greatness. He says, notwithstanding *God* always leads me in triumph. It is not that there is any excuse for weakness, but that the great trait of the Epistle is that, when you are self-reduced, God comes in. The purpose of his heart is right, still he is a poor feeble man ; but he

admits his feebleness, and then God comes in to succour him.

In chap. 3, a very important thing comes out. He draws a contrast, an important one, between the way in which the law had been given and the way in which Christ was given. The law had been written on tables of stone by the finger of God. Now Christ is written on the fleshy tables of my heart by the Spirit of the living God. He puts the two in contrast, and if you do not take in the extent of the contrast you will not take in the purport of it.

Man in flesh could not come before God. The law was written on the tables of stone in glory and taken down to man; and now Christ is written on my heart in glory. It is quite true you have a Saviour in heaven, but that is not all; you must have that Saviour written on your heart. Christ must now be written by the Spirit on the fleshy tables of the heart. Verses 4 to 17, is a parenthesis explaining the nature of the contrast. The law came from the glory of God. There was no place for man at all there, and God coming out to man simply from the glory could but have cut him off. The people were afraid to look even on Moses with the reflection of that glory on him. But now, instead of the law coming out from the glory, it is a Saviour that is in the glory, and instead

of being the ministration of death, it is the ministration of the Spirit.

This writing is not what it will be to Israel in the millennial day; it is not a *law* written in our heart, but *Christ* written on it. And to this end He has an unveiled face; there is no veil on His face as there was on that of Moses. "We all as in a glass beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." The word "glass" is rather confused. It is a mirror. I bring a mirror up to an object, and immediately that object is reflected on it. There is no place given to man; Christ only must appear. It is an immense thought, and we do well to weigh it. You may say, I know perfectly well that I have a Saviour up there; but it is not that only; it is that that Saviour is written on your heart here. You have got the treasure, as he says lower down; but it is not simply that you have a treasure, in heaven, but that you have a treasure in *you*. Thus does he present Christ to them.

He then passes on, chap. 4., to "the gospel of the glory of Christ," not "the glorious gospel." The knowledge of God has come out from the glory, and this knowledge should shine unto them. This great thing I have received, this wonderful fact, that I have a Saviour up there at the right hand of God, and

He is written on my heart down here. It is not a question of my being safe merely, but that I am the epistle of Christ.

Souls often lose comfort because not clear as to this. When man was driven out of the garden there was a cherubim and a flaming sword placed there to keep the way of the tree of life. The glory kept man out. After this God came down to take His place among His people on earth, and He came down in glory to the tabernacle and the temple. In process of time man became so wicked that God retired from the earth; but when He so retired, as we find in Ezek. i., in the brightest spot of the retiring glory was the figure of a man; an earnest that judgment will yet be removed, and man will be in the glory.

All this did not come out at once. Stephen catches the first glimpse of it; he looks up and says, I see a man in the glory. Stephen, as a saint on earth, thus sees Him and goes to Him. And many a soul sees Christ thus inside now, and can say, I have a Saviour in glory, and the judgment is over. But with Saul of Tarsus it was the opposite way. It is not a saint on earth going to a Saviour in glory, but it is a Saviour in glory appearing to a sinner on earth. So he calls it "the gospel of the glory of Christ." I have a Saviour in glory, and that Saviour is written on my heart here. I

do not now belong to the ruined thing here ; I have a treasure in my heart as I go through this world.

And now the apostle sets forth his own practical life. He had reminded them of the truth ministered, and now he turns to the practice *flowing* from it. " We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." " We are troubled," that is outside ; " we are perplexed," that is inside ; " persecuted," that is outside ; " cast down," that is inside. He gives us two things that affect us outwardly and two that affect us inwardly, but, he says, I bear up against them all. It is always bearing about in my body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in my body. He says, I bring in death on myself here ; whatever the cross of Christ has set aside, that I do not allow. It is not only that I know I have Christ, not only that He is written on the fleshy tables of my heart, but that I want that which is written to be expressed. The treasure is in an earthen vessel. It is like a light inclosed in an opaque substance : the more I attenuate the substance the more the light shines out through it. How then is this to be accomplished ? Well, it is my purpose that it should be, and I look to the Lord not to allow a single thing in me that will hinder my showing

out the life of Christ. God then comes in to help me. While glory lightens up my soul with all the certainty that I belong to another Person and another sphere, certain though I am of all that, yet I have down here in me and around me that which hinders me, so God comes in to help: "We which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." He changes the word; it is not our "body" now, but our "mortal flesh." God brings in, in various ways, for any one who has a purpose to go on with Him, that which will break down the flesh. It may be sorrow, it may be bodily sickness, but, whatever it is, it will be something that will diminish the flesh, because God cannot work until you are made small. If I could diminish myself to a fraction so that God might work I should be only too glad to do it. The hindrance with souls is that there is not enough of self-diminishing.

So it happens that one often sees a saint going on with apparently no trial, but the moment he sets himself to be for God, God brings in wave after wave upon him. Jacob in Syria never had a single death trial that we hear of. I do not mean that he had no *kind* of trial; his wages were changed ten times; but he had no bereavement; it was only cir-

cumstances. But look when he gets into the land how Rachel dies, and Joseph is taken from him, and he has to give up Benjamin.

I cannot explain it for another, but I know for myself how the Lord keeps me not *depressed* but *small*. I say I will set myself to reduce myself of everything that hinders Christ coming out in me; and then God says, I will reduce you that it may be so; and He rolls in death upon me. Some one says, I will give up this or that worldly thing. Very likely he will lose it the next day. He may think to himself, I meant to have given it up myself; God took him at his word, and took it away from him.

But glory does not kill the flesh; death is the only thing that will silence it. Many think what wonderful sights of the glory they have had, but that will never put out the flesh. It must be the cross. If I am dying, I am getting all the brighter for it outside. "Death worketh in us, but life in you." I am getting smaller one way, but bigger the other. It is what man naturally is reluctant to go through. But "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

He continues the subject in chap. 5. Here we see the importance of not letting the flesh work, but of having the grace of Christ brought out in us. By-and-bye we shall "all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad." Suppose grace be brought out in me to-day, it may be suffering work now, but every bit that comes out in me practically here will be brought before the judgment-seat of Christ to qualify me for my position with Him in the kingdom.

As to ourselves he brings us down to the very lowest point. "If one died for all then were *all dead*." It is man's thorough weakness: "all dead." And Christ died for all in that low position, that they who live should live no longer to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again. So we now "know no man after the flesh." He who was the perfect man in the flesh has died out of it, so that we can no longer look at anything on that side. All is to us "a new creation."

It is not "a new creature." A butterfly is a new creature; it is not a new creation. But the new nature is not an old thing changed or renovated; it is a new creation of God. "All things are become new, and all of God."

In the following chapter the apostle dwells upon himself as the minister of God. What really makes the minister a very great man is his smallness; so he begins with "much patience," and ends with "having nothing." It is all characteristic; when once you get hold of the idea, the grand vein of the Epistle, the thread running through it all, is smallness. If it even comes to the ministry, the whole point is smallness. God Himself rolls in death upon the servant in some form or other.

Then he turns round to the Corinthians and says to them, "Be enlarged." And how? By being small; come out and be separate, and nothing will make you so small. "Come out and be separate, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." You shall have your Father to look after you. This is not adoption; when Scripture speaks of adoption it does not say "sons and daughters." It is the sense of your Father taking care of you. A saint is much tried in his circumstances. It is that he is keeping on with the world. I say, Come out of the world, and you will find ease, and have God for your Father.

Chap. 7, tells out their repentance; how small they had been in their "earnest desire, and mourning, and fervent zeal;" they had been "made sorry after a godly manner." He

too had been small, for he had repented, having made them sorry with his letter ; he had feared the effect upon them ; had feared losing their affection through it ; but now he does not repent ; he rejoices at the result of it in their having so thoroughly cleared themselves in the matter.

And now, being in a certain sense set right, he would have them take up service for others ; chap. 8. and the argument he uses is a very interesting one. Persons generally turn to those who are wealthy to help others. What the apostle insists on is, that the act of the poor is the great thing. It is often said, "But I am so poor, so small." Then what you give will be the real thing. The poor widow who cast in her two mites to the treasury "cast in more than they all." If I am so poor that I have but a few coppers, that is the very thing for God. The Lord Himself "became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." It runs counter to all the thoughts of man. It is not a man giving what he can spare, but it is giving when he can say, This is self-reducement. Not that I am to deprive myself of food and warmth, but that my action should be self-diminishing. Whether it be service, or whatever it be, it is the same ; again it is being small ; it is always the line of self-reduction,

We now pass on to chapter 12. After showing them how they had been deceived by false teachers, whilst he himself had as great title to be great as any of them, he says: I will tell you now something that *is* worth boasting of. I knew a man *in Christ*. That is Romans. And what about that man? He was caught up to heaven, and heard unspeakable words which it is not possible to utter. I know not whether it was in the body or out of the body. I can only say that I was intelligently there, that I enjoyed myself there, but that there was no account taken of my body.

Mark what comes out now. The apostle goes into heaven; then he comes down again to earth, and what does he find? That he is worse off than he was before he went up; that he is a smaller man than he was; that he is diminished more than he was; and that, even in a point in which he could not go on as he did before in the Lord's service. Suppose, for instance, that he could not speak with the ability and eloquence that he did before; suppose that he could not tell out the things that he had heard as he would otherwise have done. Satan was no doubt glad enough of the liberty to go and cripple him; he would think, there will be no withstanding the man now, after all that he has seen, if he is let go on and tell it. So it was as he was advanced in the

heavenly thing he was made small down here ; he was a bigger man before he went up than now. Your mere human powers will not advance because your spiritual powers are greater. It will not be the power of the instrument, it will not be the perfection of your style, it will not be the grandeur of your eloquence, nor the power of your oratory; it will be the power of God.

Paul felt it terribly. He prayed to the Lord thrice to take the trial away. But He says to him, " My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in *weakness*."

It is the theme of the Epistle. If you want to be made strong, be weak. I am able to do nothing as a man. The most impressive language will never bring truth home to a soul. No, says the Lord, it must all be *my* power. I may seek to make a subject interesting, to make it plain, but the power must be divine.

I need not allude to the end, except to add that the apostle fears that, because they persist in going on in the flesh, he himself may yet be made small in another way through their not being humbled.

But the great theme is, and one that is an immense help to us in our circumstances going through this world, that, if you want power, if you want help, if you want to be used by God as you go through this scene, *be small*.

(J. B. S.)

THIS SIDE JORDAN AND BEYOND.

It is solemn to reflect on the various ways in which the enemy of the truth of God and of His people is at work to set aside His purpose in their blessing. The variety of means resorted to, in order to discredit the prime thought of God for the time being, prove two things, namely, the malice and hatred of the god and prince of this world, and the infinite blessedness and unspeakable value of the thoughts of God in the testimony revived in these last times.

It is very striking to trace in the Scriptures this decided character of opposition ; it is seen, or may be recognised, in all times, taking, no doubt, diverse methods of expression, as well as employing various kinds of instruments, and from time to time, in the skilfulness of wile, changing the tactics of his warfare, and varying the method of his assault ; yet to faith it is more than evident, that, whatever is for the moment the thought of God about His people, that is the point assailed by Satan with malignant energy. Now the history of Israel in the past will be found, as we examine it, to furnish us with a striking illustration of this deadly hostility of the wicked one.

I need not long delay in shewing that Canaan, the country beyond Jordan, was the land of Jehovah's choice and purpose for that nation. A reference to Ex. iii. and xv. will clearly shew the earliest intimation of this purpose to Moses, while the people were still in the house of bondage, even in Egypt, as well as how fully afterwards they entered into this mind of Jehovah, singing as never before; not only celebrating their deliverance and praising their deliverer, Jehovah their *salvation*, but connecting the full height of His purpose with the beginning of their blessing in these words: "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Ex. xv. 17, 18. Very blessed is it to see a *delivered* people, in the first joys of their new found liberty, reaching on in faith and hope beyond their immediate or present portion, blessed though it were, to the full height of Jehovah's purposes respecting them.

Now even in this, as well as in an earlier stage of their history, the malice of Satan shows itself; for Pharoah was Satan opposing redemption, the first step towards Canaan, as Amalek was Satan opposing the march of

dependence through the wilderness on the way still to Canaan. I do not doubt for a moment the satisfaction of Satan in holding Israel, through Pharoah's instrumentality, in the thralldom and bondage of Egypt; nor do I question a like pleasure in opposing, by means of Amalek, their dependent march through the desert, to the mountain of Jehovah's inheritance; yet, inasmuch as at the very outset the purpose of Jehovah had been made known in the touching language of Ex. iii. 7, 8, to Moses, I can have no question, but that it was this definitely avowed intention of Jehovah that Satan set himself directly to thwart, whether in Egypt by Pharoah, or past the Red Sea by Amalek; and, I may say, this seems to be strengthened and maintained by the fact so often pressed and referred to, namely, that the wilderness was no part of Jehovah's *purpose*, though it came in in connection with His ways with that people. How solemn then to think that, even at this early period of their history, the opposition of the enemy clearly declares itself, and that in relation to the full purpose of Jehovah's heart, even the land *beyond* Jordan.

In order to guard against any misconception on this head, I add a word further with respect to the opposition of the enemy. It is quite clear that as to *conflict*, in the Christian sense

of the term, there was none until Israel entered Canaan : the trials of the wilderness, its murmurs and its Marahs, were not Canaan conflict ; neither was the fight with Amalek like conflict in the land ; the great thought seems to be the testing of the people, yet in grace, the circumstances and sorrows of the way intended of Jehovah to cast them upon Himself, used by Satan to oppose and hinder, by creating, through their means, murmuring and discontent, the very opposite to dependence and confidence ; and that *dependence*, and not fighting, properly so called, won the battle in the wilderness, Ex. xvii. 11, 12, clearly proves ; for what do we find there ? Success depended on Moses' hands being lifted up. Yet how clearly marked is the opposition of the enemy to the people of Jehovah, set free from Egypt, and on their road through the desert to Jehovah's land.

But now, passing over most of the history of the desert, following that which we have touched upon, I would turn to another scene, in order to trace this opposition of Satan to the mind of God. In turning to the record of the searching of the land, permitted and allowed though it was, there are the clearest indications of the satanic energy which was at work by means of it, acting upon the weakness and unbelief of the ten spies, so as to discredit the goodness of the land of promise in their eyes

and that of all Israel (compare Deu. i. and Num. xiii.), and succeeding for the time in awakening the worst fears and passions of unbelief, until they finally burst into open murmuring and almost rebellion. How solemn such words as these: "Wherefore hath the Lord brought us into the land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? . . . Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." But it is specially noted here, as a proof of our present theme, namely, the various ways in which at the outset of their history, as well as here in its after course, satanic hatred assailed the *purpose* of God.

Very blessed is it to see how in that day, as now, God will have His witnesses to the excellency of His purpose and thoughts, as well as His delight and ability to make them good; hence satanic energy here calls to the forefront the testimony of faith and faithfulness in Joshua and Caleb. And may we not learn a lesson in these days from the loyalty of these devoted men of God and servants of the Lord? Does not their simple yet mighty appeal rebuke the fears and faint-heartedness of many at this present time? "The land is an exceeding good land" was faith's simple rejoinder then to all Satan's hindrances, and is it

different to-day? Surely the spirit of Num. xiv. is working sadly at the present moment. Not only are there the faint-hearted and fearful, who are ever ready to parade the anti-types of the Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, and Canaanites, as these formerly were; but there are not wanting those who never miss an opportunity of heaping terms of scorn and contempt upon the truth which sets forth the Christian's present heavenly standing as in Christ in heaven, ridiculing it as transcendentalism, or mere shibboleth, and trading, for the purpose of opposition, upon the failures and inconsistencies of those who, feeble though they be, yet have their heart's desires set on the present mind and purpose of God about His saints.

It needs but little perception to discover in all this hatred of and opposition to the truth, the malice of Satan, the god and prince of this world; and, moreover, those who oppose in this manner are for the most part worldly and earthly minded themselves, and thus betray the real secret of their dislike. Alas! that they should show themselves to be the representatives of like characters in the past, and that the history of the searching of the land should be thus sadly repeated. The Lord grant His saints of to-day faith in His present purpose and mind respecting them, as well as

faith in His heart and His hand to make that purpose good.

The next instance of satanic opposition is furnished by the history of the two tribes and a half: the record of their sorrowful choice and inducing second causes, is contained in Num. xxxii., as well as Josh. xxii. I say *second cause*, because the instigation was in the first instance satanic, as was the case in the previous history of the nation. Now let me recur to the purpose of God again, in order to show the opposition of Satan, expressed in the history of these tribes. His purpose was Canaan, which is *beyond Jordan*; the place of their choice was not Egypt, it was beyond the Red Sea, this side Euphrates, but not Canaan; the inducing causes were their numerous cattle, and the land of Gilead and Jazer afforded wonderful opportunities for this. Thus blinded, and losing sight of the call of God, their choice is expressed in these mournful words: "Bring us not over Jordan." "Alas! these beautiful meadows, well suited to feed their flocks, have found but too many Lots and tribes of Israel to settle in them to their loss." Such was their history, for in after days, when Israel's sin and weakness left them the ready prey of their foes, the enemies of God, the lovely country this side Jordan was the first that passed into the enemies' hands.

Has not all this a solemn voice for saints in the present time? Are there not those who have made a similar choice, having taken their place this side Jordan, that is, this side death and resurrection, applied to the soul by the Spirit of God? Is it asked, what can that mean? There can be no question, it is worldly Christianity on this side of death and resurrection. How many of the saints have cast in their lot here, settling down in the place of wandering, the heart clinging to what is this side death and resurrection; short of the purpose and mind of God about His saints at this time!

It is striking to observe the resemblance between these tribes and some now-a-days; they *did not desire or intend to give up being Israelites; by no means; but they would be Israelites this side Jordan; and is it not so at the present time?* Are there not saints who, from one supposed cause or another, stop short of the call of God? They are not lacking in either zeal or earnestness, but some, through fear and timidity, others from dislike and distaste, yet both equally, say: "Bring us not over Jordan."

A counterpart to all this is found in 2 Tim. iv. Were not all that forsook the apostle, as well as Demas, practically the two and a half tribes of that day? They did not either in

fact or intention give up Christ, any more than Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, the altar of Shiloh, or the position of the Israel of God; yet who can fail to see that "loving this present world" is taking possession this side of death and resurrection? And what is forsaking the apostle, the heavenly man in the wilderness, but a practical denial of the truth that "our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens?" Thus we see how the antagonism of satanic power was and is directed to defeat the purpose of God respecting His saints, whether past or present; and, of this, the history of the two tribes and a half, as well as those who, like Demas, deserted the apostle Paul, are melancholy instances. The Lord make His saints of to-day divinely watchful as to this.

The next instance of satanic opposition is that furnished by the sorrowful history of Israel *in the land*, and of this Josh. xxiii., compared with the book of Judges, is the mournful record. They failed as grievously in Canaan as they did in apprehending Jehovah's purposes respecting them ere they reached the goodly land itself. We have seen how, in various ways, satanic opposition displayed itself in keeping them short of Jehovah's purpose and revealed mind; and now we have briefly to trace like enmity and opposition in making them inconsistent with that purpose whilst apparently answering to it.

In Josh. xxiii. 6-12, they are warned in the most earnest manner by Joshua himself, his advanced years and his "going the way of all the earth" lending peculiar solemnity to his charge. Observe these three points here :

1. Courage to obey and cleave to the Lord.

2. He warns them as to *false worship*.

3. He warns them as to *false associations*.

In other words, he tells them their snare would be in the *religious* and *social* directions. I need not detail the manner in which this solemn charge was lost upon guilty Israel, nor the various steps downward taken with all the gradual characteristics that mark decline, until Gilgal is exchanged for Bochim.

The history suggests many a solemn thought as to His saints of to-day, and the various depths of Satan in opposing the purpose of God. To those who judge after a human method or standard it is preferable to be short of the mind of God than to be inconsistent with it ; that is to say, it is better to be the two and a half tribes this side Jordan than the tribes the other side. But I plead that the man of *faith* would never so judge. On the contrary, he, sorrowful, convicted yet confiding, turns to the Lord in earnest longing to be preserved from the failure of both ; timid it may be, yet full of trust, he is possessed by the purpose and mind

of God to have him in heaven in spirit now, as in body presently, and to maintain him on the earth true in practice to what he is in standing and position, namely, a heavenly man, one who belongs to "the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh." As such, he seeks grace to walk becomingly; he seeks preservation from all that which practically is a blot upon testimony, either on the side of God or his own side; he cultivates an unworldly spirit, *because he belongs to heaven*, and as the true security against worldly ways in his business and his home; having a home in heaven he lives there, but *from* it addresses himself in true strangership to all he is called to undertake on earth. This, I very earnestly plead, would mark the man of faith; he would avoid being short of the mind of God, as of being inconsistent with it, while waiting and looking from heaven for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord in His grace, preserve His truth to His saints in these last days, and defeat the devices of Satan, who seeks to set aside His purpose, and so rob them of their portion and blessing.

W. T. T.

NEW CREATION.

Col. ii. 1-15.

CHRIST is all in all to the believer. The soul first gets life in Him, and then it gets the object into which the life grows, its sphere, which is all the scene into which Christ has entered, just as a child grows up to realise all that is around it. There is a great deal more in it, of course, but we get in this passage I have read, first, that He is life in us, and then that He is all to us.

All Christians are conscious of the way in which He has met their need as sinners. But the Christian himself may be looked at in two ways: both as a saved sinner, and also as one who stands in the system and purpose of God's counsels. There are many, very devoted Christians too, who never get to any understanding of the latter. Christ does not merely give us forgiveness of sins; He also gives us a place with Himself, and we have to grow up into the knowledge of this, which was always in the mind of God for us, our portion, as looked at in the Second man. God has dealt with us in grace, according to the salvation that is in Christ, but beyond all that is the place that He has given us in Him.

In this chapter we are seen as "circumcised with the circumcision made without hands; in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." I leave "of the sins" out, for it is not there. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Here I get myself connected with Christ, coming so far into the new place. He has been in our stead down into death, and the judgment due to sin, and by His work on the cross has cleansed us and justified us. And then I get the second part in the next verse: "And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses."

Wherever he speaks of quickened in this Epistle it is not merely the fact that we have been born again, but it begins with us as dead. It begins with *Christ* dead, and we are "buried *with him*," and quickened together *with him*. It takes us up at the starting point; we begin *dead*—dead to spiritual life, I mean; and then the whole thing is over. It is not God dealing with a responsible being, but picking up and quickening a dead one. It is another aspect of the results of the work of Christ. When I look at myself as a sinner I say, I have died with Christ. Death had to come in in that

condition in which I was as a sinner if I was to be delivered out of it. He looks at the sinner there, and says, Now the whole thing is a new creation.

There are two things connected with this truth, and the apostle does not get much further than the first in Colossians. The first is, that it is a new creation; the other, the sphere in which this new creation has its life, *heaven*. It is one thing that I am saved, and an immense thing; it is another that I have the place with the Father that Christ His Son has: "My Father and your Father;" "As is the heavenly such are they also that are heavenly." Of course we come into this as the first, that is, as guilty sinners; for there is no real appropriation of truth unless my conscience is reached, unless the truth has got hold of me, both as to what I have done and what I am; but it is not only that there is "no condemnation," but there is a scene where Christ is to which I now belong, though I have the treasure in a poor earthen vessel.

This, then, is the point I desire your hearts to be drawn to: saved sinners, whom Christ is not ashamed to call brethren, but who are also new creatures in Christ. In Colossians it does not go any further than this new creature; but it has a sphere in which all its affections are unfolded and developed. Colossians does not

get up into it; still it says: "Their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the full knowledge of the mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge." You do not want the wisdom of the world, for you have the wisdom of God. God leaves us in this world, passing through the trials of it, so that we may learn what is in our hearts; all that is quite true; but still there is this sphere into which we are brought by God, and which we are able to enjoy. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." The apostle wants them to walk as they have received Christ; as they have *received* Christ so their minds are to *live* there. He would have their hearts get out of things here and rise to this sphere which belongs to the new man, this sphere of which Christ is the centre; "rooted and built up in him."

But if you know anything of yourself, you know that your great snare is double mindedness; there is a constant tendency to it, for we are surrounded with that which solicits the old man. You find a man who is not insincere, and yet his heart is like a highway, everything in the world passing through it, and, of course, there is no spiritual power there. This is an extreme case, but take another. Here is one

in whom that which determines the conduct of a Christian is not there, so he is unstable. He desires to walk after Christ, and to follow Him, but his feet are not in the straight and narrow way; there is that which distracts his mind and heart, and saps the spiritual strength of his soul; the manna becomes light food to him, it is no longer sweet to his taste; there is instability in all his ways. Here is the danger of this "philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." This is where the turning point comes. The world has its rudiments, its principles; it has its philosophy and vain deceit; all these distractions of the soul belong to the world. This is the snare. People get occupied with these things, get thrown into what is around them, into the ordinary conversation of the world, I do not mean anything wicked, but they come out from it with the consciousness that their souls are enfeebled. And, when a heart is in that state, it looks back to the leeks and onions of Egypt, as Israel did; but when they were wishing for these they forgot all about the bricks and the hard bondage. So it is "Beware lest any man spoil you," through "the rudiments of the world." The world will not have Christ. We do not remember this sufficiently.

We are told in Ephesians that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, that we; "being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fulness of God." This wonderful central blessedness has been embodied in a Man—all the fulness of the Godhead. How little our hearts reach it! The apostle prays that we may be *able* to comprehend it; that is what he looks for. There it is *for* us and *in* us, for Christ is dwelling in our hearts. Here I have got in a Man the Father's delight, and I have Him to feed on. It is this that is so wonderful in the blessed Lord: I see the fulness of the Godhead in Him in this world, "The Father dwelleth in me," and I also see Him one who is a great deal weaker than myself close to me as a servant. And now it is to this One that we are united by the Spirit in glory, "Full of grace and truth; and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

When people have got settled in the truth of the Epistles they go back to feed on the Gospels; Christ becomes the food of their souls and the object of them. He who is sufficient to be the object of the Father's delight is the object of mine. "In him dwelleth all the

fulness of the Godhead bodily," yet He was a real, true man, sinless, perfect man. See His tender, gracious ways with the woman of Samaria. It is the blessedness of what the Lord is that is so precious. And He never gives up that place; He never ceases to be a man; only, instead of coming down in patient humble grace where we are, He takes us up where He is, He takes us up into His own blessedness.

All this must be by faith. If we *saw* these things we could not go on with the world at all, and that is not God's intention; yet it is equally true that we are to live in them by faith.

But if the completeness of the Godhead is revealed to us in Christ, so also we are complete before God in Him. I use the word completeness instead of fulness, not that I like it better, but because it makes the connection with the following verse plainer: "Ye are complete in him." All the completeness of the Godhead comes down to us in Christ, and in Him we are complete before God. It shows out what a wonderful place we are set in. What is the measure of the completeness of it? God looked down upon earth, and found in Christ all that His heart could desire in every sense, righteousness, obedience, and everything else; and we are complete in this Christ. All that satisfies God's delight and spiritual

judgment, if we may use such a word, He brings us into. We are "complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." Above all these things that He has created, whether heavenly or down upon the earth, He is far above them all. He was always God's delight, "rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and his delights were with the sons of men." Therefore He became a man, and then, by grace, becoming our life He takes us into His own place before God. He satisfies all God's thoughts: He is the satisfying object of them, and all *that* we are brought into. We are in Him, "*complete in him.*" What a place that is! That we should get thus the fulness of the Godhead brought down to us in perfect grace, and that we should be made complete in Him! There is growth, of course: "To him that hath shall be given;" but we *have* the fulness of the Godhead in Him, and we are complete in Him before God. And complete according to what? God has no measure but His own, and that is *Christ*. When we talk of our responsibility to God the law is the measure of it; that is what man ought to have been; but this is where all God's thoughts are satisfied, and that not in the first man but in the second.

The apostle now applies this to details. He shows how God takes us up as poor sinners

and brings in redemption. How this was accomplished is first spoken of: "In whom also ye are circumcised." It takes us up where we were, in the lowest possible condition, "dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh." And then he shows out what God has brought us into, "The circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." Now here I get "putting off." This is not *purpose*. Of course it must be *done* or we cannot be in glory, but "sins" are the acts of the flesh, and the word is not literally here at all; it is not the putting off of the *sins* of the flesh, but the putting off of the whole thing, the flesh itself, before God. And because this is so comes the practical discovery of what the flesh is. There is this old tree, the old stock, which is enmity against God, and that has to be put off by dying with Christ, dying to what we are in the old Adam. God is dealing with us in grace now; the law could have killed us, but now we are crucified with Christ, and we have met its penalty in His death.

But now I find the flesh lusts against the desires of the new man, and the only remedy for this is *death*. I must reckon myself dead, and "alive unto God," not in the old man, but "in Jesus Christ our Lord." I get the figure of this in circumcision. If I try to keep the

flesh down without knowing its death in Christ, it will be a wretched endeavour, in which I shall never succeed. That I am guilty is the first thing that I discover, only I cannot go back to this now; but I then find that the flesh in me "was not subject to the law of God," and then God, "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." He did not forgive it; it was an evil thing, and God condemned it in the cross. The first thing is to get my sins blotted out as guilty, but then when I wish to walk holily I find there is this thing hindering. And then I find that God has "condemned sin in the flesh," in the cross of Christ, and that I am "not in the flesh but in the Spirit;" and I say, This is not I, it is only sin: "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

All this deals with the old man; it is the necessity of my condition, but it is not the purpose of God. Many souls have not learned it. They may have learned that their old sins are forgiven, but they do not see that they have died out of their old condition entirely, that Christ has borne the condemnation due to the flesh, and that they are clear. They see that the fruit that the tree has borne is got rid of, but there is the tree that produced them, and that is still there. So I get "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which makes me

free from the law of sin and death." I am "buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Here I get this death to sin; life, too, resurrection, new life, but it is rather the old thing that I am dealing with, or that God is dealing with. I have died to it: "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." I am cleared altogether of the old thing.

Then when I come to the new thing I can look at it in a new way. In Ephesians it is looked at more in its nature; in Colossians it is more what it is thinking of, what are its tastes and feelings. In Ephesians it is God's nature reproduced; God's own blessed nature, righteousness and truth, and we are created in that. It is "the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and holiness of truth." In Colossians it says, it is "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." I know what love is, I know what holiness is, and what divine righteousness, for Christ has died. And this new man is created after God. I am brought into all this in Ephesians; but in Colossians, I press it, we are "renewed in *knowledge*." He has brought into our souls the *knowledge* of what pleases God. This new man is associated with God in its very prin-

ciples and nature, and death to the old man belongs to us in Christ, and is to be realised by faith.

But now another thing. I was *dead in sins*; I was in a condition of total alienation from God. Man had nothing to do with God, and when there was One who perfectly answered to the heart of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, that was just the One man would not have at all. But we have got into another ground now. When Christ was dead for our sins God raised Him up, and set Him at His own right hand up there, and finding me dead in my sins, raised me up with Christ, and made me sit in heavenly places in Him. When I was gone totally away from God, when I was lying dead in my sins, I get this. Christ came down to the cross, went into death for me there, and then I get Him, not as the quickening One but as the quickened One, and this is where the new creation takes its start. I learn by grace that I have died with Christ, and that I am quickened together with Him. I am on another ground altogether. I was totally dead; not a movement of my heart towards God, nothing could get a movement out of it for Him; as He said, "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Then I get that Christ has died for me, or I could not get out of this condition, of course, and that I am quickened with

Him. Christ is now the only life that I have. The old man was dead already in these things; Christ came down to where I was lying dead, and has taken me spiritually out of them, not in my body yet, of course, but He took me out of them, and set me up there where He is Himself. God has put me *into Christ*. We are "created in Christ Jesus." So it says in 2 Cor., "If any man be in Christ he is a new creation." There he looks at it as a whole; it is new creation. Are the lusts that are in my heart, if I do not keep them down, are they of God? Of course not! As to our bodies we are not yet in this new creation, but in Christ we are in it. By this new creation of God He makes me partaker of His own nature. I was dead in sins, but now I have this new creation, and the Second man is my life and not the old man at all. What does the old man belong to? To this poor, sinful, fallen world, though it may be very respectable; to a scene where all that goes on is on the principles, on the rudiments, of the world. I cannot expect the world to go on on my principles, but there is a path that the vulture's eye has not seen; for those who are His, Christ has traced a path through it, for it is not the world the new man belongs to.

As to the old man I have got entirely away from God. Do we not know it? Take the

most respectable, decent man in the world, and the things of Christ have no possible attraction for him. They may be amiable people, clever people, modest people, but there is nothing of Christ in their hearts. The whole thing, the entire condition of man, is that he is dead in sins. He may not be reprobate, nor wicked, nor criminal, that is not the question; it is that he is *dead*. Supposing you take a dead man, has he any movement, any thought as to any possible thing? Of course not! You may galvanise him, and produce movement for a moment, just as a soul may have a momentary interest in Christianity, but it will not last. Man is dead.

Now Christ, of course, could not be holden of death, because there was life in Him, but He actually came down into death, and when God speaks of quickening Christ, and raising Him up to His own right hand, Christ is looked at as a dead man. I was thoroughly dead before God, but now I am made a new creation in Christ Jesus, created "unto good works," and so on. It is a totally new thing; the last Adam, and not the first. I have got now a man who belongs to God's new creation, because he is a new creation. When he was dead in his sins God created him in Christ Jesus: "The Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them;" I am looked at as dead, am *always*

looked at as dead before God, and I never thoroughly know my position until I know this, and that God has made me a new creation. This is true Christianity. Alas, many are not there! They just know that their sins are forgiven, but they do not know that they are dead and risen with Christ, that they are absolutely and totally raised up into another world. God has a world of His own; it is not developed, of course, yet. Christ is sitting as much alone on His Father's throne yet as He was alone in this world, but this new creation has its sphere there where He is sitting, and there is a path for it through this world traced by Himself. Nothing but spiritual mindedness can see its way through the world.

This new man is created "*after God,*" and oh, what a thought it is of blessing! The life that I have now, God has created it to satisfy Himself, and all that He is. The first man was turned into sin and wretchedness through listening to Satan, but the new man was the purpose of God's heart ere ever the world existed. Its sphere is "where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." I do not enlarge upon that scene; I suppose I might not do it properly even if I tried, but there is what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man. It is in heaven, another sphere that we belong to altogether.

We are left down here to go through this world, as the Lord says, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil," but this is not the place He has prepared for us; He has gone to prepare a place for us there, and we are new creatures in Him, that is the new man is, of course. We are "created in Christ Jesus," not in Adam; it is just the contrast to Adam. The blessed Son of God became a man on purpose to die; He came down into our death and sins, on the cross He bore the judgment due to us, and now He is gone up to the right hand of God, to be the beginning and head of this new creation. In the Epistle to the church of Laodicea He is called "the beginning of the creation of God." This world, the old creation, is all ruined and spoiled; He passed through it and has gone up to be the head of the new creation; and as the beginning of that new creation He is our life; we are new creatures. The believer's body belongs to the old creation, his spirit to the new; he is created in Christ Jesus, and belongs to another world altogether, and our everyday trial is how far we are living in this new creation and how far in the old. It is "after God created in righteousness and truthful holiness."

And where will that new creation find what will satisfy it? Only in that scene where it

can be "filled to all the fulness of God." All that can satisfy it is revealed to us in Christ, and the Holy Ghost who is down here brings these things before us. But, while every Christian *has* this nature, or he could not be a Christian, we each of us have to see how far we not only overcome the evil and lusts of our hearts, the old man, which we have to do, of course, but also how far we are living in the elevation that is the sphere of this new creation; how far we keep clear of the things that distract and drag us down in our daily path; how far our hearts are now seeking those things which are above, where He is sitting. By His dreadful death, dreadful to Him, He has delivered us from the death we were in; how far are we living up to the things that He has died to put us into? There are other things that I do not go into, the things that are against us, Satan's power and so on; but, having been dead in sin, God has created us in Christ Jesus, and we have now a place, a portion, there where Christ is gone as man. He unfolds to us in Scripture what that place is. We have got the life, we are thus a new creation as to life, and now how far are we living in the sphere and condition that that life belongs to? It is wonderful to think that God has created us in Christ for His own glory. Christ is the attractive power to our

souls there. What then is this poor world to us? A person just converted thinks nothing of this world at all, and that is the right thing for all of us.

The Lord give us, as quickened together with Christ, as raised up together with Him, all trespasses forgiven, to know what our portion is in Christ, and as new creations to walk in that sphere to which we belong.

† † †

“He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” We may not walk anything short of Christ down here. Supposing we were to copy Abraham think you God would accept that from us? Not at all. I have to walk as Christ walked, with ye Holy Ghost in me. People try to get their experiences to fit in with good men’s experiences; but in the eleventh of Hebrews, God tells us not to look at the good men, but to “look off unto Jesus.” There are Abraham, and Abel, and Moses—very precious and blessed witnesses; look at them all. But why? That you may turn away from them to Jesus.

(J.B.)

THE NEW JERUSALEM.

REV. xxi. 9—27 ; xxii. 1—17.

THE New Jerusalem and Babylon are, to use common language, rivals to one another. In the one there is nothing of man, it is all Christ; in the other there is nothing of Christ, it is all man. The one is the expression and the exhibition, and that is the wonderful thing, of the beauty seen in the man Christ Jesus ; it is His fulness. The fulness is a word not easily explained in our language, but it is not what some people call it, the complement. Complement very often in men's minds means only supplement. The real meaning of the word fulness is just what you would call a full blown rose with every petal seen. The church—the rose—is here ; the Lord is there. He has left the earth, driven away, so to speak, and now all comes out through His body. Christ is the fulness of God, and the church is the fulness or plenitude of Christ. Nothing therefore, can be clearer than the fact that the church, notwithstanding that it has failed, and it has failed grievously, will come out in the future as a magnificent exhibition of the beauty that is in Christ as a man. All will contribute to it then ; now we only contribute to it as we

are suitable to Christ; but then only Christ will be there.

The great instruction for us is, that nothing that is not Christ will be there. This comes home very practically to us, for we may decide as to everything by the question: Is it Babylon, or is it the New Jerusalem? Which is it for? Is it for man's interests or Christ's? Babylon is the aggregation or collection, the bringing together of everything that suits man: while the New Jerusalem is the exhibition of the divine beauty that was seen in Christ on earth.

But why do we get this picture of it here? Why, that being made acquainted with what we are to be in the future, we may learn what will suit Christ now, and that is an immense point. I know what will suit Him. You say, I have heart for Him. I hope every Christian has a heart for Him; but you may love a person, and not know what will suit that person. There is such a thing as awkward love. But here I learn what will suit Him. and hence I know what does not suit Him. I know what I have to set aside, and what to cultivate, and that is the great point.

Here we get a picture of the Bride before the nuptial day. If I may use a familiar illustration, the wedding clothes are brought home before the marriage to be tried on, and thus we

can see what suits Christ morally now. We have the same thing alluded to in a passage similar to this: "Like a bride adorned for her husband." So that I can tell a person a great many things that will suit Christ from this Scripture.

So far as I can count them, there are seven distinct things that show us what will suit Christ. It is not merely something to be put on for the time, but what will suit her for ever as the Bride, the Lamb's wife, made meet for Himself.

One word before I pass on to confirm what I have said, for it is important that there is nothing in the Holy Jerusalem that is not Christ, and that any one thing of self, no matter what it be, will have no place there.

There was not a thing He did that was not beautiful to God. If He ate and drank it was beautiful to God. Whether He looked at Him in private or in public life it was all beautiful. There were thirty years we know little about, but the testimony of God at its close when He came up out of the Jordan after His baptism was, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And the testimony on His public life, which culminated on the Mount of Transfiguration, was the same, "This is my beloved Son." Thus, whether in His private or His public life, He equally pleased God. and

it was from that point He became a victim. He was the expression of righteousness till then, and then He went down to be the sufferer for unrighteousness. That is the difference between the Mount of Transfiguration and the cross. You do not understand Him if you say, as is often said: He went from the cradle to the cross. We see a man in the flesh entitled to go up into the glory: as Peter says, "We were eye witnesses of his majesty" in the flesh. But He comes down to die, for "Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." He goes down to be nothing at the cross, and there glorifies God under judgment as a man. First the glory saluted Him, and then the glory claimed Him, after He had borne the weight of our judgment. There the Son of man was glorified. He went down into death, but God raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His own right hand, so that I have a Saviour in the glory. Not only One who was entitled to glory for Himself, but One who went down under the weight of my ruin, and entitled me to glory also, and thus I get it, thus I shall have glory by and by; and this is the first characteristic of the Bride: she has "the glory of God."

Now what comes out and is so interesting to

mark in the book of Revelation is, that it is at the close you get the Bride, not at the beginning. We have there the church, and of course it is the same thing only in a different aspect. We get the church first, and that all a failure as a vessel of testimony on earth. We see Christ walking through the seven golden candlesticks with His eyes as a flame of fire, for He is indignant at the state of things, indignant that His love for His church is so unrequited. Nothing makes one so indignant as unrequited love. Well, that is the state of things at the opening of this book. And here I make a remark which, though an old one, it is important to keep in mind, namely, that, as soon as the Revelation was given, the Lord could come. When the book of Revelation was given then was fulfilled what was said of John, "If I will that he tarry till I come what is that to thee?" When the book was given, so to speak, Christ had come. Of course I do not mean that He literally came, but there was nothing to prevent Him, and there has nothing happened since that which must have taken place before He could come. Things have grown since then, but everything was there at that time that there is now. Just as I might say twenty trees were planted in a certain lawn 1800 years ago, and not one since. The trees may have grown since, but

only the same twenty trees are there; there is no new tree in the lawn. Well, here at the opening of this book I find the church a failure as a testimony to man. It should have been the light of the world, the representative of Christ as the light to the world when Christ had gone away, like the moon shining in the light of the absent sun where the sun not. That is what the church ought to be, but it has lost that character—lost its place as the vessel of testimony. True, it retains its responsibility still, but no one in his senses would say that it has maintained its responsibility, unless it be those connected with Romanism and such like.

All the light that is in the world is in the church. Still, when Christ restored to the church, as He did to Philadelphia, the truth of His relationship to the church, He did not send Christians to read all the books that had been written by theologians, nor to study the light in the church, but to go back and learn exactly as the disciples did at the first; they had to begin anew. After 1800 years of light they had to go back where they began. To speak plainly, when the light and truth that have come out within the last half century began to come out, the Lord acted exactly as He did with the two disciples at Emmaus, as if not a single book or tract had ever been writ-

ten, nor a sermon ever preached for the last 1800 years. He says you must go back and begin as at the beginning, as He taught the disciples at Emmaus, when, "beginning at Moses and the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." That is the way He makes Philadelphia; He revived the truth of His relationship to the church. That is the 24th of Luke, or man's side, our side, of the 20th of John.

Now what I say is that the church has failed in being the expression to the earth of Christ.

When John sees the Lord at the opening of the book of Revelation, he sees Him indignant at what He beholds, and I believe we ought to be more indignant ourselves. I believe that if a person mixed up with ecclesiastical corruption got near the Lord, instead of being happy in His presence, he would be frightened. And why? Because he would encounter His eyes like a flame of fire. His eyes to the church properly should be as doves' eyes. Why is this? Because, He says, you are mixed up with the evil, the corruption, and I cannot suffer it. Do you think the Lord is not indignant at the state of corruption throughout Christendom? Do you think He tolerates it? He is indignant at it.

I never preach ecclesiastical corruption; I

preach nearness to Christ; but I do not think, indeed I am perfectly certain, that the soul who is in this corruption will, if he is near Christ, get frightened; not about his salvation, but distressed because Christ does not greet him cheerfully.

John knew Him best of all the disciples—had lain on His bosom, knew what His heart was—yet now He falls at His feet as dead. He says, I do not know Him with that countenance at all, and the Lord has to tell him I am the same person I used to be. Well, I speak of the fact that there is a change, not in the Lord's heart, but in His manner. When in the 20th of John He comes to His disciples, they are all glad to see Him, feeling His side and seeing His hands, and He breathing on them, and bringing them into all the blessedness of His own position as the One risen out of the ruin. There He stands among them all, calm, and making their souls to know that there was for them a region of light with not a single cloud to disturb the peace, and then sending them forth into the world with their mission in peace. But He is all changed now.

Let us trace a little how this change came in. I will first give you a sentence, and then I will try to explain it to you. So long as the church maintained its character as the Bride,

it was true in its aspect to man ; but as soon as the church gave up its bride aspect, that is, its heart for Christ, then it failed in its other aspect to man. Its aspect to the Lord is love, its aspect to man, light. It gave up love to Christ, and it lost its light to man. When it gave up the bride aspect, it lost the place of the candlestick, and it not only lost the place of the candlestick, but the light. A person may say it is the candlestick still, but what is the good of a candlestick without the light. It lost the light at any rate.

Turn now to the latter part of the 24th Matthew. Here we see the servant failed. "And if that wicked servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming," &c. Now it is a heart saying, my Lord delayeth His coming. That was not the Bride looking out for the Lord. The true state and position of the church was that of a bride waiting for the bridegroom who had gone away.

Now let me make one remark I omitted just now. When all the animals were brought to Adam to see what he would call them, he gave them names, and search was made to find a helpmeet for him, but it says, "For Adam there was not found a helpmeet for him." That word "helpmeet" is very difficult to understand. The German translation, it is said, is the best rendering of the word, and the

meaning is "something over against you." Then there was a rib taken from him, and with it God builded a woman and brought her to Adam. Hence the word "that he might present it to himself." What for? For Himself and entirely of Himself—something over against Himself. "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Now, I say that the church has failed in the bride aspect, and why? Because the teacher has failed. It is always the case. We might be sure the church would fall after the fall of the teacher. As sure as the teacher goes down the congregation goes down too. Like priest like people. The servant was made responsible, and it was the servant who said in his heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming," &c., and then he goes and mixes up with the world. The church, too, has gone down into the world, but the servant went first.

Now look at the first verse of the 25th chapter. "*Then* shall the kingdom of heaven be likened." It was not always likened. "*Then* shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins who went forth to meet the bridegroom; but while the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept." There is a sleeping saint now, and I will tell you what a sleeping saint

is. He is one that has neither the sense nor the activity of life. He gives everyone the idea that he is not awake. It is not the question whether life is there, but there is no activity of life. And now what we come to is this: the Lord, at midnight, which I believe was about fifty years ago, says, I will wake up the church in her aspect to myself. He does not say He will wake her up and make her a luminary again to the earth. I do not think a thing that fails in the eyes of men in this earth is ever restored to the eyes of men. But why, because it has failed in its aspect to men, and lost its character before men, should it lose its heart for Christ? Now what I see Christ does is this. He says, I will wake up the church in its relationship to myself; and then comes the cry, and I ask you to mark the terms of that cry: "Behold the bridegroom." Not "Behold the bridegroom *cometh*." "Cometh" is an interpolation. If I tell you the Lord is coming, I am putting all upon that coming, not upon Himself. "The Lord is here," that is the cry. And it is a very solemn and yet happy thing, and I am sure I seek to get my own soul awake to the reality of that cry—"He is here." Suppose some one came to the door and cried "He is here, go ye out to meet him," see how we should all drop everything and go. It means an appointed

place of *rendezvous*. We have no word in our language to express it properly.

Now, what is the way in which the Lord acts to His church? He acts upon the heart and the affections of those waiting for Him. He says as it were, I will awake them up, not in the way in which I awoke up Israel, by threatenings and by judgments; that is the way I took with Israel, but I have another way of acting upon the church. And, beloved friends, how blessed a way it is! Of course, He says, I know they have love for me in their hearts, and I will arouse them by a cry, and they will hear. And I believe the truth about the cry is gone abroad. I ask my own soul, "Have I heard the cry from Christ, "Behold the Bridegroom?" What a wonderful loosening effect it would have upon all of us to hear the words, "Behold the Bridegroom." "Then they arose and trimmed their lamps." I believe it is bringing out saints to a church position--to a certain testimony; that I do not deny at all, but it is the effect of having got heart for Christ, not that you are looking to make yourself any testimony to man. You know very well the effect of trying to make a testimony of this kind. Man is always a failure. But I am not looking for this, and I do not expect it to be restored. We have lost our character. In plain words, I do not know

anything a greater scandal upon the face of the earth than the church of God. I do not care what part you take in it, but we belong to the family, and we cannot shut ourselves out. I belong to the Romanists; I cannot deny it; I have got relations among them. You say, But I am not one myself. Ah! but you have got relations there nevertheless, and you cannot deny them. How can you say I have nothing to do with them? That is independency. Independency was thinking it could place itself outside the house of God. All my relations are there. Some of them may be obnoxious, but be it so that they are obnoxious, still I cannot get myself out of it. Like a member of a disgraceful family, I am not to do what disgraces them. If I belonged to a family of thieves, I am not to be a thief myself; still I should belong to the family of thieves. Just as a Jew might say, We rejected Christ. We have His blood upon us as a family, but I will not do it myself. It is to our interest to understand this, because of what Christ awakens the church up to. He awakens up the church to Himself, and the proof is you go out to meet Him. You leave things behind, and this brings out practically that He has become the object of your heart.

Now I must give you an example of one thus waiting for Christ. A person may say, I

really should like to hear of a person thus waiting for Christ. Well, you always get cases in Scripture.

I turn to the 20th John, which brings out a great point, and a very interesting thing, that what we have in infancy, at the beginning, comes out at the end. Well, what we have here is this, that what marked the dawn will mark the close. There was a bride at the early dawn, and there will be a bride at the close. I look for a bride, beloved friends. I say it is the church I am speaking of, not a select company. I do not think Christ will have an elect company only when He comes, but all the saints on earth to greet Him. I do not predict His coming to-night, but I look for Him in my lifetime. I am looking for Him to come as one of those ready to serve, as one of "a people prepared for the Lord."

But what I get in Mary Magdalene is this: the Lord transferring her from the sense of the earthly to that of the heavenly bride. The earthly bride is one who has no enjoyment when she loses the Lord personally. There is no sense of union in the earthly bride. When she loses sight of the bridegroom she is unhappy. So with Mary Magdalene. But the great point I am pressing is this, which to me is the grand characteristic feature of the closing hour, and which I would urge with all the stress and

energy I can command, that what marks the closing hour is *heart*, not intelligence. The ruin of the church is intelligence without heart. Laodicea is intelligence without heart. Let me tell you, beloved friends, that when the truth was first revived it was heart, and very little intelligence. I do not object to people's setting themselves to get knowledge about the One their heart is set on, but heart is what Christ is looking for now, and the first gross characteristic feature in the failure of the church was giving up heart for Christ.

See the case of the church at Ephesus. The church that has had the greatest favour bestowed upon her is the one to whom He has to say, "Thou hast left thy first love." I look at a saint sometimes, and I see there is great intelligence; he is very anxious to get some particular arrangement of truth, dispensational or otherwise—all right in itself; but a greater thing than this is heart. Heart gets intelligence; intelligence never gets heart. If you have got heart you are sure to get intelligence, for the Lord loves to communicate to a person who has got heart.

Now the thing of unspeakable value to the Lord in the case of Mary is her affection for Himself. She has lost Him, and she says, The whole world is intolerable to me without Him. The apostles come to the grave, and John gets

intelligence about Him, and then they go home. Mary says, I could not go home. I say I would rather be Mary Magdalene than John; and we find the Lord communicates to Mary Magdalene, and does not to John. Thus the Lord comes to her, and transfers her from the sense of the earthly bride to the light of the heavenly one, and gives her the intelligence which sets her in the right way: that is the intelligence for the heart.

This is what I find is working out in the present day: too little heart and a great deal of intelligence, but the intelligence is doing the mischief, because absorbed with the intelligence and not heart. If intelligence does not form Christ in us, beware of it. Beware of a bit of intelligence that does not form Christ in you: it ministers to man, and helps on Babylon. What, you say, helping on Babylon with Christian knowledge! I say it could never be Babylon without Christian knowledge. If the truth does not produce Christ, it subsidizes man; and if you help on man, you are diverting from the building Christ is set upon. Christ's building is the church, the New Jerusalem, which He is building out of Himself.

Now the Lord comes and tells Mary, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God: He actually communicates truth to her

which is the kernel of the Epistle to the Ephesians. At any rate, He communicates truth which suits her; transferring her from the feeling of the earthly bride to that of the heavenly one, and giving her intelligence suited to the heavenly one. She can say, I know where He is, and that is all I want to know. I know where I have to do with Him, and my heart is satisfied. What satisfies the heart of the Bride is this, I know where my Lord is. First she says, I do not know where He is. "They have taken my Lord out of the sepulchre, and I know not where they have laid him." She gets truth concerning the place and the relationship of the church. She is the one to whom is communicated these two great truths, and she is sent as the messenger to convey these truths to His brethren. Now she goes off happily; not a bit of distress now.

The church failed in its aspect to Christ, and then lost its aspect to man; and now Christ wakens it up to be in its true aspect to Himself; and, as I am true to Him, I really am in my proper aspect to man.

I leave the things unsuitable to Christ, and go out to meet Him, and I know what will suit Him. That is what I find if I turn to Rev. xxi. There I am looking on what really suits Christ. A person may say, You are not suited to Him. Perhaps not; but I do not admit

that I do not know what *will* suit Him, and I am thinking of what will suit Him, not of reforming the church. I am thinking of the bride. People may challenge me and say, "Where is the church? Surely you do not call that little meeting of yours the church." I say I do not, but what I am looking at is the principle; I mean that the hearts of the saints should be in longing, earnest, looking-out for the return of the Bridegroom, and that they should be in a suitable state to receive Him when He comes.

I say, if you get into suitable circumstances for Him to come, you will find you are far more in church order than if you made order your object. You could not be in church disorder. It is not that I am looking for church order, but I am looking to be brought out of everything unsuitable to Christ. I want to be according to Christ—according to His word.

There are two things which should characterise the Christian: the first is, I must have my heart alive to Him, to His return; and the second is, I am to be representing Him here till He comes back. As the Lord says of His disciples, "I am glorified in them." I study to be unlike the world that will not have Him, and to be like the rejected One.

The greatest glory the Bride ever had, or will have, is to be like Him. It is the Bridegroom forms the Bride.

What the apostle gets here is a picture of the New Jerusalem. "I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.

Now the first character of the Bride is its appearance, and this gives it its whole character: it has "the glory of God." "And her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal."

What a wonderful thing it is! I cannot dwell upon it, but it is extremely interesting. There is not one single thing that has failed in the hands of men that will not be resuscitated and brought into divine beauty by the Lord Jesus Christ. We have failed as the candlestick, but we shall come back again in all the brilliancy of Christ to the earth. It will need no candle, nor light of the sun or moon to lighten it. We shall come back in all the magnificence and brilliancy of divine beauty to the very place where we have been such a complete failure.

And so with the Jew. He will be set again upon the earth in all the perfection of the law—the Lord maintaining it all. No matter what has failed in the hands of men, He will restore it all. So there will be an earthly Bride and an earthly paradise, as well as a heavenly Bride and a heavenly paradise.

I do not believe any soul can have a sense of union with Christ except where He is. I do

not want to distress any soul, but you must know Him where He is. I have union with Christ where He is, in glory. You cannot be perfectly clear of all your state here if you have not got into that region of calm. You have to do with an ascended Christ. How talk of perfect peace if I have not to do with an ascended Christ? Practically we have to learn what the frigate bird does. When a storm comes on it gets above the region of storms, above the clouds, where there is none, and there it stays even for days until the storm is over. I am placed beyond the reach of storms; I am a frigate bird, in that sense, through grace, for I am with Christ in a scene where there is no storm and no clouds. I am united to an ascended Christ. The Lord says, "The glory which thou hast given me I have given them." A person might say, I cannot get this now. I answer, I belong to the glory now; I possess Him now in glory, and I am changed into the same image by the Spirit. I belong to the glory. That is the Solomon aspect. Every believer knows Him in the Jonah aspect; but He is just as much his in the Solomon as the Jonah aspect. If you do not know Him in the Jonah aspect you are not clear of your sins. But He is the King of Glory, and I have come to Him in a scene of unclouded light, which is the expression to my soul of the perfect satisfaction

that God has in the One who died for my sins, and I have perfect deliverance and perfect rest in Him.

This is the first characteristic of the Bride; but properly it is not a characteristic, but the expression of the whole thing.

The second are the walls. These are not for protection merely, but for exclusion. Everything is excluded that defiles. Nothing can come in but what properly suits Christ. Anything that does not suit Him must be excluded. That is a main point with me. The walls therefore are high as heaven. The walls are undoubtedly a figure, but nothing can be clearer than that they were to shut out everything not suited to Christ. It is not looking to be a church, nor to get into church order; not looking to be, as set forth in 1 Cor. xii., a manifestation of divine power to tell upon the whole town. But I am to separate from everything and everybody that does not suit Christ. Why so? Because I know it is the one grand principle with Him, displayed in these walls as high as heaven; it is exclusiveness.

The next characteristic we get is receptiveness: the gates. Here I have to let in everything that is suitable to Christ. Therefore the names of the twelve tribes are here. So the foundations have the names of the twelve apostles. There was no person con-

nected with the city prior to the apostles. People who talk of Old Testament saints being in the city make a mistake. Every builder knows the foundation is put in the first thing. And so with Christ and His building; for it is Christ's own building. He brings in this entirely to eclipse what man has built, and therefore it is "a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

The foundations, then, are the first laid, and the names of the twelve apostles are in them. The twelve tribes are connected with the gates, showing, figuratively, that all the people of God would come in, all belonging to God would find a place there. But then they are not the city. The church is the city; the Lamb's wife is the city. There will be many persons enjoying the city, but not the city. The walls and the houses of this place are the city, not the people who inhabit it. His church is the city, and the nations walk in the light of it. It is only confounding the figure to make other saints a part of the city.

Let me lay aside the figure for a moment. Let me try to understand what a wonderful thing the church will be coming down as a body of light—coming back to earth as a beautiful expression of what Christ is. Everything and every person to be kept out that is not of Christ, and every thing that is of Christ

to come in. It gives much for contemplation, but who can understand it without the figure? This figure is used that the saints on earth might have the benefit of knowing what the glorified church is like, and it is for this purpose.

Everyone knows a candlestick is a figure, but how expressive. God is obliged to use figures from the greatness of the subject, and the incompetency of language to express it. Often great minds use a great deal of figure, because they have not sufficient command of language to express their ideas. God does, because of the greatness of the subjects He is dwelling on. Who could sit down and write a book and tell me what that city means without the figure? He would have to explain a wonderful thing, the very size of the walls and everything else. Take the whole character of the thing.

Then comes the streets of gold. I know from this characteristic what will suit Christ: perfect, divine righteousness in walk. That is the streets of gold. That is what I shall be by-and-by. I am not it now, but I know what will suit Him, though I shall not be it actually till I am with Him. It is the bridegroom forms the bride, and I get like Him as I get near the Bridegroom, because, as I know what will suit Him, I get clear of the things that

do not suit Him. I say He will not have this or that, and I walk away from it. It is really the effect of going forth to meet Him. It has produced this.

I say I am not seeking to revive the church, but what I am seeking is to have souls alive to the coming of the Lord, because they who are waiting for the Lord seek to maintain what is due to Christ in their walk and ways on earth.

Then, "there is no temple there," no oracle. Man has his temple, that we all know. We have none. We gather on this principle. When we come together we have Him in the midst. We have nothing imposing to look to as a temple.

The next characteristic is, "no need of the sun neither of the moon to shine in it," which means natural light. We do not need human learning, we have Christ. We do not want natural light, for Himself is the light thereof.

Now the more you look into all these beautiful characteristics the more you see how the Bride will be when she comes down from heaven, a beautiful exhibition—I cannot find a better word—of Christ. She will come down arrayed with Christ, one magnificent display of all the beauty of Christ. There is the moral expression here of all that Christ was upon earth.

And now comes the seventh—the water of life. This is the only one at present available. In the 17th verse of the 22nd chapter we get what is her behaviour, what her mode of acting. What is she to do? What ought a bride to do? I am not talking of individuals, I am rather looking for the church. I do not know how the Bride will awake. I see the Lord loosening people out of system, but they become Laodicean. Laodicea is as much out of system as Philadelphia. I dread people getting out of system, and not getting to Christ. If you have real heart for Christ you separate yourself from everything unsuited to Christ, because you know what suits Him.

Now what is the remarkable point here? In the 10th verse, “I am the bright and morning star.” Bright because it is the approximation of His coming. It is an approximate thing, for “the Spirit and the Bride say come.” Now I am talking of your mission. What is your duty? what are you doing? If you are asking Him to come, you must be in a state of readiness to do it. That is what I feel is necessary, for a person to be real. To use a plain word, it is an impertinent thing to ask a person to come to you, when you are not ready to receive him; it is not good taste. The very fact that I ask Him to come implies that I am ready for Him; I wish Him to come, in fact;

“The Spirit and the Bride say come,” that is the first thing. A real person can say this; that is, one who is ready to go to Him; because, he says, I have nothing to keep me here, nor to distract me, I am perfectly free of the things here.

Then we drop down to another stage: “Let him that heareth say, come.” Now I am anxious to know what you are doing. I say, first, our work is to ask the Lord to come; and, secondly, to say to all the saints, Let us all see to it. I do not like to be alone; like Mary Magdalene, I go and tell them to say “Come.” Let us all say, “Come.”

Now we drop down to a yet lower stage: “Let him that is athirst come.” Is there an unsettled one? Let him come. The corporate thing is maintained.

Then I go down still lower to the lowest, the greatest point of need of all, and that is the evangelical point: “And whosoever will let him come, and take the water of life freely.” I get down from the highest occupation the heart can be occupied with to the lowest state of soul upon earth. Well, that is the church’s mission. Travelling down, like every good thing does, “for every good and every perfect gift” cometh downwards. A person who has the true spirit of an evangelist here goes with delight of heart while looking to the Lord to come, looking to

the saints to join him in the cry, "Come," and dropping down to the thirsty soul, going out to the utmost boundaries of the earth, crying, "Whosoever will let him come, and take the water of life freely."

Thus, beloved friends, I have endeavoured to trace for you what Christ is occupied with now, what He is now forming. "He loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it, having purged it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it unto himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

I have no doubt you will find it a comfort and a joy to your heart to say, I have heard the cry, and I am looking to Him to come, and I am going out to meet Him, dropping everything in my ways, and habits, and associations, unsuitable to Christ. I say I know what will suit Him. I may be a bad hand at getting clear, but I know what is pleasing to Him, and I am determined, through His grace and power, not to connect myself with anything that will not suit Him.

(J. B. S.)

“LOVE NOT THE WORLD.”

1 JOHN 2.

WHY is it that the people of God are not in full enjoyment of the gospel? Many whom one recognizes as fully the Lord's have but little joy in the Holy Ghost, because they have either never had a clear view of the gospel, or because, having been clearly seen, it has not been sustained in power for their own comfort and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this Scripture different classes of saints are brought before us. We read of both “little children” and “children.” The former is a particular class; the latter, the whole family. As to particular classes we find babes, or little children, young men, and fathers; and in the details given in connection with “babes” and “young men,” an answer is presented to this question as to the want of peace in many cases.

We find a certain thing is known to the babes; they have a certain power and a certain place, and, in that place, they are as able to walk and to please God as are the fathers in their place.

The babes have a certain knowledge as to two things. The *Christ* is come. They know the gospel: that God anointed His holy servant Jesus, sent Him into the world as the head of a people; "and ye," says the apostle, "have heard" of "*Antichrist*" too; the man indwelt of Satan instead of by God. The babes know these two heads. Satan is working the whole family of man, as far as he can, up to a certain point, and that, the setting up of one to be worshipped instead of God. That is Satan's aim. But God has stepped in and set His Son, virgin-born, at His right hand, and that which belongs to that Christ in the world has a master spirit in it above the master spirit of the world. There are but the two powers; each soul is either subject to Christ and led of the Spirit, or under the dominion of the spirit of darkness.

He says, "Ye know the truth, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is anti-christ that denieth the Father and the Son." Here I get what gives my soul firmness. If I fail as much as Peter, or more than any other, the *truth* is that Christ is still sitting at the right hand of God for me; all my inconsistencies cannot change that eternal truth of God. And you cannot set aside Christ without setting aside the Father too, this Son of the

Father who is connected with all the plans and affections of the Father. What had they “heard from the beginning?” “That Jesus is the Christ.” Here I have perfection as God sees it and gave it to me. If people talk of development I say they are going beyond God, for He has given me Jesus as the expression of His mind, and I cannot get beyond that: “Him that was from the beginning.”

This is the marrow of peace when the soul is tried; God’s certificate to my soul that the value of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ belongs to it individually. People often say, It is mine, because I have had such deep experiences. God has not said that. He has said that there is the testimony of His Christ, and that if that dwells in me I shall continue in the Father and in the Son. You have lost peace. Why? Because doubtless you have forged a link of your own, and not one of God’s making, so that directly happy joy or sense of experience is gone you are miserable. Keep fast hold of the testimony of God about His Christ. There is not a single bit of rest apart from the person of the Lord Jesus and God’s testimony about Him, and nothing could be more gracious than God not allowing peace apart from the way He has given it, for nothing else has sanctifying power. Though only fit for Antichrist, God has taken me up and con-

nected me with His Christ, but if I turn away from Him how can I know it all mine ?

Every step of the way you walk with God you find He has a path of His own. The "babes" were, as it were, closeted in the nursery where they were to "desire the sincere milk of the word, that they might grow thereby." They had to learn how everything was shut up for them in Christ, and when they had got this they had to leave the place of being babes. Suppose one happy in the gospel goes forth without any idea of what is in his own heart and in the world, that system opposed to the sphere apart from nature in which grace has set him, human tastes and the like will act upon him and he will fall into association with what is in direct opposition to God. He cannot then have peace, for he has failed in carrying out God's thoughts about him in connection with His plans in Christ.

God's plan is to have a people on earth connected with Himself in heaven, His house on high their dwelling place, and they acting here according to the position in which God has placed them, though having the flesh within with its lusts and desires. Can the babes come out of the nursery, and go and connect themselves with that which crucified the Son, of which the "friendship is enmity with God," without losing as an immediate result peace of

heart and conscience? Why does my peace all ooze out? Often does the answer come, "Because I am walking carelessly through the world, forgetting it is the place where Christ was crucified." A child of God may go as far as Lot did, but joy cannot be then sustained. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" My cup of joy can never be full if the world where God is not the centre is the place where I am found and in the spirit of which I am walking.

What is the world? There are definitions of it past all calculation, but God's answer is, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." "*All that is in the world!*" What all the pomp of the great city, its chariots, its horses, its revels? No! *Lust!* And what is lust? Desire after a thing, it is answered; but that is no definition. In one sense no heart ever desired glory, honour, and pomp as Christ did, for God has promised them to Him.

Lust is the stretching forth the hand to take something for *self*. If God says, Take, it is no lust to take; but if the very crown prepared

by God for you were there, and you were to take it yourself unbidden by Him, it would be lust. God has sheltered us in Christ. Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. The Spirit seeks the things of God; the things that are the best for us, and that are for the glory of God. Lust is taking for myself, and the better the thing the worse it is. Lust is the very essence of the world, and "Lo, I come to do *thy* will" His way. Wherever there is "Thus saith the Lord," though, it be going to the stake you will find a joy and a calmness never found in stolen waters taken for self. A path utterly unblameable may be pursued, and yet God may say, I did not put you there. And this comes in to interfere with the sustainment of quiet peace in the heart. Am I walking as thou wouldst have me Lord? is the question for each heart. "Lo, I come to do *thy* will," simple obedience to God, is the one great thing for the soul.

(G. V. W.)

VERY soon we shall find that what was not Christ was not life at all.

(J. N. D.)

FRAGMENTS.

THE heart not subject to the word of God kicks at the restraints it meets with in it ; but the moment it is subject it likes to do His will. The word comes in to give devotedness the right shape ; if I have devotedness apart from God's word I shall get it in a wrong shape. But the heart that is subject will be catching the mind of the Lord. The question is : Would He like me to do this ? Then go on. Remember David's mighty men at the well of Bethlehem. David did not turn round, and say to them, Go, and get me a drink of water. But there were those standing by who caught the desires of David's heart. Did they only say, We would like to go ? No. They put their swords by their sides, and went clean through the Philistines. They did not think of them ; they did not measure themselves ; but they got the water, and laid it at David's feet.

(J. B.)

THE *sealing* of the Spirit is, I know that I *am* God's property. The *earnest* of the Spirit is that I have *got* property.

(J. B. S.)

“ABIDE IN ME.”

JOHN XV.

I WOULD remark first that all the blessings spoken of here, are connected with the responsibility of those attached to Christ. It is not saving grace, that seeks and brings in the sinner, but the path in which the believer is to walk, and how he can keep in this path in the joy Christ gives.

The vine, as a figure, has nothing to do with the church: individuals are here spoken of as branches, but the vine is not a figure of the church. In chapter xiii. the Lord had spoken of going away to heaven, and He washes the disciples' feet. In chapter xiv. He unfolds the joy He is going to prepare for them in the Father's house; He tells them what had been manifested to them in Himself: the Father, revealed in the Son, and the coming of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, when they would know their union with Him, He in them, and they in Him, is what He puts before them in this chapter.

Two things are distinct: first, the place they had whilst He was on earth, He, the vine, they the branches; and, second, in chapter xvi., the heavenly part is brought out.

The vine is not the Head in heaven. You

could not plant a vine there. In heaven there is no pruning or looking for fruit. It is what the church is on earth, and if there is a false branch, it is cut off; it is the earthly condition of the church, and the responsibility of the disciple as to walk, and keeping and holding fast the joy that belongs to him in Christ. “These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” If it were only the question of simple grace to the sinner here, it would cut it dreadfully short, for it is only *friends* that He speaks of laying down His life for, not *enemies*; it is not here that He is the friend of sinners, but it is if they are obedient they are His friends; “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you;” it was the intimacy they were in with Him.

They are looked at as disciples, and told how they may have Christ’s joy abiding in their hearts; they are called to walk so as to abide practically in Him: “That my joy might remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”

“I am the true vine.” Israel was not the true vine. Israel was spoken of by the prophets under the figure of a vine, and it brought forth wild grapes. Israel thought that when Messiah came, He would be the topmost branch. If we look at Isaiah xlii., after the rejection of

Israel, as God's servant, Messiah is brought in as the true servant, and then, in chapter lxxv., the remnant are treated as servants. Therefore, instead of Israel being the vine, and Christ the best branch, Christ Himself is the vine, and His disciples the branches.

By nature I am in the first Adam, but when in Christ, I am in the second Adam. The vine was planted on earth and failed as to Israel, but the true vine can never fail; He brought forth the best fruit when tested and tried in every way, and He sets His disciples to bear fruit, saying, you are clean now, you are responsible to bear fruit. In ch. xiii., they were not all clean, but Judas having gone out He says, "Now ye are clean."

A branch when broken off and cast forth, marks a mere professor. If the union of the church as the body is understood, such a thought as a member being taken away could not be conceived: the body would not be perfect if this could be. If I am a member of the body, I belong to Christ Himself; I am taken into all the privileges He has brought His people into.

But as professing His name upon earth, as branches of this vine, we need pruning to bear more fruit, and that is what the Father, as the husbandman, is occupied with here. How wonderful for the people of God to be able to

say He is thus occupied with them ! The Lord is watching for fruit ; the Father pruning the branches to make them bear it.

“ Now ye are clean,” made white as snow. Where the word has been received, sinners are washed clean ; but that is not the question here ; it is “ Abide in me and I in you.” It is entire confidence, entire dependence, and constancy of heart in looking to Christ and getting all from Him. I repeat it must be an *entire* dependence. I may say I am dependent on Him, and something else start up and off I go : we trust to self, and so we have not present dependence on Christ. How often in any difficult circumstance our minds start up, as if we could do something ; when we have not the consciousness of having Christ with us, we get discouraged by difficulties, but if one gets the mind of God and one starts with Him, the difficulty is gone ; without that one doubts whether one is in the right path, and, being confused, the difficulty becomes greater.

“ He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.” What wonderful blessing, if made clean ! Have we no desire for the glory of God ? No affection towards Him ? He has put us where He can look for fruit, though where everything around may hinder fruit-bearing ; but if God

has saved us and given us a portion with His Son in glory, what we have to do is to serve Him and bear fruit where He has set us. It may be a very little branch, but it is to bear fruit, that the world may see Christ in those who are His down here while He is away. We have laid up our happiness in heaven; all is settled as to future joy, but He leaves us down here to shew Him forth amongst those who know Him not.

He turns next to professors, and it is, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." His own never can be cast forth.

"If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." It is not enough simply to abide in Christ; His words must abide in us also. I get the path of wisdom from His words, and I am called to walk in a path which is the wisdom, goodness and power of God, in a world of sin, not to set the world right by law, but to manifest Christ's goodness in a world that knows Him not. That is the path that the vulture's eye hath not seen; the divine Life has created for Himself a path through this world. I am not speaking of church discipline, but of God shewing the path of divine wisdom and the path of divine life in this world.

At present God is not exercising His *power*; it is *subjection*, what Christ was here; He was the subject, obedient man, we are to follow Him, walking even as He walked. The word of God is the expression of that divine path, it is the one single thing that has come from God. The Lord says, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” He was the obedient man. I am to live by every word that comes out of God’s mouth, and it is as perfect as Himself. As the man under human authority receives the commander’s word and carries it out intelligently, so it is with the believer, he must carry it out, and live by every word and abide in Christ with perfect, entire confidence.

It is just here that the heart is tested. Very often I think I should be happier in carrying out my own will, and that is where I get apart from Christ. Directly a believer’s heart is in fellowship with Christ, not seeking his own will, but the Lord’s, it may be but a lowly little place, but it is Christ’s divine path of glory, and there he gets the daily exercise of life. Wanting to do our own will, is the beginning of all evil. Do you think that you can make yourself happier by doing your own will? by doing something that you like, something that

is of the world? Then you get away from Christ.

We find here the way we are being modelled : "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Can I say I have His word abiding in me? Then, I have His own divine direction; I am filled with the knowledge of His will, and entirely dependent on Him. But suppose awful difficulties arise in the way, giants and fenced cities. Well, ask what you will; the walls tumble down. The difficulties in the way keep the believer leaning only the more on Christ in a lowly place. In difficulties we have to believe what we ask will be done for us a great deal more. If we ask for our lusts we shall get quails and judgment with it, eating of the fruit of our own ways; but here it is the most entire, blessed confidence in Him; having His word, I ask Him, and I get the things I ask. If I have His mind, I command His power. We cannot ask for what we will, but for what He does. We know when we have simple and humble dependence on Him, and when we have His word abiding in us so that we know His mind and will, and if so, we may ask what we will; we command His heart.

What a wonderful place of privilege to be in! We cannot have it in heaven as down

here ; having Christ and bringing forth fruit ; it it entire identification of heart with the Lord Jesus ; and the Lord grant us more of it ! A greater closeness to Himself ; carried on and exercised by His word. To know His mind, and having His power to carry out what we ask ; what might we not have ! I am not looking for miracles, but in answer to prayer I do expect the exercise of His power. I feel how saints in this respect come short. If we have faith expecting an answer, we shall see difficulties, we do not know how, melted and gone. I cannot but think how short we come of abiding in Him, and having what we will done for us, getting an answer, if we see a brother sinning, or dying a natural death.

“ Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.” It is our glory and blessedness that He is thinking of, laid up with God. Meanwhile, He says, you go and serve me ; I want you to bear much fruit.

“ As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.” Here love takes a divine character. Here Christ gives on the one hand an expression of His own entire dependence on the Father, and, on the other, the Father’s eternal delight in Him when down here, coming forth in, “ This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased ;” and, as we read elsewhere, He “ grew in stature, and in favour with God

and man." There was in Him the unfolding of all that was perfect, and of the most blessed obedience and love, that which was the Father's delight; and He says, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." I have been with you in this world as my Father has been with me.

Beside this, there is His delight in them. Do you not think Christ's actual life when down here was the delight of the Father? So, as we abide in Christ's words and follow Him, His delight is in us. His heart has been watching over us with earnest delight, as His Father's did over Him.

He says, I want you to be keeping close to me, that the outgoing of my delight may be unchecked: "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." What was His path down here? Doing the will of God, and keeping His commandments. If you want to give Him delight you must keep His commandments, even as He kept His Father's.

When the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle of the testimony, the camp of Israel broke up and departed from Sinai; when they started, the ark went before them, to seek out a resting place. He led them. When the cloud stayed, they stayed; when the cloud was

taken up, they went on ; a figure of our dependence on Him who is leading and guiding His people. In walking with Christ we can never walk in darkness ; if I walk in darkness, it is because my body is not full of light : “ He that is spiritual, discerneth all things.” If I am only humble enough to set about what Christ puts before me, I shall always get direction. I am sure, as far as I am doing His will and waiting on Him, to get direction from Him. They *always* had the cloud, but our discernment of His will depends on our spiritual state. It is no uncertainty here, no question of His unchanging love, but of our *way* being His delight. He says, I want you to walk as I walked, to delight me as I delighted God.

We find two things here. The blessedness of Christian life, bearing fruit, and doing what Christ did, and the blessedness of enjoying His love : “ These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full.”

Alas ! If we look at ourselves, we see how far we come short of the enjoyment of walking in the present path of Christ. If we fail, there is sovereign grace to meet us, but it is the joy of Christ Himself that is put before us here. If you think of your failure instead of Christ, do you not find that your joy is not full ? If

you look up, is there not often the consciousness of something allowed of the old nature, that does not belong to the machinery of the new? Joy can only be full, as the heart is going on simply in communion with God. The outflowing of this ought to be simply what we get in intercourse with Him; it is joy in God; the heart entering into the relationship of love, where Christ has put us, and not law.

Next, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." This increases the blessedness. We do look for love and interest to be shewn, but we have to look more to this, that we show activity of love and interest to others, "as I have loved you," our pattern. He was above our infirmities, and so, able to help. If a brother's infirmities meet mine, we clash, and it often requires a good deal of grace to see a little grace in another. You may see what is harsh in another, but if you had grace enough, you would see a little bit of Christ there. Christ was, in His unselfish love, entirely above their failures; He could adapt Himself to meet each one's needs. That is what we have to do, not to pass over evil, Christ never did that. It is a blessed, divine principle, and a relationship that gives such a perfect interest, that if one suffers, all the other members suffer with it. The moment I get a brother, I get Christ, in a

sense: “No one ever yet hated his own flesh;”
 “These things I command you that ye love one another.”

But if walking so as Christ would have you, as Himself, you must expect the world to hate you as it hated Him: “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” What a wonderful thing! Christ putting His disciples into His own place, to get the same hatred as Himself, whilst He is away. But, by abiding in Him, and His word abiding in them, they can draw from His power and get what they will, and have His joy fulfilled in themselves. He had a deep and constant source of joy that nothing could dry up: constant communion, and favour with His Father, and that is what we are to have with Himself, called to walk with Him, His present favour resting on us, that our joy may be full. The hand of God carries us on that we may bear fruit in the path where no vulture’s eye can look, a path where the light of life in Christ shines, and where is never any darkness to those who walk with Him.

We shall find it a hard test to the heart while walking with Him in such a world, but where does the path of rejection end? In the same glory that He is in. “Where I am

there shall also my servant be." It only requires confidence in His love to carry us on.

If we are hated by the world, we cannot wonder at it: "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." Poor feeble things, we may be, and the world gladly seizes on things in us which would be passed over in others, but we may be quite sure it is good for us.

Lastly, He speaks of sending the Comforter: He would come when He sent Him from the Father. Christ sent Him to be the revealer of the heavenly glory, to be a witness to His people of the glory He Himself has entered into; and "we all beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit."

Are your hearts content to abide in Christ? to know nothing in this world but Christ? If not, you will find some evil thing allowed, that is hindering.

The Lord give us purpose of heart to walk with Him, and to abide in Him! Humble and dependent may we be kept near Himself, for "He giveth grace to the humble." May our hearts lean on Him and look to Him, knowing His love all sufficient and He Himself ever near us.