

THE  
GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

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“Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.”—Eph. vi.

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PSALM LXIX.

THERE are three states of suffering in which souls may be. First, that which is their portion as sinners under judgment; second, the sufferings of a saint for righteousness, or love's sake; third, suffering as the consequence of sin under the government of God.

This last is not judgment and condemnation for sin, nor is it properly the chastening of a saint, though it may be used as such, and brings exercise of soul in such an one. Thus the consequence of Adam's transgression was to eat bread in the sweat of his brow, and the woman was to have sorrow in child bearing, both connected with the government of God. The suffering of the Jews in the latter day will be connected with this kind of suffering, though it will seem as chasten-

ing too. It is more difficult to get hold of this third kind of suffering. In it God is dealing with a man about his sins without his coming under condemnation. No doubt the Lord Jesus went through all these kinds of sufferings; of course, the first and last as saving or sympathizing with others. In representing God, bearing His reproaches, He suffered for righteousness' sake. For His love He had hatred. This was one character of His suffering. The next was that of suffering for the expiation of our sins. Of this, though it is not my purpose now to speak, we can never think enough. We can never get peace until we know it. "He was bruised for our iniquities." "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree."

The third class of sufferings He did not go through, except anticipatively, just at the close of His life, when He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." If He had been in it all the time, He would not have spoken of going through it afterwards.

At the close, He enters into a new scene, not only in the way of expiation, but Satan comes back after he had departed for a season. (Luke iv. 13.) He said, "Henceforth I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh." That character of suffering is not the present forsaking of God. However, as from Him, Satan stirred up the whole world against Him; but besides that, He brought the terribleness of distress from a broken law, the power of death, and an angry God to distress his soul.

We get the same character of suffering in the remnant. They go through all the consequences of their conduct in the government of God, though the condemnation they have deserved will not come upon them. Satan will have come down, knowing that he has but a little time. All his violence will be directed against Israel in that day. We have a picture of it in Job. Satan was let loose against him; his friends were against him, and what was worse, the terrors of God were drinking up his spirit. So with them. Satan will

use all his power to bring his terrible-ness into their hearts. To Peter the Lord said, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," when the same occasion for exercise was coming upon him. The remnant will be sustained by the High Priest during all the exercises and trials of heart they will go through.

All through the *life* of Christ, He never calls God *God*. We never find Him do so in the Gospels until the cross. It would not have been walking in the power of the relationship which was always unhindered. When on the cross, which was expiation, He does not say, "Father," until all being over, He was commending his spirit to Him, but "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" All that was against us was there coming out against Him. The favour of God was hidden from Him. Righteousness was coming forth in the execution of judgment for sin. Never was there a moment of the Father's more perfect delight in Him; but if God was dealing according to His nature and being, it must be

against sin, and therefore all was against Him, for He was made sin for us. As soon as He has gone through it, He uses both terms, "Father" and "God." He comes out as having done the work, and when He has wrought the atonement, He can bring us into the blessed fruit of it. Not only are we brought to the *Father* but to *God*, and all that was against us before is for us now. Righteousness, love, &c., are all made for us. The very same things He is in His nature that were against the sinner are for the saint. Christ, risen out of death, and having entered (sin being put away) into the unclouded joy of God His Father's countenance, when He had perfectly glorified Him, says to His disciples, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." All that is connected with these names of God and Father flow out to us. We are holy and without blame before Him in love. "I have manifested thy name," He says of the Father; but now He could reveal *God* to them.

This would have been condemnation except through the cross. This is the effect of expiation on our position before God, besides bringing us into the place of children through adoption. Christ, then, never addressed God as God during His life. When Christ is made sin, then this relationship comes out directly: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God in His nature was there dealing with that which was contrary to it, that is, with *sin*. The sin is fully dealt with here, according to the nature of God; Christ has revealed God to us, after He has gone through it. All the revelation of God against sin was wrath; God's face was hidden. In His suffering, then, Christ was quite alone. It stood by itself, it was expiation. Chastening for sin is quite another thing. There is love in that; in the other it was wrath, and the effect of it is, not a single cloud is left between us and God.

The suffering of Christ for righteousness' sake is intelligible enough in its nature, though its depth be hard to

fathom. Our place in connexion with it is also simple, filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, suffering for love's sake; and this may go very deep into the soul too; still there is joy with it if not in it, as we find Christ Himself having meat to eat. Going through the world, His heart was refreshed by the thought of souls getting blessing, and yet there was suffering with it. He had consolation from His Father according to His perfect faithfulness, and *we* may feel with Him, as well as He feel with us. When souls reject the gospel, or the Church is going on badly, or saints are losing their own blessing; all this will affect us if we are not insensible, but we shall have balm in suffering in this way.

This 69th Psalm expresses this kind of suffering. Christ says, "I am the song of the drunkard." "In the multitude of thy mercy hear me." He has access to His Father, getting refreshment from Him. "My prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time." These sufferings of Christ were deeper, I believe, than we have any idea of.

He had all kinds of sufferings on the cross; still, that from man disappeared in comparison with that for sin from God.

There is often in God's ways with men suffering for righteousness' sake and suffering for sin, or to prevent it, at the same time.\* This often causes perplexity. For the Jews, under a sense of a broken law, there will be terrible trial of faith. They will see the ungodly in prosperity, while it is promised to the godly, "they shall flourish like the palm tree." The consequence of following in the way of righteousness brings dreadful trial on them, and yet what they go through is also in consequence of their sins, yet *not condemnation*. The nation has received antichrist, because they would not have the Lord Jesus. At the same time the terrors of the law enter the soul of the righteous, and Satan uses it all against them, urging that they have broken the law. Death is the judgment of God for sin. Who has the power of

\* See 2 Cor. xii. and Heb. xii.



it? Satan. They cry out in their distress, and God delivers them; but Satan presents death as a terror, and as the judgment of God, to bring their sins to remembrance. They suffer from their sins, but yet they have integrity, and are in the place of exercising integrity. They are brought so low, that though faith is not extinct, they scarcely have any. "Shall he find faith on the earth?" They cry, "How long!" There is faith in the word, but it is near coming to an end. They are like a teil-tree in winter, with no signs of life in it, their leaves all cast. Yet this remnant is the sap of life in the midst of death, and the prophet says, "How long!" The expression "how long!" implies some faith left. They are as though they were cast off, yet hold to God's promise. It cannot be for ever. There is the integrity of heart which will not wilfully break the law, and a terror of judgment, knowing what sin has deserved. The weapon Satan will use in that day is the *truth* of God; not the grace but the truth. Many souls are

in this state now, because of integrity of heart, and their sins are all brought up to the conscience. Satan is there, and the Lord allows him to sift the soul, because He has to lay the sins on the conscience, and it is a very terrible exercise when the grace which meets the need is not known. The sorrow of this Christ went through, when He was going indeed to bear the sins. He went through it *for* them. If they feel the terror of judgment for their own sins, which they will ultimately escape, that they may morally learn their state and need, and God display His righteous government, Christ went through the wrath, and did not escape, and at the close of His path went through the anticipation of it, which Satan, as the prince of darkness, pressed upon His soul, perfect in looking to God there as everywhere, and the spring by His Spirit to them for right feelings, when they pass through the shadow of it as an exercise of heart. This suffering of the remnant is not suffering *with* Christ. They get a little comfort by an influx

of hope, and they are down again in the mire. It is an alternation of almost despairing and hoping. Christ never went through this in His life, but He did go through it in death, Gethsemane, and drawing near to, only that He was perfect in His feelings in it.

A redeemed soul may be going through many exercises of conflict between self and Satan to learn there is no good in itself. We are cast on a good out of ourselves. There must be practically the knowledge of good and evil in the conscience. Different characters need different experience. If there be pride of nature, where there is much levity of soul, or where dangers and temptations are before us, great exercise may be needed to make the value of Christ known. You cannot prescribe to God a form of experience, but the soul must learn from Christ good and evil; all the good as coming from Him, and the evil as in our will and nature where it lives. Some often go through great exercise that they may be used to others. But this

solemn question of what good and evil is must be learned under the government of God and with Satan against us. Christ went through the trial of this. No evil indeed was in Him and perfect good was, but His perfect obedience as a man was put to the test and He was tempted in all points like as we are, except sin. Would He stop in obedience because of what it cost? Would He allow the entrance of evil into His soul? Blessed be God! we know His obedience was perfect even unto death and the drinking of that bitter cup, and not the smallest thought of evil could ever find an entrance into His soul. The question of good and evil was tried to the uttermost, but only to show the utter exclusion of all evil by one who was always good, and walking in perfect good kept the evil always at a distance as such; that is, was perfect as man, perfect with God. In us the conflict and trial ends in the full acknowledgment of evil in ourselves and of perfect good in Him, and the victory too of good received from Him in life and

maintained by Him in grace in our hearts. His soul then was to go through the conflict, not as though He had the evil, but as tested by Satan and doing it for God's glory and our sakes, whether in the presence of good and evil He will go through all and glorify God; and He says, "As my Father gave me commandment, even so I do." Then He was to go through it as a real man. He says to His disciples, "Tarry ye here;" but all that man is was used by Satan. Then His own forsake Him. He is left without comfort, which yet His soul would seek and did, and left exposed to Satan without any and alone. "This is your hour and the power of darkness." Angels, indeed, came and ministered unto Him. This loneliness the remnant will not be tried by. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another." No sorrow was like His. All that *man* was is turned against Him. He looked for comforters but found none. Then He goes through the power of death. (I am not speaking of expiation now, but of death as an evil pressing on man and

Satan's power in it, yet as terror looking forward.) Was He to give way? Was He to take it from Satan and so enter into the temptation and shrink from it, or fall into despair, or go through in obedience and drink this cup of wrath, taking all this evil and bearing the judgment of God for it? He went through "with strong crying and tears." He went through as none other could. The remnant will, in their measure, go through this exercise as an exercise of heart. Christ takes up language for them, "Thou knowest my foolishness," &c. That was not His own; He takes up the language with Israel that He may go through with them and sympathize with them, (not in the way of yet actually working out expiation.) He will come to them in it but not take them out of it, because they must learn what sin is—learn it in integrity and in the presence of Satan, fearing lest they should not get from under it, though indeed they will be delivered. He can come and sustain the soul under the trial and inspire faith under it, and show them how to

bear it. They are to be sifted as wheat, the grain not falling through, though the chaff does. He can minister faith to them, as to Peter, with a look at the right moment. They will see there is something to hope for. They may say, After all there is grace for a poor sinner, and then be sinking down in the mire again as bad as ever, while learning what sin is morally before God and under the power of Satan, appealing to God against the thing He has pronounced judgment upon. Thus they will learn the evil of Satan and the flesh and bless God for deliverance. They will be walking in darkness while hearing the word. There is no praise nor liberty in that state. (See Isaiah l. 10.) In Christ there was no inward darkness, but the whole power of it, as He says, was pressed upon His soul. "This is your hour and the power of darkness," and His soul was sorrowful even unto death. We should not be in that condition. The path of obedience is not the path of darkness to us, though there may be darkness in getting into it. They are told to trust.

There is something for faith to lay hold of, a rope to cling to in the waters, until they come to know the full redemption accomplished.

It is important for us not to miss a perception of all these different sufferings of Christ. We should not go into it merely critically—that is ruinous—but with the heart. It is most important also to remember that in expiation He was *alone*, without a ray of comfort, all light hidden. Besides, men being all against Him, He has the power of Satan to meet, and then the wrath of God. Perfect, absolute obedience, came out when put to the test. He went through everything. He was left alone in His own perfectness with evil there, made sin—and wrath came upon it—for God to be glorified. What the sufferings of Christ were, none can fathom. What this grand solution of the question of good and evil. We shall reap the blessedness in perfect good, blessed be the name of our God! where no evil can enter.

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## THE TABLE OF THE LORD.

1 Cor. x.

The Lord's table is spoken of in this chapter as the CONFESSION of the Lord by those who partake. Various, we know, is the aspect given to this precious legacy left to us of the Lord. Circumstances in the conduct of the Corinthians brought it into another point of view.

The Israelites were baptized unto Moses and the judgments of Mount Sinai, in the cloud and in the sea; God therefore vindicated His glory on many various occasions, because He was not duly acknowledged in His attributes toward His people. Subjection according to their deliverance was forgotten. "Remember how I brought you out of the land of Egypt, with a mighty hand and outstretched arm," was the burden of the call of the Lord to Israel. "Now all these things happened to them as ensamples, (for us,) and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the

ends of the ages are come.”\* The apostle argued therefore that as to join the altar of the idol was to have fellowship with the idol that it could not be with impunity. To join the altar of the idol was fellowship with the idol; owned it, in fact, confessed it. If it were the table of devils, it was communion or fellowship (the word is the same) with them. Singleness of confession then was that which the Lord, strong as He was jealous, required. To confess any other Lord was incompatible and impossible; and as a common act (which the introductory act of Christianity was not) it partook of the nature of a common confession. At the table of the Lord, the assembly was one bread in the participation of the one bread or loaf. Saved by grace, there was no question of salvation, it was—who was Lord? The assembly therefore, whatever character of worship, thanksgiving, memorial of grace in the Lord’s death was shown forth in the Lord’s supper, it was the example

\* We might almost say concentrated. So also end together in where that word is *εὐτελεία*, &c.

of the Israelites separated to God in the cloud and in the sea, that the instruction given in the parallel given by the apostle lies. It is then the unmixed confession of the Lord by a practical separation to Himself without any admixture of other subjection that we find in this chapter. In the Hebrews, the apostle says, "We have an altar (I do not suppose that this alludes to the table) of which those who serve the tabernacle cannot partake." It is a much more serious question, but which vindicates the purity and singleness of the confession intended to be made by the *table of the Lord*.

Christendom looks on Christ as commonly acknowledged within its bounds, as received on earth, and mixing Himself with the world. God looks not at it so. Christ was rejected on earth and received in heaven. If we would acknowledge and confess Christ aright, it would be as rejected on earth and now at God's right hand. If we belong to Him, we belong to Him there. He does not, as supposed,

belong to us down here ; we show forth His death till He come from where He is. This is the proper and true confession of Him giving our confession its just significance in the world ; waiting for Him and separate unto Him in that expectation. This manifest instruction from this chapter shown in these observations does not however pretend to include other doctrine in the chapter.

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## JOHN XIV.

Two things enter specially into the Gospel in our relationship to God, and both of them are needful. First, to have our conscience set at rest, by being in the light ; and, secondly, to have the knowledge of God's thoughts and feelings towards us, as both are made known in Christ. The one purges our conscience, i.e. Christ's work for us ; the other assures our hearts of God's love towards us. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up." "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." Both these

we must learn in God's presence. The whole secret of a soul being brought to God is, that it is brought into the light, for "whatsoever doth make manifest is light." And the word of God, which is the expression of what God is, is a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight." We are brought into the light where everything is made manifest according to the holiness of God. Light is perfectly pure in itself, and manifests everything on which it shines, as "all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light." "This, then, is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." If we walk in the light, *as he is in the light,*" &c. This makes the indispensable necessity of our being absolutely and perfectly purified—for without that the light could only condemn. This is not deadness of conscience, for it is said, "awake thou that sleepest," &c. In God's presence we are made guilty and are

cleansed. This gives us to know the perfectness and the eternal character of that peace—for everything is brought into His presence, and we stand in that presence in eternal redemption. Being brought into the presence of God, He must either put us out of His sight for ever, or the sin. As regards the revelation of this, it did not come out until the veil was rent by the death of Christ. “But now we all with open (unveiled) face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,”—are not condemned by it—nor is sin imputed by it—but “are changed into the same image from glory to glory.” There can be no true peace until the conscience is finally and perfectly purged, otherwise, the presence of God, which reveals the sin, would only be distress and trouble to the Spirit. And here it is that many have not peace. They may have the affections drawn towards God, and get happiness from that—for where the soul is attracted by Christ, and goes to Him, and rests on the graciousness of Christ, it has peace; though at other times,

when the soul has not the consciousness of that it becomes troubled and distressed, but whenever the conscience comes to be exercised, then there is trouble of soul, because God has not brought that soul into the full blaze of light, that it may discover its own vileness, and that all has been done to meet it, and that for ever. There may be such a thing as believing our past sins to be forgiven, yet when we stand in the presence of God, to be uneasy because we have discovered evil in ourselves. Adam had to say not merely "I have eaten of the forbidden fruit," but "*I am naked.*" And so the soul in the presence of God has to feel that the sin is there, and that in God's presence it cannot be hid. Now it is often the case even where the soul knows the truth of forgiveness, through the blood of Christ, that in the presence of God, it is not at ease; it cannot say, *if this moment before God*, "ALL IS RIGHT," because it has never been properly there. How comes it that it has never been there? Job says, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but

now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I ABHOR MYSELF." He felt what he was in the presence of God, *when there*. Thus in mercy the soul is brought into the presence of God to settle that now, instead of in the day of judgment, and is brought to discern the new nature—and it is only in the new nature we can discern the depravity of the old, in the presence of God. For the want of this you may often see a soul thoroughly upset; and if the law has been dwelt on, it must be so; because there is the thought of something to do. But if I know of a certainty that there is nothing good in me, I shall not think of that; for if I know the tree itself is bad, I know also the fruit is bad. If left under law, it is that I may discover that; and inasmuch as we are partakers of the new nature we shall be able to see the utter impossibility for the old nature to stand in the presence of God. This shows us the need of the conscience being perfectly purged. God, therefore, by bringing us into His presence, shows us the blood of Christ, as that which



has put away sin perfectly, according to His holiness, and the conscience is freed for ever. God, who knows the sin, has put it away, according to His own estimate of sin, for ever, by the blood of Christ. When it was a work entirely between Christ and God, "he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "Once in the end of the world, he has put away sin," and "the worshipper once purged has no more conscience of sins." "He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified," through the eternal redemption he has obtained for us, according to the infinite value of His work, done in the presence of God, according to the eternal nature of God, and therefore of everlasting efficacy. Thus the *conscience* is set at rest.

Then there is another thing, a settled *confidence of heart*. For Christ says, not only "peace I give unto you," but "*my peace*;" and it is very important to see the solid peace God would have you possess. When He says, "*my peace*," it is not simply peace, but *His* peace—the peace He has in God. The Father would you should have in

His presence, Christ's peace. What was it? Was there ever the slightest cloud between His soul and God? "I know thou hearest me always." He had the consciousness of the Father's eternal favour resting on Him, as also witnessed to at His baptism by John; and He rested in the Father's eternal delight in Him. It flowed from the nature of what God was; so that His soul could rest in it eternally, in abiding peace that never could change. The spring of divine love itself was bound up in Him who was to be the vessel to bear it for ever. Now He puts us in the same place of relationship as Himself, as He says, "My Father and your Father, my God and your God;" and there was the constant revelation of the interest He Himself had in assuring the heart of what was in His heart towards them, so that the soul should not sink; and also of His readiness to succour and sustain them in all their trials and perplexities. Was there ever anything came from His lips that could break down *their spirit*? Never. To break down *the heart* there

was plenty, that He might show mercy. The thief upon the cross said, "Lord remember me, WHEN THOU COMEST IN THY KINGDOM." He said, no; "*TO-DAY thou shalt be with me in paradise.*" The Syrophenician woman, who came as a dog, asked but for the crumbs; and He gave crumbs to dogs, thus lifting up her heart and leading her on. To the adulteress He said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more." To Peter, "who cursed and swore and said he knew not the man," He said, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." This was that his confidence in Christ's love should not be shaken, though it was needful that Peter's self-confidence should be broken up. But then there was restoring grace in it, as He adds, "when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." He would have Peter to trust in Him, not only according to His unfailing love, but as having learned also that truth—"where sin abounded grace did much more abound." And if they even said, as in the case of Jairus's daughter, Thy daughter is dead—why

troublest thou the Master any further?" His reply is instantly, "*Be not afraid, only believe.*" A bad conscience cannot trust. He must therefore bring down the conscience into the sense of sin, that we may not trust in ourselves, but in Him. What does the misery all around tell us, but *not to trust in man*. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man." Nay, we must not trust in the saints either, for no man can be a stay to his brother. God would not have us trust even an angel; but it is that He may come in Himself and sanctify the heart to Himself, because He is love. He is perfect love, and is so even in the midst of our sins, that we might be able to trust Him in all things, and say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Thus the soul is brought to trust in Himself.

"My peace I give unto you." Having wrought peace for us, He sets us in the presence of God with not the less certainty of divine favour than Himself. If it were not so, if but the least doubt rested on us, the more we thought of being in His presence, the

more miserable should we be. "*My peace* I give unto you." "Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God" (that the Father has proved His love to you in the gift of His Son, so that you can rest in it, not in the sense of anything of your own, but in Him and what He is,) "believe also in me." "I go to prepare a place for you." His love to His disciples not only put them into the same *peace*, but would put them into the same *place*, that we might rest in *His* love who could not be happy without having us with Him. In the Lord's Supper he says, "with desire (not they, but) *I have desired* to eat this passover with you." He looked to enjoy this last supper for His own happiness, and to have the latest opportunity to be with them, to eat with them before He suffered. His love for them made it His own happiness to express that love, and so to be with them. The same thought is in the parable of the lost piece of money and the prodigal son. As in the prodigal son, many a one is pressed and uneasy to know how the Father would receive

him. Why it was the Father's joy (God's joy is spoken of) shown out in the character, and dealings, and ways of the Father towards the Son. The spring of love and joy was in the Father's heart. That is where the soul gets peace. "Perfect love casteth out fear." If you have the least fear, you must have torment. Your heart is not at rest; it has not peace such as Christ speaks of—"my peace." The first dealing of Christ with us is as sinners when we are convicted of the sin; and He does not leave us till He has brought the soul into His own peace. He was going away, and His disciples might have said, "If we had but Christ here always, to tell us to go there, and to do this we should be happy." But it could not be, because it was God's thought to bring them into the joy of the Father's house. However, it was to be no mere process of soul going on, in which they would be occupied about Him down here, but He says, "I am going away to be occupied about you"—"I go to prepare a place for you"—"and will come again and receive you unto myself." He will never rest until He brings us into full joy and glory with Himself. He has given us *His peace*, (it is not peace here in the world—He had anything but peace in the world.) And His conscience

had nothing to say. He was always perfect, and His heart could always rest in the perfect love of His Father and that is *His peace*. He gives us His peace—a peace fit for Christ—and is gone “to prepare a place for us;” as the necessary result and consequence of the love that gave us His peace. His *heart* is in it. He must have us with Himself. “Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be *with me where I am*.” His heart cannot rest until He has done the thing fitting in the matter, as Naomi told Ruth concerning Boaz.

Now, let me ask, why so much toil and trouble, if we have Christ’s own peace? And why can trial exercise? Do not you find many things distract, many things attaching themselves to the heart? But why? Because the affections of our hearts are not brought up so that we might “grow up to *Him* in all things, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” He does not say, your hearts shall not be troubled, but “*Let them not*.” There is a needs be for trouble to break down that which clouds the heart: But we have the Spirit of God feeding us, as taking the things of Christ and showing them unto us, and the hand of God breaking down every thing of the flesh, so that Paul could say, “I glory in tribulation.” But why is this? Because it

is profitable ; for it is the means of his judging that in his flesh which was hindering his joy and blessing. It is not merely when we have known peace some time, but from the first beginning that we have learned the peace of Christ, that we may trust Christ. The confidence is perfect in Christ ; and if I cannot say, “ *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me,*” yet at least I can say, I know “ *it is true.*” One thing more. The Holy Ghost is given that we may enjoy this—the love of God. The joy of it is connected with the path of the Spirit. We must be brought to the conviction that there is sin, and that there is grace in the presence of it all to put it away. There is such a thing as the government of God as a Father in His family, and the favour of the Father must always necessarily be according to the ways of the child. “ If a man keep my commandments, he shall abide in my love, as I also have *kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.*” Now when speaking of His grace to us as sinners, it is, “ Herein is love, not that we loved him.” In the path of the Spirit, we shall know what this love of God is. “ I kept my Father’s commandments, and abode in his love ; if ye keep my commandments, ye shall also abide in my love.”



## DIVINE PERFECTNESS OF LOVE.

1 John iv. 17.

The love of God is presented in two very distinct ways in this chapter: first, in the 9th verse as manifested in giving His Son *for us*; and then in the 17th verse, in its double fruit of love and life *in us*. God's love in contrast to man's love is distinguished by this, that while man must have something to draw out His love, as it is said, "For a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." God's love is without motive, there being nothing attractive in the object that draws it out. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." God's love sees no good in us. The brightest proof of God's love and man's enmity was seen in the cross. They met there, and the superiority of God's love was manifested; as Jethro says, "In the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them." Having

shown out the first fruit in the 9th verse, i.e., the open manifestation of His love to us while we were yet sinners, we learn His purposes and counsels about us as saints; in the second place, in the 17th verse, "Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world." This is a very different thing from His first visiting us in our sins. "Herein is love with us made perfect." The perfectness of God's love toward His saints is seen in the bringing them to be like Himself. The sovereign grace of God puts the saints into the same place as Christ, that we may have the same kind of fellowship with the Father that Christ had. So in John xiv. the Lord says, "My peace I give unto you,"—that is, the peace He had with the Father—"not as the *world giveth* give I unto you." The world has the character of a benefactor, and that it sometimes gives generously I do not deny, but then it is by helping a man, as he is, out of the resources which it has, which

may be all very well, because by helping him it is only taking care of itself; but it is evidently a different thing here, for Christ takes us clean out of our condition, putting us into the same relationship with the Father as Himself. The world cannot give in this way; there is no guarding anything for self in Christ's unjealous love, but in us there is. Therefore He could say, "Not as the world giveth give I unto you." His delight was to show that the Father loved *them* as He loved Him. "The glory thou hast given me, I have given them, that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Jesus not only loves them Himself, but He will have it known by the world that they are loved by the Father, as He Himself is loved. Can there be anything more disinterested than this? (Though the word disinterested fails to give the full meaning.) Still all this is guarded, for Christ ever keeps His place as the eternal Son of God. As at the Mount of Transfiguration, the moment there is

the question of putting Moses and Elias on an equality with Jesus, they both disappear: for when Peter said, "Let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias, while he thus spake there came a cloud and overshadowed them," and instantly they vanished. "And there came a voice out of the cloud saying, This is my *beloved Son*." It is not said, "hear *them*," but "hear *him*." "And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone." If Christ in His wondrous grace reveals Moses and Elias as His companions and associates in glory, the moment Peter in his foolishness gives utterance to the thought that would place *them* on an equality with Christ, they must both vanish from the *scene*. It does not say, "as the Father loved *them*," but "as he loved *me*," (as a man,) for however Christ may bring us into the same place with Himself, if we elevate ourselves to an equality with Christ, immediately we shall be above Him; and it is ever the case that the more a saint enters into his elevation as

being brought into the same place with Christ, the more he adores Christ as God over all blessed for evermore. This is ever to be borne in mind. The thought in verse 17, "As he is so are we," is of putting the saints in the same place as Christ. If I have righteousness, it is a divine righteousness, "We are made the righteousness of God in him;" if eternal life, it is a divine life, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear;" if glory, it is the same glory, "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them;" if it is the inheritance, we are "joint heirs with Christ;" if love, it is the same love wherewith the Father loved Christ, "that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." The love is the most difficult thing for us to enter into, but the Lord would have our hearts enjoying it. All that we have in Christ is brought out in this passage, in this general expression of God's grace to bless us, not only *by* Christ but *with* Christ. Christ could not be satisfied unless it was so, we being the fruit of

the travail of His soul. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be *with* me." Again, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." The Father's love is seen in giving His Son to die for us, and thus bringing us into the perfect place. Some Christians do not give this 17th verse all its power. They refer it simply to our position before God, respecting the day of judgment. Whatever judgment may come, the saint has nothing to do with it, for where there is a question about judgment, there can be no boldness. There is nothing more comforting than the perfect confidence of having God as my Father. I cannot get the affections in full play, if I think God is going to judge me. But if I have the spirit of adoption, and I sin or do wrong, I run to my Father directly, because I know my Father is not going to judge me for it; for God is my *Father* and not my Judge. Therefore boldness is needed for the exercise of spiritual affections in me. And we

ought to remember this, for Christians often shrink from it, but it is evident that if I am hesitating whether God is going to bless me or to judge me, I cannot love Him.

Then observe another thing: there is a great difference between spiritual *desires* and spiritual *affections*, though both have the *same root*. Spiritual *desires*, if the relationship which would meet them be not known, *only* produce sorrow. Take an orphan, for instance, in a family where the parent's *love* to the children is witnessed every day; the sorrowful experience would be, Oh! that I had a father! The child who has its parents has the same desires, but the relationship exists of parent and child, and it knows the joy and gladness. As the children of God we must have the consciousness of the relationship in which we stand to God. It is not merely that we have a divine nature, which gives us spiritual *desires*, but we must also have a consciousness of the relationship into which we are brought by the power of what Christ

has done. It is clear there never could be a question between Christ and His Father, as He daily and hourly enjoyed the consciousness of His Father's love. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." So also He says, "My peace I give unto you." Again He says, "That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." The Father's delight was in Christ and He knew it in the daily enjoyment of it. Well, "As he is, so are we." While Christ lays the ground of our relationship by being the propitiation for our sins and the source of our life, yet it is not by Christ's righteousness that I get *boldness*. I must be righteous, of course; I cannot have boldness without it, but besides this there is another character God has toward me, that of a Father; and I have another character towards God, that of a child. I have not only righteousness, but I am a Son. And here I would notice the defectiveness of some of our hymns, which call Christ our brother. We never find in Scripture that Christ is



called our brother. In the fulness of His grace He is not ashamed to call us His brethren. My father is a man, but I do not call him a man. It would show a want of filial reverence in me if I did. In nothing is the power of the Spirit of God more shown in the child of God than in the suitableness of his expressions and feelings towards God. If we are really enjoying the place of infinite privilege, the source and giver of these privileges will maintain His own proper place in our hearts. Theorizing about it will not do. A common expression is, We cannot be always on the mount. So far that is true, because we all have our place of service down here; but I would observe, that being in the mount of God's presence always humbles, though when a saint gets down again he may be proud of having been there. Paul was not puffed up when he was in God's presence caught up to the third heavens; but after he had been there he needed a thorn in the flesh, lest he should be exalted above measure. The heart is never proud in

God's presence, and only when it is really there is it really in its right place, for when out of it the flesh turns everything into mischief. "As he is, so are we," not only in the same standing and acceptance as Christ, but brought by the communication of His life into the same relationship as Himself. While in the beginning of the Epistle the foundation is laid deep and wide in the cleansing blood, still the grand subject of the Epistle is the place into which we are brought. "Herein is love with us made perfect." If my heart has seized the truth that God as a Father is acting in grace towards me, there is no place for fear. In all my need, and even in that with which I ought to have nothing to do, in all my sin, I fly to Him. I could not in my sin fly to my judge, but I have confidence in my Father's love and I fly to Him without fear; for "perfect love casteth out fear." In all sins and follies I can always look to Him who gave His Son for me. That is where *grace* puts me. The *proof* of

God's love is, He has given His Son; the *perfection* of His love is, that He has brought us into His presence.

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## ZIKLAG.

1 Samuel xxvii.—xxx.

In no place, save in the matter of Bathsheba, is David so morally low as in 1 Sam. xxvii. His loss of confidence in the Lord, and his consequent lies and artifices in the court of the king of Gath, are sad indeed. His heart, it is true, was not turned away from Israel. He was Israel's champion still, in all the desires and purposes of his soul, and had his eye towards Israel's prosperity and honour. But for present circumstances he has lost all faith in God.

It is not at once or speedily that the Lord begins the discipline of His saints. At the least it is not commonly so. Our sin may find us out years and years after it is committed. The Lord may call our ways to remembrance long after we have

left those ways and turned to better. The widow of Sarepta, in her experience, may illustrate this for us. (1 Kings xvii.) The sin of Saul against the Gibeonites was visited in the distant, closing days of David. (2 Sam. xxi.) "God moves in a mysterious way." He takes methods which are all His own, in the exercises of His hand with His people. But "He is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain." We have to *bow* now—we shall *justify* Him for ever.

At the water of Meribah Moses and Aaron grievously sinned. They committed a very high offence in smiting the rock and challenging the congregation. But the water came forth, and that at once and abundantly, as though all were right. The whole congregation and their cattle drank of it, and to all present or immediate appearances, the Lord had no controversy with any one. But afterwards the Lord lets them know that their offence had not been overlooked, for that, by reason of it, they should come short of the land of

Canaan and die on the wilderness side of Jordan.

And how did the Lord Jesus, in the day of His ministry here, *quiet* the fears of unbelief before He *rebuked* them? "Peace, be still" was said to the waves of the sea, ere "How is it that ye have no faith?" was said to the fears of the disciples.

We find another sample of this way of God, in this scripture, on which we are now meditating. David, as we have said, was morally very low in 1 Sam. xxvii. But he meets with no present resentment. He goes with his 600 men against the people of the south, and victory and spoils are his, and he returns to the king of Gath, and at Ziklag enriches and secures himself.

What shall we say to all this? We may well remember, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." And we may also remember, "Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

David, however, is loved—surely he is, and, in the great sense, as dearly as ever—but his sin has not been slighted by the Lord. He is loved, and a gracious witness of that is shortly afterwards given him; for the Lord interposes to save him from the tremendous results of his unbelief and lies. Through the jealousy of the princes he is hindered from being found in the Philistine army, which was then gathering at Aphek, to march against Israel. It was the Lord who put that into their hearts, to preserve His child and servant from this terrible catastrophe. He once gave Joseph favour in the eyes of his master; He now gives David disfavour in the eyes of the princes of the Philistines. This was a most gracious interference. But the burning of Ziklag and the captivity of all that was in it are before him, to let him know, and know it with a vengeance too, that the Lord has not overlooked his sin.

But again I may say, very marked indeed is the grace of God towards

him in thus withholding him from the battle which was soon to be fought between Israel and the Philistines at Mount Gilboa. What would he have done had he been there? How could he have escaped the snare and mischief which his unbelief and sin had so awfully prepared for him? But God can turn the hearts of the children of men, as seemeth best to His godly wisdom, and now the envy of the Philistine princes is used for David to keep him back from the slaughter on Gilboa, as Abigail had before been used to keep him back from the blood of Nabal.

But how low had David fallen! He was another man when his own spirit had told him not to touch the Lord's anointed, and when his heart smote him because he had done even so little as to cut off the skirt of the king. Such moral or spiritual changes do we find in the progress of christian life, and they warn us to draw upon Jesus for "exigence of every hour," and not to think that we shall stand to-morrow

because we have not fallen to-day. But though the Lord pardons, He chastens. He forgives the sin, but He takes vengeance of the inventions.

David had received Ziklag as his wages for going over to the uncircumcised. Was it not "the wages of unrighteousness?" But the Lord can cut holes in the bags where we put such money as this. And so He does here. Ziklag had been visited, while David was in the camp of the Philistines, and Ziklag had been burnt, and all therein had been taken captive, wives, children, cattle and all, by the people of the south, whom David had afore beaten and slaughtered.

Terrible! Nothing could exceed this but death. *That*, however, the good hand of God had hindered—as we read on this occasion, "They slew not any, either small or great, but carried them away captive." And it was thus in the case of Job. All was touched by the hand of the enemy but life. But life was spared then and now, because of God's purpose of goodness



for Job's latter end, and because of like purpose towards the offending culprit, David. And so indeed in all the chastisements of the saints. *That is always spared and preserved, which is needed for God's abounding grace at the last.*

And now, we find *moral* recovery leading the way to another piece of history altogether. How right! It is a bitter thing to depart from Him; a blessed thing to return to Him.

David is enabled, as we read, after all this terrible catastrophe, to "encourage himself in the Lord his God." (xxx. 6.) What can be more blessed? Save indeed the answer which grace gives to this faith. Jonah looked afresh to the temple, when he was in the whale's belly; David encourages himself in God in the sight of the ruins of Ziklag. This was all the bitterness of his own way; but he is "strong in faith;" and I know not that faith was ever more bold; and the God of all grace vindicates its boldness to the full.

If the former sight were terrible, this is precious. David now begins in faith, as he had begun in unbelief in chap. xxvii. Ziklag in flames was the end of *that* course; trophies, and spoils, the honour and the wealth of victory, crown *this*.

After encouraging himself in God, he acts with bravery and earnestness. The Lord puts helps and opportunities in his way, and makes circumstances to favour him, and at the end crowns him with success, giving him not only to regain all that he had lost, but to enrich himself with spoils of the enemy.

What a witness is all this of the pleasure the Lord takes in the bold faith of His saints! David was under sore displeasure for a high-handed offence. But in spite of all that, (enough to make a coward of any man,) his encouraging of himself in God is thus crowned and honoured of God.

But still further, in this fruitful scripture.

The heart of man, we know, is a *deceiver*,—"deceitful above all things,"

—so that “he that trusteth it is a fool.” But it is a *vagrant* likewise. It is famous for its wanderings and uncertainties, as it is for its deceits. And happy indeed is the prospect of its being delivered from these its wretched conditions, when the presence of the glory of Jesus, and the atmosphere of the kingdom, free us, as I may say, from ourselves.

We get now and again some pledges or expressions of this—and the heart of David furnishes us with two of them. I mean on this occasion of the spoils of the Amalekites, in 1 Sam. xxx. and at the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, in 1 Chron. xxi.

A time of conviction of sin, of anxiety of conscience, of the early strugglings of the soul awakened to its condition before God, is necessarily a time for the enlarging of the heart. The sinner is then so occupied with his question in God’s presence, that he cannot be following his nature in pride or selfishness. It was thus with David, and with Ornan too, in the day of

1 Chron. xxi. A great public calamity was then hanging over them, and relief from that was the one commanding care and question that filled every bosom. All must have been ready, at such a moment, to forego their own personal private advantages—and David and Ornan, the king and the Jebusite, represent this, the one insisting on giving his threshing-floor, the other insisting on paying for it.

A time of gladness is also, by a kind of moral necessity, a time of largeness of heart. If we eat the fat and drink the sweet ourselves, we shall be ready to send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. (Neh. viii.) Such is the day of 1 Sam. xxx. Fears have all been quieted, anxieties relieved and answered. The spoils of the Amalekites bespeak a day of triumph. David is full of generous, large-hearted thoughts. He will not brook the suggestion that the feeble ones who had tarried at the brook should not share the spoils with those that had gone down to the fight. And he himself

sends round to all his friends, portions of what may be understood to have been his share of the profits of that joyous day.

Such was the heart of David, taken up by the hand of God on these two occasions. Different the occasions were, but David's heart in *such* a hand enters into the power of each. And how blessed if communion had in our souls its proper *separating* and *realizing* power: separating us from present attractions, realizing before us future, eternal glories!

We need to put the heart near to Jesus—to have it kept steady amid the changing scenes of Christian life—to have it enlarged by reason of spiritual joy.

David rebukes the Amalekite master here. He had left his servant behind him because he had fallen sick; David, returning to his comrades at the brook enquires after their health, and then gives them a full share of all that had been gathered by the victory.

And how should we, in the joy of the

Lord, rebuke the world and nature!  
But, "what do we more than others?"  
may well be the whisper and the enquiry of our hearts.

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## GOD'S DWELLING PLACE.

Genesis xvii. 1.

All the relationships we have with God are founded on these two names—God and Father. I can only know God in the way he has revealed Himself—and that is the way He has revealed Himself, as the God and Father of Jesus.

Hence it is said to be eternal life to know God thus, i. e., in the Son. It is never said, that they had eternal life in connexion with God Almighty:—we know they had, but it is not so characterized.

There are two things we have to know in God, that are precious to us—communion and God's dwelling place. Now this latter Abraham never had. We never read of God dwelling with

any until redemption is accomplished. God could visit, give promises, &c., but He could not take up a person, or body of persons, and say, There is my dwelling place, until redemption was fully accomplished. How could God dwell where He saw sin ?

The more I go on, the more I see the immense importance of this, that the unqualified results of grace should have their place in the hearts of the saints. I am sure nothing can protect them against the incoming of the seductions of the latter days, but the consciousness that they are not of the world of which Satan is the prince ; but that they belong to God in virtue of a redemption which has put them in connexion with Himself, apart from all question of sin, flesh, or Satan.

God blessed the faultless creature, but He was not the companion of the creature. He visits Abraham, but He has no dwelling place with Abraham ; but the instant I get redemption at the Red Sea, I get the song, " This is my God, and I will prepare Him an

habitation." In the 15th of Exodus, and in the 29th, we find this to be the settled purpose for which He has brought them out.

Singularly lovely are the visits He pays to Abraham, but Abraham was a stranger on earth, and God was a stranger; but He has a throne in Israel. The worth of redemption is that He can dwell among them. Did God dwell among them when He said, "When I see the blood," &c.? No. He is passing through as a judge. The moment redemption is wrought, (i. e., the work done which takes us out of the condition we were in, and puts us into another) He dwells among them. This is an immense truth. Has God made any mistake as to the cleansing which He has accomplished by the blood of Christ? Any mistake as to the righteousness which He has made us to be in Christ, and on which He has put His seal and fiat because He likes it? Let your hearts say what the value of the redemption is on the footing of which God comes and dwells



in us. Can a single unsettled question remain if God has made me His home? He does not dwell with Abraham, but on the ground of redemption He does in Israel. In Egypt God had not lost the character of a judge, but of whom was He a judge at the Red Sea? Only of their enemies. His character is changed entirely; He is in relationship with them. So at Pentecost. Grace had come and sought them, but redemption had to be wrought; and then God comes and dwells with them. They are delivered and so cleansed as that God can make His abode with them. There is not one atom that does not bear the stamp of the blood and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. There will be all kinds of exercises in order to maintain the relationship, but we are in it. It is there to be maintained.

In Genesis the 17th, we see the difference between a soul resting on promises for the earth, and the heart resting in God so as to have communion with God. It is a different thing

to get kindness, and to enjoy Him who does the kindness. The first revelation of God to Abraham gave no communion, but calls him from "Ur of the Chaldees." But Abraham will never bring "Terah" into Canaan. You may have left the world, and yet you will never get into Canaan with Terah. Many a soul is longing to be there, but there is a constant grieving of their Leader. Is He going to put His sanction on that? Never. When at God's call he went to go into Canaan, "into the land of Canaan they came." In the giving up of self and of the world—there is power. Abraham gave it up and Abraham had power. Lot had no power. Abraham brought Lot back, and had the spoil of the world, yet gave it all up. God was his portion. He had given up the world and not gotten Canaan. His trust is in God. He will not have a single thing in which God is not.

If I say, I am your reward (Gen. xv.) where do I get the measure and character of the reward? In your heart.

That is not wrong, but it went no further. It made what man could look for, the measure of what God could give. It could meet every want, but am I going to make God merely a servant for all my wants?

In the 17th chapter it is not meeting man even in respect of His own promises and man's wants. There it is, "I am the Almighty God," &c.; not a word of "thy." It is not, I am "*thy*" Almighty God. He was that, but He was much more. It is what He is. God reveals Himself, saying in effect to Abraham, "You have not to do with promises, you have not to do with wants; you have to do with me." "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." Let there be the full answer to what I am.

What God wants is to take us out of it all to enjoy Himself. He has given us a nature capable of enjoying Himself. He is a Father and we are children. When He says, I am holy, our hearts reply, O what a comfort. Not a particle of sin will be in His presence.

He is love—to be sure He is, and it is shed abroad in my heart, and I am living in it and on it. God talked with Abraham. I get not merely promises, but communion.

In the 15th chapter Abraham says, What wilt thou give *me*? In the 18th he is interceding for others. If you are living in the sense of your own need, your prayers will turn round yourself; but when there is that kind of confidence which is found in communion, besides prayer for your wants, you will be able to intercede for others; there will be the intercessional link. In the 15th chapter Abram remains Abram; in the 17th his name is no more Abram, but Abraham.

Has He not done the same with the Church? We are associated with the full tide of His own thoughts in grace. After the struggling at Peniel, God gave no revelation of Himself; but when Jacob got back to Bethel He revealed Himself unasked.

We are not in the flesh at all; we are not in Egypt at all; and the God

we have found is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and He talks with us. We are on our faces it is true, but still He talks with us on the ground of redemption. We are not in the old name by which we were known in flesh, but in Christ. "The Lord direct our hearts into his love."

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### DANIEL III.

In this chapter we have the spirit and character in which the godly remnant will pass through their trials. It is not in that character, however, i.e., not the outward difficulties and deliverances as here referred to, but it is the spirit of the thing that I desire to call your attention to, because there are various trials which attend the soul while passing through this world. In Israel God was showing forth His mighty power in temporal deliverances, as in the case of Pharaoh; but with us it is a different thing. Being spiritually delivered, we are waiting for God's Son from heaven. All through, those that are faithful to God have always been a suffering people. Obedience and reliance on God characterize the seed all through.

Now it is another thing we find here (besides the love of power;) they use religion to unite and band together—to oblige conformity to the king's word—no matter whether king or pope if it is his religion, for religion being the strongest motive in the human heart, men use it to sway and influence others to gain their own selfish ends, and it must suit man. And here we find it in full perfection. He who wielded God's power, and in whose hands God put it, never used it on God's part; for when God had tried man as the Jews by the law, &c., and they failed, He puts absolute power in the hands of one man, and instead of his using it in serving God, he sets up an image and commands all men to worship it. And what do we find God's people doing? They abstain from it in the character of the Remnant—they will not submit—they do not do it, and it is a great crime of course, upsetting the whole thing. Then comes persecution, and to that they do submit. However God might allow His people to suffer, nothing ought to alter their reliance on Himself. Faith was as simple a thing in Babylon as in Jerusalem. God is the God of heaven and earth at all times, and none can hinder His power or the exercise of it in grace towards

His people. He may suffer them to be in trial—He may not always give outward deliverance; but *patience* is always the same, and the ground of confidence is the same here in Babylon as in Jerusalem. If the circumstances and trials are different and great, the Lord's power of interfering is always the same—it never hinders that. The outward trial may hide God's power from our eyes, but He is always the same.

I doubt not in this day many a heart is feeling discouraged and ready to say, "Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us;" and what could you get more? for what is better or mightier than the light of God's countenance? However sorrowful we may be about things, that is not to weaken our confidence in God. It was when all seemed hopeless in Israel, that "Emmanuel" was found among them. And, however hopeless the condition of God's people may seem, when a *false* god is set up, God remains the same.

Mark the perfect power of the king, and the perfect patience of these faithful sufferers. If they had resisted the power, it would have been over in a moment; as they would then have taken it out of God's hand. But *now* they change the king's word by their patience. If they had op-

posed Nebuchadnezzar, it would have been all over, for God gave the king his power; but they submitted, and therefore God could deliver them.

The effect of these faithful ones being in the trial is—what? Why, the identification of their names with God—as He is also called the God of Abraham. “Whoever shall speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.” What a blessed thing to be thus associated with God; having His name associated with theirs. And how blessed the identification of the saints with the God who is not ashamed to be called their God. It was by non-resistance—by bowing to the power and will of God; although evil as regards the exercise of it in the king’s hand. If we get in the humble, low place of suffering under the power, we shall find God’s power will be put forth to deliver.

We see here what quietness and peace of heart, whether it be refusing to worship, or suffering the furnace, or coming out with honour; it is sure to bring the blessed reward of ever having God’s name identified with ours; and the God whom we have known as our God, and whom we have cleaved to in trial down here, and He to us, is the same whose name attaches itself to us in the glory.



## THE INSTRUCTION OF DISCIPLINE.

Jonah ii.

The discipline of a soul under the hand of the Lord has many deep lessons in it; lessons such as no theory can teach, and which can only be understood by the light of the infinitely perfect word of God. Without constant self-judgment, it is impossible to say how much of divine truth, about those very exercises of soul, and these living ways of the Lord, as well as about other things, may be held, and taught too, as little more than theories, in regard to their present practical effect upon the heart. It is not that there is designed hypocrisy, but, through the levity of our minds and the unsubduedness of our flesh, the depth of God's truth and ways is not scanned by our souls.

Truth, it should be remembered, is not God; but, if the soul is to fully profit by the lessons of His word, God and His truth must not be disjoined.

Another thing too may be observed, that knowledge is not faith; though advancement in knowledge, and an ability to speak of the truth of God, are often mistaken for faith—or, at least, the heart may not be conscious, in its advancement in knowledge, how much faith and the soul's practical accordance with the truth, have fallen in the rear.

On this point, the moral of the prophet Jonah's story gives us a striking example. There was a double lesson which the son of Amittai learnt (learnt, at any rate, as he had never done before) under the Lord's dealings with him for his self-will and for his shrinking from the responsibility connected with the testimony with which he was entrusted. He might often, as a prophet, have enunciated the truths, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy;" and "salvation is of the Lord;" which are the burden of his confession when delivered from the fish's belly; (Jonah ii. 8, 9) but what emphasis did they gather in his soul through the Lord's dealings with him in the terrible

circumstances, into which his disobedience and self-will had plunged him!

The grace of the Lord is wonderful in the height to which it raises its objects; but it is wonderful also in the depths to which it descends, and in the manner of its working in the hearts of those whose condition makes them need its intervention. God goes along the whole pathway of His people, as well as meets them in mercy at the beginning, and receives them in like mercy at the end of their course. And He will make them learn this, either as they, in obedience, “prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God;” or as, by some discipline of his hand, He teaches them that “they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.” Faith always finds its answer in God, and finds too, in whatever circumstances, that He is “the God of all grace.” Even where transgression called for this rebuke, it is said, “They called upon the Lord and he answered them . . . . Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God: thou wast a God that *forgavest them*, though thou

tookest vengeance on their inventions." Jonah's sorrow, that extorted from him his cry, was self-earned sorrow, and the trouble that made him say, "Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple," was trouble that came directly from the Lord as a chastening for his disobedience, still the grace that met his spirit, now broken by the discipline of the Lord, was unchanged in its character, and made him say, as he had never said before, "Salvation is of the Lord." His cry was by reason of his affliction, still his voice was heard. He says, "Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice." The billows and the waves were rolling over and around him, and he was imprisoned hopelessly as in a living tomb, apparently cast out from God's sight, yet he looks again towards His holy temple, and he finds that God is in His holy temple! He finds that He is there to regard the cry of the wretched and to hear the prayer of the destitute! "He cannot deny himself." "The earth with her bars was about him for ever," yet his life was

brought up from corruption. It was when his soul fainted within him that he remembered the Lord; and it was because he had been heard in these appalling circumstances that he records his prayer.

It is the object of the enemy at such a time to throw the pall of despair over the troubled soul; but God's Spirit leads the heart to look to the hand that corrects for help—to own its misery and in the depth of its sorrow to cry to God for deliverance. The path of disobedience may be trodden in carelessness when outward circumstances are smooth; and it may seem a happier enterprise to be sailing with a fair wind to Tarshish, than to be called to bear an unwelcome testimony to Nineveh; but when the storm arises and the voice of God's reproof is heard in the conscience, and thus He is teaching the truth that "they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy," nothing but the sense of His unfailing grace can sustain the soul.

It was God's complaint by the prophet against Israel. "They have not

cried to me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds." Their misery oppressed them and they howled upon their beds in consequence; but there was no cry to the Lord. Nothing is so terrible as the stubbornness of spirit that refuses to look to the Lord when He smites! Better with Jonah to be in "the belly of hell," if even there the cry of anguish is wrung from the soul and addressed to God who alone can deliver—for then deliverance is sure.

Jonah had often prayed to the Lord before, and knew that He was the hearer of prayer; but this truth was much more deeply engraven on the tablets of his heart when he said, "Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice." He had known too, and, as a prophet, had doubtless taught others, in the broad and general sense, that "they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy;" but in the whale's belly he was taught that to pursue nature's path and to choose his own course, however fair it might promise, was a lying vanity—in a word,

that every object the heart might choose for its ease in opposition to obedience to the will of God was a lying vanity. The thought of an escape from the disagreeable, humbling, unwelcome work of going to Nineveh, and the ship of Tarshish, with all that lured his heart from the path of obedience to the Lord, is now seen simply as a "lying vanity." "Salvation is of the Lord," in its application to the guilt and condemnation of sin, the prophet had known before he was cast into the sea; but there he learnt that truth in its application to the misery, and sorrow, and danger into which he had plunged himself by the wilfulness of the course he had taken. Like Hezekiah, in his affliction, and sorrow, and chastening from the Lord, he could say, "By these things men live and in all these is the life of my spirit."

The death of the Lord Jesus was everything to the Apostle, in the outset of his career, in relation to his deliverance from sin and his acceptance with God; but there was a practical lesson of "always bearing about in the body

the dying of the Lord Jesus," and of the proofs of His delivering power, which he never learned so effectually as when he had to say, "We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, inasmuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead; who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver."

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## THE SIMPLICITY THAT IS IN CHRIST.

2 Corinthians xi. 3.

It is very observable that a man of ordinary capacity, persevering in the pursuit of a single object, generally succeeds; while a much more talented person, pursuing several objects, succeeds in none. The time and bent of the mind when given to one object dis-



tracts from another, so as to render success impossible. Now, God has set before the soul a single object; even Christ. He is presented to us as the object of present and everlasting confidence, the object of hope, the object of desire, so that to know Him is eternal life already begun; and the most gifted and advanced disciple cannot breathe a higher prayer than "That I may know him." The one comprehensive commandment of God, is, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear him"—"look to him"—"delight in him." And *the* work of God is that we "believe in him whom he hath sent." Other objects, however good in themselves, must have a disturbing and distracting effect on the soul, unless duly subordinate to Christ. He Himself has ruled that we cannot serve God and Mammon, and has laid down the rule for the guidance of His disciples, "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

A believer in Christ is a man of a single object, and if, by the grace of

God, he has a single eye to that object his "whole body will be full of light." A single object and a single eye are the two thoughts blended together in the expression, "The simplicity that is in Christ." From such "simplicity" the Corinthians were in danger of having their minds corrupted. In that high yet inexplicable sentiment or impulse of our nature, where affection and respect is mutually drawn forth between a man and woman, so that a single object becomes to each the engrossing centre of all the thoughts, we have an illustration of what the Apostle means by the simplicity that is in Christ, and to which he refers: "I have espoused you to *one* husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." But the Apostle turns from this to a very intelligible reference. "But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

"The serpent beguiled me," was Eve's only excuse to the challenge of

the Lord God, "What is this that thou hast done?" Whilst the principles of all sin are to be found in the one great original sin, the pattern sin, as it were, in that comprehensive word, "disobedience" the beguiling power of Satan, which led to the act, was the desire of knowledge and wisdom. After the serpent insinuated the lie, "Ye shall not surely die," he goes on with the seducing subtilty: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, *then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*" The serpent beguiled Eve from the happy knowledge of God in nearness to him, into distance from God, and unwillingness as well as inability to come near Him. The subtilty which prevailed with Eve was that she would be happier if she exalted herself, that she would be wiser by disobeying than by fearing God; that there was something more desirable "in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," than in "the tree of life."

Again, was the Tree of Life, in the

person and work of Jesus, opened to men "to see, taste, eat, and handle," not in Paradise, but in the very world in which man was an outcast from Paradise. But, again, also hard by this tree of life, was presented another tree, "pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise," in "the wisdom of this world." Again there was room for the subtilty of the *old* serpent to beguile, by persuading those who had tasted that the Lord is gracious, that they could be higher, happier, and wiser, by means of the wisdom of this world, than they were as believers in Christ, and disciples of Christ. It appeared as a privation to them, and a degradation to call no one "Master" but Jesus, to know no wisdom but Jesus, "the wisdom of God," to look to Him as "the light," and for light, as well as "the salvation of God," and for salvation. "Surely the wise man and the disputer of this world may be helpful to us," might the Christian say in answer to any subtle whisper of the serpent. "Engraft the knowledge of

Christ on the rudiments of philosophy, and what a system will be produced!" The introduction of the wisdom of this world, corrupted the faith instead of helping it, destroyed the temple of God instead of rearing it. (1 Cor. iii. 17.) Human wisdom and disputation had resulted in undermining the fundamental truth of the gospel, the resurrection of the body. The Corinthians were in danger of losing the rich blessings of the gospel, by that which, through the subtilty of Satan, appeared an advantage to them. The philosophical teachers, who were really "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into Apostles of Christ," under the subtle guidance of "Satan, transformed into an angel of light," dared not, directly, "preach another Jesus," or pretend to give another Spirit, or to have another gospel—that would be too open and undisguised. But to draw off the heart from allegiance to Jesus, by other objects, to substitute human wisdom for the Spirit of God, and to make the gospel itself a subject of de-

bate and speculation, served the serpent's purpose better than open hostility. He knows that there is but one Jesus, and he knows who He is, the Holy One of God. He cannot deny this, but he can lead men to speculate on His person, till he has undermined all the doctrines of grace which result from the glory of His person. The serpent knows well his power over the conscience, for he is "the accuser of the brethren," and he knows also the only power by which he can be resisted successfully, even by the power of the cross, and to undermine that, has ever been his object; and, for this purpose, he finds no readier a tool than the wisdom of man. "For the preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness, but to us who are saved, the power and wisdom of God." The serpent knows also the value of the Scripture, and that it "cannot be broken;" by this weapon, wielded by Jesus Himself, at the season of His temptation, was the serpent defeated. He could mutilate Scripture, but he could not stand

against it. "It is written," foiled him in his subtleties. Glad would the serpent be to wrest this weapon, the sword of the Spirit, out of the hand of believers; and early did he begin through his philosophical ministers to corrupt that word, the authority of which he could not deny. "We," says the Apostle, "are not as many, which corrupt the word of God." It is easily corrupted by taking from it, or adding to it, or setting up anything as of like authority. The old serpent—the accuser of the brethren—is only overcome by them, by "the word of their testimony, and by the blood of the Lamb, and by loving not their lives even unto the death."

"There is but one name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved, even the name of Jesus." The serpent would beguile us, by adding something as supplementary to Jesus, in order to salvation, or by making Jesus one among many other objects; but whatever these objects are, they

will assuredly displace Jesus—He must have the supreme place, or none at all—He must be all, or nothing.

There is but “one Spirit,” and the presence of that Spirit can be tested by the witness that He bears to the Son of God, in the great facts of the incarnation, cross, resurrection, and ascension, and coming glory of Jesus. There is but one gospel, even that of the grace of God, in present and everlasting remission of sins through the blood of Jesus, present and everlasting righteousness to him that believeth in Jesus. “Another gospel,” if it pretends to be one, is “no gospel” at all, it troubles instead of comforts, and unsettles the soul instead of establishing it. The only wise God has alone devised a plan to secure His own glory, and the eternal blessedness of which a sinner is capable. He can alone announce Himself as a just God and a Saviour, and the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, because in it is revealed the



only method of righteousness by which a sinner can stand before God—the righteousness of God by faith.

The Corinthians were in danger, as we ever are, of being “corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ;” and we are so corrupted whenever the highest object of human attainment is, in our estimation, more desirable than what Christ is of God made unto us and what we are of God made in Him.

The gospel announces to us the wondrous means of God’s “possibility” to do that which is equally “impossible” for man’s wisdom or even the law of God to achieve, even the making a sinner perfectly righteous in the sight of God. Until we realize that faith in Christ has at once set us in a position unattainable by the highest human wisdom or the most perfect human righteousness, we are in constant danger of being corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ. Satan knows how to ply the “highly esteemed” things among men to the subversion of the gospel of the grace of God. He will

use unto this end the religion of man or the wisdom of man. The early Judaizing tendency is an instance of the former danger now fully manifested; the subtle disputations of the Greek of the latter, now also fearfully prevalent. God has drawn the line between that which man can attain unto and that which He reveals. He hides, such is his good pleasure, from the wise and prudent that which he reveals to the babes. Now human wisdom has ever thought to obliterate the line which God has drawn between human investigation and divine revelation, by pretending to reach, by reasoning, that which can only be received by faith. Speculations on the person of Christ soon corrupted the simplicity of faith in Him; again men became vain in their imaginations. Men speedily became wise above that which is written, and thus superseded the authority of Scripture. Human intellect pretended to explain what God had been pleased to reveal, and thus the Holy Ghost was virtually superseded as "the guide

into all truth." Thus faith, instead of resting in the power of God, was made to rest in the wisdom of man; for such indeed is the boasted authority of the false church in its traditions, equally as false philosophy, to which in appearance it is so much opposed.

To recognize the Scriptures as the only and sole rule, and the Holy Ghost the only infallible guide into the understanding of that which He has dictated, and as the glorifier of Jesus, are our greatest safeguards from being corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ. Whatever draws away the soul from Him must be regarded by us as an idol.

"We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

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## NOTES OF A LECTURE

on James i. and ii., 1—13.

I would follow with you, beloved, for a few minutes the Spirit's teachings in this Epistle.

I grant you it is not up to the level of the other Epistles—that to the Romans for instance, which teems in every part of it with dispensational truth. We get there under the hand of the Spirit:—Dispensational standing, iii—v.; Dispensational experience, vi—viii.; Dispensational knowledge, ix—xi.; Dispensational service, xii.

But our Epistle, though not up to this level, as we have said, is still, in the power of the Spirit, of the same high calling. The materials that we have here are common-place enough, it is true; and I love them the better because they are so; for thus it needs not that the soul be brought into any extraordinary circumstances to learn the lessons to which it is set. The Spirit looks after us, as it were, follows

us into the details of every-day life, and would have us be through all its varied scenes just what we are in the Church—vessels of the Holy Ghost outside as well as inside in the activities of the new life, as much as when ministering in the Church; and it is to fix our souls emphatically on this truth, that the Spirit in Romans xii. has so blended what may be called ecclesiastical gifts with those that find their exercise in the varied social relations, that it is impossible to say where the one order of gift ends and the other commences. It is as members of Christ we are addressed throughout, as men of the Church, whether as teaching, prophesying, or using hospitality. “Not slothful in business,—fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” What you are at starting, beloved, that you are even to the end—in every relation and under every circumstance, a *man of the Church*. If I go out and become a man of the family, or a man of the neighbourhood, or a man of business, am I to be one whit less a man of the

Church? Nay, beloved, and again I would charge both you, and myself, never *lay aside* the Church-man. All is to be up to the level, and in the spirit of that consecration to which we are exhorted in Romans xii. 1. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice," &c. It is this, as I judge, which gives that tone and character to the lessons to which we are set down in this Epistle, and which I would now look at for a little with you in the details.

First, then, we are set down to the lesson of trial; (2—4;) a lesson, I need not say, in the full character of the dispensation. A soul under the Solomon-glory could not be set down to such a lesson as this. It had its own proper experiences, beautiful in their day and generation, on its own proper teachings too. The law for instance, the ten commandments, very fine, in their age and generation; perfect, I need not say, but not fit for this day of grace in which the mercies of

God have been revealed. And it is that which sets us down to learn lessons altogether of another order, even to count it all joy to fall into divers trials.

And what, I ask, has authority to set me down to such a lesson as this? What but this, that I am called to follow a rejected Master. I have been led into companionship with a suffering Jesus.

Our brother has been praying that we may heartily welcome all trial and discipline, through which the flesh is made to wither, and the soul is trained into deeper fellowship with the precious peculiarities of our calling; a prayer not one whit too high for such a calling, though perhaps too much for some of us; a little above, it may be, the actual experience of our poor hearts. But, oh! let us yield ourselves to the teaching, if we have any fellowship with the precious peculiarities of our dispensation. Let us never forget that companionship with a sorrowing Jesus, is to yield to the heart its best joy in a world that has rejected Him. And let

us address ourselves to the little that remains of the journey, in the full power of such a calling, enduring hardness as good soldiers.

Next, we are set down to the lesson of rank and dignities. (9—11.) And here again we are in the power and spirit of the heavenly calling. Will the spirit of social order set me down to such a lesson as this? No, beloved, it is a lesson peculiar to the Church of God; to be appreciated only by those who are breathing the atmosphere peculiar to such a calling. And shall we leave the atmosphere of the Church, and go out and breathe the vitiated, inflated atmosphere in which the men of this world live, and move, and have their being? The Church has learnt that all flesh is grass; what then can we do with the varied glories and distinctions, in which the flesh would fain array itself?

Then we are set down to the lesson of temptation. (12—17.) “Do not err, my beloved brethren.” This is too solemn, too sacred a lesson for man’s



feeble, erring mind to exercise itself upon. Take heed, see to it that you trace no evil thing to a higher source than your own corrupt heart. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God." "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust." And, on the other hand, be careful to trace up every good and right thing to no spring short of the blessed God Himself, even the Father of Lights, "in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"—a fountain that cannot send forth sweet water and bitter, but whence flows every good and perfect gift.

Then we are set down to another lesson; the finest of all may we not say, if we may speak of degrees where all is divine—the lesson of "pure religion." (ver. 26, 27.) Pure religion is just this, To be imitators of the Father in His boundless and rich grace, and to track the footsteps of a rejected Master—a separated Lord. If we are separated in the mere severities of nature, it will not do; we are to be in

sympathy with the largeness of the heart of God.

Then, brethren, we are to learn the lesson of glory. (ii. 1—9.) “Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.” How can the faith of glory have respect to the petty distinctions recognized amongst men? The world may well cherish and value its own titles and dignities,—honours struck out of its own mint. But what has the faith of glory in common with all this? And let us remember that it is in the light of this faith that we are called to discern glory—and faith only can discern it. The world has no eye for it. And surely we do not need to be told that the whole spirit of things around us is just after the fashion of the world’s way of discerning. But let us seek to walk in the light of the glory to which we are called.

The last lesson to which we are set down is the lesson of grace. It is the royal law. Is “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” up to the mark of the

church's calling? No, indeed it is not. It was fine, very fine, in its generation, but not up to the measure of the grace that suits us. "So speak and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." If we learn grace from any source short of the perfect law of liberty, we shall miss of the grace that becomes us, even of that infinite grace in which we stand.

And now, beloved, may we as those who have been called by glory and virtue—who have been made partakers of the heavenly calling, set ourselves down to the study of these homely lessons—addressing ourselves to the little remnant of our journey, in the full power of that heavenly calling, in the light of that glory, and in companionship with Him, who, though rejected here, has been glorified there. And though, as we pursue our way, our poor hearts will have to learn to the full the ruin of the Church, let us ever remember that it is our privilege to learn along with it the blessed sympathies of the Spirit.

## 2 CORINTHIANS VI. 14—16.

### A FRAGMENT.

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”

There is allusion in these three verses to several passages of Scripture, the principles of which are peculiarly applicable, and the mind of the Apostle was imbued with the truth contained in these Scriptures. He had imbibed the sense, the sap—though you will not find the exact words that are here brought together recorded anywhere. The principle is this: whether it be Egypt, you must get out of Egypt—or Babylon, you must get out of Babylon. “And ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” He promises to be more to them than He had ever been to the Jews; He will have them entirely to Himself. Now we are not, like the Jews, to judge only of outside cleanness, but we are to judge the whole spirit of the world; and whatever is not of Christ we are to judge unclean. The world will come in with all that is pleasant to

the flesh, but it will bring in all that can trouble, and will bring in judgment.

The Word of the Lord is that which the Apostle gives us, taking the sense of several Scriptures, and so applying them as to express God's mind with peculiar force and clearness. "I will dwell in them and walk in them," &c. He is here laying the ground, and we ought to be able to go on with that which He would unfold to us, and to say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." If we have known the unsearchable riches of Christ, let us live in the enjoyment of our own proper things which God has given us in Him.

When a Christian gets into the world, it is dreadfully far. It is not that he may fall into its grosser sins, but when he gets into association with the spirit of the world, he gets out of his right sphere, and loses his proper blessings.

The Apostle says, "Our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged!"

He had said, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." That is the testimony we go out with to the world. Ye have received this testimony; well then, take care that ye receive not the grace of God in vain: but now be ye enlarged. I want you to leave the spirit of the world, that your hearts may be enlarged; and that cannot be but as you are living in the new world, in the place where God has put you. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." This was having fellowship with the world. If I go and dishonour God with idols, He will destroy the idols. He says, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

The Apostle had to write unto them, not as unto natural men, (because they had been converted,) but as unto carnal; he could not write unto them as unto spiritual, consequently was not able to tell them of that which was their portion

and really belonged to them: for if they had not been faithful in that which was another's, how could he give unto them that which was their own? Wherever the heart is turned to idols, it is necessarily straitened in itself; it is not living in its own proper sphere, where the riches of God's house have entrance into the heart.

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### THE VERSATILITY OF GRACE.

"Unto every one of us is given grace."—Eph. iv. 7.

I LOVE to ponder o'er the various ways of grace,  
The blessed features it presents, my heart delights  
to trace;

By God, the fountain of *all* grace, to each of His  
'tis given,

And by its exercise is marked the citizen of  
heaven.

It weeps with those who weep, and joys with  
those who do rejoice;

It listens to the mournful plea, and heeds the  
suppliant's voice;

Stoops to the abject and the vile, the outcast,  
and forlorn,

Nor turns aside, although 'tis met by insult and  
with scorn.

Diffusing happiness around, its words are gracious, kind ;

It soothes the heart with grief o'ercast, and cheers the drooping mind ;

The widow's tear it wipes away, and, from its heaven-blest store,

Relieves the orphan, fatherless, the aged, and the poor.

'Tis goodness in activity, 'tis sacrifice of self ;

'Tis occupied with others' good, and seeketh others' wealth ;

It labours not that fickle man its work may praise or own,

There's but *one* smile it reckons on, that smile is God's alone.

It seeks communion with the saint, the godlike, and the good,

And bids the weak and tempted one, to stay himself on God ;

It points the sinner to the cross, and tells of joys above,

And never tires while dwelling on the Saviour's deathless love.

O precious grace ! divinely good ! dwell, ever dwell with me ;

Yea, with each child of God on earth bear constant company.

We need thy exercise to soothe the sorrows of the way,

Till glory crowns the work of grace, in heaven's unclouded day.

A. M.



## THE CAPACITY FOR KNOWING DIVINE LOVE AND HOW WE KNOW IT.

1 John iv. 7—19.

I would add to the paper on 1 John iv., which you have published in the February number, some observations of a somewhat different character, though partly referring to the same truths. The verses which I would seek in a measure to unfold are from 7 to 19. There are two subjects in these verses—the capacity for knowing divine love and the manifestation or proof of it, or more generally how we know it. First, as regards the capacity of the saints, that in them by which the blessedness of God's love is known and enjoyed. It is twofold. First, participating in the divine nature; (verse 7;) secondly, God's dwelling in us. (verse 12.) This gives it its full and perfect character and forms the link with the manifestations of this love, for this reason, that we cannot then separate the capacity to

enjoy God and the manifestation of God, because as dwelling in us the manifestation of Himself becomes power to enjoy Him. Hence, though for convenience' sake, I have separated the two points, capacity to enjoy and the manifestations of divine love which reveal it to us to be enjoyed, and this division for other objects is exceedingly important and never lost sight of in Scripture, yet as regards God's dwelling in us it is imperfect. We cannot here separate the capacity and the means. Next, then as regards the means of knowing the divine love. It is first manifested to us in its true nature in Christ's coming into the world to save in love, that had no motive in us; secondly, it is perfected *in* us in that God dwells in us and sheds it abroad in our heart; thirdly, it is perfected *with* us in that even while we are in this world we are as Christ is with God, so that we have boldness in the day of judgment. The whole is connected with the subject of the entire Epistle as displaying the traits of the divine nature in us by

the communication of that eternal life which came down from the Father, so that these things should be true in Him (Christ) and in us, as had been shown as to righteousness. Chap. ii. 29 and iii. 1st and following verses. Only the communication of life is completed here (love being the very nature of God and not an attribute) by the perfect manifestation of that love, and even by the dwelling of God in us. Righteousness and love are the two great characteristic traits of the divine life, but the latter is what God is. I do not say God is righteousness—I say He is righteous—but I do say He is love. Righteousness refers to others. Love is what He is in Himself.

But to proceed now to the examination of the verses, and first our capacity to enjoy the love of God. The Apostle exhorts the saints to love one another, “For,” says he, “love is of God.” It is so in its nature, for it is what He is. Hence when a man loves with these divine affections, he is certainly born of God, for he participates in His nature

and he knows Him, for he knows what that nature is, for he participates in it. A mere animal cannot enter into my thoughts as a man, for it has not my nature so as to be able to do so. If we have the elements of this nature as ours, we are clearly born of God and know Him, for that is His nature. This is the first essential principle of our capacity for the knowledge of God as love, the participation in this nature, and a most blessed one it is. Our being born of God, our receiving life is a real thing. It is our being made partakers of the divine nature. But for the full completing of this power of knowing God we must bring not only the divine nature as communicated to us, but God Himself in. This is still connected with its manifestation in loving one another. No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us. Thus the divine presence becomes the power of knowing God, of His love being perfected in us. We know that we dwell

in God and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. St. Paul, though, as he is wont, in a more dispensational way, tells us the same truth. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. It is here said, remark, *of* His Spirit, because it is not a display of power as it might be when it is simply said His Spirit, as iii. 24, where consequently it is not said we dwell in Him, but such a working of the Spirit in the power of divine life that there is communion in the elements of the divine nature. We love for He loves. He has given us *of* His Spirit. Our being partakers then of the divine nature and God dwelling in us form our capacity for enjoying God in love.

I turn now to those things in which that love is manifested and proved. First, we have verses 9 and 10. In speaking of him that loves being born of God and knowing God, the soul might have been thrown quite back on itself to search the love there and fall into mysticism. But the Spirit of God at

once, while clearly laying down this partaking of the divine nature, turns the eye of faith to what is wholly outside us, in order to have the proof and learn the character of divine love. In this was manifested the love of God to us. This comes out in the fullest and most blessed way. He sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. I was dead then—I live through another. It was pure and perfect love in the mind of God Himself—the expression of what He is in this love, for there was nothing in me to attract or awaken it. I was dead. But God gave the one blessed object of His undistracted and undisturbed love—His only-begotten Son—for me when I was dead. Herein, then, was love, *not* that we loved God, (that was law work,) but that *He loved us*. But this leads to another aspect of the state of the sinner. He was guilty as well as dead, but Christ came to be the propitiation for our sins. That is the pure love of God without a motive, but what was in Himself took us up

when our state was one of death and guilt through sin. It was in this state and as being in it we were loved and the love applied itself to this. I look for it, therefore, in God and know its absolute completeness in Him. There was only a needy undeserving object in me. It was to my state of sin this love applied. If I look at the cross where it was displayed, I have no part in it but my sin. The love of *God* there was manifested in this that we, dead in sin and guilty, might live through Him, and know that propitiation was made for our sins.

I now turn to the last of the three points I mentioned—Love perfected with us. It is in this: that as Christ is, so are we. Love was manifested to us in that He came to us in love when we were in our sins. It is perfected in that as Christ is, so are we. We can say, "in this world," for it is here that we learn to know we are, in Him, the righteousness of God in unclouded light. How can I but have boldness in the day of judgment, when I am as the judge be-

fore whom I appear. And so it is with us. He comes and fetches us Himself and changes our bodies into glorious bodies by the way; so that when we appear before Him, we are like Himself in glory. But this comes about by a real communication of life. We say we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory." Paul, as I have said, treats it more dispensationally, but it is the same truth. I know I am as Christ is now, that He is gone to my Father and His Father, my God and His God. Risen after He had completely put away our sins, He has taken us in the power of resurrection out of the whole case we were in and put us in a new one before God, even that in which He is. To be as Christ the Son before God our Father is all that love could do. Thus love was manifested in visiting us in our sins: it is perfected in putting us in Christ's position before God, and that livingly. I have reserved for the last what comes second



in the chapter, because it speaks of our present enjoyment of this blessing. I have already referred to it in speaking on the point of our capacity to enjoy. It is said, (verse 12,) "No man hath seen God at any time." What is the remedy for this seeming impossibility of knowing Him? The answer here is, If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and His love is perfected in us. Here is a wonderful way of knowing God, of enjoying in the most perfect way His love. How great is the intimacy when He dwells in us and gives us to feel immediately the sweetness of His present love. No intermediate means to assure us of it merely, precious as we have seen these are and absolutely necessary to found our souls in the certainty that He does love us, we know it because we enjoy it directly with Himself. He has been pleased to come and fill our hearts with the consciousness of His love and to abide there. He becomes the home and object of confidence for our hearts, because He dwells in our hearts. He can dwell in

us because of Christ's work and our cleanness and righteousness in Him. Here is rest—here is peace, the spring of joy and the intelligence and pledge of what we shall enjoy with God above. This passage is the more remarkable through its correspondence with the 18th verse of the first of John's Gospel. The same difficulty is raised. No man hath seen God at any time. And how is it met there? The only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. Not who *was*, mark: He who is the one object in whom the Father's love concentrated itself in the most immediate enjoyment and delight. He has declared Him as He Himself knew Him; so he that hath seen Him hath seen the Father. Thus by the Son's coming into the world, we may, through grace, know God. This, along with the consequent promise of the Spirit on His departure, is the great subject of John's Gospel. God made known as the Father by His revelation in the Son. But how is the same difficulty

met here? God dwells in us. We know it by this great result of Christ's work, that cleansed and justified. God dwells in us, and makes us enjoy by His presence a love which has allowed nothing to hinder its making itself our own, and has communicated itself to our hearts by dwelling in us, so that we know that nothing hindered its communicating itself to us. We know it because it is communicated and God is nearer to us than any other object in the world. He dwells in us. Wonderful place given to us!—not an earnest of God's love, (there is of the glory,) but that love itself perfected in us, because He is there, and whom would we wish but He, and where He is, who shall compete with Him?

One sentence remains in the passage which I would notice. Some may say, This is too high for me, I cannot pretend to enter into all this, I must have something simpler. Friend, nothing is simpler than the presence and love of God, *where it is enjoyed*. That is what is wanting. And now, to shew you

how without excuse you are, it is written, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Do you confess that Jesus is the Son of God? God dwells in you then. How are you treating such a guest?

Allow me to add one correction of a thought fundamentally just, and one correction of an error of expression or copy. The latter is in page 36. Read, it does not say, "As the Father loves me," but, "as he loved me." That is it is not the infinite and eternal delight, but the Father's love to Christ as one walking down here. The other remark I would make is this—that while the contrast between knowing God as a father and as a judge is most just and most important, it is well for the Christian to remember that in a certain sense it is just as father that He is judge. As regards final judgment, or the imputation of sin, the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son. The perfect work of Christ, which has put away our sins

and thus secured us from the judgment of them as guilt, brings us to call on the Father, who without respect of persons, judges according to every man's work. That is what delivers us from judgment as to guilt, brings us into that holy and gracious care which never overlooks anything in the children, and judges it according to the Father's own nature, into the privilege of communion with which the child is fully brought. The word of Christ was, *Holy* Father "keep through thine own name." That perfect love of God which has brought us into the enjoyment of itself has not changed Him into whose communion it has brought us, so that He should allow any evil. Indeed it would not be love. He deals with us in grace; warns, chastens, and if he chastises, it is that we should not be condemned with the world—but He allows no evil in His government of His children more than finally in the government of the world.

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### COLOSSIANS III.

This chapter unfolds, in a very complete manner, the character and fruit of the life of Christ in us. The reader may remark an interesting difference between the Epistle to the Ephesians and that to the Colossians, which in some points have much resemblance to one another. Both connect the head and the body. To the Colossians the apostle speaks more of the person, glory, and fulness of the head from whom they were in danger of slipping away through the influence of philosophy and vain deceits on the one hand, and legal, fleshly, Jewish ordinances on the other. To the Ephesians, he unfolds the privileges of the members, and the whole standing of the Church; or, more exactly, its sitting in heavenly places in Christ, and being the habitation of God through the Spirit on earth. The Epistle begins with the highest blessings of the children of God, and goes on to the union of the Church with Christ. The consequence

of this order of instruction is, that the Holy Spirit does not see, as in the Epistle to the Romans, the redeemed living in sin previously and convict them of it, and shew how they are to be justified; a subject never spoken of in Ephesians, but looks at Christ first as dead, and sinners dead in their sins, and then the whole is the work of God in an unmixed new creation, and they are raised with Christ and sit in Him in heavenly places.\* Hence their state is spoken of in broad contrast with being all children of wrath together, and, though there are precepts and directions, Christian life on earth is little spoken of, while the Holy Spirit is looked at as dwelling in the assembly, and in the saint, and they are not to grieve Him; and the development of a worthy walk refers to this calling to have the Holy Ghost in their midst.

\* Hence, the Lord's coming is not spoken of, though the counsels of God as to it are, because the saints are seen already sitting in heaven.

In the Colossians, as we have seen, they were slipping away, or in danger of it; and Christ is largely put forward, and heaven is a hope. The fullness of the Godhead in Christ is declared; and then, Christ in them the hope of glory is spoken of as the aspect of the mystery which is in the Spirit's mind before them. The Holy Ghost is not spoken of in the Colossians, save in the expression, love in the Spirit, but Christ our life is. It is this last point I would a little bring out. It is a life which associates them with heaven, and is to be displayed in their whole character on earth. Let us turn to the third chapter. The second had already in unfolding the completeness of the saint in Christ, shewn that he was dead and risen again by faith of the operation of God which raised Christ. On this ground the apostle calls on them to set their affections on things above, where Christ was sitting on the right hand of God. Christ is more objectively put before them than in Ephesians, still they are associated with



Him, but personally. "Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." They are livingly associated with the position of Christ. He is hid in God. So is their life—for He is their life. There is no display of it in the truth of its glory yet. When Christ appears, for the association is unbroken and uninterrupted, they will appear with Him in glory. It will be remarked that this is not being members of Christ, but our life, following all the phases of His history after resurrection, because He, Himself, is our life. The display of it in contradiction to flesh and likeness to Christ down here is now unfolded. He was in heaven by His divine person, and so displayed a divine and heavenly life in man on earth. We, consequent on redemption, have a place with Him in heaven, and so display this heavenly character like Him on earth—buried into death and risen again; we have put off the old man and put on the new—Christ is our life. We have members on earth, but no life; we walked in evil things

*when* we lived in them. But that life is not ours now. Practically, we have to take care that everything of the kind is totally put down. Mortify, put to death, your members on earth—they are to be wholly and entirely set aside; they are the doings of the old man, but we are dead and must practically deny all that belongs to it. The wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience for these very things. All fleshly evil is wholly to be put down. But this is not all—there are things which are not lusts, but the unbridledness of the will, tempers. We put off all these also. Anger, malice, &c., are not lusts, but unsubduedness, want of self-government—all this is put off. So untruth as well as violence—Satan's two great characters in Scripture. We have (not ought to do so) put off the old man and his deeds.

Thus far negatively. But we have put on the new also. What is the measure of this new man? To this the apostle proceeds. It is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that

created it. Its measure of good and evil is its knowledge of God. Innocence had been once in one created in God's image, but no knowledge of good and evil. Then there had been the knowledge of good and evil, but acquired by sin. So that there was anything but what was according to the image of Him that created him. But now Christ being our life we are renewed into this knowledge according to what He, the perfect image of God, was, and that among men and as a man. Christ is our life, so that there is in the very nature of the new man, the elements and principles of these new apprehensions in the living delight in what is good, and horror of what is evil: but Christ is the objective measure of this—the one in whom we see the perfect display of the good we have to know; He is the image of the invisible God; we see in Him how the divine nature displays itself in a man. But this is the measure of good for us in the knowledge our hearts are to possess of it and follow, nothing less

than the image of Him that created us. Hence it is said, "Be ye followers (imitators) of God, as dear children, and walk in love as Christ has loved us," where we see the way of God, and that in Christ, our pattern. And this goes to the fullest extent. Hereby know we love, "because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." And this is the force, too, of what the Lord says—"Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." He does not say, "*with.*" It is not our responsibility for acceptance before God—we are perfect in Christ, but that is another point—but we are to be like our Father, act on the same principles—He is kind to evil and good, so are we to be. We are to be above the power of evil in grace, as He is. For Christ already, then, revealed the Father's name to the men given Him out of the world, and manifested Him so that he who had seen Him had seen the Father. The whole condition of the believer, what characterizes his existence as

such, is then summed up in one blessed word, often misquoted. All human distinctions are dropped with the old man they belonged to, which is now put off. Christ is all—the one sole thing which occupies me, is my object, the sphere in which my mind lives—all else has disappeared as motive or ground of thought, He is everything; the form of my life knows nothing but Christ, He is everything, in what forms and characterizes it there is nothing else. What am I? A Christian. I may be, as a fact, a slave or a freeman, a barbarian or a Greek—that belongs to the old man, forms no part of my conscious existence and motives. As a Christian, I may have, in various cases, to act according to the place I may providentially be in, as to the old man, and into this the apostle enters further on. I may be a husband, or a wife, or a child, or a slave. And because Christ is all, I shall behave according to the will of Christ in these circumstances, for my soul it is only a position I have to be a Christian in,

where it is one which Christ owns, and hence faithful to Christ in it. But these are details into which I need not further enter at this moment.

As to the principle of my life, Christ is all. But besides this, He is in all. He is the life and power to live for every Christian; so that He should be all. It is not Christ all in all, but Christ all, and in all—all as an object, in all as life and power. This is the Christian. The apostle now draws the consequences: "Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved." This is my position. It is *as such* I am to put these graces on. I am to walk in the consciousness that I am an elect one of God; one on whom His full favour and delight rests as a present thing in sovereign goodness. It is not merely the doctrine of predestination, but my present conscious position. I am a chosen one of God in the world. Further, I am a holy one of God, born of Him; and in Christ I partake of the divine nature, and am set apart for Him. Besides this, I am beloved of

Him. What a state to walk in the consciousness of! And note, it is laid as the ground of putting on gracious qualities, not the fruit of having put them on. It is in the consciousness of these blessed relationships with God, which are real living ones connected with the nature of which we have been made partakers, that these qualities grow and are developed. Hence they are gracious qualities, divine ones, such as were displayed in Christ, found in Him and in us, as He is in us as our life—bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. What a picture of Christ in the spirit in which He went through the world! Nothing strong outwardly, or shining. God, nor the divine nature in us, does not want to shine nor attract admiration to itself. That nature, content in blessedness, can, without any need to seek itself, act in grace to others; and while ever consistent with itself, does not want a character, but what is good, and the good of others. As Christ did, so have we to do; be

the epistle of Christ. We can walk through a world such as this in grace.

But these expressions of the gracious and heavenly nature in man are not all. Love in its own proper and divine nature must be brought in. God is love, and rises in His own perfectness, which nothing can touch, and admits no evil, above all, yet consorts with nothing contrary to itself. I could speak of gracious qualities in man, and of having a quarrel against any in which these qualities were to be displayed. But God rises above all this, acts in the certain consciousness of His own charity. Indifference to evil is not charity. God cannot be indifferent to evil, and God is love. He can rise above it, bear with it, forgive it, put it away at the cost of giving up His own dear Son, but not associate with or acquiesce in it. The holiness of God's nature cannot be separated from His love. I could not call it love in a father, his making no difference as to his children being in evil or not; to be love there must be the holiness which requires



that we should get above the sin to be able to love. Else it is mere personal companionship or acquiescence in evil if it be there. Perfect charity is not called for where there is not perfect holiness. Nor could there be perfect holiness without perfect love, for an ungracious feeling or an angry one would not be holiness. Hence, love may be shown in chastening, in holding aloof, in a steady withdrawal of expressed favour, and in our relations with another in the firmness which refuses to associate with evil. Besides gracious affections, the perfectness of God's love is brought in. But here, evidently, the heart is stayed, because God is above all in love. He is never troubled. If we walk in love, His peace rules in our heart. Nothing separates us from it. We dwell in it. And there is thankfulness, for all comes from His love. But there is expansiveness in this nature, and by the revelation of all the riches into the communion of which we are brought, and we enjoy these things together. The word of

Christ is to dwell in us richly, and this in the way of joy while helping others on, and communion together. The former traits gave us Christ in us, properly speaking, though the heart be never without an object. This Christ, all to us, and enjoyed in the affections of our new nature. All this, and our passage through a world of temptation, is guarded by a simple but very fine and all-searching test—a joy to possess it if we are true, but detective of all want of truth or heart. Whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Now, this is perfect liberty as to everything His blessed name can be connected with, and a test which detects everything, however apparently allowable or innocent or good to man's eyes, which cannot be done in that name. To the upright in heart, who seek only to walk as He walked, to glorify Him, to reproduce His character in this poor world, which so needs to know there is such a thing as the grace of it, to the upright heart such a test is invaluable, and links all the best

affections of the heart to it. It judges all that would carry a fair appearance, and yet have reserves with God or motives that will not bear the light. This is the closing safeguard and rule which preserves from the deception of the world, and the seductions of the selfishness of one's own heart. I can only give an outline which may introduce the reader into the bearings of the passage. Any such paper as this can only be useful as it leads him to study scripture and the path of the blessed Lord Himself, remembering, if he be a Christian, that he is partaker of the life of Christ, and set to display it in the world, that He may be glorified.

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## CHARITY.

“And to brotherly kindness charity.”

2 Peter i. 7.

The common notion is, that brotherly love is charity, and indeed its most perfect form. This is a mistake, as the passage above shows. That brotherly love is a most sweet and precious fruit

of grace is most true—precious in the heart that is filled with it, and precious in its mutual development. But it is not charity. We are told to add “to brotherly love, *charity*.” The reason is simple. If it is brotherly love, brethren are the object; and though when genuine and pure it surely flows from grace, it easily, in us, clothes itself with the character which its object gives it, and tends to limit itself to the objects with which it is occupied, and to be governed by its feeling towards them. It is apt to rest in its objects, and thus avoid all that might be painful to them or mar the mutual feeling and pleasantness of intercourse, and thus make this the measure of the conduct of the Christian.

In a word, where brotherly love ends in itself as the main object, brethren become the motive and governing principle of our conduct, and our conduct becomes as uncertain as the state of our brethren with whom we may be in contact. Hence the Apostle says, “Above all these, put on charity, which

is the bond of perfectness." And another Apostle, "And to brotherly kindness, charity." Now charity is love. But will not this seek to exercise brotherly kindness? Undoubtedly it will. But it brings in God. "God is love." "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him." Hence it brings in a standard of what true love is, which mere brotherly kindness in itself never can. It is "the bond of perfectness" for God, and God in active love is its measure. Brotherly kindness by itself has the brother for its object. Charity is governed, exists, in virtue of the conscious presence of God. Hence, whatever is not consistent with His presence, with Himself, with His glory, cannot be borne by the heart which is filled with it. It is in the spirit of love that it thinks and works, but in the Spirit of God by whose presence it is inwardly known and active.

Love was active in Christ, when He said, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers;" in Paul, when he said, "I would that they were even cut off

which trouble you." Charity, because it is God's presence, and we feel His presence and look to Him in it, is intolerant of evil. In mere brotherly kindness, the brother being the object before my mind, and, if God's presence be not felt, if I do not realize it, nature coming in so easily, and here in its most unsuspected and kindly shapes, I put man before God, smother evil, keep kindness going at any rate, and so far exclude and shut out God.

Charity is His active presence, though it will be in love to man. But it gives to God all His rights. He it is that is love; but He is never inconsistent with Himself. His love to us was shown in what was the most solemn proof of His intolerance of evil—the cross. There is no true love apart from righteousness. If God is indifferent to evil, is not righteous, then there is no love in grace to the sinner. If He abhors evil, cannot suffer it in His presence, then His dealings with us, as sinners, shew the most perfect love. If I have ten children, and they go

wrong, and I say, "Well, I am to shew love to them," and take no account of their evil ways; or if some of them go wrong, and I treat them as if there was no difference to my mind in their well doing, or evil doing, this is not love, but carelessness as to evil.

This is the kind of love looked for by unconverted men, namely, God's being as careless as to evil as they are. But this is not divine charity, which abhors the evil but rises over it, dealing with it, either in putting it away, or in needed chastenings. Now, if God were indifferent to evil, there is no holy being to be the object of my love—nothing sanctifying. God does not own as love what admits of sin.

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### FRAGMENT.

There are two things the Spirit witnesses to—as to my sins and as to myself. As to my sins, that they are gone: "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." But as to myself,

His witness is, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

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### THOSE WHO SLEEP IN JESUS.

"I am the Resurrection!"

The grave its charge may keep,  
And our loved ones crumble into dust,

While in the dust they sleep.  
We count them still as living,  
As living unto God;  
Our hearts have no misgiving,  
Ever resting in that word:—

"I am the Resurrection!"

Sad is our heart and home,  
Most desolate the broken band,  
Where the stroke of death has come.  
Still are our lost ones living,  
They are living unto God;  
Waiting with us his bidding,  
To arise, and meet the Lord.

Oh thou, "the Resurrection,"

When, when wilt thou appear,  
To turn to joy our sorrow,  
And stay the falling tear?  
In this earth, where death is sweeping  
Its myriads to the tomb,  
Into this scene of weeping,  
O Lord, when wilt thou come?

E. D.



## PEACE BY JESUS CHRIST.

### Acts x.

In this chapter we have the foundation truth of the reception of the Gentiles into the Church. And one thing very marked in the narrative is, how very present a thing salvation is. Cornelius was an officer, a devout man, who gave alms, &c. God was working graciously in his heart; yet still he had one thing to learn, and that was salvation. I do not say that in God's sight he was not saved, but he had to learn to know his relation with God as a present thing. So with the jailor. His heart was touched, yet he says, What must I do to be saved? Now when God begins thus to work, He finishes what He begins. Here we have the full bringing out of known salvation in order that there may be the enjoyment of God. A father may have forgiven a repenting child in his heart, yet if this forgiveness is not made known, the child cannot be happy.

Here then we have the first case of

the Gentiles being brought into the full knowledge of salvation. This is not simply conviction—a man's being regenerated so as to desire to have peace with God. There must be that, but the gospel is the *answer* of God to all these desires of the heart. The poor woman in Luke vii. was evidently renewed in heart when she went to Jesus. She felt such an attraction in Jesus as drew her to Him, but she had not the answer of Jesus, "Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace"—you are saved. That answer is the foundation of all the hopes and joys of the believer. The thing which characterizes a Christian arises from the knowledge of present salvation. It is not a desire after righteousness and a fear that if I do not attain to it, God will be against me as a Judge. It is salvation brought to me, not merely as a possible attainment, but as God's answer to all this felt need of the soul.

Peter speaks to Cornelius "the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ."

Mark, the Apostle at once speaks peace. Peace is a wonderful word. It is a far greater thing than joy. It excludes everything that would disturb. I may have joy, but then I think of this trial or the other and my joy is damped. But it is not so in peace. If I have sorrow, joy coming into my presence will but embitter my sorrow. But in peace there is the absence of everything that would disturb. God is never called the God of joy, but He is the God of peace.

Peter does not say, Keep on and you will get to peace, but he brings peace with him. He brings God's answer to all the need of this man's soul.

There may be peace in providence, but this peace goes a great deal further. It is peace with God. There are two things in this peace. But first let me say, it is with God that this peace is. The soul when awakened wants to have a perfect, thorough satisfaction that God has nothing against it. When the soul comes to know God at all, it is with God it wants peace. We are

content naturally to have it without God, but now it cannot have peace without God. We may try to distract the mind, but let the thought of God come in, and all our peace is gone. - Now it must have peace with God. Conscience must be perfectly satisfied that God is satisfied. It may be labouring to satisfy God itself, for a time under law, but when really awakened and in earnest it soon finds that this it cannot do, and yet it feels that He must be satisfied. Do you think that if I have offended a father I can be happy without the certainty of his being satisfied? The conscience takes satisfying God as the measure of right and wrong. There is no peace till then. Then all is peace. Then it does not care though all the world is against it. It does not care for character. It is conscience the soul cares for. Now it can be honest about itself and acknowledge itself to be what it is. There is also a quiet sense of being in favour. There is the heart's assurance of having perfect peace with God. Now there is not a cloud on my

soul before God, for conscience has been cleansed in the fountain opened. I have been there alone with God and all has been opened up and the whole thing has been settled. His love I know, and know just where I most needed to know it—about my sins—and that is peace. It is not trying to get on the best way I can and hoping that God will overlook the rest; no, it is with the knowledge of good and evil and with it peace in God's presence. It is not a negative thing merely, but something positive, something which God can delight in. He not only sees no spot, but He sees what gives Him delight. Now the conscience and the heart are both satisfied. Bring in the light and it only brings out my righteousness. Now if my conscience knows God as love, I cannot but wish Him to love me. When I know that God loves me as God only knows how to love, I am not only in the light but in the warmth and sunshine of His love. There is peace. Conscience in the light, and not having one thing with

which to reproach me, and feeling conscious of this; and on the other hand the heart in the perfect consciousness of His perfect love resting on me. Where that is not known there cannot be peace.

Now Peter does not preach a quantity of things in us, which, if we manage to get, we may have hope; but he comes and tells these needy awakened sinners "Here is peace for you, a made peace." It is made, and perfectly accomplished and now preached through Jesus Christ. Well, now the Lord says, "you are not at peace with God. He comes and says, 'I am come to give you peace.'" He does not say, "Make your peace with God," for He, Himself, has made it. We are preaching a thing that is, not a thing that is not. Who was working in the cross? God's holiness. There peace was brought by the blood of the cross. The thing was settled by God and the Lamb alone, and about our sins too, when and where we could have no part. There righteousness was dealing with Christ about my sins, and the

result I see in resurrection. "He shall convince the world of righteousness, because I go to the Father." If I own the sins through grace for which Christ suffered, and put myself in His place, I get in Him and His place before God, for He has borne the sins. I own these sins in the presence of God. I deserved that cross. But now I am in His presence in Christ, and righteousness gives peace to the conscience.

I wish to get peace in the heart. Well, where is there love as in the cross? The best thing God had given for the worst thing I had done. Will my sins hinder? Why they are the very things which have brought out God's love to me. I take Jesus as the measure of all the love of my Father. He gave Jesus for me. There my heart has peace—peace unspeakable. If a man knows God he wants Him all. The desires are now infinite, in object at least, the heart having been touched with the love of God. If we want love it is in God—joy, it is in God. And of course all this will manifest itself in life.

Upon the perfect remission of sin comes in another thing, the perfect power of enjoyment. As long as a man is trying to make terms for himself, he will resist the simplicity of grace. If I have anything to do in it I must pretend to satisfy God as to my part in it, and if I am trying to do this I shall never know God. No, it is by faith that I come to know God—faith which teaches me that it is done. I have but to believe—Christ thus gets all the glory, and I all the good. “Whosoever believeth *in Him* shall receive the remission of sins.” Not, whosoever believeth in the remission of sins. It is a joyous thing to know the remission of sins, but the soul will soon get weak if thinking of that. “Whosoever believeth in Him” turns the soul to God. I look to Jesus, and that is what gives joy, and changes me into His image.

Now, when Cornelius believes in Christ, as preached for the remission of sins, the Holy Ghost comes—in a peculiar manner it is true then, because



God was showing that He would receive the Gentiles. So it is not merely the knowledge of remission, but the love which was proved in the death of Christ. The Holy Ghost sheds it abroad in my heart, and peace flows as a river. He gives the apprehension of God's love, the spring of joy and the living power of glorifying Christ. The moment Peter says, "Through His name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive the remission of sins"—and we know the words went into Cornelius's heart—the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. Thus we have first peace, then the ground of it, God's love and Christ's work; and then the power of enjoyment, the Holy Ghost.

Are you labouring to get peace? If so I am glad, in one sense, for you know your need, but you will never get it so. Do you think that God would have bruised Christ to make peace, if you could make it for yourself, or even with the help of the Spirit? "To him that worketh not but

believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." The heart's intercourse with God is with the *God of Peace*.

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## A MAN IN CHRIST, AND THE POWER OF CHRIST IN A MAN.

2 Cor. xii.

We need to be taught of God, what this "man in Christ" means. When we speak of a man in the flesh or a man in the Spirit, we mean his state or position; what characterizes him before God. A man in Christ does not mean what he is *in himself*. It is the condition of *every child of God* "in Christ." This chapter, in what follows, shews us much of what flesh is, but in this state—"in Christ," flesh had nothing to do with it. The body had nothing to do with it. Paul could not understand it of himself. He says, "I knew a man in Christ, whether in the body I cannot tell," &c.; that is, it is not what he

was as a man down here. It is the position of a believer contrasted with that of an unbeliever. "If any man be *in Christ* he is a new creature." That characterizes him, and the value and import of it are unfolded in that passage. And again "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." It is quite evident it has nothing to do with anything he has out of Christ. Whatever he was before, he was in flesh; now he is *in Christ*, and all is measured by Christ: he has got his place in the second Adam, and not in the first. It will show itself in its practical ways, but this refers to his standing.

I desire to show, first, the force and bearing of this—a man being "in Christ." So long as Christ was in the world, nobody could say, "A man *in Christ*." "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth

alone." God's grace was working from Adam downwards; but that is another thing. In order to know what it is to be in Christ, we must know what this Christ is. Why should God have peace and blessing for a man in Christ? Because there was none for him anywhere else. There would be judgment for his sin, but no life or righteousness, or power, not one thing that he needs before God could he have without being *in Christ*. There is plenty of wickedness and pride, creature work of our own, but nothing that can go up to God. We may clothe ourselves in our own eyes, but Adam was naked *before God*, even when he clothed himself. There may be bright qualities, intellect, &c., but who is clothed in them? MAN. He prides himself in them. But there may be good qualities in any animal. There is a difference between some and others; some are vicious, others the reverse. The intellect of man and his wonderful faculties are not the question, but what do they turn to? Pride, title to be something, man clothing

himself in his pride! Is that the way to heaven? God says, "there is none righteous, no not one." Does the man think so, who thinks to go to heaven that way? No! he has nothing else but filthy rags. When the voice of God is not there, the fig-leaves may do very well. They may do for man; but when God comes in, they will not do before *Him*. God clothed Adam, but then death had come in. When man clothes himself it only brings out his shame. When God clothes him he is fit for God—he has "put on Christ." There is no desire in the natural man to be with God; man has no desire to go to God. Conscience drives a man away from God, and his heart keeps him away. Any honest unconverted man would own he has no pleasure in Christ. It is thoroughly brought out that the carnal mind is enmity against God. The man out of Christ is either a gross outward sinner, like the publican, or the respectable and hard-hearted man who has no sympathy with the reception of a sinner. See what the Christ is whom we

are in. Christ comes; God occupies Himself with these sinners, but see how they treat Him. Knowing all the sin, all the hatred of their hearts, the breaking of the law, and a thousand other sins, He came for this reason—He came to seek sinners. The grace of God, who is love, has risen above all, that man is. If man feels what he is before God he gets into despair. You do not trust every one who comes to you, because you are sinners. God knows all about you. Christ came because you are wicked. If that suits you, *that* is the God you have in Christ. If that does not suit you, there is judgment for you. But, in Christ, God is above all the sin, and because it is what it is, He sends Christ. What man means by God's goodness is indifference to sin. God never in grace alters His holiness. Before a man could be in Christ, the whole work was needed to be done. He made Him to be "sin for us." The first thing is Christ made sin, and then grace reigns through *righteousness*. Christ was entirely

alone to drink that bitter cup, and then God could not only save the sinner but glorify Himself about the sin. God would glorify Christ in Himself. When Christ was made sin, God was perfectly glorified. There was perfect righteousness against the sin, but love in bearing it. He is gone up to the throne of God, *as a man*. Now there is a Christ to be in; righteousness is accomplished; the whole thing is done; and the Holy Ghost is sent down to bear witness that God has accepted this man and His work. Righteousness is glorified in the presence of God.

As a Christian, I am a man, not in the flesh, but in Christ. The whole work is done that fits Him to sit on the right hand of God. He has glorified God, and God has glorified Him in Himself. But before I can have a man in Christ, I must have a Christ to be in there on the throne of God. Directly I take knowledge of what Christ has done for me, as applied by the Spirit, I am a man in Christ. It is not given to every one to have spiri-

tual manifestations, as Paul had. Paul saw more of what it was to be there by what he saw here.

Now we see what the flesh is in connexion with this. In the beginning of the chapter, we see what the height was to which a man could be taken. The thief might go into Paradise the same as Paul, but it was a wonderful thing for a man down here to have these revelations. But in the end of the chapter we see what the flesh is capable of. Nature cannot go into heaven. If God is pleased to take Paul up there, there is no consciousness of being in the body at all. "A man in Christ"—"of such an one will I glory." There is the glorying of a Christian. How many a one would say, You must not do that; but Paul says, "*I will glory in it.*" There is a man dead! No, he is not dead; he is alive in Christ—as a man *out of himself in Christ*. He will glory in this; and you could not help glorying, if you really believed it. It is not thankful, not to glory in it. You may not



apprehend all about it, but if you believe it you will glory in it. If Paul had gone up to a fourth heaven, there would have been all the more need for the thorn, or he would have gloried in that. The danger was not when he had the apprehension of the presence of God, but it was when out of His presence, when he got thinking of it. The revelation was not a source of strength; he needed something else. Whenever he preached, he had something to make him humble, something to keep the flesh down, (the thorn, not sin,) something to make nothing of *him*—breaking down the pride of man. He was *humbled*, because in danger of not being humble. There was strength for him. If he preached in a despicable manner, but souls were converted, (as they were,) how was that? If that is the way of getting blessing, it was not *Paul's* power, but Christ's power. Then let me have the thorn, he says. Thus we have the danger of the flesh dealt with in humbling him in the presence of man—breaking down that

very thing that would puff itself up, and Satan that would puff up is obliged to be an instrument to break it down.

Now, I have the *power of Christ in the man*, not only a "*man in Christ*." While in this world, I want something to carry me through, and to protect me from being cheated—something for the conflict I am in. That is *power in the Christ*, as well as being in the Christ. There was something there to keep the nature down that would have gloried; and besides that, it was the occasion of bringing in Christ. There is always something to glory in in Christ. Do not believe that the saint is not entitled to enjoy all the advantages he has in Christ. All the hindrance, all the wretchedness, made him glory more in Christ. He says, "Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities," &c.

At the end of the chapter we see what the flesh left to itself even in a Christian is. Flesh in its fairest forms, its capacities, &c., is all a hindrance. He may only glory in the old man, in its being *dead*—"reckon yourselves to

be dead," &c. We may rejoice in finding the flesh good for nothing. What man is in flesh, and flesh in a man, is all bad. God says, I will visit you by my word and Spirit, and then bring you to where I am. The *sins* are gone. But the *sin* is not gone you say. But "sin in the flesh" has been condemned. Christ has died for it, and I am clear, justified from it. I have got out of this condition thus condemned. If you have got into the third heavens, you may know that all the *flesh* could do would be to make you proud of it. A man in the flesh cannot please God, and the flesh in man cannot please God. If you were in the fourth heaven, it would be just the same. Sinful flesh has been condemned. Then I can say, I am dead and I am in Christ, the man at the right hand of God.

*Whether an apostle or the simplest saint that ever was, I need the power of Christ in the man.*

The Lord give us to judge flesh, and all the scene around that ministers to it.

“JUDGE NOT THAT YE BE NOT  
JUDGED.”

Matthew vii. 1.

These words are often employed to hinder a sound judgment as to the plain path of right and wrong. If a person is walking in that which I know by the Word of God to be *wrong*, I must judge that he is walking wrong, or give up my judgment of right and wrong. I may trust he may be misled, or that difficulties and temptations may have overcome him, and consider myself, lest I also be tempted—think the best I can of him—but I cannot put evil for good or good for evil. There can be no right motive to do what is wrong, to do what is contrary to God's will. There may be ignorance, want of light in the conscience, and I may and ought to take all this into account, but I cannot say that the person is not doing wrong.

Woe be to me if for any personal consideration I enfeeble my own sense that a wrong path is a wrong one. The

saint must be very careful not to allow any sophistry to modify any submission of heart and conscience to God's judgment of good and evil. As regards the Church of God, the Scriptures plainly declare we are to judge "them that are within; them that are without, God judgeth." This is no imputation of motives nor habit of forming an opinion on other people's conduct, which is an evil habit, but the duty of not allowing evil in the house of God. It is positively commanded to us not to allow it.

Again, many apply this to judging whether people are Christians. But this is founded on a fundamental mistake. It is assumed that people are to be supposed to be Christians unless proved to be the contrary. If the faith of the soul be a personal thing and I value Christ, this cannot be. I am not called upon to be volunteering to pass a judgment on the point, whether such or such an one is a Christian; but the person who blames me for saying such an one is a Christian *is judging* that he is a Christian of

*course*, which is quite false. The Apostle says, "*the love of Christ* constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, *then were all dead.*" Believing this, it is a joy to believe that any one has passed from death unto life. That is not a judgment, though the rejoicing of the heart, that faith in that person has brought him into the blessed place of the child of God. It is a most horrible principle that we cannot know who are God's children, Christ's disciples. It *destroys all godly affections*. If the children of a family were told that they could not know, and ought not to judge, who are their brothers and sisters, what would become of family affections? The Lord has said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." How can this be if I do not know who are disciples, and towards whom this love is to be exercised? We must know each other as children of God to "love as brethren." He who objects to judging that such and such are God's children

objects to the love of the brethren. He is rejecting the spiritual affections on which the Lord and Scripture so much insist. There is a wrong spirit of judgment. If I occupy myself needlessly in thinking of others and expressing an opinion of them, if in questionable cases I ascribe even in my mind wrong motives—nay, if I do not hope in such cases that a right motive is at bottom, I am in the spirit of judgment and away from God. If severity of judgment with a person when I am bound to judge he is faulty possesses my soul—this is not the Spirit of God. But to weaken the plain, unequivocal and avowed estimate of right and wrong under pretence of not judging—to deny the knowledge of one another and mutual love among the saints, under pretence that we have not a right to judge, is of the enemy and a mere cover to a man's conscience to avoid the conscious pressure of that judgment on himself. If saints maintain a divine standard of right and wrong, I must judge them who do

wrong to be doing so. I am not always called to occupy myself about them—then, if unhindered, the spirit of judgment comes in—but if I am, I must judge according to the Word of God. If I am to love the disciples of Jesus, the saints of God, “the brotherhood,” I must know who they are. If there is a disposition to distrust or to impute motives, then the spirit of judgment is at work.

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### CHRIST AS OUR FOOD.

“And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho. And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.”—Joshua v. 10—12.

I would say a word as to the way in which Christ may be considered as our food. He may be looked at as the food of the Christian in three ways.



First, as a redeemed sinner; secondly, in connexion with sitting in heavenly places in Christ; and thirdly, as a pilgrim and stranger down here. But this last is merely accessory and not the proper portion of the Christian. The Lord said to Israel that He had come down to deliver them from Egypt and bring them into the land of Canaan. He did not say a word about the *wilderness* when He came to deliver them from Egypt, because His interference for them there was in the power of redemption and for the accomplishment of His promises. However, there was the wilderness as well as redemption from Egypt and the entrance into Canaan; and Christ answers as our food to these three things. Two of them are permanent; for we are nourished by Christ in two ways permanently, that is, in redemption and glory. The third way is as the manna which we have all along the road. It is in these three ways that Christ meets His people and nourishes them all the way. Two of them remain, as we have

seen, but the third ceases when the circumstances it was to meet have passed away. They did eat the pass-over and the manna until they got into the land, then the manna ceased; but they continued to eat of the passover.

Now there are two ways in which it is proper for us ever to be feeding on Christ. First, as the passover, for they ate the paschal lamb when the wilderness had ceased and Egypt had been long left behind. When in Egypt the blood was on the lintel and the doorposts, and the Israelite ate of the lamb inside the house. The thought they had while they were eating it was, that God was going through the land as an avenging judge; and the effect of the blood on the doorposts was to keep God out, which was a great thing to do, for if brought into God's presence as a judge, woe be to him in whom sin is found.

The state of the one that now eats of Christ is just according as he estimates the value of the cross, through fear of what sin actually merits.

When we have got into the effect of the blood of the paschal lamb, we have got into Canaan, and enjoy the peace of the land as a delivered people, having crossed the Jordan—not only the Red Sea. That is, we have passed through death and resurrection; not as knowing Christ dead and risen for us merely, as presented in the Red Sea, but as being dead with Him and entered into heavenly places with Him, as in Jordan. Then the character of God is known as *their God*, that is, the accomplisher of all that which He purposed towards them. It is not keeping God out now, but it is enjoying His love; not looking at God as in the cross pouring out wrath in judgment against sin. In Jesus on the cross there was perfect justice and perfect love. What devotedness to the Father, and what tender love to us! And this is the way the saint who is in peace feeds on the cross. It is not feeding on it as knowing that he is safe; for Israel's keeping the passover after they got into Canaan was very different from

their keeping it when judgment was passing over. In Canaan they were in peace, and they were able to glorify God in this way, in the remembrance of their redemption from Egypt. In this we see presented, not the sinner that feels he is safe, but the saint that can glorify God in his affections; his heart confidently flowing out to Him, and feeding on Christ as the old corn of the land—the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. We see Christ now by faith at the right hand of God as the glorified man, not merely as Son of God, but as Son of man; as Stephen, when the heavens were opened to him, beheld *Jesus* at the right hand of God. We also see Him up there. We do not see Him as He is represented in the Revelation, seated on a white horse, coming forth out of heaven. He will indeed come forth and receive us up where He is, and we shall be like Him and be for ever with Him. But we shall feed on Him as the old corn of the land when we are there, and this is our proper portion now: manna is not

our portion, though it is our provision by the way. Joshua sees the Lord as the Captain of the Lord's host, and Israel feeds in the land before they fight. And our portion is to sit down in it before we fight, because God has given it to us. They do not eat the manna in Canaan, that is for the wilderness. The manna is not Christ in the heavens! it is Christ down here. It is not our portion; our portion is the old corn of the land. That is, the whole thing, according to God's counsels, is redemption and glory. But all our life is exercise down here, or sin, (excepting that God does give us moments of joy) because, while here, there is nothing but what acts on the flesh, or gives occasion for service to God. We may fail, and then Christ comes and feeds us with manna, that is, His sympathy with us down here, and shows how His grace is applied to all the circumstances of our daily life. And that is a happy thing. For most of our time, the far greater part of our life, we are occupied in these things,

necessary and lawful things no doubt, but not occupied with heavenly joy in Christ. And these things are apt to turn away the heart from the Lord and hinder our joy. But if we would have our appetites feed on Him as the old corn of the land, we must have the habit of feeding on Him as the manna. For instance, something may make me impatient during the day, well then, Christ is my patience, and thus He is the manna to sustain me in patience. He is the source of grace; not merely the example which I am to copy. He is more than this, for I am to draw strength from Him, to feed upon Him daily: for we need Him, and it is impossible to enjoy Him as the paschal lamb unless we are also feeding on Him as the manna.

We know that God delights in Christ and He gives us a capacity to enjoy Him too. To have such affections is the highest possible privilege, but to enjoy Him, we must feed on Him every day. It is to know Christ come down to bring the needed grace and

turn the dangerous circumstances with which we are surrounded to the occasion of our feeding on Himself as the manna to sustain us and strengthen us in our trial.

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## FRAGMENT.

“Thy kingdom come.” This sets everything aside in this world that the kingdom of the Lord may come in. It involves the removing of things that are made that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Let us ask ourselves if we are quite sure that our hearts are so detached from everything here that we can truthfully say, “thy kingdom come.” Are we quite sure that we should like to see Him come in this kingdom, which will involve the shaking out of everything that may not remain when He so comes? Surely it would wrench our hearts from a quantity of things that are attaching our affections to that which does not belong to the coming kingdom and must inevitably be shaken down. The Christian, doubtless, desires it as an

object, but if it be applied to what is in the heart, it can only be said in truth by the only perfect one.

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## PSALM CXXXIII.

God of love and consolation,  
Hear thy children's voice of praise,  
Who 'mid outward tribulation  
Still a note of joy would raise.  
For though earthly props are sinking,  
Friends fall back, and foes prevail,  
Cast on thee in love unshrinking—  
Ours are hopes that cannot fail.

Teach us, Lord! the secret meaning  
In thy "new command" reveal'd;\*  
We, who on thy bosom leaning,  
To redemption's day are seal'd.  
Give us more of that anointing,†  
By thy Holy Spirit shed,  
That we may through thine appointing  
In abiding truth be led.

As the precious oil descended,  
Which o'er Aaron's garments roll'd,  
May thy saints in love be blended  
Here, while scatter'd from their fold.  
Satan's wiles and earth's commotion  
Ne'er can rend us from thy breast—  
In thy love's unfathom'd ocean  
All thine own may safely rest!

I. G.

\* John xiii. 34.

† 1 John ii. 27.



## GOD'S GRACE AND GOVERNMENTAL DEALINGS.

Luke xiii.

There are two great principles in God's dealings, in connexion with man on the earth, which are developed in the Church of God, as such, and in the government of God. And these two things are very distinct the one from the other. In the Church the riches of God's grace are manifested; but in His governmental dealings, righteousness, and the display of His *attributes*, as justice, mercy, and goodness. We have an example of God's governmental power in Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7, "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's

children, unto the third and fourth generation." Here it is in connexion with the Jews, and not only among the Jews, but it shows also that which is outside in the world in God's dealings. What we get in Exodus xxxiv., is not sovereign grace bringing a soul to eternal life, but governmental power; the exercise of which we may now mark every day around us. For if a man wastes his fortune, or ruins his health by intemperance of any kind, his children suffer for it. This is an invariable principle. We see also the exercise of righteous government in God's not clearing the guilty.

See God's dealings with David, because of the matter of Uriah. "The sword shall never depart from thine house. . . . Thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. . . . Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child that is born unto thee shall surely die." Now, here was judgment for David's sin; and we know

that in his after life "the sword *did not* depart from his house."

This also is true of the Jews, for the murder of the Lord; as it is expressed in Galatians;—"What a man soweth that shall he also reap." This, however, is not *grace* but *government*; still it is true of a saint, as well as of a sinner. Both kinds of dealing God has with the saints *now*, that is in *grace*, and in *righteous government*. I shall never reap the reward of my sins in eternal blessedness—that is infinite *grace*; but in the way of *righteous government*, I shall reap the reward of my iniquity down here. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. . . . He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." It is *grace* as to sins eternally: but *righteous government* as to iniquity *down here*. God never lets go the reins of *government*, even over the world, although for a season He did not interfere in governmental power. As it is said, "The times of this ignorance God winked at." He did not say there was no sin; therefore they

were responsible. So that "Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." There was *sin* and death, though no *transgression*, because God had not then come in with law. But Adam had received a positive commandment, and had transgressed it. And sin must bear its consequence, which is *death*. But "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel," then all will come out, and both will have their place.

The angels see and understand the government of God in the world; but in the Church it is quite another thing, as Peter says, "*Which things the angels desire to look into.*" The angels had seen the various wisdom of God in creation, when the morning stars sang together; but here it was quite a new thing; for by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God is displayed. God is going to have a people not belonging to the earth at all.

In the prophets government on the

earth is spoken of, because it is of Messiah's Kingdom that they speak. But God's government towards Israel in its Messiah-character is now suspended, but it will come out again another day. When the kingdom is spoken of it is government on the earth; but when the Church is spoken of it is as connected with the Governor Himself. The position of Christians is such, that they have in it a motive for the very commonest affairs of life: so that their daily conduct should be suitable to their high calling of God in Christ Jesus. We are united to Him who will judge the world; and therefore when the apostle is going to counsel two foolish Christians that are going to law, he says, 'what, cannot you settle such a *trifling* thing as that about money without going to law?' "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" Could not those who are destined to do such high things settle their own smaller matters, without going to law, and that before the unbelievers? It is the sense of their high calling that Paul places before them;

which he desired might fill their minds as it did his. Therefore, if telling them as servants to be faithful in a house, and not to be guilty of purloining, he says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The *grace* having appeared, the *glory* is looked for; therefore the conclusion is, do you, as subjects of the grace and waiting for the glory, live *righteously* and *suffer wrongfully*, rather than avenge yourselves.

We have, then, God's government of this world, and of the Jew in justice, though in patient goodness; and His taking *out of the world* a people united to Christ in governing. If you look

into the prophets, you do not find any thing about the Church whatever; but about government, whether of the Jew or of the world. But when we come to the Church we find a suspension of government, in its outward, visible, and settled order, because the world had rejected Christ, who was their Governor. In the Church I get entirely a new thing; for the Son of God having been rejected in the world, is gone back to the Father, and he now says to us, "Ye are not of this world, even as I am not of this world." "Now is the judgment of this world, now is the prince of this world cast out." Christ, who made all things, is also set over all things in government, as Head of all things; though not yet openly exercising His power thus. But Christ who is "Head over all things, is also Head to the Church, which is His body: a thing hidden from ages and generations, but is now made manifest. In Ephesians this is fully brought out; but there we have more of the fulness of the body; while in Colossians, there

is more about the fulness of the Head. This is because the Colossians were in danger of slipping back from the Head into the observance of ordinances; therefore the apostle presses the fulness of the Head upon them to bring them back again. But in Ephesians he dwells on the Church, the body, the *fulness of Him* that filleth *all in all*. The Church, as his body, is the *completeness* of Christ.

In Eph. iii. we read of the promise in Christ by the gospel given in the eternal purpose of God to the Church *before* the foundation of the world; whereas the promises given to Israel were given to them *on the earth* and *not* before the world was. The Church was called in the eternal purpose of God, *before* time; while the Jew was called out *in* time. In Col. i. 23—25, we read, "Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard and which was preached to every creature which is *under heaven*; whereof I, Paul, am made a minister; who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and



fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the Church; *whereof I am made a minister* according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfil (or more properly to *complete*) the word of God." That which still remained for God to give, and which *we now have*, is the revelation of the Church; for until the Church was revealed, the word of God was not complete. But now that which for ages and generations was *hid in God*, is fully told out. Here we see Paul's *two* ministries, first, that of the gospel, and then that of the Church. And the form which a believer's life now takes is, "Christ *in* you the hope of glory." A Christ in heaven, and at the same time dwelling in the saints now on the earth, is a thing which was hid in God *before* the foundation of the world. Unto the Jews had been committed the oracles of God; but they knew nothing of a body on the earth united to a Head in heaven, even to the man Christ Jesus, as members of

His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Until the Church was revealed to Paul, this was still hid in God's eternal purpose. As soon as all God's dealings, in the sense of proving man, were closed with the earth, by the rejection of His Son, ("This is the heir, come let us kill him,") all was closed to *men in the flesh*, and the Church is brought out in connexion with a man in heaven.

God sent His only Son, and Him they crucified. He had no other messenger. Christ was rejected as *Prophet*, as *Messiah*, as Son of Man, and as Son of God; and when man, as man, was thus fully shewn out, God comes in and acts for Himself. Him, whom man had put to death, God raises *from the dead*, and sets Him down at His own right hand in heaven; in virtue of which the Holy Ghost comes down and unites a people on the earth to this *risen Man in glory*. This is quite a distinct thing, and therefore it is that in scripture we constantly find a gap, as it were, leaving space for the mystery of the

Church, "which from the beginning of the world hath been *hid* in God," to be brought out.

Therefore, as we have previously remarked, the Church is not found in the Old Testament; but Christ's coming in humiliation, and His coming in judgment, are spoken of close together, without saying a word about the Church coming in between the two events. So, in Luke iv. when the Lord was in the synagogue at Nazareth, after preaching from Isaiah what referred to His then mission of healing the broken-hearted and preaching the acceptable year of the Lord, He closed the book and sat down, saying not a word about "the day of vengeance"—that being deferred until the mystery which had been hid from ages and generations had been manifest to the saints; or, in other words, until after the Church had been brought out.

It is of immense importance, for the steadiness of the soul, to keep these two principles quite distinct; for what often confounds people in the study of

prophecy is their not seeing the distinctive place which the Church of God holds apart from God's government of the world, or of Israel. But the very essence of the Church is, that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. They are all sinners alike; but when reached by God's grace are all brought into one body. The very principle on which the Church is based, would have destroyed the whole basis of the Jewish system. All along in the Jewish system their righteousness consisted in maintaining a distinct separation between themselves and the Gentiles; but now "there is no difference;" for both Jew and Gentile are made *one in Christ*. If the barrier which God Himself had originally set up had been broken down before Christ was crucified and risen, it would have been sin: therefore the Church could never have been even hinted at in the Jewish Scriptures. The principle of the Church could not be brought in, while the "handwriting of ordinances" remained. But this being "blotted out" in Christ, "the

twain (Jew and Gentile) are made *one new man*."

In going back to our chapter, (Luke xiii.) we see the Jews had the thought of God's government in their minds. Nor was it wrong in itself. They thought that God could not let such a guilty wretch as this Pilate live, who had been mingling the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices. But Christ brings them to a new principle by which to judge of things, and tells them that Pilate is but a mere instrument in the governmental dealings of God with the nation. Judgment was going on in this present evil world. "Suppose ye," says the Lord, "that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans? I tell you nay; but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." It is not that they were finally condemned as sinners here, but it was governmental judgment in this world which would overtake them all unless they repented. God had sent forth His judgment and caught these Galileans, and would catch the Jews

also unless they repented. For not only Pilate but God's Son was there, and they were practically rejecting Him. And how many of the Jews had *their blood* mingled with their sacrifices by *Titus* in the destruction of Jerusalem! Christ had said to the Jews in the close of the 12th chapter, "When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite." This is not a question of eternal salvation, but it simply refers to the state of the Jews: that is, the Jews will not come out till they have paid the very last mite. Jerusalem will not get out till she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. But she will get out from the chastenings of the Lord when they are complete. It is very evident that this passage refers simply to God's government of His people.

In the 56th verse of the preceding chapter, the Lord asks in the way of reproach, "How is it that ye do not discern this time?" And ought not *we* always to discern the time? Surely the Lord might often reproach us by saying, "How is it that ye do not discern this time? All the world is rejecting me, and if they do not repent before they get to the judgment, there is no hope." Natural conscience ought to tell you Jews not to reject your Messiah, for God is going all the way along with you to the magistrate, dealing with you in patient grace; and if you do not repent and be reconciled, judgment must come upon you; and then it will be the same with you, as with those whom ye think to be such sinners.

"I am come to send fire on the earth,"—(the *fire* of judgment) "and what will I if it be already kindled?" (Ver. 6.) The Lord is here dealing with the same state of things.

The *fig-tree* also is Israel; for God came *seeking fruit* in them, but He

found none. In the gospel there is this difference, that *grace sows* in order to produce fruit; but in connexion with Israel's responsibility, He came seeking fruit and found none.

The sentence upon the fig-tree then is, "*cut it down.*" He not only found it useless, but His vineyard was cumbered by it. "The name of God is blasphemed through you among the Gentiles." Then comes in Christ's mission. "Last of all he sent his Son." God had planted a vineyard and pruned it, but found *no fruit.*" Then a new Gardener comes in to try what He can do, and He said, "Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it," &c. This was all done, but still there was *no fruit.* All was useless, as far as Israel was concerned. Then God says, I will get rid of the whole thing; "*cut it down.*"

The woman with an infirmity (ver. 11,) whom Jesus heals on the sabbath day, brings out another thing that was working in their hearts, that is, the abuse of the law, which brought in



hypocrisy. They would lead an ox or an ass from the stall to water on the sabbath day, but they could not bear that a daughter of Abraham whom Satan had bound eighteen years, should be loosed on the sabbath day. One of the infirmities of man's mind is to use *possessed* truth to resist *revealed* truth. Paul was an example of this. As "touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless;" still Paul thought he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth. And so also Christ says of them in John xvi. 2—3. "These things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father nor me." They were using the name of the Godhead which had been given them ("Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord") to reject the *Son*; for when Christ came in humiliation, they would not receive Him. Orthodoxy is used to stop the reception of truth. When truth is the ground of a man's standing, it gains him credit; but when a new truth comes in, it puts *faith* to the test. So

the unity of the Godhead was used by the Jews to resist the reception of Christ.

The ruler of the synagogue said, "There are six days in which men ought to work, in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day." But he ought to have known that the Lord of the Sabbath was there. That single word "*daughter of Abraham*" ought to have told him who He was that stood there.

And the Lord answered him and said, "Thou hypocrite," &c.

In the 18th verse, the Lord goes on to say what the kingdom will be like, while the King is rejected and away.

While the king is sitting on His Father's throne, until He comes to take His own throne, the kingdom is like a little seed thrown into the ground which springs up and becomes a *great tree*; just what we see in Christendom. This fills up the gap between Christ's rejection and His coming again. There is no royal power exercised while the king is away; as it is said in Mark's

gospel, "It springs up men know not how." But when the harvest is ripe He will come again. He sowed the *first* time, and the *second* time He will put in His *sickle*. He does not, however, come looking for a *great tree*, but for *heavenly fruit*; though instead of the fruit He expected, He will find the seed has become a *great tree*, with the *fowls of the air* lodging in the branches. Pharaoh was a great tree; Nebuchadnezzar was a great tree; the high and great ones of the earth, the representatives of earthly power. Even Israel, who had been planted "*a noble vine, wholly a right seed*," was bearing *no* fruit. Therefore, as it is said in Ezek. xv., "What is the vine-tree more than any other tree," if it bears no fruit? It is only fit to be burned. We all know that the *vine* is the most fruitful thing that grows upon the face of the earth, and that the branches when cut off and withered make the best *firewood*; but they are useless for anything else. It was not a question of the kingdom here, but of fruit-bearing. The word

sown in the heart does not come to a great tree, but produces fruit.

In ver. 21, the kingdom is likened unto leaven; and leaven is just that which spreads throughout the whole mass in which it is placed, and also gives a character to the thing in which it is. It is the nominal profession of Christianity which is spread into a great mass—a great system. Looked at as a doctrine it has leavened whole countries. Still it is not what the Lord could own, as leaven in Scripture is never used in a good sense. The idea is, it is the spreading of the thing while the king is away.

It should be observed that there is not a word here about the power of the Holy Ghost in connexion with the spread of Christian doctrine; He is simply speaking about the effect produced in the world.

In the question of the disciples, ver. 23, "Are there few that be saved?" the word "*saved*" is the same as that which all through the Old Testament signifies the *remnant spared*. Therefore the

question really was as to whether this remnant that would be spared would be *few* or *many*, when the judgment came. But this being a mere idle question, the Lord does not answer it, but says to them, (ver. 24,) "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Those who will get in may. The strait gate was *receiving Christ at that time*.

Some would come and knock when the door is closed, to whom He will say, "I know you not whence ye are." Strive to enter in at the *strait gate*, through which Christ goes before you—that is *rejection*. "For many (all Israel) shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." For, inasmuch as they did not receive Christ in humiliation, He says, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." It is all most simple when we see the *rejection* of Christ. For those who reject Christ in the day of His humiliation will themselves be rejected in the day of His glory; and instead of being His companions in the kingdom will be thrust out. The unbelieving Jews shall see the Gentiles

come into the glory of the kingdom, while they remaining in unbelief will be cast out.

The Pharisees came and said to Him, "Get thee out and depart, for Herod will kill thee." (ver. 31.) Now Herod was an Idumean and became their king; but what had this Idumean king to do with God's promises to Israel? Nothing whatever. In Herod we have a kind of figure of the wilful king, first in his trying to kill Christ, and then in his having no faith in God's purposes or Christ's glory. But Christ answers, "Go tell that fox" I shall do my Father's will till the moment come, for I am come to show divine power, and when rejected here shall be perfected in glory. What divine contempt for the apostate king was here combined with the most perfect human obedience! "Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following, for it cannot be that a *prophet perish* out of *Jerusalem*." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee ;

how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" After all, *Jerusalem* is the guilty place. Let the Idumean king say and do what he will, it is Jerusalem that is guilty; for Jerusalem was nearest to Himself. And the nearer I am to God, if I reject Him, the worse is the rejection, and the more dreadful the judgment, because it is the place of *love*. Look at Psalm cxxxii. "The Lord hath chosen Zion, he hath desired it for his habitation," &c., and at the end of Psalm lxxviii. it is the same election of Zion from the 65th to the 68th verses. "But chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion which he loved." And in Psalm lxxxvii., "What is Rahab and Babylon?" I am not ashamed of Zion to compete with them. But Christ does not put the sin upon them until they have rejected both Him and His Father. But before bringing out this purpose of grace, God dealt all through with man on the ground of responsibility, and the last

effort He made was in sending His Son. The fig-tree yielded nothing—responsibility was fully put to the test, when the *soil* itself was found to be bad. I have tried the chosen portion, says God, and find the whole thing so worthless that nothing can be done with it. It is as though one had taken the sand of the sea and found it so impregnated with salt that nothing could be done with it; and the more digging and pruning that was given to it, the more *bad* fruit it produced. And we all are no better than the Jews were, for we were, by nature, children of *wrath* even as others. What! condemn *everybody*? Yes, to be sure, but then I condemn myself! Man's "heart is enmity against God." And the more pains God has taken, has only brought out the more hatred. The old man is condemned, and the gospel begins with seeking and saving that which was *lost*. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" And do we not find the truth of all this in ourselves?



But notice how the divine person of the Lord comes out here, "O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would *I* have gathered . . . . . and ye would not!" Now a prophet could not say this, though Christ was a prophet, it is true, still He was *more* than a prophet. He was Jehovah; for none but Jehovah could gather Israel. As it is said, "He that *scattered* Israel will *gather* him." Israel had rejected Jehovah when under responsibility; but Jehovah will own them when He comes in grace. The Church will go up to heaven and the kingdom will be set up on the earth. And mark how the divinity of our blessed Lord shines out again and again in the gospels, while at the same moment the humanity remained so perfect. And here I would say a word or two as to the *way* of bringing this blessed *fact out*. For surely the circumstances through which the Lord passed in His path down here did bring out in a far *brighter way* WHO HE WAS, than any text that could be adduced to prove it. Not that I would set aside

any text, but suppose you *believed* there was a *God* as a truth; if He were to come down by your very side and say, Here I AM, would not that be a very different thing? And though Christ was the humbled man all through His path here, (for He was ever the servant of all,) yet when the service was of *no use*, then it was that God shone out. "Before Abraham was, I AM." (See in the 33rd and 34th verses of this 13th of Luke.) The moment He said, *I must die*, since you reject me, immediately *Jehovah* shone out. "O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would *I* have *gathered thee*"—and who could gather ISRAEL but *Jehovah Himself*?—"but ye would not," therefore "your house is left unto you desolate UNTIL ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the *name of the Lord*."

The complaint in the Psalms is, that there is none to say, "How long?"—none to count upon the faithfulness of Jehovah to His people. (See Psalm lxxiv.) The expression, "How long?" is often used in the Psalms; and in

Isaiah vi. it refers to chastening, and not retribution. How long is Israel to stumble or fall? (Rom. xi.) In Isaiah vi. the prophet having uttered those words, "Make the heart of this people fat," &c., taken up by the Lord in John xii., the prophet then says, "How long?" He was in the faith of God and reckoning upon God, and having God's mind, he cannot believe that God will give them up, and therefore asks, "*how long*" the chastening is to continue. To which the Lord answers, "There shall be a great forsaking in the midst of the land, but in it there shall be a tenth, and so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." The *sap* is still there, though there be no leaves.

So in Psalm cxviii., "The Lord hath chastened me sore, but he hath not given me over unto *death*." In the same way, the Lord does not say, Your house is left unto you desolate, and therefore you shall not see me again. No, but He says, "Ye shall not see me, UNTIL ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the

Lord." He can give as Jehovah, in grace, the *answer*, and when He gives repentance to Israel, then He will send Jesus—whom, until then, the heavens have received—and then our connexion with Him comes in. The prophets spoke only of earthly things, though divine; but to the Church it is "Holy brethren, partakers of the *heavenly* calling!" You hath He quickened together with Him in the heavenly places, and that gives security. How did I get in there? By virtue of Christ; He is my title and is He not a good title? My desires are to be acquainted with this, that I am one with Christ in heaven. And these are my desires in fact, and that is what the Holy Ghost seals upon my soul, and we get it as our everlasting portion. When Israel is brought to repentance, then "the stone which the builders rejected will be the head of the corner," and owned of them. They will say, "O! give thanks unto the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever." Alas, they will receive another first! But when

their hearts are turned and grace works, then they will use the language of Psalm cxix., and find the expression of the law within their hearts, and when faith is thus exercised, and their hearts are broken and open to receive Him, then He Himself will come to them. If there is not a prophet to say, "How long?" then Jehovah Himself will give the answer.

And though applied to Israel here, yet we may learn what the Lord is, for He never changes, and though He executes judgment in righteousness, *grace* is found in His heart for faith to lay hold of. "When he comes shall he find faith on the earth?" Well, if there be not *faith* to be found, or a *prophet* to be found, there is *One* who will lay up in His treasures something for faith to lay hold of in the sovereignty of *His grace*. We see Jehovah in that humble one, that humble man, and see how He is able to rise above all iniquity; and thus to see Jehovah shining out through it all, how precious He becomes to us, and that

we are one with Him should endear *Him* to our hearts, and in learning *Him* may He give us to follow Him.

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### DEUTERONOMY VIII. 3.

“And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.”

No one is led into the place of weeping, without getting *some* joy. Israel were already God's people: He leads them into the wilderness to humble them; He makes them hunger that He may give them manna; He leads them into trial that He may give them something better. Some would say, If in the midst of the leeks, onions, and flesh-pots of Egypt God had given them the manna, they would have rejected all other things because the manna was better; but it is not so. While the flesh

is surrounded by that which suits it, it is fed by it, and will reject the better things. Day by day, hour by hour, God is leading us to that condition of hunger that he may give us something better, something not discernible by the natural mind, but satisfying. When I have tasted the manna, there is a *reality* about it; it is not faith any longer. If I am hungry in the wilderness, and am fed and braced up by the food, do I not know it? Can power come into my veins and I not know it? It might be a matter of faith that we are to have the manna to-morrow; but it was a matter of feeling and reality that they had eaten it to-day. As we eat and are strengthened, let us say, I *know* that man doth not live by bread alone. We feed on Jesus the living bread, the gift of the Father, and we may say that we are miraculously fed from heaven every day by supernatural food, that we might know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

What think you of possessing in *measure now* all that we shall possess in the day of the Lord? Then pain of body and pain of heart would all appear very light, and we could say with the Apostle, after enumerating things that would make some people mad, “these *light afflictions*, which are but for a moment.” Why do not we thus speak? It is the right of all who have the Spirit. Outside the sanctuary, until the Lord comes, there will be troubled hearts and diseased souls, but it must not surprise us; it is all alike an opportunity for the display of God’s grace which spreads itself abroad to meet the misery. Every want that pressed on the Lord Jesus always gave an occasion in His soul to the cry of faith.

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### FRAGMENT.

One atom of brokenness of spirit is better than filling all London with miracles.



## THE BODY AND THE SPIRIT.

The light, in many paths, or currents of it, through scripture, shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day.

The light of resurrection thus shines. It is a mystery which is accepted by faith at the beginning. Abraham believed in God as a quickener of the dead.

The resurrection was implied in the words of God to Moses, out of the burning bush.—“I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” declared the resurrection. (Ex. iii.) Our Lord tells us so. (Matt. xxii.)

But it did not tell us of the resurrection in all its purposed, counselled glory. The One who was to be the first-begotten of the dead, “the Second Man,” was also “the Lord from heaven.” (1 Cor. xv. 47.) And being so, a body worthy of Him would be prepared for Him; and this could be nothing less than a “glorious body.” Consequently the body of the Second

Man, the risen First-born, being "the Lord from heaven," was a glorious body—and all that are His, bearing His image, are to rise in glorious bodies like Him.

This is told us in 1 Cor. xv. and thus, the light of the mystery of resurrection shines brighter and brighter, through scripture, reaching its noon-day strength in this 1 Cor. xv. The body of the saint is to rise again, as Ex. iii. intimates, and as Matt. xxii. teaches—but that it is to rise in glory, we do not learn till we reach 1 Cor. xv.

But again:—

The Last Adam is "a quickening Spirit," as well as "the Lord from heaven." 1 Cor. xv. 45.

Being such, He is not dependent on the body which He has assumed. And thus we find it, in the progress of the Book of God. This blessed "Last Adam" comes forth and manifest His virtue as "a quickening Spirit," showing us that He depends not on His body; for when the Lord Jesus is about to die, He says to the Father,

"Into thy hand I commend my spirit."

Jewish faith had not, dispensationally, reached that point. It expected resurrection, as we have seen, but we do not learn that it formally looked for the separate existence of the spirit. Such a mystery may have been prophetically or passingly glanced at—as in Eccles. xii. 7—but it was not dispensed in the doctrines made known to Israel. The Lord Jesus, however, manifested it, as we now see, in Himself, when He came to the time of His departure.

Jewish measure, and the measure of Christ, the quickening Spirit, met on the cross. The dying thief said to the Lord, "Remember me, when thou comest in thy kingdom," thus recognizing a future kingdom, and a portion in it, by resurrection. The Lord Jesus, the quickening Spirit, replied, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." (Luke xxiii.) The spirit was not to wait for the kingdom.

Stephen, the first to follow the Lord,

after this, out of the body, says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The Holy Ghost by that letting us learn this, that the elect share the blessedness of the disembodied state with the Lord Himself. Christ, as the quickening Spirit, imparts His virtue to us; as He does, as the Lord from heaven, share His glory with us. (Acts vii.)

Stephen's face shone "like that of an angel," and he said, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." His body carried the pledge of its future glory; his spirit at once inherited its due place, the presence of the Lord, returning to Him who gave it.

We are wrought for, or destined unto, the glorious body, the building of God, the house not made with hands—but its time is not yet come. But He who has wrought us for this house is God, who, in the meanwhile, gives us His Spirit; so that, having the Spirit, we go to Him as soon as ever we leave the body, and with Him wait for the better body.

This 2 Cor. v. 1—6 teaches us. The

history of the body of a saint is kept distinct from the history of his spirit. The body waits for its glorification; the spirit, absent from its present body, is present with the Lord.

The spirit returns to Him who gave it, as we learn from Eccles. xii. 7. The Lord Jesus gave it, (the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the risen Christ,) as we learn from John xx. 22. The Lord Jesus receives it as returning to Him, as we see in Acts vii. 59.

The history of the body is not interfered with by the history of the spirit; nor is the path or history of the spirit interfered with by that of the body. In the hour of the rapture, or the resurrection of them that are Christ's, they will be together.

For, the body which is sown in the earth, and there sleeps, while the spirit is returned to Him who gave it, is raised, as in the day of harvest, changed and glorified (1 Cor. xv.), and then translated to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thess. iv.)

In the language of scripture we are,

at times, identified with our *spirit*—as when the apostle says, “having a desire to depart and to be with Christ”—for in such a passage, the apostle speaks of his *spirit* as being the same as *himself*. At other times, we are, on the other hand, identified with our *body*, as when the apostle says, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,” for in such a passage, he speaks of his *body* as being the same as *himself*.

The spirit of the dying thief went that very day, the day when his body fell asleep, to Paradise. But he found the Lord there already, as the Lord said to him, “This day shalt thou be *with me* in Paradise.” For Jesus gave up the ghost before the thief, and thus was in Paradise before him, ready to receive him there.

Paul, a man in Christ, was taken to that same place, Paradise, the place of the separated spirit, and returned to the body, when the trance or rapture was over. And by that journey or translation he was enabled to illustrate certain doctrines which he taught.

For in his own person he verified this—"absent from the body, present with the Lord"—and in his experience he realized what he also taught, "to depart and to be with Christ which is far better;" for there, in Paradise, he had visions and audiences which he could not utter, when he came back to life here.

There is the presence of Christ "in spirit," and there is the presence of Christ "in glory." The disembodied state is the first, the resurrection and the rapture will lead to the second.

It is written, "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the hour of death." (Ec. viii.) But *God* is able to retain it. Is anything too hard for Him? In mysteries like these, as the Lord tells, we must know two things, "scripture" and "the power of God." (Matt. xxii.) For what God says He can perform; what He promises He will make good. And it is the business of faith to learn what He has said and what He has promised,

that is, to know "scripture," and then to be sure of His "power" to make it all good.

God has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, though man has not. And did He not do so in old time? I mean in such cases as in the two children, the child of the Sareptan, and the child of the Shunammite. (1 Kings xvii.; 2 Kings iv.) And did not the Lord Jesus in His day do the same? As in the persons of the widow's son, of Lazarus, and of Jairus' daughter. And the Lord's own life or spirit was retained till all Scripture, to the utmost jot and tittle of it, was accomplished—till He could say, "It is finished." (John xix. 28—30.)

And this reminds me of a difference between the death of the Lord and the death of Stephen.

Stephen's was the death of a martyr. He bore witness to the truth, and provoked the hatred of the world. He then convicted his enemies, bearing witness of the evil of their ways, and thus he further provoked them, till they



would bear it no more, and stoned him to death.

This was a sudden, heated burst of enmity, and the righteous was the victim.

The Lord's death was not this. He died as the Lamb of God under God's hand, as He died as a martyr under man's hand. Man hated Him, as he hated Stephen, even to death. That is true. But He did not fall, simply under man's hand and hatred, as Stephen did; He was smitten of God, as Stephen was not. And therefore it was no sudden, heated burst of enmity that took His life from Him—all was calmly, fully accomplished, in order that eternal counsels might be made good, and scripture fulfilled. And till all was finished the Spirit was retained. There was no accomplishing of counsels after this manner, nor fulfilling of Scripture, in the death of Stephen. There was no hand of God in that event, save as He was there to illuminate and cheer His elect. Man alone was putting Stephen to death, and that

too in a sudden, heated burst of hatred. He was a martyr, and only a martyr. But God's hand was principal in the death of Jesus, and therefore all was calm and deliberated. He was God's Lamb as well as man's martyr. There was no opened heavens to Jesus, as there was to Stephen, no sight of the glory of God; but, on the contrary, three hours of darkness, desertion, and thirst. The heavens were opened *by* the death of the one, and *to* the other as he went through his death. That is the difference as to the sufferers themselves. In the mode of the death, as I have noticed already, Stephen's was under *a sudden burst of hatred from man*; Christ's was *calm and deliberated*, life retained till scripture was all fulfilled.

And here let me add, faith has not to do with problems or difficult propositions, but with facts, with declarations and promises in their full simplicity. And the more the reader of them is a child or a way-faring man, the more will he find them to be plain

and easy. And they are sure as well as simple; because they are the words of Him who cannot lie; yea, of Him who glorifies Himself in their accomplishment.

I might have noticed the scene on the holy mount, in connexion with my subject—I mean the transfiguration.

The transfiguration may be received as a verifying or an assuming of the fact of a resurrection of the saints; and not only so, but as a pledge also of such a resurrection being *glorious*. It was a little sample or foreshadowing of the day anticipated in 1 Cor. xv. For that day will be the day, as I may call it, of the general transfiguration, when “they that are Christ’s” shall be raised in bodies of glory, as Moses then appeared in the sight of Peter, James, and John. Jesus, on the holy mount, was transfigured, and Moses and Elias appeared in glory with Him.

And the shining of Stephen’s face, to which I have already referred, as a partial transfiguration, an earnest of that glory in which his body is to shine

in the day of the resurrection of those that are Christ's. We read of that face, that it was as if it had been the face of an angel. And the Lord, in Luke xx. says, speaking of those of whom Stephen is one, "they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

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## DIVINE PERFECTNESS OF LOVE.

1 John iv. 19; v. 7.

*(Continued from page 43.)*

"We love him because he first loved us." We now delight in the Lord, but we did not come in in that way, it is a mistake to think so. We do not come in by loving God, we do not love God because He is lovely; we are not competent, we cannot love Him, we should not be sinners if we could. But we are sinners, and must come in as sinners—as debtors to His grace, and then, having come in as debtors, and

finding God to be what He is, *love*, meeting us in our every need, then we love Him, finding how He had first loved us.

Verse 20. "If a man say he loves God and hateth his brother he is a liar." Here we see the truth is checked in an interesting way by practical details. If a man does not love his brother, he cannot love God; wherever the divine nature is, it is attractive to one born of God.

Verse 21. "And this commandment have we from him." We have another important principle in this verse;—whatever the energy of the divine life in me, it will always bear the character of *obedience*. While there was in Christ the devotedness of love, there also was obedience; we are to love the brethren, as being led by the energy of the Spirit, but to love them in the holy place of obedience to God. There is nothing so humble as obedience. So the Lord said, "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." So, again, when Lazarus was sick, and they sent

to Jesus, He abode two days in the same place, because He had no word from His Father. And so, if I have any little service to do for my brother, it must be done in obedience to the word of God. It is what Satan tried to get the Lord out of in the wilderness. "Oh!" says Satan, "have your own will, if it is in ever so little a bit, by making these stones into bread, now you are hungry." "No," the Lord replied; "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." And here we get a counter-check to all the workings of the divine nature, for if it is not a command, it is not of God. Man may put on all the forms of love imaginable, and become like an angel, but if it is not in obedience to a command it is nothing, and will not do.

Chap. v. 1. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," and there we get the link between God and the family. When any one is born of God, he is my bro-

ther, and is that which is a link between my soul and God. If the question be asked, "how am I to know who is my brother?" every one that is born of God is my brother. I may have to sorrow over him sometimes, but still he is my brother, because I am linked to him by the same divine nature. It is of great importance to remember this in the present day, because where the Holy Ghost really acts, there will be a tendency to follow different courses. There has been an awakening from the deadness around, by the power of the Spirit. There are glimmerings of light. Mere stones would be motionless, but a moving power comes in, and they all go in different directions. If they were all *subject* to the Spirit of God they would all go one way.

And there is another thing to be observed, that we are not at the beginning of Christianity, but at the dark end, and escaping, as it were, by different roads. The very fact of the operation of the Spirit of God, if we were absolutely and perfectly subject

to the Spirit in all things, would be to produce perfect unity; but we are not thus subject—and being what we are, there is a tendency in us to go in different directions. The remedy for this is, that in so far as my heart is in fellowship with Christ's heart, love to all saints will be there; to the same extent that Christ is valued, will the saints be valued. In proportion as Christ's thoughts are known to me, will all the saints be in my thoughts. I do not know Christ's love rightly if one saint is left out. As it is said, in Eph. iii. 18, "May be able to comprehend with *all saints*, . . . . that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." If I should leave one out, I should leave out part of Christ's heart. In Coloss. it is, "your love to *all saints*."

In Colossians we have the fulness of the *Head*, and in Ephesians the fulness of the *body*. God's grace working in me makes every one born of God the object of my affection. I cannot go every way at once, and a real difficulty arises now, how to walk in fidelity to



Christ and in love to the brethren, so as not to let the affections get into a loose and general way. I cannot love God without loving all the children of God. By this we know that we love God, when we love His children, and *vice versa*.

Now that is reasoning in a circle, as men say; but there is truly in it a counter-check against the evil of our own heart. If I love the Father, I shall love the children for the Father's sake, but if I were to lead them to do anything wrong, it would shew that I did not love them for the Father's sake, but for my own satisfaction and pleasure. If it is for the Father's sake you love the children, then it is as God's children you love them, and not for your own comfort and pleasure; and this is proved by your loving God and keeping His commandments. Obedience and faith, in your own walk, will prove that it is as God's children you love the brethren. How practical is this, both in wisdom and in love. If I know that a member of the body of

Christ is going wrong, does that make me cease to love him? No, but because he is going wrong my soul is more deeply and affectionately going out after him, as being one with Christ. To be able to love the brethren *faithfully*, we must keep close to Christ.

Again, we have what I call a counter-check. If one comes to me with a vast amount of truth without holiness, I cannot recognize such, he is not of the Spirit—He is the Spirit of holiness. Or if there be a great show of holiness, and truth be absent, that also is not of the Spirit—He is the Spirit of truth.

Satan never touches that which is born of God—he cannot touch it. Worldliness is a dreadful hindrance to the saint; we have the three-fold opposition, in the world, the flesh, and the devil; the world opposing the Father; the flesh opposing the Spirit; and the devil opposing Christ. The difficulty lies in this, maintaining our nearness to Christ, which the world coming in hinders. Then I am open to all sorts of

error, for I shall not take the trouble to be right unless I am near to Christ. It is very troublesome and disagreeable, sometimes, to have to do with saints—(sinners too). One cannot give up this thing, another cannot give up that, and so they get off the foundation; and if we are at a distance from Christ, we shall be ready to give them up, and shall not take the pains to get them right, when they happen to be wrong. So Moses said, "Have I conceived all this people, have I begotten them, that thou shouldst say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom?"

Paul says, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you;" you have got off the right ground, and I must have you born again; I am travailing over again for you, that you may be right, because you belong to Christ. When Paul looked at them in confusion as they were away from Christ, he could only say, "I stand in doubt of you." But when he looked at them as in Christ, he could say, "I have confi-

dence in you, through the Lord." How is this? Paul, himself, had got nearer to Christ. Faith sees not only Christ in the glory, but sees also the connexion between the glory of Christ and saints, the link and tie between God and His people, and it is that which enables one to get on. So Moses said of Israel, not only God was their God, but "they are thy people." The greater the trouble the greater the joy, because that is the link; the real hindrance is the world—there is nothing takes the energy of the Spirit out of the heart like the world. See Gehasi in the king's court; his heart had drawn in the spirit of the world, and he was able to entertain the world with the mighty actings of the Spirit.

The world must be entertained, and it will be entertained by religion, when it cannot get anything else. All that I know of the world's path, spirit, affections, and conduct, is, that it has crucified my Lord; not in its affections and lusts merely, but by wicked hands it has crucified my Master. Suppose

it was but yesterday you had seen Pontius Pilate, the chief priest, and elders of the people putting Christ to death, would you feel happy to-day in having communication and fellowship with them? Well, the stain of Christ's blood is just as fresh upon the world in God's sight as if it had been done but yesterday; the time which has elapsed makes no difference in the moral guilt. The question is, am I to get under the power of the world, or am I to overcome it?—in my heart I mean. When Christ was down here, with all the beauty and moral grace in which God the Father would delight, there was not found in the world one thought or sentiment or common feeling, drawing them to Him. The world in all its classes, rulers, priests, pharisees, and the multitude, all have been associated in hanging the Son of God and Son of man on a gibbet. Such is the world's true heart. If I have seen the glory of His Person, and see that He is the very Son of God who came down, and that the world turned Him out, can I

be happy with it? The link between the thoughts and affections and the world exists in every heart; so that in all sorts of things, even in walking through the streets, I constantly find that which attracts my eye, and my eye affects my heart. Nothing will overcome the world in my heart but the deep consciousness of how it has treated Christ. Take my children for instance; I want them to get on well in the world, I must have good places for them in it; and nothing but knowing the place Christ had in it will overcome the world in my heart. There is no possibility of getting on unless the world is given up, and the heart is satisfied with Christ, and Christ is everything to it. What do I read of Abraham? That he left his country, his kindred, and his father's house, and sojourned in a strange land where he had not a place to set his foot on. We are not of the world, and so it is the test of our affections; for we are not at once taken out of the evil, so we must have our hearts exercised to godliness. It is very easy

to overcome the world when the love of Christ has made it distasteful. Satan is the god of this world. Perhaps you will say, That is true of the heathen world. Yes, but it is true of the whole world. Though it was not till after the rejection of Christ that it was brought out, it was true before. God had spoken by His servants the prophets, and the world had beaten one, and stoned another, and killed another; then He said, I will send my beloved Son, may be they will reverence Him when they see Him, and Him they crucified, thus proving that Satan was the master of man. So the Lord said, "O, righteous Father, the world hath not known thee!"

You will not have spiritual discernment or power of motive unless the heart is kept near to Christ, and I shall not want the world if Christ is in my heart. If my delight is in that in which God delights, that is Christ, then I can overcome. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." What!

must I do everything to Christ? Oh! that very question proves a heart away from Christ, showing that it is bondage to you to do all to the glory of God. It is not that we are to *scorn* the world in the least, for God's grace is for every poor sinner that will receive it. It is the spirit of the world in my own heart which I have to overcome, that which my heart is in danger of being led by. I will now just look back to the three points on which I have touched.

1st. Perfect love with us. There is not merely the manifestation of God's love to the poor sinner, but association with Christ's life, putting us in relationship with God.

2nd. Love to every saint is our place; but we are to love them as God's children, and ourselves being found loving God and keeping His commandments.

3rd. We are to overcome the world, the heart resting on, looking to, eating, feeding upon, Christ, gets the consciousness of what the world is, and overcomes.

The Lord keep us in humble depend-



ence on Himself. His grace is sufficient for us. His strength made perfect in our weakness.

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## CHRIST THE SON OVER HIS OWN HOUSE.

Heb. iii. 1—6.

The constant tendency of the heart, even when brought up to our privileges in Jesus, is to slip off from them. When Satan finds he cannot resist the introduction of the power of the gospel by false doctrine, he then seeks to get something before the mind, as worldliness, the cares of the world, and a thousand things, to keep the soul from simply looking to Jesus. When the truth is first presented to the soul, he tries to hinder its reception; but when it is received, his effort is to diminish its power, in some way or other, and the only remedy for this is the heart being occupied with Christ Himself. We need an increasing knowledge of Christ in order to keep our hearts out

of the world, for the heart that is learning Christ cannot stay about the things the world presents, but desires to go on to know Him more fully. In looking to Jesus, it is not knowing a doctrine merely about Christ: it is *Himself* we want to know. It is "the truth as it *is in Jesus*" that has a charm for the soul; for grace and truth came by Christ Jesus, and it is never known in the power of faith out of Him. There never can be that power which detects the course of false doctrine, but as the soul is dwelling in Himself, "rooted and built up in him." (Col. ii. 7.) The heart centred in Him is able to look out and see all the extent of the divine revelations to the soul. "Wherefore, holy brethren," says the apostle, "partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." There is always a tendency to slip back, and thus lose all practical power; but because of this, does He try to shake their confidence of what they are? Not in the least. God never does this,

but He shows us our inconsistencies with what we are.

So the apostle calls back the hearts of the Hebrews to the place of grace where God was dealing with them. As in the Corinthians also he says, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." They were puffed up by the evil; and it is not that the apostle would allow the evil to pass, but he first sets them on the ground where God had set them. And so he comes to our hearts and says, Do not you turn away from the ground where God has set you. He calls us up to the spring of it all in the heart of God, and then says, How can you be seeking the world and what it has to give, when you have such a portion in God?

I would now say a word of the manner in which he presents Christ. He is going to speak of Christ in the most glorious way he can; but he does not begin with it. He first speaks of that which is a link between their hearts and this blessed and glorious One, and

having knit up our hearts to this, he then shows us His glory. Now there is great grace in this: for it is not merely as an abstract truth, (a system of theology, saying, This is God.) No; but he says, I am going to talk about one who was amongst you—the one between you and God—the one who brought God nigh to you, and stood for you toward God. I am going to talk to you about Him “who was faithful to him that appointed him.”

Here we get this glorious Person in an official character, and thus He was appointed. And we look at this blessed and glorious One in office, “who was faithful in all His house.” “*Whose house are we?*” And this is of the greatest comfort to us; for it is thus we get this glorious One so very near to us—so close to us as to be interested in everything that concerns us. For Christ, “as a Son over His own house,” was interested in carrying on all God had intrusted to Him, as Moses, the servant, was interested in bringing Israel up out of Egypt. But he pre-

sents Christ to us as worthy of more glory than Moses. "Inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house, for every house is builded by some one, but he that built all things is God." And thus I find myself brought into union with Him who created all things. I was brought close to Christ when I got this blessed familiarity, and then I find that the One who condescended to be in this blessed place of nighness to me was God; and so I learn that all my concerns are in His hand, who is God. Moses was faithful as a *servant*, but Christ is faithful as a *Son*, who knows the house belongs to Him—"As a Son over his *own house*, whose house are we." It is His own house, for Christ, as a Son over His own house, is not only the God who created all things, but the one who takes an interest in everything that concerns us, just as a son over his own house. And thus I find myself brought into the presence of the whole universe in *Him* that created it.

Now this is the way the Spirit of God would carry us on through the world, not as merely leading us through the world, but keeping our hearts above the things of the world, while passing through it.

As the Son cannot but be faithful to Him who appointed Him, when I see that the One that is thus interested in His own house is the glorious One that created all things, I learn that it is God, Himself, and I can trust Him. He also makes us to see that it is the interest of the Son, and not merely an official appointment; and thus the heart knows Christ has all the interest in it as a Son over His own house; and thus our hearts are fixed on Him, and enlarged on Him; our affections are drawn out and enlarged in their own proper sphere; and the heart, thus kept from worldliness, is enlarged in a divine way, and it is such a comfort to think that the most ignorant soul, if taught of God, gets enlarged and sanctified affections.

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## FRAGMENT.

James i. 9—11.

“Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.”

The Jews had to be guarded against a wrong thought of the expression of God's favour, because all that which the gospel brought out is so contrary to that which they had been accustomed to. The general character of the epistle of James is like a continuation of our Lord's teaching on earth. It does not present truth in its heavenly application, but in connexion with its judgment of earthly things. The Lord looked at all earthly grandeur and the only thought of His heart was, that *God has not His place*: so here. The divine nature cannot adapt itself to man's lusts; and therefore when in a

man, it necessarily comes athwart all that men are cherishing and pursuing. The thought of these verses is that the believer is to rejoice in that which brings out his real condition in God's grace; because it is divine truth which alone does this. By getting social communication on heavenly subjects it brought the one down, and raised the other up. The world had lost its power *in principle*; and then it is found that inequality of position is that which draws out affection, and not equality. The metaphor in verse 11 states the fact that when judgment comes, the rich are more exposed to trial than the poor; for example, in political revolutions, wars, and earthly changes, &c.; but the great point here is the judging all that appears by letting in daylight upon the scene. Judgment is upon the whole scene we are living in.

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## THE THREE WHO ARE WITNESSING—"THE SPIRIT, AND THE WATER, AND THE BLOOD."

1 John v. 6—21.

In the preceding verses the question between God and the world is brought to an issue; for the Son of God having been seen in the world, and *in* the world and *by* the world *crucified*—thus putting the world to the test—God could do nothing in the world in the hope of finding good in it, after it had crucified His Son. Jesus had to say, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." Having hung God's Son on the cross it is plain that that act cut the world off from all possible association with God, and thus the world has become a thing to be overcome by the saint, as the apostle says (ver. 5), "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" But he then adds, "This is he that came by water and blood."

That is, he now presents the charac-

ter and value of the cross, "He came by water and blood." The water and the blood are as a witness on God's part; the testimony that God gives: for it should be observed that the words "witness," "record," and "testimony," are all the same word in the original.

You may remark here, that "This is the witness, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." This is the thing witnessed. This is the record (or testimony) that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in *His Son*. It is not in the first Adam, but in *His Son*; not in man, nor by his works, nor by any means whatever, but it is *God's gift*. "He hath given," and though we possess the life, it is not properly and intrinsically in us; but in *His Son*. When we are quickened, the life is not looked at as *in us*: for Christ says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." It is therefore immutable. If Christ's life, indeed, can in any way be annulled or set aside, then can the life in us be so likewise, and not otherwise. If Christ can die, so can we; but if death hath no

more dominion over Him, no more hath it over us. And this it is that gives the amazing value and most blessed character of this life, viz., that its spring and source is in Christ. It is given to the Son to have life in Himself. (John v. 26.) And thus He becomes, through grace, our life. For example, my finger has life, my natural life, flowing through it; but the seat of life is not there. My finger may be cut off, though I am not here supposing that a member of Christ can be cut off (which is impossible); but if my finger be cut off, the life still remains in my body, the seat of life not being in my finger. My finger was as much alive as the rest of my body, but the seat of life was not there. The seat of life is in Christ. "Our life is hid with Christ in God." Hence all the character of the life and all the communion flows from the blessed truth—"in his Son." The character of this life is nearness to God. Christ Himself is my life. It is of the last importance for the strength and comfort of our souls, and for all blessed delight in God, clearly

to understand what our life is; for our thoughts on regeneration are necessarily altogether imperfect until we apprehend that it is a real life which we have, a life associating us with God's Son, a life not possessed before, and in virtue of which we get communion with the Father, who has given us eternal life—not *in us* but "*in his Son.*"

We get brought out in various testimonies what Christ is to us, as in 1 Cor. vi. 9—11, where the apostle, speaking of the offscouring of the earth, says, "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." And so here we get a corresponding testimony brought out in these three witnesses, *the water, the blood, and the Spirit.*

In John xix. 34 it is recorded that "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water." The blood and the water flowed from *a dead Christ.* Hence we see how manifestly the link between the natural man and God is

broken, and broken for ever! For "in that he died, he died unto sin once." All that Christ could have blessed in nature is now entirely and for ever gone; and if there is to be any blessing now, it must be in a new nature, and through a dead Christ; as also all connexion and association with God. Expiation, purity, life, can alone be had through a dead Christ. It is a dead Christ that must purify me if I am to be purified; for it was from a dead Christ that the water (the symbol of cleansing) flowed. Until the death of Christ, God was dealing with nature, to see (or rather to teach us, for we knew what it was) if any good thing could come out of nature. But the cross proved—God's rejected Son proved—that it was not possible that any good thing could come out of nature. Man is not merely a sinner driven out of Paradise, as we know Adam was; but man's state now results not only from his being turned out of God's presence because of sin, but from the will and energy of his evil nature, which has cast God out of His own world.

The cross shows that man's nature is utterly incapable of being acted on by any motive whatever which could set it right. This is very humbling, yet very blessed. Heaven will not do; earth will not do; the law will not do. I have yet one thing in heaven; my beloved Son. I will send Him. It may be they will reverence Him when they see Him. But no. The determination of man's will is to have the world without God. This is what man wants. He will not have God in any sense. Here it is brought to a climax; and the very worst display of Christianity will be just this. If any of you should be seeking pleasure in the world, you know you do not want to find God there; for if you did it would upset it all. Thus are you saying in spirit, "Let us kill the heir, and the inheritance shall be ours." You may not have lifted up your hand to slay God's Son, but you have turned Him out of your heart. Man's great abilities will be much more developed in the day that is just approaching, than they have ever yet been, in trying to make the world go

on thoroughly well without God. When was there ever a time when everything was going on so well, as men speak, such unity among nations as now, or such drawing out of resources? The cry is, "Peace, Peace," by the energies and working of man's will without God. Man looks for progress in the philosophy, commerce, politics, and comfort of this world, but still there is in his *heart* a dread of the consequences of the progress of this self-will. Thus is fulfilled the apparent paradox of Scripture, the cry of peace combined with "men's hearts failing them for fear." Now men would say that is a contradiction, but it is not; for while men are building up commerce, and arts, and science, in the energy of self-will, who is there among them that would undertake to answer for the state of any nation in *three years'* time, or for even a much shorter period? Man is afraid of the working of *self-will* in his neighbour, though he likes to exert it in himself. But the Christian has learned that the question as to the world is settled in the rejection of

Christ. At that moment it was all over with the world. The question between God and man is settled as to man himself; for not only is man turned out of Paradise, but when God's Son came they crucified Him, and now grace comes in; and the Christian goes outside the world to get, in God's rejected Son, the life which is to be had in Him alone. This is God's record that He hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Amidst all this turmoil and trouble where shall I get peace? The moment I get a pierced Christ, I have that which expiates and purifies. All this is not a theory, not a doctrine merely, but a reality; for the moment my conscience begins to work, I find that by nature I am separate from God; that my carnal mind is enmity against God; that it is not only the world that has crucified God's Son, but *my sins* pierced Him. This is an individual thing, for this is how individual souls are brought into the blessing. When I have real faith in what God's Word tells me about my own evil, then the question



arises, What am I to do? All that which makes me a mere moral man declares that I could have nothing to do with God; but through a *pierced* Christ I have *three witnesses* that I can have to do with God. The highest act of insolence that it was possible for man to do against God, brought out the very thing that put guilt away, even the blood and water flowing from Christ's pierced side. Suppose it was but yesterday that I wielded the spear against Jesus, the very act that brought out my enmity brought that which put it away. I cannot estimate sin aright until I see the water and blood flowing out of the pierced side of Christ, putting it away. But then I must be brought to the consciousness that *I* in spirit was there; *my* enmity to God did it; *my* sins pierced Him. It was thus God addressed the Jews, telling them that they had killed the heir; i.e., their hearts had consented to it. Those Jews whom Peter addressed, saying, "Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," had not actually murdered the Prince of

life. They had not held the spear any more than you did; but in the same spirit they refused Christ a place in their hearts; and it is thus God deals with the world. His question with the world is, "What have you done with my Son?" As with Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother?" And the only answer they can give is, "We have slain Him."

The moment the *Messiah* was rejected, that moment all title to the *promises* was lost to the Jews. All hope of salvation—everything is now gone from them as a people; and now if they would get blessing, they must come in as sinners and have their sin put away by the blood that flowed from the pierced side of their Messiah. Now then as all title on the part of man to anything is gone, God is giving eternal life. God must direct the heart away from itself (except to the sense of its sinfulness) to Christ. Have I estimated my own sin as the murderer of Christ? Well, the blood has put the sin away; for the blood has cleansed the man who held

the spear that pierced His side. We are nothing but sin; well, Christ was made sin for us, and through a dead Christ we get the blood as a witness that our sins are all put away; the blood being a witness of the perfect expiation of all sin. Christ "hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Here, however, it is not looking at the part man took in it, but at what Christ came into the world for, and which He accomplished.

There is, however, the *water* as well as the blood, and what is that? The water cleanses as the blood expiates: "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." While the blood expiates the water cleanses. The water bears witness to the same life-giving power. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The Spirit of God is the source of life, and the power of the Word, and gives life. Practically the Word is the instrument, the incorruptible seed; and it is also a discerners of the thoughts

and intents of the heart; and it is that by which God's thoughts are communicated to us. And it is out of the pierced side of Christ that these testimonies of God flow, thus writing death upon every production of nature. For it is not a modifying of the nature, which now exists, that the cross brings in, but the counting everything outside Christ to be dead, as there is not a thought, lust, or desire about the world upon which Christ does not write death; and thus it is that we get altogether new affections, "dead unto sin but alive unto God" through the life in His Son. And the real character of purifying is this writing death upon everything that flows not from a pierced Christ. The water is the purification, but the purification is through a dead Christ. Christ all His life through was the pattern in man of what man ought to be; but our participating in this could only be by the cleansing of His death.

But there is a third thing, we have not only the blood which expiates, and the water which purifies, through which

we are dead to sin; but He has obtained for us the Spirit, the presence of the Holy Ghost, as the power of the word. It may, perhaps, be objected, I don't find myself thus dead to sin and purified. But you have a hatred to sin, which is a proof of your having died to it. And "In that Christ died, He died unto sin once, so likewise RECKON ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin;" for God ever treats us according to what He has really given us, treating us as though we had realized it all. So in John, the Lord says, "And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Now they did know HIM who was truly the way to the Father, yet Thomas objected and said, "We know not the way," because they had never realized it. The instant I believe in Jesus, I am called on to *reckon myself dead*. I am never told to *die*, but I am told to mortify my members that are upon the earth. But I am never told to *die*. A man under the law will be trying to die with all his might, but he will never succeed. A Christian *is dead* and his life is hid with

Christ in God, and therefore he mortifies his members which are upon the earth, as living in the power of the life he has in the Son of God. Observe, he does not speak of our life being on the earth, for that is above with Christ in God; therefore he treats us as dead, but our members which are upon the earth, we are to mortify. He never tells us to kill ourselves, but faith takes God's testimony as true, therefore I say I am dead, and because I am dead, I have to mortify my members, being as dead to the earth as Christ was, for I have God telling me that I am dead through believing. This is most practical as to peace of soul; for the moment I believe in Christ, I am delivered from all these things. I am not seeking to die, for I have the secret of power and count *myself* dead. There is a practical difficulty as to the water, for how can I say I am washed, if I still find myself to be dirty? But I can say I am dead *in Christ*, for I shall never succeed in killing myself. The moment that I believe in Christ, all that He has done as a Saviour is mine,

and God appropriates and applies it to me. I may have failed to realize it, but the treasure is put into my possession.

Some souls often say, I believe all the value and efficacy of Christ's work, but I cannot apply it. And who asks you to do so? It is God who applies it, and He has applied it to you, if you believe in its value and efficacy. The moment we believe in Christ, we have the Holy Ghost as bearing witness, "He shall take of mine and shew it unto you." Just as the Son came down to do God's will, and then ascended up again into heaven, so at the Son's ascension, the Holy Ghost came down as a Person on the earth; for the Holy Ghost is always spoken of as being on the earth, and it is this which gives the true and peculiar character of the Church of God. And here we get the *third witness*, in the Spirit of Truth coming down to the earth. The moment I believe, I am sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. All that I can produce of God's good fruits as a Christian, is in consequence of being sealed by the Holy Ghost.

Redemption being perfectly accomplished then the Holy Ghost comes down in person, so that the position of the Church on earth is between these two things, the redemption made, and the glory in prospect, as the Holy Ghost comes down between the Church's redemption, and the Church's glory.

The knowledge of being dead with Christ gives me a pure heart as being myself dead to nature, sin, the world, and law. By the blood, I get perfect peace and a good conscience; and then the Holy Ghost comes down from God; thus we have perfect peace with God, having God's own witness. Well then, I have left the whole scene; I have done with nature altogether; my sins are all gone; the blood has put them away, and I am now dead unto sin, and alive unto God. The cross, the wounds of Christ, are the door by which I entered, and the presence of the Holy Ghost is the power by which I enjoy the fruits of it. As we have seen, the witnesses of God on the earth are *three*, the *Spirit*, the *water*, and the *blood*, and



these three agree in one; "for this is the witness of God, which He hath testified of His Son."

The heart is constantly looking for God to give it a testimony about itself; but God is giving a testimony about His Son, and not about what we are; if God were to give a testimony about us it must be about our sin and unbelief of heart. But no; and it is of great importance in this day of infidelity, to see that if God gives a testimony, it is about His Son, and what He is to the sinner. If you believe that, you will get peace.

If I am going about to get a standing before God on the ground of my holiness, that would be self-righteousness, and of course I shall not get a witness from God as to that. But if my soul take its stand with God, on the testimony God has given to His Son, then I get the witness in myself: when I have got this faith, I have got the thing in my own soul. For instance, look at Paul before Agrippa: "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear

me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am except these bonds." He was so thoroughly conscious that the Christ in His soul was the Christ in heaven, and he was so happy in this consciousness, that he wished the whole company were like himself (except the bonds), having Christ as a well of water springing up within. That which makes heaven to be a heaven to the saint, is just this, that he finds the same Christ in heaven that he has in his own soul; and all the subtleties of infidelity cannot touch the soul that possesses Christ thus within. No reasoning of an infidel can shake my confidence if I am happy in Christ; for if a man came to tell me there was no Christ, when my soul was happy in Him, I should not believe him. There may be no intellectual or logical proof on my part, but there will be, to a certain extent, a moral testimony in the happiness of my soul, and the warmth of my affections being centered in Christ. I have often found how much it tells with men of all conditions, to assure them that I am per-

fectly happy in Christ, and quite sure of going to heaven. Are you so? they say; I only wish I could say it. It would not be a proof to an infidel, his merely seeing you were happy; but it comes home to the heart of man, as there is a craving in man's heart that will never be met till he gets Christ there; for man is never happy without Christ, whatever he may say.

“He that believeth not God hath made him a liar.” The sin of men is in making God a liar, when they do not believe the record God has given of His Son; for men do quarrel with you when you tell them you know that you are saved. They say, How can you know that? Which is just as much as saying that God is not capable of communicating any blessing to man. It is calling God's wisdom in question as well as His power in the testimony of His mercy and grace. This is what I have felt in the great question about the Bible. It is not whether it is the people's right to have the Bible, but it is questioning God's right in giving it.

The treason is in keeping away God's message from His servants. It is not merely the servants' right to have the message, but it is God's right in giving it that is called in question, as it is interfering with God's right of communicating His thoughts in His word.—Whenever God gives a revelation, man is responsible to receive it. God has given a witness in which He reveals the glory of His Son, and when man calls in question that word, he is disputing with God in the testimony of His grace as to what He is.

Who can explain the riddle of this miserable world, without Christ? Go into the alleys and lanes of this vast city, and see the woe and degradation even in this best and most civilized of countries, and learn there what sin does. In the drawing-room you may philosophize about it, but it is not in a drawing room that you will learn what the world is. But when you tell me that it was because of all this sin and wretchedness that God's Son came down into this world to put the sin away, then I can under-

stand it; and God gives eternal life, not life for a moment, or a life we can sin away, as Adam, but eternal life, which is above and beyond sin altogether, being in His Son, and therefore as near to God as can be. "This life is in his Son," who was ever the subject of His Father's delight; for when down here, God could not be silent in His expression of joy, saying, "This is my beloved Son."

And God, in giving me eternal life, has also given me a nature and capacity to enjoy Him for ever. I am brought into an association with God, a relationship to God, and an enjoyment of God, which the angels know not, although holy in their nature, and exalted. We are thus brought near that we might know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be "filled with all the fulness of God."

In what a wondrous place we are set, if we could but be purged, not from gross sins, but from the *vanity* and *earthliness* that fills our minds, to enter into all our blessedness, and the association which we have thus with God, the very

same which Christ has ! He hath borne the wrath of God for our sin, that this full cup of blessing might be given to us. In all this God would have simplicity of heart. A man may talk about many things, but knowledge apart from Christ will never do ; but if we possess Christ *within*, Satan can never touch us ; and if he comes, he will find Christ there, who has overcome him. It is a sweet and blessed thing, that any saint, though born but yesterday, has all in Christ that I have. And if one says, But I am such a great sinner, well, the blood has put that away, and settled that question for ever.

“ And this is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.” There is a confidence in God that applies itself to all the details of life through which I may be called to pass. This is the confidence we have in Him, His ear being ever open to us, we have what we ask for, when we ask according to God’s will. How wondrous is this, that God’s ear is ever open to us, for surely we

should not desire to ask for anything contrary to His will. "And if we know that he hears us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." I am so made to know the love, that if I ask, I shall have. If I am really in earnest to do God's will, to preach the gospel for instance, and there are hindrances in the way—Satan in the way—I have only to ask, and I have all God's power at my disposal, His ear being open to me. If you know what conflict and difficulty are, what a blessing is this, to have God's ear open to you, and to know if you are doing God's will, you will always succeed in doing His will.

"There is a sin unto death, I do not say ye shall pray for it." Temporal death is here intended as chastening in the way of God's government. "There is a sin not unto death." And if there be real intercession God will forgive us. (James v. 14, 15.) If you ask me what the sin unto death is, it may be any sin; it may be the telling of a lie, as in the case of Annanias and Sapphira.

(Peter does not pray for them.) See also the case of Stephen, when he said, "Lay not this sin to their charge." And in Corinthians, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." The horribly confused state of the Church causes the government to be kept more in the hands of God; and from the saints' incompetency to walk in the power of the Spirit, they are necessarily more thrown on the Lord, whose faithfulness to us will not allow our sins to go on unjudged. "He withdraweth not His eye from the righteous."

May we be so walking in the power of holiness that we may not be struggling with sin under His correcting hand. May we be walking in full communion with His grace! Amen.

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## THE BRIDE OF THE LAMB.

Rev. xxi. 9, and xxii.

This bride of the Lamb is to be the convoy of the glory back to the earth, to its place of power and government on



the earth. The Lamb's bride is found in heaven, (chap. 19,) but here she is manifested, not only to show us her beauty, but to try our hearts by her light. It is not merely the beauty and attractiveness of the scene, but that which applies itself to the heart and conscience. If we are seeking *ourselves*, (i.e., our *own advantage*,) we are *not* in moral harmony with this scene. Here it is her joy as well as her dignity to bring, *not* her own glory, but the glory of God back to the earth. How is it with our hearts? Do we desire to be the ministers of His praise, and not of our own? We ought to be putting on the character of this city before we reach it: it ought to be the breathing of our souls, "Lord, conform me to this thy glory."

1st. We have the *stability* of this place, it hath *foundations*. All that I desire to notice now in this description is, to draw from it that which will affect our hearts. Do we delight in its stability? Dissatisfied now, we ought to look fully in the face of all around, and say, It will not do for me; but when we

look to Jesus, can we say, "*This is my rest?*" We shall be established in abiding rest, how far can our hearts now go to Jesus and acknowledge Him as our rest, and sing in spirit, "*This is my rest for ever?*" There is nothing in these foundations that can be moved. Are we in company with this? Can we look to Jesus and say, We have tasted in Him the desired end of our long wearisome journey?

Ver. 22, "I saw no temple therein." *All savoured of worship; there was no need of set days, the whole is sanctuary.* Do we breathe in unison with this? It is a long journey to flesh and blood; the strong sleep in going up the mountain, and in the garden, and when the word is to watch. But there is a worshipping atmosphere where no provision is made for the flesh. O! let us now pray that we may find greater liberty in worship; and wherever we are, may the thought of the presence of Jesus be our sanctuary, and may we not only *delight* our hearts with this wondrous vision, but try their affections by it. What is the light in

which our souls are walking? Is it the light of the simplicity of Christ? Is the Lord God and the Lamb the light of our souls? Acquainting ourselves with our duty in our calling by the way, but the knowledge of God and the Lamb the light to guide our feet? Through the whole scene, we are *of* the holy city, though not *in* it yet. Nothing that defiles can enter in; the purity of the place is such, everything brought in there is sanctified. Is my heart delighting in this? Do I love the pure things that suit the presence of Christ?—having that within me that, having breathed the atmosphere of this holy city, can desire to cherish this? Then not only in the blood of Christ do I read my title, but in the Spirit within me do I read my sympathy with Him, if I love the things that are pure.

The healing of the nations (chap. xxii. 2,) shows the *benevolence* of this city. What did she do with her river and her tree? She sends them forth to heal and refresh the earth. There is her benevolence; and if I am niggardly, refusing

to go forth with the little or much I may have, I am not of this city. Do not you delight in this city? I know it rebukes you, but do not you delight in it? We would not blot out a feature of it for worlds, though it may chasten, and humble, and rebuke us. While we are surveying our dignities, we are trying the strength of our affections, how far we are in present sympathy with this city which brings down to earth not its own glory but God's. As long as I am not satisfied with Jesus, I am not in company with the stability of this place, and all its worship, light, purity, and rich benevolence. These are not only rays of glory, but they are features of moral character.

Chap. xxii. 3. "His servants shall serve him." Oh! do not you know what it is to grow weary in service? And are you not angry with yourself for this weariness? This very anger tells you that you are in full sympathy with that place where His servants SHALL serve Him. Is it not happy to know that by and by, without fatigue of heart,

or weariness of spirit, you shall serve Him night and day. By the grace of God, this very anger in our souls shows our sympathy with this city. Are we not daily obliged to go to our Father, and complain of our little love; and is not this the Spirit forming us for the glory? (ver. 4.) As we look at *His* face, He will stamp ours with the mark that we are His, for with Him we shall reign. It is the glory of a king to have a happy, obedient people; and that will be the glory of these millennial kings—these that constitute the Bride, the Lamb's wife. All under their rule are happy and blessed. In the 11th verse, is a solemn word, a day is coming, which will no longer be a day of salvation; when once the Master riseth up, and shutteth to the door, there will be no more entering in. In the 16th verse Jesus shows Himself as the root and offspring, &c.; and in the 17th verse, the Spirit seems to catch that character of glory and says, "Come." Have you and I laid the scene of our happiness in the presence of Christ? Do we never allow

a hope, or indulge an expectation, the moral character of which would hush the desire of "Come *quickly*, Lord Jesus?" We should say to our hearts, "Where have you been gleaning to day?" It is not merely that we have to acquaint ourselves with passages like this, but there is to apply them to our hearts. "Let him that heareth say, Come." Here is full liberty, beloved, to him that heareth, and *whosoever will*. If any say, I have not heard; well, have you any thirst? are you *not* satisfied? will you come? He is most condescending, come to Him as a poor sinner, if not as a believing saint. In verses 7, 12, and 20, we have, "Behold, I come quickly," but the context in each is different. In the 7th, like the 12th of Luke, or 24th of Matt., He comes as the thief; in the 12th, He comes as the master to his servants, bringing his reward, his kingdom and glory; in the 20th, he comes *Himself*, alone as the Bridegroom to the bride; and her response is, *Amen*, (or *I am satisfied*.) Thou art all I want—the richest answer to Him.

May we stir up our hearts and our affections to be ready. Have I laid out for to-morrow, and so hindered myself from being able to say, "Come, Lord Jesus." "Surely, I come quickly." Amen. This is the simplest, the heart's desire. We thus indeed say our Jesus is our Omega. It is the desire of our souls to keep ourselves in the sympathies of this place. It is written, we are not of the world, though in the world; we are to be of heaven, though not in it—answering in all simplicity, "Even so, come. Amen." Ver. 21. This is our power, *the power* of the bride to adorn herself, make herself ready.

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## "THE LAW OF LIBERTY."

James i. 25.

"The law of liberty" is this, when a command is given which it is the greatest desire of the heart to obey. The fulfilment of the "royal law" is when we are free to do nothing but that which belongs to the new nature. We are

made "partakers of the divine nature;" (2 Peter i. 4;) and having this nature, "the law of liberty" allows me to walk according to it; and, consequently, not according to the flesh, though the flesh may be there. The precept takes in what the new nature would do if unhindered; and thus our desires have the sanction of the word of God. Moreover, it cannot be a perfect law unless it is "a law of liberty." For if it be addressed to that which has no desire, it is simply its being addressed to the flesh, in which good does not dwell. "A new commandment I write unto you; which thing is true in him and in you." Christ's commandments direct and form the life that is in us, as they are the expressions of His own life; and they form ours by His authority: for it is *commandment*.

"The law of the Spirit of life" is a different thing. It is not a commandment, but the necessary consequence of the life that is in us—like the law of gravitation, &c. "Looking into the perfect law of liberty" is looking into these commandments.



## “AS THE TRUTH IS IN JESUS.”

Ephesians iv.—v.

“The truth as it is in Jesus,” is here connected with putting off the old man and putting on the new; for you cannot have the *practice* of the Christian life, without the life itself. But *having life*, the commonest duties are connected with this truth of the body of Christ. For example, Lie not one to another! because “members one of another.” This is the secret of the elevation of a Christian’s conduct.

All our duties flow from our relationships. A child’s duties result from what he is to his father; the wife’s to the husband, &c. A Christian is put in the most responsible relation; and his highest privilege is to have the *Lord* brought into everything, because thus his affection to Christ is tested in all. The precept which forbids my purloining in a house, brings God to remembrance. (Titus ii. 10.) We have our place in Christ before God; and God has his

place in us before men; so that whatever does not suit the presence of God, does not suit a Christian.

The first effect of the presence of God is to annihilate a man. Therefore in ver. 2, in connection with walking worthy of the high vocation, it is "with all *lowliness* and meekness." Then another thing follows—long-suffering and forbearance. There is to be no hurry with our brethren. In this chapter, up to ver. 6, we are *all alike* addressed; afterwards, according to the sovereign will of God, given to individuals.

The expression, "That he might fill all things" (ver. 10,) shows that faith cannot look out on a place which divine love and righteousness have not filled. *He* has come down in love, and gone up in righteousness.

"Perfecting of the saints," (ver. 12,) refers to them *individually*; "Edifying of the body," collectively. I can use my members as servants, but the moment I make them anything else but servants, *it is sin*. When man fell, he was *under* the evil. Now we are to be

over the evil, "renewed after God." "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

The character of the Epistle to the Ephesians is peculiar in one remarkable point, it sets the Church, already so entirely in Christ the Head, that it does not speak of the coming of the Lord. The reason of this is evident: it supposes the Church to be *with Christ*. It ever views the Church in the Head. First, as to its testimony: "That now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." 2. As to blessing: "Blessed with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ." 3. As to where we are, "quickened together with Christ, and raised up together, and made sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." 4. As to *conflict*: "Wrestling against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places."

If I look at the Lord as *coming* for the saints, I see them distinct from Him. *Individually* we are so of course,

and waiting for Him. If I am here, and He is there, we are two and not one. But the truth, in this Epistle, rises higher, never looking at the saints as *apart from*, but as *in* Christ. The whole body is ever so connected with the Head, by the power of the Spirit, that they cannot be separated. "Members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." "No man ever yet hated *his own flesh*; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Thus, then, in Ephesians, whether it is *blessing, testimony, conflict, or where we are*, all is *heavenly*; and the measure and standing of our conduct ought to be the heavenly man. "As the truth is in Jesus."

In chapter i. *the counsels of God* are considered. Chap. ii. *His power* to us-ward who believe. Chap. iii. the character of His blessing to the Gentiles. Chap. iv. the character of the saints as the body of Christ in heaven, and as the habitation of the Spirit down here. Also the practice becoming such. In chap. v., which we are upon, we have the exercise

of Christ's love towards those so united to Him.

It is not only what is the place of God that we need to know, but what is the exercise of Christ's affections towards us in that place. So here, it is not the plans and thoughts of grace that are presented to us, but the *exercise* of grace. It shows us the way Christ feels in *His* relationship to us.

Whatever we are, divine teaching ever connects the commonest details of ordinary life with the highest privileges. That which loosens the bonds of common *life* is not the *testimony of God*. Whatever are the privileges of the saints they are brought to the *light*; and it is by the *light* every thing is tested. Truth always fortifies conscience in a man, in His common-place duties. Of course I mean a just conscience, for there may be a *morbid* conscience. The truth would ever lead to the fulfilment of those common duties, *which all own to be duties*.

Again, wherever the grace and love of God act on a saint, they always go back to God. The incense in the holy place

always ascended, but the fragrance was not for the priests, but *for God*. It was burnt entirely for God, but the sweet savour was diffused all around. Whatever Christ did He did *to God*, and it was a sweet savour. If it is not so with us it is nothing but *selfishness*.

Christ loved us, and gave Himself for us. Here is the greatest act of love *to us*: but it was "a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour." (ver. 2.) Love cannot come down and act in this heavenly, this perfect man, without its perfection being *Godward*. Love having *God* ever before it, can *go on* ever according to the mind of God, amidst all opposition. In its perfectness, however, this could be found only in Christ. We have it, but it is mingled with much failure.

Love, however, comes down from God, and must return to God. We know how self-applause, and how many mixed motives creep in with us, *afterwards*, if not at the time. But oh! how earnestly should we seek that our motives may be *single to Godward*. It is a dreadful

thing for the grace which God has given to be used for SELF. Never did Christ seek His own glory. It was always His Father's glory that He sought. It is indispensable for *internal* holiness, (I speak not of external) to have the heart exercised about this.

All our privileges bring us *to God*. God has a certain character, and He cannot allow anything unsuitable to that. "*Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.*" It is not, we have *got* light, but we are light. The very nature is light. Darkness and light can never be together. This broad truth is laid down in ver. 5, but it rests not here. It adds (ver. 6) "*Because of these things the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience,*" or unbelief.

Mark, how unbelief is the *root* of all sin. It is not the only sin; but all sins deny the character of God. In ver. 8, it is said, "*Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.*"

This principle having been laid down, we have the measure and standard of this light (ver. 14) even *Christ Himself*.

“Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Christ is the standard, you are *asleep* a little, not *dead* actually, but practically as if dead. Let me awake, then, and get all I can in Christ. But what do I get in Christ? Every thing! This awakening does not mean the conscience merely, for the avoiding certain things, but it is the getting Christ Himself formed in us. While I have the *nature* I have also *Christ* the *object* before me, and He is light! Light is *before* my soul, as well as *within* my soul; Christ is my *life*, and I get in *Christ* *divine perfection*, as well as *life*.

Christ shall give thee light. Let us take one instance. People think it a great matter if a man has what they call a fine fortune left him! *But Christ* says, “How *hardly* shall they that have riches, enter into the kingdom of God.” “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.” “Woe to them that are rich!” Riches may be the ruin of a man. Is that *light*?



“See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.” (ver. 15.) There is not only to *avoid* certain things, but there is something to be *gained*. *Divine wisdom to live Christ*. We have to walk with all the wisdom of God. Satan is seeking to trip us up; to dim our testimony; to cause that to be seen in us which is *not Christ*. We are called in a world that is against us, to be waiting every opportunity to seize it for *Christ*. We are to *live Christ* before the world. That is what is meant by wisdom and redeeming the time. It is not merely not *wasting it*, but seizing it for Christ. The devil seeks to pre-occupy men’s thoughts and affections; but we want to redeem time from this, by seeking every opportunity of introducing Christ.

“Be filled with the Spirit.” (ver. 18.) Nothing but the Spirit—a vessel filled with one thing—the Holy Ghost, the spring and source in the soul, of all you do. If it be so Christ will be the subject. The Spirit may give understanding, and the mind still be working; but when “*filled with the Spirit*,” the whole

man becomes the instrument in His hands, so that he thinks, feels, utters, only what the Spirit gives. I speak here only of power, not of *revelation*. Thus, filled with the Spirit, the flesh would not meddle with the things of God. But too often we mix up *our own* thoughts, and we introduce things at the wrong time. We want to be as clay moulded by Him.

What a deliverance is this from self! What a consciousness of the power of God in us, when thus filled with the Spirit! All must acknowledge how little there is of this in us, and how all is so *mingled*! so little of the complete setting aside of all that is of man! If we fail the conscience has to be dealt with; but our normal condition is to be walking with God, "filled with the Spirit."

Our proper joy also is in God. "Singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord" (ver. 19), while looking *up* or looking *down*, giving thanks to God and the Father! What, for tribulation? Yes! because the Spirit gives

me to see God in the tribulation. Filled with the Spirit, I am ever giving thanks to God. See how Christ rejoices in spirit, saying, "I thank thee, O Father," (Matt. xi.) when, as to circumstances of sorrow around, His heart was breaking. The secret of this was, that while grieved with Israel's rejection of Him, He was in perfect communion with His Father, and with the glorious thoughts of God about His Son.

Very often the flesh is not broken down enough to make a man take the place and walk in the truth which God Himself has revealed to the soul. Thus it was with Peter (Matt. xvi. 17, 23), though he had just made the blessed confession of Christ which the Father had revealed to him, when the Lord spoke of His path of humiliation, as the Christ, "the Son of the living God," before the Jews, Peter could not bear it, and beseeches Him not to speak thus. Peter's flesh was not broken down enough to walk in the power of the truth he had received and rejoiced in. So it is with us.

But now we pass to God's revelation of what Christ is in His relationship to His body the Church. As in Rom. viii. it is in the first part of the chapter God *in* us; and in the latter part God *for* us. So here God speaks of what Christ is *for* the Church. The spring of all is Christ's love. "*He* LOVED the church." God showed Him that pearl of great price. Christ must have it, though He give HIMSELF for it! All that Christ is in the perfection of *His holiness*, wisdom, and grace—all that is *Himself*—all that He gave for the Church! The shedding of His blood is not spoken of here. Not only what *He* had did He give—not His life only, but *Himself*. A man cannot give more than Himself. Thus wholly is Christ ours by divine gift and according to the perfectness with which God gives. Christ loved the Church; but having a bride, He must have her according to His own mind. He does not sanctify her first, and then make her His own; but He makes her His own in order to sanctify her. (See ver. 25, 26.) Hence the washing of water

by the Word. The written Word is the mind of God. Thus Christ gives the expression of His own heart and mind to the Church, in the Word, in order to make it like Himself. "Sanctify them through thy truth! Thy word is truth." This testimony to all that God is in Christ is applied to the Church to conform her to Himself. God must have the Lamb's wife like Himself. Even nature teaches this, and thus Christ applies the Word which is the revelation of God in Christ in order to bring us into this likeness to Himself and to cause God's thoughts to be ours. (See chap. i. 2, 3.) "Holy and without blame before him in love"—this is what God is, and this is what the love of Christ is doing for the Church, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." The Word cleanses a man's affections; and not only *cleanses*, but the end is to make *glorious*. Even now the glory shines in on us, and we are changed from glory to glory. Thus the apostle saw the light—the light of Christ—at

the end, and each step as he approached he got more of that light. The power of the glory is applied by Christ through the Word. Christ must have the Church FOR HIMSELF. We get this principle in Canticles; not that I think we have the Church in Canticles, but the Jewish remnant; still we get the principle of Christ's love there. The first thought is having got Christ, but then follows, "I am my beloved's and his desire is towards me." *I belong to CHRIST.* It is a remarkable and beautiful expression in Gen. ii. 22 with reference to Eve as a type of the Church. The Lord God builded (see margin) a woman. The Lord presents this woman to Adam. The second Adam, being the Lord God, presents this glorious Church to *Himself* without spot. All the perfection of God became man in order that He might be satisfied as to His Church. Ah, here the heart gets happy and humble! It is when I am dependent on the affections of another that my heart gets humbled and learns to rest in a sanctified way upon the object of affection. Our hearts

no longer thirst. (See John iv. 16.) We get our life out of Christ. (Gal. ii. 20.) The life that I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God. All through this time of our weakness we have the unceasing love of One who nourishes and cherishes us as His own flesh; and there is a kind of blessed *necessity* for this. No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord, the Church, for we are members of His body, &c. (Ver. 28.) It is most sweet to take the motives of our duties from the pattern we have in Christ. There is not one relationship owned by God for which we fail to find a pattern in the things of God. In this passage it is the devotedness of love. It is not *the blood*, but all the perfect, the precious, tender, unceasing care of love, (of His love who *gave Himself, for us,*) until He shall present us to Himself a glorious church, holy and without blemish. How our hearts need to be learning more of this love of Christ which passeth knowledge!

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## PERFECTION.

Hebrews vi.

Nothing seemed to be a greater burden on the heart of Paul than to keep the saints up to their privileges. The Hebrews saw that Christ had died for them, though *that* had not the power over them which it ought to have had; but they were risen with Him also. They were in Christ in heavenly places within the veil, and the question was, were they realizing that.

There is great force in the expression he uses in chap. v. 6, "*ye are become*, such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." "Are become" marks the process by which they had reached the state they were in.

Freshness of affection, and quickness of understanding go together. There is less spring, less apprehension, less clearness when our hearts are not happy. On the other hand, my judgment is clear when my affections are warm. Motives that acted before cease to be motives when my affections are warm.



Freshness of affection being lost, the Hebrews were "dull of hearing;" and so were "*become* such as had need of milk, and not of strong meat." And then the apostle explains that those who use "milk" are unskilful in the word of righteousness and are babes; while "strong meat" belongs to those, not who have made great progress, but who are of full age,—*men* in the truth in opposition to being *children* or babes,—and who have "their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

But how can I separate the "knowledge of good and evil" from the knowledge of Christ. If I were to try to separate between them of myself, shutting Christ out, how could I? He is my standard of *good*; and it is what I find in Him that gives me power to judge what is *evil*. How can I walk as He walked *without Him*? "*Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, (or the word of the beginning of Christ,) let us go on to perfection.*"

Instead of wasting your time with what has passed away, go on to the full

revelation of Christ. Be at home there, and understanding what the will of the Lord is. For how can I walk as He walked without Him? I know not how to attempt it. The secret of everything is found in that truth, "*Ye are complete in him.*" As Christ Himself also has said, "At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and *ye in me.*" But what is that? and where is Christ now? In heaven. Then I am there too, and my affections should be there also. My hope is to be thoroughly identified with *Him*. For the portion I have is what He has—life, glory, all that He has risen to—and all my associations are with Himself. There is the difference between "the principles of the doctrine of Christ" and the full perfection. Of Christ Himself it is said, (chap. v. 9,) "*Being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.*"

Now He was not made perfect down here, but in being glorified in heaven. He went through the experience down here; as it is said, "He learned obedience

by the things which he suffered," and then went into *heaven*, to be Priest, because our blessings and associations and hopes are all up there. He is "made perfect" as our High Priest in heaven and not down here. He had not received that point in the counsels of God, in *glory*, when He was down here. Now He is there He has associated me with Himself in that place. I can see that Christ has been through this world so as to be able to sympathize with me in all my sorrows and all my trials; and He has also borne my sins in His own body on the tree. But where is He now? He is in heaven; and I am there too in spirit, and He will soon bring me there in fact. *Where He is*, is His being "made perfect." The work is done, and now He is showing me the effect of its being done; and is teaching me the walk that belongs to the redemption He has wrought out. He has taken my heart and associated me with Himself, and He says that is *the perfection* I am to go on to.

Where did Paul see Christ? Not on

earth ; for long after He had left the earth he was a persecutor ; but he saw Him, as we all know, in heavenly glory. His only knowledge of Christ at all was of a Christ in heaven. His course on earth He might learn ; but the revelation of Christ that brought his soul into the presence of God in the power of an accomplished redemption, was the revelation of Christ in heaven and in glory. Hence he says, " Though we had known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." The Christ he wanted to " win," (as he says in Phil. iii.) was a glorified Christ. It may cost me my life, but never mind. That is my object ; after that I am reaching. I am alive from the dead, because Christ is ; and I want to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of me. I am not in the flesh, but in Christ. I have the consciousness that this work of Christ has put me in a new place, (not yet glorified in body, but) in a new place as to my life and associations and home ; and this is the *perfection* we are to go on to.

It was this that ruled the apostle's affections, as he says, "that I may win Christ." This was his object, to "bear the image of the heavenly." His mind was full of it. The Holy Ghost has come down to bring all these things to our remembrance. Believers are united to Christ in glory. It is never said that Christ is united to man; but believers are united to Christ. Then the apostle was living by the power of the Holy Ghost; so that one may conceive what a trial it was to him to see these people going back to the first principles. They were all true, but if people stop there they stop short of a glorified Christ. To the Galatians he says, "who hath bewitched you?" because of himself he says, "I knew a man in Christ." "A man in Christ" is a man risen out of all that connects itself with the law and ordinances, as well as with sin and death, and all that is sorrowful or attractive in this present evil world. His spirit is broken to find the saints resting with things on earth about Christ. The Holy Ghost was come from heaven to

make them partakers of a heavenly calling; to associate them in heart and mind with Christ, and to show them things which would not only keep them from "the evil which is in the world," but from the world itself.

The Hebrews had a temple standing when Paul wrote, where Christ, Himself, had been. Why, then, should they have left it, if Christ had not judged the flesh, and shown that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God?" "The middle wall" had been put up by God, Himself; how should they dare to break it down, if God had not done it? If God had not said that He would not have to do with flesh any more, how could they dare to leave the camp, and go outside? CHRIST GLORIFIED is the end of all the first principles, and we have to go through the world as strangers and pilgrims. The only thing God ever owned in religion was Jewish, which had to do with the flesh—with men here in the world—but that is gone by the cross. All is crucified; "the handwriting of ordinances" has been blotted

out—"nailed to the cross"—and thus taken out of the way; and in a glorified Christ we see the end of all that is abolished. Henceforth our life, our home, our associations, are all in Christ.

But the doctrine of the beginning of Christ was not that.

What do we find as long as Christ was upon earth? Why the testimony of the law and the prophets, which taught righteousness and called the nation to repentance and faith. Christ Himself also speaks of a judgment to come, which they believed. The Pharisees believed in a resurrection of the dead. Baptisms or washings and the laying on of hands, they had them. They constituted the elements of a worldly religion, and were sanctioned by God until the cross. The Messiah coming on earth is the "doctrine of the beginning of Christ;" but now I leave that and go on to perfection. I do not deny these things, but I go on to the fuller revelation of Christ. These first principles are all true, but then I have other and far better things.

Saul might have been the brightest

saint going under the old order of things, but not knowing Christ. But supposing a person got into the heavenly things and was "enlightened" and had "tasted the heavenly gift, and was made partaker of the Holy Ghost, and had tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," and then gave it up—what could he do then? What else was there to present to such an one? There might have been a going on from faith, in an humbled Christ to a glorified Christ, but there is nothing beyond. For it should be observed there is nothing of *life* signified here. The expressions do not go beyond the indication of truth that might be received by the natural mind, and the demonstrative power of the Holy Ghost, which persons might partake of, as Scripture shows, without being participators in eternal life.

There may be light in a sense without the smallest trace of life, of which Balaam is an example. Of the stony ground hearers also it is said concerning the word that "anon with joy they re-



ceived it"—they "tasted the good word of God." Moreover, Judas could cast out devils as well as the rest: he was a partaker of these "miracles of the coming age." And Christ had said (Matt. vii. 22) "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works?" Still they are disowned of Christ as "workers of iniquity."

But there is this farther in the case supposed: "They had crucified the Son of God afresh," by turning back again from these heavenly things, and therefore could not be renewed to repentance. The nation had indeed crucified Christ, but they did not know what they were doing. This could not be said of those of whom the apostle is speaking. This was not ignorance, but will.

There is a great difference in what is expressed by "anon with joy they received it," and the word ploughing up the soul—giving the sense of sin and bringing into subjection to God's redemption. The result of life is seen in

*fruit*, not in power. In the parable of the sower the seed received into good ground “brought forth *fruit*.” In the other cases there was “no fruit brought to perfection.” If there is any fruit, the tree is not dead. Hence the apostle says, “We are persuaded better things of you, and *things that accompany* salvation.” These were not power merely nor joy; for these might exist and there be no life. Judas could cast out devils as well as the rest; but Jesus said, “Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” The connexion of your heart with Christ—the consciousness of God having written your name in heaven is the blessed thing. The fruit which the apostle takes notice of, in ver. 10, is love to the brethren. This was there, and showed itself in the active ministering to the saints, out of love to the Lord’s name; while full assurance of hope to the end was to be desired. There might be working of miracles without knowing or being known of God; but fruit-bearing in

grace is the token of being branches of the true vine.

In the example of Abraham, the apostle presents an encouragement to their faith, which needed to be strengthened. Abraham had the promise of God, and he believed it; he had His oath, and he trusted it: but we have more. It is not to us that God presents a promise of future blessings, and adds an oath to assure us of their accomplishment; but He has performed all that He calls us to believe. We have a redemption now in the presence of God. Christ, having wrought the work, is sitting down in the presence of God, and in spirit has brought us there. But we have more than that—for, in hope, we are partakers of all the glory which belongs to that redemption. We have life, redemption, the Holy Ghost as the seal; and more. The forerunner is gone in, and the Holy Ghost gives us the consciousness of our union with Him, and not merely that our sins are put away through the blood-shedding of Christ. We have the Spirit in virtue of

Christ's redemption, and He is come to tell us that we are in that Christ, who wrought the redemption, and is now in the power of an endless life within the veil.

But what is the practical consequence of all this? Why, if the glory He has is mine, and I am going on after Him, then all the world is but dross and dung in my esteem. This will be faith's estimate of everything in the world, when Christ is filling the heart's affections, and when the soul is pressing on after Him, in the certain hope of being for ever with Him. One moment's real apprehension of Christ in the glory is sufficient to dim the brightness and glitter of every earthly thing; but the soul must be occupied alone with Christ for this.

If our affections and desires are lingering on earth, or stopping short of a glorified Christ in heaven, as the one in whom our life is hid, and to whom we are presently to be conformed in glory, and that in the glory where He is, we shall find soon that earthly things are

something more than dross and dung. Leave a stone on the ground for a time and you will find that it will gradually sink into it. And our hearts, if they are not practically in heaven with Christ, will soon become attached to earthly things.

There is a constant tendency in earthly things to press down the affections. Duties are more apt to lead away the soul from God than open sin. Many a Christian has been ensnared by duties, whose heart would have shrunk from open sin. But we have only one duty in all the varying circumstances of life—to *serve Christ*. And we should remember that if things on earth are dark and the heart is tested in journeying through the world, all on the side of God is bright. “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto *perfection*.”

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## FRAGMENT.

The presence of the Holy Ghost down here, as truly sent from above as the Son, though in a different manner, and

consequent on the accomplishment and establishment before God of divine righteousness by Jesus Christ, is the key and centre of all that belongs to the christian estate.

Righteousness has been established before God, in heaven, and perfect love shown to the sinner on earth. Christ has made good both perfect love on God's part towards man in his sins—for God so loved that He spared not His own Son—and perfect righteousness for faith before God—for Christ is our righteousness before God. Of this the Holy Ghost is witness in the gospel, in the whole creation, (see 2 Cor. v. 19, 20; Col. i. 23,) because Jesus is on high.

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### LOVE TO JESUS.

“Whom have I in heaven but thee?”

I love thee, precious Lamb of God,  
 Thy name to me is dear;  
 No charming music falls so sweet  
 Upon my listening ear.

I love thee as the *humble* One,  
So lowly in thy birth,  
Who made thyself of no repute,  
Though Lord of heaven and earth.

I love thee as the *spotless* One,  
The holy and the pure ;  
Made sin, that I its fearful weight  
And curse might not endure.

I love thee as the *gracious* One,  
So gentle and so kind,  
Who wiped the falling tear, and loved  
The broken heart to bind.

I love thee as the *faithful* One,  
Who did the Father's will ;  
Who never sought thine own, but did  
His blessed Word fulfil.

I love thee as the *patient* One,  
Rejected and reviled ;  
Yet ever calm and tranquil thou,  
Beneficent and mild.

I love thee as the *suffering* One,  
Unpitied in thy woe.  
No heart responsive beat to thine  
When waves did o'er thee flow.

I love thee as the *dying* One  
    Upon the cursed tree—  
Ah! there I measure, Lord, thy love  
    To such a wretch as me!

I love thee as the *risen* One,  
    No longer in the grave;  
Triumphant now o'er death and hell—  
    Omnipotent to save!

I love thee as the *reigning* One,  
    Upon the Father's throne,  
With majesty and honour crown'd,  
    And glory all thine own.

I love thee as the *coming* One,  
    And oh, I wait to be  
Upborne in clouds of glory bright,  
    Dear, precious Lord, to thee!

Come then, oh Saviour, quickly come!  
    Drive hence earth's night and war:  
"The Spirit and the Bride say, Come,  
    Thou bright and Morning Star!"

A. M.

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## PAUL'S MINISTRY IN ACTS XIII.—XX.

The Apostle Paul, in some sense, may be said to end his ministry in Acts xx. He ceased then, formally, to be the *servant*, being soon to become the *prisoner*, of Jesus Christ. It was a transitional moment. His ministry had now continued since the time of the opening of chap. xiii.

If we look back at him, in these chapters, and review his labours as a husbandman in the field of the gospel, we shall find him using at times *the plough*, at times *the seed*, and at times *the plough and the seed together*—and all this, in the skill of one who understood the character of his work, and the different husbandry, which different soil demanded. And it is happy to be able to mark such skill as this—the skill that distinguishes and understands the work that is to be done, as well as the diligence that does it.

We find this same skill, in a divine

and perfect form, in the Lord Himself. The Lord is seen at times taking the nicest and most distinguishing knowledge of the work that lay before Him. In the parable of the sower, he lets us learn how He had surveyed the field in which He was working; how He knew that in one place it was but as *highway* ground, where *Satan* prevailed; in another, *stony* ground, where poor impotent *nature*, unequal to render anything to God, was disappointing His service; in another, *thorny* ground, where the *world* was hindering the ripening of that good seed which He was sowing; in another, good ground, where toil was rewarded.

Thus did the Divine Husbandman Himself take knowledge of the scene of His labours in its large and various characteristics. But His gracious, delicate, and yet keener sense acquaints itself likewise with fainter and more minute differences. He speaks of one "not far from the kingdom of God." He loves the rich young man who came to Him under some struggle between heart and conscience. He calls aside

the misled multitude to teach them in gentleness and patience, while He exposes and rebukes their misleading teachers to their face. He separates between Nicodemus and the people of Jerusalem, though he and they together were moved by the same influence, the miracles which He was working. He will sit down in the midst of the twelve that accompany Him, and separate ingredients found among them at times. He will distinguish between Mary and Martha, when put to do such unpleasant work, though He will leave them both still, as with an equal love!

And how perfect all this was, in the way of a Husbandman in God's field, who will be skilful as well as diligent! And in his ministry through these chapters, I mean in the samples of his sermons, which are here recorded for us, we may trace this skill of his divine Master, (and surely, by the Spirit of his Master) in the Apostle Paul.

At the opening of chap. xiii., the church are met together at Antioch, and there and then, Saul and Barnabas are

called out for work in distant fields. *Saul*, soon after this, became *Paul*, the more confined Jewish name taking its Gentile, larger form (I believe, under divine suggestion), because the scene of service was now enlarging itself, and Paul was predestined of God to fill it more specially than any other, and to become the characteristic minister of this full and abundant form of grace.

In the synagogue of another Antioch, an Antioch more completely beyond the Jewish boundary, our apostle begins his series of preachings. He is invited by the rulers to give the congregation a word of exhortation. Of course he is ready to speak to them, for he was sent forth by God with "words" for sinners all the world over. But it is "fallow ground" he finds here; a people who give no evidence that they were seeking the Lord with interested consciences—for it is such seeking that is the witness that the fallow has been already broken. "Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord." (Hosea x. 12.) But where such seeking is not, the

plough must be used, the ministry that convicts the conscience and lays the sentence of death in the creature. Accordingly, Paul uses the plough here. He warns the people of Israel here in the synagogue at Antioch, lest that word of their own prophet should be made good against them, "Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." But since they had invited him to give them a word of exhortation, and had now quietly waited and listened, he casts in the seed as well as uses the plough, telling the synagogue of a risen Jesus, and of forgiveness and justification through faith in Him. (Chap. xiii. 38—41.)

This, surely I may say, was skilful husbandry—husbandry such as the nature of the soil demanded.

Soon afterwards, however, we find him doing somewhat different work at Lystra in Lycaonia. He has no invitation here, no assembled, attentive audience, but a blinded, idolatrous people, who needed to be thoroughly awakened. Under the instructed eye of the apostle, the ground here was merely one of "thorns;" and

the word to guide him was at the door—"break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." (Jer. iv. 3.) We find, therefore, only the plough in the hand of this skilful husbandman. He runs into the midst of the people at Lystra, and challenges their consciences to take knowledge of their condition before God. He would fain drive the conviction deep into the ground of their heart. There was nothing but this for it. The field demanded this husbandry. A besotted multitude, who would fain worship men of like passions with themselves, have to be arrested, if haply some light from God may awaken the conscience. (Chap. xiv. 15—17.)

Again I say, how perfect is this in its season! Some may object, Paul does not preach the gospel here. It is so; but this was his wisdom in the Spirit. He does not cast in the seed, but breaks up, if he may, the thorny fallow ground. As his Master at the well of Sychar before him would reach the conscience of a poor sinner; and thus, when the conscience was awakened, He had seed of

the most precious quality for the soil, saying to her, "I that speak unto thee am he." Paul had the same seed at hand for these blinded sinners at Lystra, if, like her, they were convicted; but his earlier business, like that of his divine Master before him, is with the plough.

We next find him as a preacher or witness of the gospel at Philippi. Here he lights upon two distinct pieces of ground, each of which had been broken up already, and his hand is called to till them. Lydia was a seeker of the Lord, a Gentile, who had been already brought to worship the God of Israel. The Apostle meets her at the river side, where she and other women used to pray together. The soil of her heart is thus ready rather for the seed, than for the plough; and, accordingly, the Apostle "sat down and spake to" her and her companions. It was the happy, noiseless work of the sower. Gently did the seed fall into the ground, which the Lord of the harvest as gently opened to receive it. (xvi. 10—15.)

So, the gaoler. The Lord breaks up

his fallow. Rough and hard work it may have been; but it was the hand of God that did it, and did it all alone, ere the Apostle is called to enter on his work. For, amazed at what had happened, when the prison doors had been forced open by the earthquake, and yet the prisoners had not fled, though he discovered that his life was safe, and that he need not kill himself, yet (as one standing on the brink of hell, his soul, not his life, became now his anxiety) he cries out to Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And the Apostle's only business is to tell him of Jesus. (xvi. 25—34.)

This was easy work and happy work; the work of a sower in prepared ground, ground that made a sure promise of bringing forth herbs meet for him by whom it was about to be dressed.

We have, however, still to follow him: and we find him a preacher again, at Athens. (xvii. 18—31.)

It is not the rough ground of Lystra that he lights on here—but it is equally a field of thorns, which needs just the



same husbandry. Blinded, vain idolaters the men of Athens are, as were the people of Lystra. Refined and tutored, it is true—schoolmen of various wisdom after the manner of men; but refined or rude, Athenians or Lycaonians, the fields of these blinded idolators are all “fallow” under the eye of God, and Paul has only the plough in hand here. After exposing their folly, not so much in their *acknowledged*, as in their *real, palpable*, ignorant worship, he speaks to them of the resurrection of Jesus, in its connexion with *judgment*; telling them that “God had appointed a day in which He would judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.” This was using the plough. The Apostle seeks to convict the conscience. He treats this select, well-tutored assemblage, at Athens, as “fallow ground,” a field of “thorns,” the only thing to do with which was to break it up. It was only plough-husbandry that suited it.

This closes his preachings in this great season of his ministry. But we may surely admire the various, perfect character of it—the skill, as well as the diligence of this servant of the Lord of the vineyard.

These same chapters would have allowed us to look at Paul, as the husbandman at other work, visiting the fields which he had thus ploughed and sown, either, as it were, to water or to weed them. For he goes among the churches, to give them exhortation, or to confirm them. But I do not look at these and other matters, found in these chapters; but when we reach the opening of chap. xx., we find the Apostle in the midst of the church again, as we saw him at the opening of chap. xiii.—with this difference, however, that he was there, at the beginning, at Antioch, called out from the church to go forth to labour; here, at Troas, at the end, he is in the midst of the church during church-service, celebrating, in the breaking of bread, the proper standing of the elect of God, and worshipping in

the sense of the salvation of God. And, surely, there is beauty in this variety. The Spirit calls forth, from God's assembly, an energy that will go out with plough and seed, and waterpot, to do good work in distant fields, still untilled; or, He will awaken that assembly itself, to do its own proper service within its own borders—for we are either to go abroad, and there *publish* God's salvation, or to come home, and there *celebrate* it.

Then, at the very close, at Miletæ, we see our Apostle, who had, at the beginning, been *sent forth* to his ministry, and had then *pursued it* skilfully and diligently, and then *celebrated* the fruit of it, now *taking leave* of it.

This was a transitional moment, as I have already called it. He is leaving his ministry, and entering on the last rough stage in his way to heaven. He is careful about others, but all at ease about himself, and in readiness for his departure. He thus appears before us in this scene, which closes our meditation.

## POSITION OF THE BELIEVER BEFORE GOD.

Read Eph. i.

You so continually find the hearts of Christians, even, so little thoroughly founded on the work of the Lord Jesus, so feebly conscious of their relationship to God, that I desire briefly to bring out again what the position of the believer is before God as presented to us in this Epistle and in Romans.

Before beginning, however, I would first allude to one thing that hinders people, and that is want of earnestness of purpose. Thus you often meet persons who say they want peace, and yet they can go and play all the day. Is it a wonder if they have not peace? Others, again, may not be trifling, but they throw their heart into business. The effect, of course, is the same. How little of what Barnabas exhorted to, "That with purpose of heart they should cleave to the Lord!" How little of what Paul had before him, "This one thing I do!" Or of the prayer in the

Psalms, "Unite my heart to fear thy name!" Nay, they are afraid even to look earnestly at their relationship with God; they are afraid to see it.

I am persuaded that many souls are in such a condition; possessing life, it may be, but contented without a full, distinct living in and knowledge of God and His righteousness, so as to walk always in the liberty and joy of a known relationship. Now to be uncertain of our relationship with God is not the Christian state. "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." The spirit of fear is not the spirit we get in virtue of the righteousness of God. It is very useful in its place, but where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.

The great thing which hinders this is flesh, that is, the nature we get from Adam. The flesh has its desires and delights, and it has its condition before God—sin; just as we have life in Christ, and we have righteousness in Christ, that is, standing and life. We are apt to think that scripture speaks only of flesh as to

its corrupt workings ; but *it has its standing before God*, as well as its workings. I cannot be guilty and righteous at the same time ; I cannot be a saint and a sinner at the same time. We have to get well hold of this, that the man in the flesh is a guilty man before God, one who has no righteousness ; a man, indeed, ever living in evil, but besides that a sinner before God. I may be in conflict with my sins, and yet know no acceptance, and I may be in conflict and yet know acceptance. The mere question of conflicts, and overcoming, is not the whole question of acceptance. I may have a child struggling with an evil temper, and vexed with itself because of it, and yet my heart may be delighting in my child. I have to overcome before and after acceptance ; only I fail before and succeed after. But for acceptance God cannot have any sin at all.

The Epistle to the Ephesians takes up the work of God, without any reference to any experience at all. It takes up the sinner where God sees him Him-

self, and puts him where God's power has put Christ. It does not speak of justifying, nor of any work in order to it, but it takes the sinner up just as he was and puts him up where Christ is. It puts him in the place of a child, and says, walk as a child.

Romans speaks of us as alive in sin, Ephesians as dead in sin. Therefore, in Ephesians, God takes into His own presence, according to His own nature as God, and according to the relationship of children. We are created again in Christ Jesus. There we get nothing but the work of God. What has a man to do with his own creation? Nothing whatever. Therefore God places him there according to the power which put Christ there.

But *we* do not begin there, with being dead, where God begins in Ephesians. Therefore in Romans i. the picture of man's state is fully brought out and then what meets it. It is not men "dead in sins" that we get, as in Ephesians, but a responsible person living in sin, and so he has a conscience of sin

whenever law comes in; first, as to his conduct, and then as to what passes in his heart. Then God meets this condition in the third chapter in the blood of Christ. It is not one dead in Romans. We have somebody to begin with who wants justifying. He finds the law of sin in his members, and more, he is a captive. The war, it is true, will be to the end, but not the captivity. But what about righteousness? Is the man with the law of sin in his members, which leads him captive, righteous before God? The very opposite, and wretched because so. Where is the way out? There is none for the flesh, and that is what we are speaking of.

Then he is taking up what is passing in his heart, to draw the conclusion of what is passing in God's heart. What is known of God? His righteousness. In what character? That of a judge. Is that all you know of God? Redemption is unknown. It is the case in this eighth of Romans, of one under law trying to make out righteousness, looking at God as a judge, and finding it



cannot meet him. It is the condition of a sinner who is to answer for himself before God. This is all true, but am I to learn nothing of what Christ did for people in that state? It is the standing of a man who has to answer for himself as a child of Adam, before God. Now, if that is your case, you are infallibly lost.

This sort of exercise is very useful to break us down to find the need of another standing altogether. The blood of Christ is the answer to what I am, a sinner before God; but besides, Christ's standing is my place in the presence of God in spirit. Till this is known, the question is, How am I to get done with this conflict, which always leads to so much sorrow? (Not that the conflict ceases, only when *redemption* is known there is power.) Well, the end is this, I must reckon myself dead; there is no use in the conflict. I cannot deliver myself. Where the Romans end as to experience, Ephesians begin as to doctrine. Then I am created anew in Christ Jesus.

We must come to a positive, full, true sense of this, that we are dead. Till

the soul has been brought to this, it has not got a standing in Christ: it is not expecting it; it is seeking help. But, if I may so speak, is Christ going to help Himself to be more righteous? "O, but I find so much evil in myself!" "In yourself!" Are you to be accepted in yourself? "So much evil!" Why, there is nothing else. You are trying to get an experience which will set you right before God: but you cannot, and ought not. What we are brought to is the full, certain, most holy, sin-judging discovery, that in the flesh dwells no good thing. Are you going to have your standing with God ascertained by the knowledge of good and evil in *you*? Will God pass it over lightly? No; but He takes us out of it. He cannot have us in the flesh at all, because there is sin in it. All comes to this: death and resurrection. We were baptized into His *death*. You must come and close with Christ as dead about sin, and own, I am there. (I must be alive unto God in entirely another way.) I have judged myself as I ought to do when brought to acknowledge that

not one stone have I found in the morass of sin to put my foot on before God as to righteousness. I am dependent on the goodness and grace of God. I have learnt what I am, what sin is, what my condition is, and learnt that flesh never can be set up again. The old man must come to the cross, to death experimentally. Then there is full deliverance. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." I am not now answerable for what I was as a sinner. Why? Because Christ has answered for it. That is closed. "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

You will find that in Romans Christ is not followed to His exaltation except once. (Chap. viii.) And the reason is that Romans is this, that Christ stood there in *our place* and wrought that work. It is the close of my experience as a sinner. Now I come in Ephesians to the beginning of my experience as a saint. What has God done? He has taken the One who was dead for my sins and set Him up in heaven. That is my

place, "holy and without blame before him in love."

You never can get really and rightly practically into the blessing spoken of in Ephesians, unless you have got really and rightly into the consciousness of this, that you are dead. Otherwise you will have the new thing and the old thing. Therefore we must distinguish between the conflict and the standing. The flesh never ceases to be an enemy, but now it is locked up. If I have got the flesh locked up, he may lust as he pleases. He has no power. For the Spirit is life because of righteousness. You cannot get *that* until you have given entirely up the other standing.

If a man looks at the experiences of his heart he sees inconsistencies, and that is not divine righteousness. He must be brought to death. There is no hope of getting better, and while under the law no power of getting better. But when brought into the presence of God, where all sin is seen and judged, then we get on true ground. We thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I cannot but regret that I find in Christians uncertainty as to their relationship with God, looking to experience in connexion with their standing. *Our* experience is not Christ, and He is our righteousness.

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## A WELL OF WATER.

John iv.

In the preceding chapter we get the quickening power of the Spirit and the contrast between the old and the new creation; here we get another thing—the dwelling of the Spirit in the believer. “The water that I shall give him shall be *in* him a well of water,” &c. Of necessity a man *must* be born again—born of water and of the Spirit, if he has to say to God. This is what has to be presented to the sinner: “You *must* be born again,” while at the same time we know it must be God’s work. It is not in a legal sense that it is said, “ye must,” because we know a man cannot accom-

plish it of himself, but there is a moral necessity for it, because until born again the sinner cannot have one desire, or any thing in him, suited to God. It is the requisite flowing from what God is, and what the sinner is. But there is not this moral necessity for the indwelling of the Spirit in the believer. There is no requirement in that, but it is the expression of pure grace. It is not a thing necessary to man, but one given by God, and therefore, not only the Jews, but the Gentiles might have it. "If thou knewest the gift of God," &c. For the Jews, even, it was necessary to be "born again," and that was the instruction of chap. iii. In chap. iv. it is a pure gift of which He speaks, and He would show Gentiles might have it, as well as Jews, for this was a poor Samaritan He was speaking to.

The life that is given brings in power, as well as a new nature. The new nature has certain characteristics, love, holiness, &c. "He that is born of God sinneth not." But there is another thing, viz., power; and without this the

very desire for holiness will occasion distress of soul and the sense of condemnation, and there will be neither peace, joy, liberty, nor consciousness of relationship; all which are formed on the *indwelling of the Spirit of God*. The Spirit of God produces these effects in the soul in which He dwells, bringing forth in us what is like God. Thus we see the difference between the Holy Ghost quickening, or giving a new nature, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in us and giving us power.

The woman comes to draw. The Lord asks for drink. She is surprised at His asking *her* for water. Before, we have seen Him talking to a Jew, a Pharisee, a Rabbi, but here was a poor Samaritan. She was astonished at His having overleaped all bounds, and come in perfect freedom to speak to her. But here was the gift of grace come down to her as well as to the Jews.

Passing over the details of her conversation, which are most interesting, I will notice the lowliness of Jesus, in His actings towards her. His position

here is founded on His entire rejection as coming in the way of promise. He is on His way, as rejected, to Galilee, the place where God visits His remnant. (Isa. ix.) "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." He left Judea, and God leads Him through this wretched, apostate race; just a picture of the Lord's actings now in sovereign grace, gathering out Gentiles before He comes to the remnant. That which lays hold of a sinner is sovereign grace. Christ is rejected by man, and man is rejected by God. There is mutual and complete rejection. *Promise* is gone because *Christ, coming with the promises*, was rejected. "My soul abhorred them, and their souls abhorred me." It is now a rejected, humbled Christ, bestowed as the sovereign *gift of God*. "If thou knewest the gift of God." God was *giving* freely, and *He who gave* was there. He who could create another heaven and earth if He pleased, came to ask drink of her! What confidence in His grace it inspired! He does not expect her to ask of Him until



He has asked of her. Our pride would say, "If I accept favours of God, He will accept favours of me." Here is God Himself coming and saying, "If thou knewest the gift of God," &c. He would be dependent for a drink of the brook by the way; such was the position He took! When He could put Himself in such a place as to ask a favour of her, all the sluices of her confidence are opened. "He must needs go through Samaria." His path led through it. That was the path in which His love in coming down here put Him, and it over-leaped all bounds.

There is nothing so hard for our vile hearts to understand as *grace*, but there is nothing so simple. If you knew the Person of Him who asks, you would know the perfectness of grace coming down to the wretchedness of man to bestow. It is not now you *must* be this or that, but here is God comes down to you. He is at perfect ease with the woman though she was going on with her sins; she a Samaritan, and yet there is God going on with her. The revela-

tion of God in this way gives the consciousness that she can get what He has to give. The moment a soul apprehends what it has in Christ, IT HAS IT. "Sir, give me this water."

There is a thought *added* now (ver. 16) her sins have to be made known. There is no understanding of what He has to give until the conscience is reached, and she has the conscience of sin. If the things of God could be reached by the natural understanding, man would in a sense be a match for God. But man is not in that position with God now, whatever his position was in innocence. Now when the conscience is opened it brings the sense of need. Then the sinner sees nothing but sins, and sees also that nothing but God's grace can meet them. A man never gets spiritual understanding until God has dealt with his conscience. Until the flesh is in a measure judged the Christian has no power to understand God. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is," &c. When I know the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, I know that I have

everything I can need, because everything is in Him—love, power, holiness, everything is in Him. “He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him,” &c. A detected sinner is in a different case to being in possession of the well, and yet the detection was on the way to it. The way to bring this well into the heart was to convict of sin. She was in the presence of God! Do you think of that?—That we are in the presence of God. We should never sin if we did. The woman follows the natural course of her own thoughts in talking about the water from the well (verses 11, 12). But Christ says, “the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water.” In using what sin gives in this world it is soon spent. The strength is gone in the spending—the spring becomes dry. But with spiritual things it is just the reverse, the more I spend the more I’ve got. The water becomes a well “springing up,” spiritual capacity increases. “To him that hath shall be given.” Besides, it leaves no desires for anything else, no hankering after that I have not

got. He shall never thirst, never thirst after anything else, whilst there will be the increasing sense of need of the living water continually. I cannot say this practically of one whose soul is hankering after earthly things. When there is this hard crust over the soul there is need of humbling; but the natural state of a Christian is to go on, and have more given. A Christian sunk down into the flesh is thirsting. If I hunt down to the bottom of his soul I may find the well; but there ought to be rather the sense of possession than of need in the soul. Here is rest and power. We have not only everlasting life in Him, from whom we shall never be separated, but the man has a well of water *in himself*. "It shall be in him a well of water." This is power coming down from God; heaven is brought down into my heart. It is the power of divine life bringing me into fellowship with the Father and the Son. It is nothing short of all that is in God dwelling in me. I have got something that lays hold of that life, the gift of

God. Mark, it is here the well of water in the individual. There is an eternal spring in my own soul. There's a power in the person associating him with all that is in God. The man drinks it in, receives it as a thirsty person, and then it becomes in him a well which makes him partaker of what is in God. It brings into intercourse with, and to *feeding*, in spiritual apprehension, on the things of God. It has not reference to outward gift, but to living power in the soul embracing all that the Father and the Son have, and it has its character and stamp in the person of the eternal life to which it springs. These everlasting things belong to the person who enjoys them. It springs up to everlasting life.

I now turn to Rom. viii. to trace the way in which the Spirit is brought out there as life and power. As the breath of life was given to the first Adam, and he became a living soul, so we have the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. After life there is power also. This is the consequence of the sentence passed upon sin

in its whole nature, not on sins only. In Christ on the cross, God condemned sin in the flesh. God has dealt with it, and judged it in the person of Christ. As soon as I am quickened, there is the enquiry, How am I to get rid of this sense of sin in the flesh? It is already condemned. Not only are the sins condemned, but the principle of sin is condemned. "They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh—they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." There is power, not only desire. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." The Spirit is not only the source of the new nature, but the power that puts this new nature into living connexion with its object. It is not only the flesh on one side and the new nature on the other, but I have the Holy Ghost in the new nature. God has condemned sin in the flesh by the death and resurrection of Christ. There is the revelation of the Father and the Son, received by the soul, in which the Holy Ghost dwells.

The Holy Ghost now works in power on the new nature, because Christ has dealt with the old. This is not like the Spirit as given to Balaam; but it is showing how the believer receives the Spirit after he is quickened. "Ye are not in the flesh, but *in the Spirit*." This puts me on the ground of what *God is to me*, and not *what I am to God*. As to our standing, this is our position. The Father loves me as He loves Jesus. I own no life but what the Spirit gives, and because of the Spirit dwelling thus in me as the grand link with the Father and the Son, there is not one bit of the believer which belongs to sin or to the devil; but spirit, soul, and body, we belong to God. "The Spirit is life because of righteousness."

Another thing is, that He will quicken these mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in us. In the burial of a Christian, I cannot say we commit the body to the earth, but to Him who redeemed it. There is also *relationship*. "Sons of God." If led of the Spirit I am a child, I have the spirit of adop-

tion. I am thrown into entire association with Christ. I am a child of God and have the consciousness of the Spirit of adoption. "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit," &c. We are set there by sovereign grace. It is not what *we think about it*, but what *we are*—"the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." The Holy Ghost cannot say, "I do not know whether I am saved," "I doubt," "I hope to be saved." The Holy Ghost brings it into the heart, and gives the blessed sense of the relationship.

When the high priest went into the presence of God, the light shone upon all the names engraven on the breastplate, and that was an inferior relationship, but it is true that the same delight which the Father finds in Jesus, He finds in us. There is the shedding abroad in the heart of Divine love, by the Spirit, just as a candle sheds abroad its light in the place where it is.

So if the Holy Ghost really dwells in my heart God's love is there, for God the Holy Ghost is there. Though it is my heart, it is God's love that is there.



The Spirit sheds it abroad by being there. Just as Christ being in the heart draws down his own love into it.

Again, if the Spirit thus dwells in us there will be the consciousness of groaning with the creation around. If we walk through the world with Christ's love filling the heart, there is not a single thing but will awaken sorrow—the sorrow not of irritability, but of love. Christ did ever the work of love, but with what a sense of the way in which death had come in. He was always sorrowing because all love. The Son of Man was “acquainted with grief,” not only trouble, but grief. It went into his heart. We see Jesus groaning at the grave of Lazarus, although He knew what deliverance He could effect. If we had been going to do it we should have gone gaily in, because going to bring comfort to the family, but Jesus had such a sense of the groaning of creation that he groaned.

The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities by putting us in communion with God's love. The Spirit by dwelling in me

makes me to realize love in the midst of sorrow. Instead of selfishness it produces prostration of spirit in the sense of what is around. The Spirit takes up the sorrow which nature sinks under, but helps my infirmities by putting me into communion with the perfect love of God shewn in Christ's humiliation. The Holy Ghost being given to us in Christ, and God having come down to us in all our necessities, we are carried back into the midst of the sorrow and the sin in the sense of that in which believers groan. This woman at the well (John iv.) was conscious of the creation she belonged to. She had no power to overcome sin, but perhaps was well wearied with it; coming as she did in the heat of the day to draw water, not at the hour that others came, for shame. She did not know what she was coming for then, and when she had got the living water, she went back to the city to tell the Samaritans. Thus should we carry back the love which has delivered us into the world from which we have been delivered. The Spirit helpeth our

infirmities. Our understandings are not fully informed of what we want, but the "Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." If God searches our hearts what does he see there? A quantity of sin to be sure, but He sees desires there. The Spirit maketh intercession according to God, and yet from poor creatures who do not know what to ask for. The use the Holy Ghost makes of it is to take up the groaning. Every groan I utter is the positive witness of blessing in the midst of sorrow because of the intercession of the Spirit according to God. What a well of water! it is not crying out for self, but so realizing the blessedness of God's presence in the midst of it that selfishness is gone, and a means opened while in the body of being the vessel of the intercession of the whole creation; all our own sufferings lost in the thought of its being the path to glory. Christ's heart was moved when He saw sorrow. He would not have us

cold and indifferent to it, yet not selfishly affected by it, but full of tenderness and compassion towards those who are suffering. He hath set us an example that we should follow in his steps.

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## THE INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT.

John xiv.

Having taken up on other occasions the quickening power of the Spirit and also the Spirit as a well of water springing up to everlasting life, I now desire to look at the further blessing connected with the Spirit of God dwelling in us.

We have seen how the quickening is connected closely with Christ, and not only with Christ, but *entirely* and *simply* with Christ; born anew of the second Adam in contrast with the first. Then we saw the Spirit of God become a spring, or source in us; and there are the blessings flowing from that. There

are also relationships flowing from it. There is not only power given through the Spirit dwelling, but there are relationships resulting from the redemption accomplished. There are not desires only, but development and power of union and communion.

We have the Holy Ghost in virtue of the work of Christ, which gives perfect rest. In Christ we are set in the presence of God. The Spirit unfolds all the consequences of our being thus brought into God's presence by the work of Christ: the consequences in glory, the glory to come; and more than that the Spirit of God becomes the power for the exercise of those relationships. No man can know the blessedness of a relationship except in the exercise of it. As in nature it is so, so with the Divine relationship. All depends on the presence of the Holy Ghost down here.

Two great truths are connected with this:—First, The accepted Man, the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, (not any man in creation) is in heaven.

The one who came down is gone up and is in the presence of God. Secondly, The Holy Ghost down here is associating us with all that Christ is in heaven. All that the Church has here is founded on this.

Thus we have three important truths as the result. First, The Holy Ghost makes my person His temple. Therefore it is said, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." I must use my body as a vessel, an instrument of the Holy Ghost. His presence is the measure of my condition, His dwelling in me is the measure of my conduct. It is joy to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Power also is the result of being anointed with oil. — "We have an unction from the Holy One," &c.; and again, "led by the Spirit." The fact of the Holy Ghost's being here is the immense principle of the Christian's life. The next thing is, we are brought into fellowship with the *Son*—and the next is fellowship with the *Father*.

When Christ ascended on high, by virtue of his having become man, He could

say, "I ascend to my God and your God," and in virtue of His being God He could say "to my Father and your Father." His having made us children by adoption we have this special relationship with God, and so true, so deep, so real a thing is it, that He says, "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God;" thus being rooted and grounded in love, that we may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God. This is the amazing infinite sphere of blessing which we are brought into by the Holy Ghost. Because the Holy Ghost dwells in us He becomes the spring of affections and feelings suitable to the relationship. He cannot help it. A man feels it in his prayers. He finds his heart going out after the Lord. He has desires he cannot help expressing about the Church, &c. See the case of Ananias in Acts ix. 13. There is that kind of intimacy between him and Christ that he can reason as it were with Him, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man." Again, if it is a

question which concerns me as a child, I naturally ask my *Father* for certain things I want, but the soul cannot have freedom of intercourse with God in His majesty unless our hearts are clear before Him as our Father. We want in certain things to go to God as God, and in others as Father; and in both we have this blessed freedom of intercourse through the Spirit, as well as that of the members of the body, with Christ the Head. All are the free gift of God. When I fail I fly off to my Father to get help, for I cannot have communion with *God* when I've failed; and as a member of the body I need the Holy Ghost to take of Christ and make it mine because His. This is not community, all is *gift* to us, but all that Christ has and is in glory as man is ours, for he has given it to us—"Another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." This is consequent upon Christ's going up to the Father. Christ goes up and receives the Holy Ghost because of what he has done for others. As Head of the



Church he receives it that the members may share it with Him. Jesus received the Holy Ghost down here for service. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, Acts i., but what is said in Acts ii. 33, is "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost." In the one case He was *sealed* by the Spirit at His baptism; in the other He received the Holy Ghost to shed abroad on us at His ascension to the Father,—“I will send you *another* Comforter.” He calls Him “*another*,” because Christ himself was their comforter while he was with them. Christ was to go away. He could not abide here. He must ascend to heaven. “By His own blood He entered in once into the Holy Place.” Christ being our advocate there, the Spirit comes to advocate our cause here.

It is said, “The Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive.” The world having broken with Christ, can have nothing whatever to do with this Spirit of truth.

They were not only to have this Comforter as they had had Christ, who only abode as their companion and then went away, but (ver. 17) He was also to be in them, and not only with them. Here, in ver. 16, it is, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter." Here Christ is obtaining the Holy Ghost for them. In chap. xv. 26, it is, "the Comforter whom *I* will send unto you"—as divine Head of the Church, though a man. He had a title to dispose of everything, and *He sends* the Holy Ghost. (See also chap. xvi. 7.) Then another thing is, the Father sends Him in Christ's name, because of His acceptance of His work. The immense, the unchangeable, resting-place of all blessing is the name of Jesus.

As to its present condition, all connexion between the world and God is closed. (I do not speak of *providence*.) The world then sees Him no more, but Christ says, "ye see me." What an immense difference between the Church and the world—to see this blessed one.

He is the object before us. The Son having been rejected from the world, all communion between the world and the Father is closed. They say, "This is the heir, come let us kill him." "Now is the judgment of this world." "Upon us the ends of the world are come." "But ye see me." When the world sees nothing, we, in the power of faith, behold Him who is invisible; our eyes thus always resting on One in whom the Father finds delight—not the natural eyes of course, but I know that my affections are set upon the One in whom the Father is fully satisfied.

There was an adequate motive for the Father to love Christ. It is undiscerned by us in our natural minds, but the Holy Ghost brings us into blessed communion with the Father's mind. "Because I live ye shall live also." Believing in Him makes me know what His estimate is of Christ; and it is also by virtue of believing in Him that I have *life*. Not only is the *object* the same as the Father Himself has, but the life is the same. "Because I live

ye shall live also." He unfolds this connexion afterwards. (ver. 20.) "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." This is not said at the beginning of the chapter. It could not be said until there was union through the Holy Ghost's being given. They ought to have known the Father by Christ's being with them, but they could not know this further thing. "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father," &c. When the Holy Ghost was sent down, the Church knew not only of the union of the Father and the Son, but also then *our* union: "*YE in me.*" The Holy Ghost then leads to Christ as the object of our souls—to Christ as our life—and to the knowledge of Christ in the Father, and we in Christ. This source of life is in us. "Because I live ye shall live also." This is more than the fact of the security of life. The very One in whom he lived was to be the source of life to them. We have then the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father. Instead of knowledge

viewed in connexion with the Father Himself, and with the Son, it is "he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." All is in virtue of accomplished redemption—the Son having taken His place at the right hand of God.

My relationship then is founded on Christ, and in all the perfectness of Christ's standing before God for me, but the power to enjoy it is the Holy Ghost. Christ takes his place on high—sin is all gone, for he has borne it away, perfectly atoned for it, in having been made *sin*. The holiness and the love of God have been made known by the dealing with sin upon the cross in a way in which nothing else could have revealed them. Having done it all Christ enters the presence of God the new man, and where He is, we are. Therefore *the place* of the Church involves entire deliverance from all fear, because having the spirit of adoption I am not before God now as my judge, because I am His child. My very existence as a Christian flows from this, I am born of God, a child in the

house. In virtue of being thus born I have my existence before God as His child—the work of Christ, of course, being the foundation. He has borne judgment—law, sin, &c., are all gone, and I am free from every charge before God. The reasoning goes on, Rom. viii. 13, “If children then heirs,” &c. All we now have and are will be manifested in glory, but we are now speaking of the position before the Father with Christ the model man, the First-born of many brethren. Have we lost anything of the majesty of God in all this? Certainly not. Christ has brought God to us in all His glorious attributes instead of taking from them. The soul has all the holiness, majesty, as well as love brought home to it. Reverence, adoration are wrought there by the Holy Ghost. A son does not the less admire the excellence of his father, because he is his father. All true worship is the returning back to God from us all that the Holy Ghost has revealed to us of God. Chap. xiv. 26, “He shall teach you all things, and

bring all things to your remembrance," that is, the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name. This is the full character of our relationship with Christ. He shall bring to your remembrance whatsoever *I have* said unto you—not only what *He is*, but the remembrance of all that Christ expressed on earth; and it is a delight to my heart. Every word that came from Christ's mouth was God speaking through a man. Comfort, wisdom, love, all came from Him in perfection. "Thou hast given me the tongue of the learned," &c. The Spirit does not, of course, reveal to me Christ as now on earth, but I have not lost Christ a bit as to what he was down here. He brings all that He was to our remembrance now. The Holy Ghost gives me Christ as the manna that came down from heaven, as well as what *He is now* as the hidden manna, and that is giving me to feed on Christ.

Mark the difference between Christ's commandments and those under the law. Christ was life, and all His commands

were the expression of that life which He had in Himself. So with us; for we have the life in Him. *Christ is our life*, and His precepts are the guidance of the life which we have in Him. Did *life* result from what *we are doing*, all would be over with us. I see the ensnaring world all around me, but I have not only the Word of Christ to direct me, but I have the power of Divine life—*Christ Himself* to help me. 1 John i. "There is an object before me." There is more direction for my feet in what *He* is.

Chap. xvi. 13. "I have many things to say to you," &c. It is not here the *path* and teaching in general, as we have had, "But when He the Spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all truth." This is a *present* thing; not "He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you," different to His being the remembrancer of what He *had said* while He was with them on earth. What He hears He speaks. These are the things in Heaven brought down to earth by the Spirit who is on



earth. It is the revelation by the Spirit of all that Christ is. Having taken the place on earth as the servant, what He hears He makes known to us, and Christ is now in heaven for us. The Spirit also shows us things to come, He brings out all the glory before us, the future hope. I thus look forward to the time when God shall unite all in Christ as Head. "In the dispensation of the fulness of times that He might gather together in one all things *in Christ*, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." In the future all the glory is to be Christ's and we are heirs of it. *It is to come*, but the Holy Ghost makes it known as *ours*. Thus I look forward to the time when all is manifested, and I am to share it with Him. The glory belongs to one who has identified Himself with and suffered for me. It belongs to Him who loved me and gave Himself for me, and all His glory is ours; and this is not all, for He says, "All that the Father hath is mine; therefore, said I, He shall take of mine and shall

show it unto you." Thus I am to know what that is. My soul is to know all the glory which this humbled Christ is to have. "He will guide you into all truth." Everything is set in its right place in the soul, Christ being the centre of all, and all being centred in Christ. All is our own as members of His body, and if He has set Him to be the Head over all, it is to His Church. The Holy Spirit leads us not only into the hope of the future glory, but also into the consequences of union with the Lord Jesus Christ now, in the most intimate relationship possible. The Holy Ghost shows us, in Christ, all the affections of Christ in exercise towards us, in virtue of that union as the bride of Christ, the Son, as Ephesians goes on to show: not only how the head is connected with the body, but how the husband is with the wife,—“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church.” This is enjoined not only as a duty, but according to the example of Christ Himself—“No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and

cherisheth it even as the Lord the church." Thus is this ministry of Christ towards us because of this relationship.

Mark the double character of holiness and power there is in this. Take care you do not grieve this Holy Spirit who brings you into the enjoyment of all this. Whatever is of the world and of the flesh grieves the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed. It is the measure of what becomes a Christian, a spiritual man. Then as to power, we are to be filled with the Spirit—so filled that as to our place in heaven we shall be all joy. In the fulness of communion the soul gets its place in the heavenly choir, singing and making melody to the Lord. But then I am in this world of sorrow. And what am I to do? To see God in all; "giving thanks always for all things unto God and our Father," "rejoicing in tribulation." It naturally takes some time to work this thankfulness in us; but of Jesus Christ it is said when He was rejected by Chorazin and Bethsaida,

“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father.” He saw God in it. And so when we can see sorrow coming from God, when we see that His hand is in it, we can thank Him for it. It is not so at once with us sometimes, but it is wrought in the soul afterwards, when the risings of the flesh are subdued.

Being filled with the Spirit, is having Christ the actual source of all that arises in us of thoughts and feelings. A man's spirituality is measured by this. When there is nothing else but Christ, we are filled with the Spirit. What liberty this is! Freedom from sin and all besides to serve God. The liberty of the saints must be a holy liberty. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death. We have the Spirit of adoption founded on redemption; thus we have liberty towards God and from Satan. What would have been taking Christ's liberty from Him, if it had been possible, would have been hindering His doing the Father's will.

There are two things for us to think of from this subject. 1st, The amazing grace which has set us in such a place, even as temples of the Holy Ghost. 2nd, We are called upon not to grieve the Holy Ghost who dwells in us, that we may not occupy Him with our faults and failings, instead of with those blessed things which are ours in Christ.

May we keep our affections fresh and happy in fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

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## HOW THE LORD GIVES STRENGTH.

2 Cor. xii.

We are apt to make a mistake in speaking of our weakness and unprofitableness, forgetting that it is when we have done our duty we are unprofitable servants. When we speak of our weakness of spirituality or conduct, we mean our failure. But when Paul speaks of weakness, it is that which makes room for power, "when I am

weak then am I strong," and the result fully produced is with the consciousness of there being no strength in us. This is a very different thing to our failure. Our failure ought to lead us to humble ourselves before God for that which led to the failure. If we have not done what we ought, why have we not? We cannot glory in not having done it. There is a strength that the babe in Christ may have, and needs—power guided by wisdom, and that does not fail. When we have not been emptied of self, and are full of self-confidence, we must be broken down; pretension to strength is always in the way for failure. The first step towards failure is forgetting our entire and absolute dependence. As Christians, we *know* we have no strength, but *forget* we have none.

This chapter brings out in a remarkable way the dealings of God in giving strength. There is a wonderful scene going on in the heart of man. God does not let us always see it; it would not be good for us; we could not bear

it. Sometimes the veil is drawn aside; and, as in the case of Job, the heart is exposed to itself; God and Satan are seen to be there. It is a serious thing when God thus lifts the veil and shows what is going on for good and evil in a poor little heart like ours! God "hath set the world in their heart," and if it *ends* there, it is all vanity and vexation of spirit.

Another question as a moral question is the WILL of man. (When will is not at work and sorrow comes in, it is the happiest position; for sorrow without will is a means of blessing.) The first who begins that question is God. It is a question of Satan's power, man's will, and God's goodness in the midst of all that. You have the conscience of evil in your hearts, and the evil is too much for you; you do not know what to do with it. This conscience of good and evil has come in by the fall. Adam had the conscience of good and evil with sin and by sin. He had it by disobedience. Conscience therefore cannot guide a man right. The con-

verted man has the light of God to bear upon it. That shows man what he is. The soul has to own its badness, and to say, God is right. I go with Him morally in condemning myself. God shows man to be vile as to nature, rebellious as to will, and hateful towards God as to his affections. And it is a blessing when He shows it to us: but it is not *deliverance*. That is another thing. The glory of God's ways is that He puts us down completely as to ourselves, by the fact that our salvation is wrought out by another. When I had done nothing but sin, I find God has condemned sin in the flesh. Where? On Christ. I see my sin all measured and dealt with on the cross. Thus I am brought to God, and in the presence of God no one is proud. It is away from Him (as to the consciousness of it) that pride works.

The beginning of the chapter shows us what a "man in Christ" gets, revelations, &c, (if we do not have these now we shall by and by,) and afterwards we see what flesh in a man is, what it may



come to; debates, envyings, wraths, &c., as in the end of the chapter. There are the extremes of both, revelations in the third heaven, and flesh in its worst character. Most Christians are in neither one state nor the other practically.

How sadly we are generally dragging through this world as those who are not capable of having their citizenship in heaven! Of some God was not ashamed to be called their God, because they were looking for a city beyond this world. God is ashamed to be called the God of those whose hearts are only here.

Paul says, "I knew a man in Christ, of such an one will I glory." That is what all Christians should have got hold of. If you are not a man in Christ before God you are lost; it is presumption to think of being anything else. Can I know that I am going to be like Christ in glory, and not glory in it? We must glory. Paul was not glorying in the revelations when he was in them; he had no time then to glory; but he glo-

ried in what was his portion, Christ, his life, righteousness, glory, &c. Paul speaks of these revelations as having been given fourteen years ago. It is not intended that we should always be living in the wonderful enjoyments connected with the glory of Christ: if we were it would be sight, not faith. There was no danger of being puffed up when in the third heaven, it was when he came down to Paul again, there was the danger. There is no danger in the presence of God.

I learn now another thing, viz.; that it is not God's thought at all to alter my flesh, my old nature. The tree is bad; the flesh can be puffed up in Paul in the consciousness of having been in the third heaven. There is no good in *me*. I am a sinner. This is more than living under the curse of a broken law. Where *I* am, where my flesh is, I should pervert even the third heavens. In verse 7, we see that God turns that by which Satan would have tempted him, into a rod to keep down his pride. We are not told what the thorn was,

but it was something that made him despicable in preaching (alluded to in Galatians) to meet the pride that would come from the revelations. Numbers were converted, not by Paul's eloquence, but by the Lord's power. Their faith was not to be standing in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God.

Thus we have *Christ for the man* upon earth. We must be brought down to nothing, having no strength in ourselves. The flesh was not allowed to act in Paul, a thorn was sent *lest* he should be exalted above measure. That is the normal condition of a soul, viz., power given not to sin.

If the heart is exercised in dependence we judge the root of the evil, and it does not come out. Our business is to learn the evil in our character by judging it and not by its coming out. If I have a proud character, and am humbled before God about my pride, I go out, and am more humble than a very humble man by nature. I have not a bad conscience by the flesh being in

me, but I have if I allow it to act. The thorn is sent to prevent it.

In verse 9, we see how he came to *power*. The question of righteousness has been settled by Christ being at the right hand of God. It is a settled thing. It is practically learned when I am saved, and then I have a title to the third heaven. "My strength is made perfect in weakness." The Lord never gives us *intrinsic* strength. He makes us feel our dependence. I am made to feel my weakness when I see how my flesh would pervert even the blessings that are mine in Christ.

Therefore will I rather glory in infirmities, not in sins, but in infirmities, e.g. distresses, persecutions, &c. The Spirit kept him from that which would have given him a bad conscience.

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## DEATH WORKETH IN US.

2 Cor. iv.

Two things are remarkable in this chapter. 1st, How entirely it is a *new*

*power* by which we are enabled to glorify God—although we are so apt to mix up with it human energy and strength, and so bring in weakness. And 2ndly, The deep consciousness the apostle had of the value of the saints to the Lord. Therefore he could say, “All things are for your sakes;” and that is how he looks at himself. He offers himself a sacrifice —“ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” He could say, “Troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed: always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For 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. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” He gives up himself to them, and says, “I am content to be all this, and to suffer all this; yea, to lose my life for your sake. It is all right. I ought to be a sacrifice for you; it is God’s object

I should be for you." For He who was entitled to glory was content to leave the whole and to give up Himself—even His Messiahship and all. Christ gives up *Himself* for us. And therefore he could say, "All things are for your sakes." It is encouraging and cheering of heart to know that all things are for our sakes—"that the abundant grace," &c. Then the vessels in which the Lord may choose His grace to work are counted as sheep for the slaughter; always bearing about in their body the dying of the Lord Jesus. "Death works in us, but life in you." Just so far as death works in ourselves, life can work by us in blessing to others. And I would just say here, It is a remarkable way the apostle took Christ's place. Of course it was Christ's grace in him. By bearing about in the body the dying, not *my* dying, but the death of Christ, that had put an end to him, that another power might work by him. As far as my energy is concerned, it is death. "Always bearing about the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in

our mortal flesh." Not Paul's life, but the life of Jesus. Knowing, He that "raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also." He is counting on the same power that raised up Jesus raising him. Just as Christ took the resurrection as the answer to natural death, so the apostle, "that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God."

Two things I would notice:—1st, it is a comfort to be able to say, everything is for our sakes. Secondly, how far can we say death worketh in us, so that the life of Christ should be made manifest in our mortal body? If to shine out of our hearts it must be as bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, and then, come what will, we can say, that the full portion of Christ is ours.

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## FRAGMENTS.

Matthew xiv. 1—21.

When John was cast into prison Jesus went into Galilee: but when

John was beheaded. He went into the wilderness. The world had nothing to minister to Him; but He in divine power ministered to all the necessities of poor sinners in these destitute circumstances; and here he showed, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The poor sinner found the place destitute, but Him full of all blessing in this destitute place. He healed the sick and abundantly fed the hungry, and made the wilderness the place of blessing, because the place where He was. Rejected righteousness in John was the occasion for drawing out more grace from Him.

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You never see a Christian go through his course without being "brayed in a mortar." Unsuspected evil may demand this, but it will, under God's hand, be thus.

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## THE POWER OF REDEMPTION.

Read 2 Cor. v.

Redemption sets us at rest and in peace in the presence of God. The whole character of christian life flows from being brought back to God, and thus we are called to walk with God. To believe that we are brought back into the presence of God is not presumption; it is faith. It is presumption to think that we can be saved in any other way.

The character of our life is that of constant dependence on divine power. If we are "troubled on every side," without being distressed, it must be because the power of God is working. If "perplexed," without being in despair, it is because the power of God is there. But then I must hold myself entirely as a dead man as regards nature, and in the possession of a new life in Christ. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." (iv. 10.)

With Paul the flesh was not allowed to interrupt the power of this divine life, so that it flowed on in an unhindered way. This is a blessed state, and we should know it in our measure. Whenever the life is in activity it always rests on its object; while the character of the life is that of perfect obedience and simple dependence. The obedience of Christ is very different from our thoughts of obedience, which often imply a will opposed to God, and moreover it involves in us much that is to be abstained from, as well as many claims to be yielded to. With *Christ* the Father's will was the motive, the only motive for whatever He did or suffered. Hence the motive I have in acting, as far as I am a new creature, is the doing of God's will.

It is an important fact that sacred Scripture never tells me to die to sin, for this I never could do. But the Scripture tells me that I am dead, that I have died with Christ, and this is christian liberty. I begin with being dead with Christ. For I cannot die to

sin, when sin is the character of my whole life apart from Christ. But how then have I this death? I have *another* life; I am alive in Christ. I am to mortify the flesh most surely, but then it is only in the power of this life which I have in Christ that I am able to do that; and God's dealings with us will help us therein. But when I look at self that is not faith: I cannot indeed see what the life is which I have got, it is all so marred. But when, by faith, I look at *Christ*, faith's object, I see it all—love, joy, patience, obedience. And we are partakers of this life, as Christ said, "Because I live ye shall live also." And again, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." I thus get confidence with Him, and then His perfectness, which shines as light, shows me all my inconsistencies; and the more I see of them in the light of Christ's perfectness, the better.

In the power of this life I find myself practically dead, and I see my house in heaven, as it is expressed in

verse 2. This makes me groan. But why do I groan? Because I have seen and tasted the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, but in person I am not there yet. The groaning is not from disappointment, but from earnest desire, "Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." (Ver. 2.) As yet we are not in the positive possession of this glory, but longing to possess it; for faith rests on the ground of our position in that deliverance which has been wrought for us. Hence there is no Christian, however weak, but has a title to long for the glory to which he has been predestinated. It is true of every believer, that "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

But we must not think that the earnest of the Spirit is the earnest of God's love. It is the earnest of the inheritance, the earnest of glory; as in Ephesians it is said, "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which

is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of his glory."

What God has done to save us, He has done perfectly. He has loved us also perfectly, and because of this "we have boldness in the day of judgment." Not only have we boldness before the throne of grace, but "boldness in *the day of judgment.*"

Christ also, into whose presence we go, if we depart, and before whose tribunal we are to appear, gave Himself for us, as the apostle says, "Who loved me and gave *himself* for me." He gave not His life only, not merely His word, but all; His affections, His heart, all that constituted Himself. We have not a thought of blessedness in Him, but He has given it to us. For though we are the subjects of redemption, He who has wrought redemption has an eternal interest and stake in it; as it is said, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied."

There is no kind of hesitation or fear about himself or about believers when

Paul says, "We must all appear," or, as it might be read, "We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ." Faith realizes this manifestation before God as a present thing, and this is most healthful to the soul. It is that which gives activity to conscience, which is a most necessary thing in our daily walk with God and before men. Paul's conscience was always at work. He exercised himself day and night to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men. His was a purged conscience, still it was an active and an exercised one; and it was manifest before God.

It may be that there is no outward or allowed evil, but there is something in every heart which we cannot help knowing that we are sparing, something that is not Christ in us. But we must be manifested before the tribunal of Christ. All is indeed grace, but the present working of grace is to exercise the conscience. The effect of grace is *now* to bring into the light and to make manifest. Having salvation in

Christ, and being seen in Him, and righteous too in Him, and consequently having peace of conscience and rest of heart, I can afford to judge myself: to judge myself in the light which makes all things manifest. The Lord grant us deliverance from every reserve in our poor hearts! for there is power of life in Christ to enable us to triumph over sin and death, and to live not unto ourselves, but unto Him who loved us, and died for us, and is now seated at the right hand of God. We are already risen in Him and are to be manifested with Him in the glory. Shall I then allow any wretched object or idle vanity to occupy me instead of Christ? It may be perhaps some folly, or some piece of self-importance, or some evil disposition, or even the cares of this life! All this grieves the Holy Spirit of God, and the consequence is, that the eye is dimmed and the power is gone. Of the good Shepherd it is said, "He restoreth my soul:" and therefore our hearts should not be satisfied to go on at a distance from the

Lord, or in a state that will not bear to be manifested by the light. When life acts, it acts upon its object; and just as far as I am occupied with an object outside of myself, I get rid of self. This is true even naturally.

The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God; and hence I do not measure sin by breaking commandments merely, though that of course is sin, but I measure sin by the presence of the Holy Ghost in me; as it is said, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." If I grieve the Spirit I lose my discernment, and sin dims my power of sight, and deadens my spiritual senses; so that the Spirit of God is obliged to bring me to the miserable work of being occupied with my sin (as Peter was) instead of being occupied with all that is precious and joyous in Christ. It is very grievous that, instead of doing the work which it is His delight to do—even revealing Christ—He is obliged to reveal our sins to us, till we weep like Peter over



our self-confidence and departure from the Lord. All is manifest unto Christ. For a moment look back on all your ways from your youth upwards, (but you cannot bear to do this if you have not settled peace,) look at them *all*, and look at them all in the light of God's Word and Spirit. Look at your sins before conversion and after conversion: how many there are! By this review, again and again, as humbled and led of the Spirit, I get a special increase of blessing. I retrace the foolishness and sinfulness of my doings and the patience and long-suffering of my God. I see Him guarding me here, teaching me there, lifting me up when I was ready to fall, and comforting me when I only expected punishment; and hence I adore and praise Him the more! But if it be thus in looking back *now*, how much more will it be in the moment when set in the glory! I shall then know Him and see Him, and trace all His ways in the fulness of that light which now, in the measure of it I possess, manifests Him and myself in .

contrast. For surely it is just in the measure in which I can judge my ways in His presence, that the effect is adoration and praise.

It should always be remembered, that Christ is not our life, without being our righteousness; and that, neither is He our righteousness without being our life. If this be surely grasped, it will enable the soul to look at the judgment-seat of Christ with perfect calmness; and only, as has been stated, to use the thought of our being manifested there, to give present activity to conscience, if thinking of oneself, or if thinking of others to persuade them, if haply they may be brought into the light now, in grace, in which all will be manifested, ere long, for judgment. "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade *men*." And then the Apostle immediately adds, as regards himself, "But we are made manifest unto God." This is a present thing. It is the light in which he is already manifested, and in which he seeks to walk. The knowledge and

power of the life we have will bring us peace in the place of terror, for Christ is the object of this life. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in *the face of Jesus Christ*." This fulness of glory, the glory of God Himself, we have as the treasure in our own souls, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. Paul goes on to resurrection, and comes back again to the object of his faith, and then sees himself in the glory. I look to attain to this resurrection (Phil. iii.), and would have my conversation in heaven. In result we get a double truth, the power, the expectation working in us, and the blessed fact, that He will Himself receive us into the glory. The doctrine of all this is found in the last verse of the chapter. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Confidence is founded on *His* being

made our righteousness, who was made sin for us! But there is another thing which is exceedingly sweet to me, a profound consolation, a wonderful depth of joy, viz., to look on Christ, and to say, that is my life. Death has no power over the life of Christ. Divine power, working in life, swallows up death, and brings entire deliverance from what sin has wrought. The same divine power which wrought in Christ, in raising Him from the dead, is now working in us, and will raise us up by Jesus. And then how plainly do we see, that God does not take counsel of man. He takes His own thoughts and executes His counsels in the riches of His grace! The Prodigal's own thought was to be made "a hired servant." But the father received him according to *his* thoughts; robed and fed him according to *his* thoughts. So the Lord has set us in His place as man. As He said, when on earth, "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The world gives something out of itself; but Christ brings us into Himself—into

His joys, into His peace, into His glory. If Christ comes, mortality will be swallowed up of life; if He does not come, I shall give up mortality. We shall all appear before the judgment-seat, but before that we shall be up in the glory; received there by Christ, as He says in John xiv.: "And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Can I then be afraid of the tribunal? No. The more we learn of God's ways, the more we shall delight in God's ways. It is an amazing and solemn thought, that we are made manifest unto God! But faith realizes this position, viz., our position in the presence of God. "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord," what then? Is he afraid? No! But the knowledge gives activity to love. "We persuade men." Paul stood in the presence of God, and manifest to God; and if we thus stand in the presence of God, we shall find out how little the heart knows of "bearing about in the

body, the dying of the Lord Jesus." We do not find it out, unless we are thus in the light.

The right effect of the judgment-seat is, not what shall be disclosed by it in future, for that is Christ, and I have solid peace because it is Christ in whose presence I shall appear, but *the present* power to be before it; making it the test of conscience now, and the standard by which we try our thoughts and ways. May we each know it, and walk in it!

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## PETER'S MINISTRY IN ACTS X.

In what various forms the grace of God shines on the pages of Scripture! At times the eye catches some fresh image of this, and looks at it with admiration. An instance of the way of grace will be found in this chapter.

It is the record of a piece of spiritual husbandry. In the narrative which it gives us, we have the *soil* that is about to be cultivated; then the *sower*, and

the *seed*, and *the lord of the harvest* presiding over the whole work from first to last.

Cornelius and his household are the soil, now under the husbandry of God. Peter is the sower; and the words which he spoke in the house of Cornelius are the seed. This is all plain and simple. But the chief thing to be noticed, we may say, is the hand, the divine hand, that presides over and orders all this interesting action.

And in this action we get witnesses of grace in its *tenderness*, in its *strength*, and in its *glory*.

We have two visions, one to Cornelius and one to Peter.

Cornelius, at the time when this scene opens, was a piece of fallow-ground which had already been under the action of the plough. He was prepared for the sower by the hand of God, as all "good ground" is. He had been under certain exercises of conscience. The Father, I may say, had been drawing him. He was not at ease. He did many things religiously,

and did them with a heart that would fain bow to God and seek Him. God had found him, but he had not found God. But here, grace shines in its tenderness—for such a condition of soul as this is of price in His sight; so that a special message is now sent from heaven to guide it in the way of peace. The angel tells Cornelius that he had a memorial with God, and that he himself had been sent expressly to put him in the way of hearing words of salvation.

Now this is full of tender grace. The first throbbings of an awakened soul are precious with God—surely so. The parable of the prodigal son witnesses this. The love which the Lord felt for the rich young ruler in Mark x. may also, I believe, witness this. So, His words on the publican in the temple in Luke xviii., and the answer He gives the scribe in Mark xii. The first stirrings of a convicted conscience in the Samaritan of John iv., and so to this day, all such motions in all hearts are known to Him and by Him. And



sweet and rich is that grace which takes such a form of condescending tenderness, and exercises that considerateness of love which listens to these feeblest and earliest cries of infancy. But as it is His own visitation that has awakened them, so does He wait on them to bring them to fruitfulness.

Peter, in this scene, was the minister of Christ. He was the sower, according to the figure I have used. He was the servant of the Lord Jesus in the gospel of God; but his heart needed to be enlarged. It was not of the same measure as the Master's; the Lord, therefore, has to send a message to him. A vision and a voice address him, while in a trance, to prepare him for a sowing time among the Gentiles. He was not up to this. He does not understand it, and he resents it. He must be right of course, and his Master wrong. "Not so, Lord," he says. His eye had never surveyed such distant fields as these, save with scorn, as no part of God's vineyard, or within the range of His husbandry. But the

Lord is peremptory, as of old He had been with Jonah, and lately with Ananias. Peter must go with the seed where God had already been with the plough—yea, where He had been, in counsel, ere the world began; for even then He had “cleansed” the Gentiles.

Thus, by the *strong* and the *tender* hand of God, the ground and the sower are found together. What forms of grace! Peter is made to visit this Gentile plough-land, this distant field, already broken up, but not as yet sown. Grace, as we saw, in its tenderness had valued the throbbings of a freshly awakened, uneasy conscience; and grace, as we have seen, in its strength and decision, rebukes and overrules the slow-hearted servant, who knew not the riches and the largeness of that truth which had been entrusted to him. Accordingly, these two visions, the one to Cornelius and the other to Peter, have different secrets in them, each very blessed. On the authority of the one, we may tell every convicted, trembling soul, that its trouble is known and

marked by God; on the authority of the other, we may tell every sower of the seed, that he may go to the ends of the earth with that which he has, and bear the tidings of full forgiveness and acceptance to every sinner that will, by faith, use Jesus and His salvation.

Light and consolation are here, surely. These two visions turn to blessed testimony; and as we have two visions in this chapter, so have we one seal. The seed of the sower is sanctioned in a glorious manner.

Peter's sermon, so to call it, is the seed. He tells the house of Cornelius, and all gathered then and there, (all were alike welcome to hear,) that Jesus had come preaching peace, had been slain by men, raised by God, and that His resurrection was set in the eyes of all men, both for judgment and salvation; for judgment on the world, for salvation, full remission of sins, to all who would believe in Him. The Holy Ghost then falls on all them that heard the word. He had fallen on the disciples assembled at Jerusalem at the appointed Jewish

Pentecost, sealing the great fact of the exaltation and glory of Jesus ; now, He falls on a distant Gentile household, sealing the word of salvation as upon the ends of the earth.

What glorious grace was this, I may say. If we saw the *tenderness* of grace in the vision or mission that visited Cornelius, and the *strength*, or decision and largeness of grace in the voice and the vision that addressed themselves to Peter, here we see nothing less than the *glory* of grace ; the Holy Ghost, who had before sealed the fact of the exaltation of Christ, now seals the truth of the salvation of every poor sinner all the world over, who will believe in Him !

Very blessed, surely. The Spirit endued the disciples at Pentecost, giving them words of life for all the nations of the earth ; the Spirit now seals those words of life in this first-fruits of the nations.

May I not, therefore, say, that this chapter gives us the sight of a precious piece of divine husbandry ? We see

the ground that was to be tilled, and then the sower, the seed, and the hand of the Lord of the harvest, presiding over all in ways of tender, earnest, and glorious grace; and all this to bring sinners back and home to God. It was not to put the Gentile and the Jew together, Cornelius and Peter, but to put God and the sinner together, that all this august and interesting action takes place; and to put them together under such a seal, as no malice or force of earth or hell can ever cancel. And there is no rest for us till this is reached; for our relation to God is, indeed, the *great* circumstance.

And on the authority of this chapter I may say, with what earnest personal zeal the Lord is seen to apply Himself to the work of salvation; for this chapter illustrates that. Visions, oracles, missions of angels, the presence of the Holy Ghost Himself, here tell us of His zeal. "I will do it," says Jehovah, by His prophet, speaking of the redemption of Israel in the last day. "Assuredly with my whole heart

and my whole soul." What words! "The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this," says another of the prophets, when prophesying of the kingdom; and in the day of the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, as we read in Exodus ii., iii., we hear and see the same—the Lord so earnestly listens to the cry of Israel's sorrow. "Their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage, and God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant, and God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." It is all God, and God in deep personal affection. And then, the vision of the burning bush is the same. It tells us that God was already in Egypt, in the midst of His people's sorrows there, ere He rose to send Moses there.

All Scripture abounds with the witness of this intense personality, so to express it, with which the blessed God gives Himself to the work of salvation. The whole of Luke xv. again shows it to us. The personal *toil* of the Shepherd, the personal *diligence* of the

woman, the personal *affection* of the Father, in the three parables there, bespeak this. So, also, the whole of what is seen and heard in Luke i., ii. All heaven is there earnestly occupied with that great mystery, the birth of Jesus, or the incarnation of the Son, which, as we know, was the preparing of the way for the salvation of God to enter this world of sin and death. Gabriel, chief among those who wait in God's presence, is sent on special messages. Hosts of angels are there, and the glory fills the fields of Bethlehem. Old men and babes, matrons and maidens, youths and widows, shepherds and priests, all are summoned to take their place in the common joy.

Surely we may let our hearts know that God is a cheerful giver. He does not *send* His blessings, He *brings* them rather; and brings them not merely in His hand, but with His heart.

Surely, after meditating on this chapter we may say, with what tenderness and strength did God grant "repentance unto life" to the Gentiles! With what

a vigorous hand did He “open the door of faith” to them! (See Acts xi. 18; xiv. 27.) He does His things, blessed be His name, like Himself, in ways that tell us it is Himself that is doing them. Such an entrance did He make, in the day of this chapter, upon the nations of the earth, with the grace of His gospel; so that we, sinners of the Gentiles, may sit in His presence, and no longer talk of the crumbs under the table, but take of the full feast on the table—take of it as our’s by title written and sealed by His own hand.

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### THE MIND OF CHRIST.

Phil. ii. 5—13.

We get here a material help to the judgment of one’s own soul as connected with one’s *walk*, because we have the example of our Lord; a course, and a mind displayed in that course; *shown* to us *by the Spirit of God*. All the work connected with that Blessed One being emphatically the work of *obedience*, it is the mind of Christ definitely and



distinctly laid before us, as that which we are called upon to follow. From first to last He manifests *obedience*; from first to last He carries out the *mind of the Father*; from first to last carrying out and giving efficacy to the counsels of God and thoughts of the Father's heart. "Lo I come, to do *thy* will, O God!" On one only occasion was it, "If it *be* possible let this cup pass;" but even here it was immediately followed by, "*nevertheless not my will, but thine!*"

The gospels give us blessed *details*; but in this portion we get the *principle* that guided Him even more magnificently set forth than in the gospels we find it—tracing His whole course down: "Equal with God," yet "taking the form of a servant." Not merely the Son of *God* become Son of *man*, and as such to have certain glories which attach to Him as such—a place in the heavens—sway over the earth, &c.—*that* would have been a carrying out of the mind of God; but there is much more. We get (ver. 8) the

*depths* to which this spirit carried Him! There was the *cross*! that cross which had a legal curse connected with it. There was that cross, which, having a legal curse connected with it, made it to Him, as Son of God and as an Israelite, *emphatically bitter*! Was there that entire subjection of will? Not only not the *desire*, as with the first Adam, to stray out of the circumstances, but complete subjection to the will of His Father? Had He a mind? Had He a will? There was indeed a mind and a will in most entire subjection to the Father's mind! If the path of obedience God had traced for Him did not terminate on the life-side of the cross, but on the death-side of the cross, was He going to take it up? Yes! "He *humbled* himself, and became obedient unto death, *even* the death of the cross."

We have nothing told us here as to the object of the cross—nothing told us in connexion with the cross. It is simply presented in connexion with obedience and subjection to the Father's

will in it. We have nothing put out here, as we have elsewhere, as to how the cross was God's measure of what the world was—of what Satan was—of the thorough detection of what man was in the *flesh*—it is put out nakedly as what the *obedience* was of a man who walked on this earth! And it is not that His obedience ceases there—far from it. He was told to sit, and He sits, in patience waiting, and has waited these eighteen hundred years! When the time comes that the heavens are to be purged—by and by—He will be told to rise, and He will rise *in subjection to God*. He will do it in the perfect character of the servant! As it was in humiliation—as it is now in patience—as it will be by and by in glory—all traced out as the expression of the *obedient* mind, the *perfectly subject* mind.

There is an especial *force* to the soul in this, when He is speaking to us who have known the power of that cross, that that mind which was in Christ being found in us, that we should trace

out the expressions of that mind as it came out here upon the earth. I am sure if one has known that cross as the place where Christ settled with God, the question which He alone could entertain in the presence of God; (the question about our sins and guilt and how we find ourselves *free* among the dead;) so, I am sure, shall we be prepared to find every action of the spiritual life associating us with the cross here below.

Satan will ever be proving the flesh; but what does the flesh know of obedience? It is *indeed* important for us to walk in the Spirit. Unless there be the quiet, deliberate settlement in our minds that there will be the cross with it, it is impossible we shall find the steps by which He went, and which He thus tracked out for us in the desert, through the place where God first met us, and by which we shall reach the glory. All are linked with the *cross*—the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. I believe, if you weigh God's glory properly, you will not find any

circumstance in your onward path that is not connected with the sufferings of Christ. And I believe nothing so tests and settles what is of the flesh and what is of the Spirit as this principle of *obedience*, as being the mark of Christ's mind when in this world. This known, recognized principle of *responsibility to God*—individual responsibility—that which Christ ever walked in, will be found an immense help to our own souls. It is responsibility always; not in the old nature, (*that* can bring no fruit to God,) but in the new. Everything that is of the Spirit has the mark of the spirit of Christ's *obedience*. The more we have it the more isolated we shall be *with God*. Aye, even among the saints, it will be more, "Lo, I come to do *thy* will" *alone with God*, as we get to this point of fellowship with Christ and His obedience—an obedience in a path constantly strewn with sorrows.

Just turn to verses 12 and 13, where the apostle applies to the Philippians the exhortation which he had given

them, and they certainly will confirm this truth.

The presence of God and the nearness of God—not our taking hold of the power of God, but God's power laying hold of and working in us—produces a “fear and trembling.” You can never have a really cultivated sense of the presence of God, without the consciousness of what the apostle refers to here, a “fear and trembling,” *for* “it is *God* that worketh in us.”

I have been surprised, as an individual, by the multitude of questions which are settled by this one answer so simply, when the question of any practical conduct appeared entangled, by observing how the principle of obedience downward, even unto death, which marked Christ's path from beginning to end, being applied to the person proposing the difficulty, will detect whether they were puzzled to know how Christ would have acted, or whether they had a will of their own that did not *like* the path which Christ would have taken.

It is truth we cannot evade, that the Spirit of Christ in the disciple leads into a path of humiliation and the setting aside of self, though it be step by step. In whatever circumstances we may find ourselves, it is the same mind that was in Christ Jesus that we are to seek, and that is a mind of deep *individual subjection* to God—a mind of entire and *constant obedience* to God here below, even if it be unto the death.

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## FRAGMENT.

We may have the hope of the Lord's coming as being glad to get to the end of the desert, because it is a desert; or we may long to be out of it because Canaan is at the end. If it is not the latter, we shall be in danger of being tired with running, which is always wrong; we should be in the spirit of *waiting* pilgrims, not *weary* pilgrims, for we ought not to be weary. I do not say we are not weary, but we ought not to be so. "For consider him, who endured such contradiction of sinners

against himself, *lest ye be weary and faint in your minds.*"

We ought, in the power of the Spirit, to be longing for Christ, because of the excellency there is in Him. It is not because of the judgments that are coming, that we should wish to be with the Lord; for in the book of Revelation, when all the judgments have been gone through, He presents Himself to the church as "the bright and morning star;" and the bride says, "Come," it is her response to Himself for what is in Himself, and not because of the judgments. And when He has presented Himself as "the bright and morning star" to the church, He does not add, "Surely I come quickly," until the church has first cried out, "Come," in answer to what He is in Himself, and therefore a desire produced by the revelation of Himself.

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\* \* The reader is requested to correct the following errors in printing, in the last number :

Page 291, 14th line from the top, read *love* for "leave."

298, 4th ,, bottom, read *doing* for "during."

299, 13th ,, top, read *Miletus*, for "Mileta."

304, 3rd ,, bottom, read *seventh* for "eighth."



## THE MARRIAGE SUPPER.

Matthew xxii.

It is a remarkable thing, until we know what man's heart is, that whenever the Lord Himself acts in the world, men call in question the authority by which He acts.

Take Moses, for example:—he was the minister and witness of the Jewish dispensation, and yet his authority was constantly questioned. It was the same also with the prophets:—they came with the testimony of God, and they slew them. When it was a question about religion, the accredited system that gives honour to the people, it was *received*, but the moment it was to affect the conscience before God, then it was called in question and *rejected*.

When the Lord comes in by the conscience, it is always called in question; but when it is something accredited as a system to raise the honour of the people, then it is received. Hence, we constantly find the Lord, in dealing with

men, does not refer to His miracles, or to anything of the sort, but applies Himself to the consciences and the souls of men.

Moses wrought miracles to establish his mission; and so Christ says, as a matter of testimony, "If I had not done among them works which none other man did, they had not had sin, but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." Still, in His ministry, Christ appeals directly to the consciences and souls of the people. And the people felt this, when they said, "John did no miracle, but all things that John spake of this man were true." So now, where there is the outward acknowledgment of Christianity, it is necessary to appeal to the conscience, and not to stay at mere orthodoxy, and the general truths of the gospel.

When "the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him, as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you

one thing, which, if ye tell me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" After reasoning with themselves, they answered Jesus and said, "We cannot tell;" thus proving their moral incapacity to judge the smallest things of God. Therefore, said Jesus, If you cannot tell whether the mission of John was from heaven or of men, "neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." Their confessed incompetency in the one case, to judge, proved their insufficiency in the other. For, in truth, the real power to judge right and wrong is found in the conscience of the man that is addressed. Hence, we know, when the soul is subject to the Spirit of God, by the conscience of the man being engaged in judging himself. When the judgment of the soul is about itself, one is sure that the truth is received in the conscience; but not till then do we know that the truth is "of God," because it has judged the heart; and thus the

judgment of the soul is formed about itself in the presence of God.

In the parable of the two sons, the Lord makes another appeal to their consciences; by putting the question, as to which did the will of his father; showing that the mere professor of religion was not judging himself before God at all. He says, "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." He was a self-willed, rebellious son,—*"and said, I will not;* but afterwards he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise." He was a civil professor, *"and said, I go, sir; and went not."* Now Christianity has nothing to do with *civility* before God, but its power is found in the subjection of the heart and conscience to God. The mere profession of religion is nothing but hypocrisy before God, and therefore the Lord says, "The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." If the prophets are sent, and Christ is sent, it is plain that God is dealing with souls as not being fit to

enter the kingdom of God. Until the word of God has reached the conscience, the Lord talks about "*entering*" the kingdom; proving that they are all *out of it*. And God does so now with men. He takes them up as not being *in* the kingdom, but as having yet to enter it on the ground of conscience and repentance, and on the direct testimony of the word of God coming to the conscience.

But how was it that the publicans and harlots were nearer the kingdom of God than the Pharisees? Not, certainly, because they were vile merely, but because they were more subject in their consciences to the word of God, than the others.

If the word visits the soul, it brings the conscience down to the level of the word, and to an acceptance of the judgment which it brings; but if God is rejected, despair brings the conscience down to the level of every sinner, and to the conviction that it is without God.

But Christ now takes up another parable, for He is still dealing with the

Jews; and says, "There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it." He looked that His vineyard should bring forth grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. God sent His prophets seeking fruit, and them they ill-treated; and last of all He sent His Son, and Him they slew.

It is, plainly, not the principle of grace that is presented here, but of righteousness. It was seeking for fruit where there was no fruit to be had; for they hated His prophets and killed His Son.

This is the sure and only result of God's dealing with man on the principle of righteous requisition. And that not merely where the law is the standard of that requisition; but it is the same when the highest advantages of distin-

guishing goodness lay the ground of responsibility. Fruit may be sought, but there will be none; but the hatred of the heart will shew itself against Him by whom the advantages were bestowed. Hence, in the parable of the marriage supper, God is acting entirely on another principle—that of grace. “A certain king made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding, and they would not come.” The Jews were the *bidden* people, and they would not come. “Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, tell them which are bidden, Behold I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage.” And they would not. Then “the king was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.” Here the Lord closes with them, as a nation, and takes up another thing. “Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready but they which were bidden were not

worthy. Go ye, therefore, into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage."

This testimony was not to Jews merely, but to the whole world. "So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests." And then comes in the question of the wedding garment. Here we find professors again. The Lord has now totally relinquished the intention of seeking fruit from man, as man. He now deals with conscience, and conscience deals with *the sin of self*. So that when the conscience is roused by the word of God, it knows that God has judged it.

The Lord did seek for fruit in Israel; not in Cain's family, but amongst the people whom He had separated to Himself by many privileges. The Lord had such a dealing in the world with man, and He was then seeking for fruit. Of course He knew the end from the beginning; but man was thus tested and proved, and the result is the ex-



pression, "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed; how art thou become unto me the degenerate plant of a strange vine."

All these pains had been taken in the Lord's wisdom for producing fruit: and more than that, He *looked* for fruit; but there was no fruit to be had. God sent His prophets to Israel, showing that He expected fruits; nay, Christ Himself came in that character to the Jews. For God says, "I have yet one son, I will send him; they will reverence my son." They will give the fruit to Him. This is shown in the parable of the barren fig-tree. (Luke xiii. 6.) Thus God did seek for fruit. His ordinances, His word, His prophets, and last of all His Son, all were spent upon them. "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" And yet no fruit was to be found in God's vineyard. One thing is certain, that the more care God took in providing for its bearing fruit, the more it brings out man's wickedness in refusing it. And last of all, and worst of all, it brings

out the deliberate enmity of the heart of man against God, in the wilfulness which crucified His Son. What good then would it do to dig about a bad tree? It would only bring forth more bad fruit. The law of God only brought out man's disobedience; and the claim of God for fruit did but provoke the enmity of the heart of man against God for claiming it. Not only have they refused to give the fruit when God sent His servants, but they have killed His Son. The thought of producing fruit, therefore, as if in the vineyard, when not there, is a proof of the truth not having reached the conscience. It is like the son who said, "I go, sir, and went not."

But to the parable. "A certain king made a marriage for his son:" he provided for his guests. Here God lays aside the principle of His whole dealings *before*. *He is not now looking for fruit*, for this one simple reason: He has proved the tree to be bad, or rather the soil to be bad. It is no matter what is sown in the soil; it is all bad. God is now inviting souls to partake of

what He has provided. He is not asking them to bring anything with them. The *king* is not asking them to bring their own supper with them. It would have been insulting his majesty for anyone to come with his own supper at the door. But there is *one thing* which they *must* have; it is the "*wedding-garment*"—Christ's righteousness. But suppose these poor people had said, I cannot come; I am so poorly clothed; or refused to take the wedding-garment. This would not do: there must be a wedding-garment for a wedding-supper. It does not signify whether one is rich and in costly apparel, or poor and in rags; each must have on the wedding-garment. Nothing suits God's house but the garment that suits the wedding which is going on there.

This dealing of God has displaced the principle of seeking fruit, which had been tried. God tried it by His own means and in every way, and has set it aside, because of the fruitlessness of the plant. And any that attempt to be accepted on this ground are denying

that God has tried it and set it aside. The thing in this parable is, that the condemnation depended not on anything in the person, but in the rejection of the invitation that was given. Christ first sent to the Jews (His friends) to invite them to the kingdom. Then He dies, and is raised again. He then sends again, saying, "All things are ready, come unto the marriage." They rejected the invitation; and as for his servants, they slew them. So now, if any are rejecting the gospel of Christ, it is the same thing as if they had crucified God's Son. God is saying to you, "All things are ready." My dinner is ready; "my oxen and my fatlings are killed;"—Christ has died, and is risen again. There is not a thing to be done. All is ready; and yet it is shown that men prefer their five yoke of oxen to the gift of the only-begotten Son of God. God thus presses on the conscience of the men: "My oxen and my fatlings are killed; come unto the marriage. But they made light of it; and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to

his merchandize," &c. God says by His servants, The supper is ready, all things are prepared—and then, not come on a certain day to supper; but, because Jesus is dead and risen, God has accomplished for Himself all things for His own glory in the perfect and finished work of Christ. The command is therefore, "Go ye into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." He does not count how many; but only turns back to see one thing. The guests have sat down at the table: but have they on the wedding-garment? Have *you* put on Christ? What a folly if you have not! He has sought you: have you on therefore the garment that suits the house? That suits the heart of the king who made the wedding? That suits the wedding-glory of the Lord Jesus? Unless He is met in this, He is met with insult in *His own house*. If the glory of God in Christ is not the thing in your heart, you have not understood what God is about. You have not got God's thoughts in bringing you there. It is for the glory of the Lord

Jesus Christ; and if you have not apprehended this, you have not apprehended the object of God, nor believed the truth of God in your soul. It is a wedding, and how have you forced yourself into God's house, not having God's thoughts, not having put on the wedding-garment that God has provided for the marriage of His Son? But suppose you have not got on this garment. What is there you have not, which you may not get this moment—freely get in Christ?

Everyone that is at the marriage adds so much to the glory of the feast—so much more to the honour of Him who made the marriage for His Son. Has your pride been brought down, so that your soul has submitted to Christ? If so, you have submitted to an accomplished salvation.

When the guest is seated at the table, he is happy and secure in the enjoyment of what He who had provided the feast had called him in to partake of. And God is satisfied in beholding him who has put on the Lord Jesus Christ as his righteousness. It does become us to

honour the Lord Jesus Christ in all our ways; but the fruits of the Spirit are—what? “Love, joy, peace:” the first fruits, those nearest to the source, are love, joy, and peace, as the soul rests on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. All setting up of fruits, apart from this, is the rejection of Christ, and is contrary to His glory.

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## THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

John xiv.

Most touching and comforting to the heart of the believer are the communications of the Lord Jesus which are recorded in these four connected chapters of this wondrous gospel.\* And there is no fruit of grace more precious, nor any that more endears God to the soul than that which sets the heart in peace to receive the overflowings of Christ's love in this form of personal address. It can never be too strongly borne in mind that the grace which

\* Chapters xiv., xv., xvi., xvii.

finds us alike sinners and at a distance from God, when received, sets the heart in the place of nearness to Himself, and in the place of the precious privilege of listening to all that Christ has to tell us about His own and His father's love. Especially is it not enough to heed these precious communications as truths presented in the form of general address; they should be listened to as the very voice of Christ addressing the soul. It is to me—to you—that the Son of God, whose blood has washed away our sins, is speaking when He says, "Let not your heart be troubled." He is not now speaking to "uncircumcised hearts and ears," or abroad amongst the unheeding multitudes; but to His own disciples—alone and apart in that room, where in infinite grace He has just laid aside the towel and taken His garments again after washing their feet.

Many things might well fill their hearts with sorrow—the treachery of one, the denial of another, and the cowardice of all; but especially the



thought of the loss of His companionship, which had been, without their almost knowing it, everything to them and in the place of everything besides. Still He says, "Let not your heart be troubled." How tender is this grace! But why not troubled? Because *faith* should ere long do more than sight, even in regard to *Himself*, as well as with regard to their eternal portion on high. He says, "You *believe* in God"—unseen, unknown, except by faith—still *God*—God known, trusted, loved, owned, waited for, prayed to, the spring of comfort, and the eternal stay of the righteous—"Believe also in me." This is the precious secret. Faith in Jesus tells the heart not of what He once *was*, but of what He now *is*. Instructed indeed by the *past* of His precious history of love, and grace, and condescension; and gentle goodness, *faith* in Him gathers all up into a present *now*, and gives all a personal, present reality to the soul. Yes, gracious Lord, *to believe in thee*, is that which brings thee, with all thine untold love and grace, to dwell

with personal, present comfort in my soul!

Let us not think that Christ is here laying the basis of their salvation, which once secured, the heart has no more to seek. He is not doing this, but He is opening the springs of eternal *comfort* in a world that would soon present an utter blank to their sorrowing souls. He says, "Believe also in me." You have known me here by the seeing of the eyes and the hearing of the ears, and you have left all for me. Now you must "believe in me," and faith will follow me up where I was before; there not another, but the same, and with the same undying, unchanging interest in you.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: (abodes:) if it were not so, I would have told you." It is *the Father's house*, the *home* of the family, where "the first-born amongst many brethren" is gone before; and He says, "I go to prepare a place for you." How surely, if *Christ be known*, really known, heaven becomes the object of desire. But then

it is no longer heaven in its vagueness, nor God in the distance of His creative power or in His uncreated glory; but it is the *Father's house* in all its positive attractiveness, and the Father in all the grace and love presented in that endearing name.

“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Sure never were there words more simple; but what floods of revelation do they pour into the soul. How is the heart of the Lord Jesus still linked with His saints. Himself it is that is preparing a place for us; it is in *His Father's house* we are to dwell; it is He Himself that is coming again. He says He will receive us to Himself, and where He is there we shall be also.

Lord Jesus, it is enough. We want no more. We wait thy coming. *Thy* heart it is that is careful for our happiness and provident of our home. *Thy* love designs, *thy* power accomplishes, and *thy* faithfulness secures it all.

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## POWER TAKEN BY GOD.

Rev. xix. 1—6.

We are very little conscious of the blessing granted us, in being made acquainted with God's purposes, even those of judgment. The *first* thing, of course, for the soul to be anxious about, is the possession of *peace with God*. But then the heart will not be shut up to that, but is enlarged of God, to enter into the whole scene and scope of glory, in which the Lord Jesus Christ delights, and in which He will have us with Him; and, in connexion with this scene, into the judgments on opposers and enemies, consequent on His taking His inheritance.

If we think of the past or the present, in scripture or profane history, and consider how power has been abused, we cannot wonder at the joy Heaven evinces, and the song of praise bursting forth at God's taking the government:—"The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Trace it back to the flood. After delegating the new world to Noah, we find man despising the authority of God, and idol-

atry coming in; in fact, the whole course of the world is according to the prince of the power of the air—according to Satan—and not according to God; all is apostate from God! The more religious they were, the more Satan was honoured. As the apostle says, “The things the Gentiles offer, they offer to devils and not to God.” It is not simply the natural lusts contending, and the motives enlisted on the side of sin; every way, it is all the devil’s. What a change, when God shall take the power into His own hands, and we can sing, “The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!”

All idolatry is summed up in Babylon, “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.” Go back to Nebuchadnezzar. The head of gold turns to idolatry. And I would note here, that all that was connected with the worship of Pluto in pagan religion, (a shadow of truth men never effaced even here, though hell and the devil all that remained of it,) and you will see that the unity of the God-head was not the truth denied. That which man quarrelled with was *that*

*which reveals the Mediator.* Satan cannot deny there is a God, but he will try to hinder (by putting another object between) His light and love from shining into the heart and conscience, and so revealing Him who alone can give us peace. When the golden calf was made, the devil did not take away the name of Jehovah; for they said, "To-morrow is a feast to Jehovah." So now it is not the name of God cast out; but the introduction of that which hides the truth. All Satan's aim is *to blot out the Mediator.* So John, in his epistles, when Heathenism and Judaism were combined in this one object, meets it by "God is light," and "God is love." And *the saints are to be partakers of the same.* So long as Satan can hinder that, he will give the name, and call it Christianity; but his object is to keep up *distance between our souls and God*, and to prevent us from reaching the blessed end for which Jesus suffered—"who died the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." Blessed be God, we have such a mediator, who brings us to God, raising us up to

Him; not as Satan tries to bring God down to us—"after the similitude of a calf eating hay." The corruption of the mediatorial work of Christ is Satan's wide-spread power over the nations in the hands of Babylon,—but "Strong is the Lord God that judgeth her."

The first verse ascribes salvation and glory, &c., to God—not to the Lamb—but to God on the throne, reigning; first, executing judgment, then reigning; to the God of heaven sitting on the throne, (not coming to earth in the characters known to the Old Testament saints, as Shaddai and Jehovah,) judging Babylon. He reserves to Himself the judgment which puts down Satan's power and malice. Be not surprised at power unintelligible, yet chaining men's minds. It is Satan's work. It is quite beyond us, and cannot be put down till the Lord God takes the power and gives perfect deliverance. Christ cannot display His long-affianced bride until the evil is removed, that which is false and corrupt put aside, and that which is true brought

out in its place. The pretended heavenly thing removed, Christ will bring forth His bride and produce her before the world in the glory prepared for her. While He is hid with God, we are hid too. Our display shall be with His display. The Church and the world cannot go on together. By the Holy Ghost she is planted and set down here in the character of witness. In as far as she is true, she is hated by the world. For a brief season there was gladness and the people glorified; but she has to walk by faith not by sight now. A heavenly character is hers. "Ye are not of this world." And He cannot appear till we come forth with Him.

God will have realities. Now although He is bearing with corruption, it is only in order to the gathering to Himself His Church. She having gone up and been received of Christ, He will come back with her, and be manifested to all. May we keep ourselves for Him until He comes.

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## GOD'S GOVERNMENTAL DEALINGS.

In the early days of the Church, the elders were called for, and prayer was made. If the sick man confessed his sin, there was forgiveness; and if thus healed by prayer, and life was spared, it is plainly a question of God's governmental judgment, and not of salvation. "If any man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death (plainly temporal death), he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto *death*: I do not say that he shall pray for it." (1 John v. 16.)

This is certainly not a question of eternal life, but of temporal government; and the Church ought to be God's interpreter in this—"One amongst a thousand to show man his *uprightness*"—and able to discern God's mind. If a soul that knows the grace of God has committed sin, his real place of "*uprightness*" is the confession of the sin. God has concentrated His mercies in the Church, the place where redemption is

owned, and there ought to be spiritual power to discern in such cases. There is not *law* now to bring sin to the conscience; but there is righteous chastisement in God's family; and we sometimes see immediate discipline for immediate faults. But if the will is broken, and sin is judged, the need of chastening no longer exists, and it is removed. Mercy, indeed, is over all God's works; still, where redemption is owned, God's governmental power is exercised, and there ought to be the knowledge of it, according to the revelation God has given of Himself, and of His ways.

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## CREATION.

"And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."—Gen. i. 31.

THE earth beneath is beautiful,  
 And every tree and flower;  
 The heaven above is beautiful,  
 In sunshine and in shower.

The golden day is beautiful,  
That wakes the world with light;  
And beautiful the gems that bind  
The shadowy brow of night.

There's beauty where the tempest flaps  
Her dark wing o'er the deep;  
And where the calm, still waters lie  
Hushed into quiet sleep.

It shineth o'er the ancient hills,  
Whose mighty bosoms hold  
Memorials of a giant race  
That walked the earth of old.

And down amid the blossom'd vales,  
And through the twilight wood,  
God hath made all things beautiful,  
And all was very good.

Ah! who would think, to look abroad  
Upon a world so fair,  
That all is enmity with God,  
That sin and death are there?

Alas! alas! the vision bright  
Is but a fading dream—  
Those scenes of beauty and delight,  
They are not what they seem.

A thing polluted 'neath the curse;  
A troubled groan is all,  
That meets the eye and ear of faith,  
Since Adam's fearful fall.

And all must pass like *fleeting clouds*  
Of early morn away.  
The whole creation waits its change,  
Its solemn purging day.

The Lord of day, the peerless sun,  
Shall turn to darkness soon;  
The shadow of the day go down  
Upon the gentle moon.

The stars which through six thousand years  
Their changeless course have kept,  
Shall fall like withered leaves o'er which  
The autumn blast hath swept.

And He whose voice once shook the earth,  
The trembling heavens shall move,  
And judgment's voice awake the hearts  
That never woke to love.

END OF VOL. IV.