

Things New & Old,

A

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FOR THE LAMBS AND SHEEP OF THE FLOCK
OF CHRIST.



“Feed the flock of God.”—1 PETER v. 2.



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Things New and Old.

"GILGAL."

JOSHUA V.

"WHATSOEVER things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (Rom. xv. 4.) These few words furnish a title, distinct and unquestionable, for the Christian to range through the wide and magnificent field of Old Testament scripture, and gather therein instruction and comfort, according to the measure of his capacity, and the character or depth of his spiritual need. And, were any further warrant needed, we have it with equal clearness in the words of another inspired epistle: "Now all these things happened unto them (Israel) for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1 Corinthians x. 11.

No doubt, in reading the Old Testament, as in reading the New, there is constant need of watchfulness; need of self-emptiness, of dependence upon the direct teaching of the Holy Spirit, by whom all scripture has been indited. The imagination must be checked, lest it lead us into crude notions and fanciful interpretations, which tend to no profit, but rather to the weakening of the power of scripture over the soul, and hindering our growth in the divine life.

Still, we must never lose sight of the divine charter

made out for us, in Romans xv. 4—never forget for a single moment, that “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.” It is in the strength of these words that we invite the reader to accompany us back to the opening of the Book of Joshua, that we may together contemplate the striking and instructive scenes presented there, and seek to gather up some of the precious “learning” there unfolded. If we mistake not, we shall learn some fine lessons on the banks of the Jordan, and find the air of Gilgal most healthful and bracing for the spiritual constitution.

We have all been accustomed to look at Jordan as the figure of death—the death of the believer—his leaving this world, and going to heaven. Doubtless, the reader has often read and heard these lines—

“Could we but stand where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o’er,
Not Jordan’s stream, or death’s cold flood,
Could fright us from the shore.”

But all this line of thought, feeling, and experience, is very far below the mark of true Christianity. A moment’s reflection, in the true light which scripture pours upon our souls, would be sufficient to shew how utterly deficient is the popular religious thought as to Jordan. For instance, when a believer dies and goes to heaven, is he called to fight? Surely not. All is rest and peace up yonder—ineffable, eternal peace. Not a ripple on that ocean. No sound of alarm throughout that pure and holy region. No conflict there. No need of armour. We shall want no girdle, because our garments may flow loosely around us. We shall not

need a breastplate of righteousness, for divine righteousness shall there have its eternal abode. We shall have no want of sandals, for there will be no rough or thorny places in that fair and blissful region. No shield called for there, inasmuch as there will be no fiery darts flying; no helmet of salvation, for the divine and eternal results of God's salvation shall then be reached. No sword, inasmuch as there will be neither enemy nor evil occurrent throughout all that blissful, sunny region.

Hence, therefore, Jordan cannot mean the death of the believer and his going to heaven, for the simplest of all reasons that it was when Israel crossed the Jordan that their fighting, properly speaking, began. True they had fought with Amalek in the wilderness; but it was in Canaan that their real war commenced. A child can understand this.

But does not Jordan represent death? Most surely it does. And may not the believer have to cross it? True; but if he has, he finds it dry, because the Prince of Life has gone down into its deepest depths, and opened up a pathway for His people by the which they pass over into their eternal inheritance.

There is no such idea in the word of God—in the gospel of Christ, or in the entire range of our heavenly Christianity—as a Christian standing where Moses stood, when, from Pisgah's top, he looked forth over the promised land. Moses, in the governmental dealings of God, was prevented going over Jordan. And, looking at Moses officially, we know that the law could not possibly bring the people into Canaan.

But Christ, the true Joshua, has crossed the Jordan, and not only crossed it, but turned it into a pathway

by which the ransomed host can pass over dryshod into the heavenly Canaan. The Christian is not called to stand shivering on the brink of the river of death, as one in doubt as to how it may go with him. That river is dried up for faith. Its power is gone. Our adorable Lord "has abolished death, and brought life and incorruptibility to light by the gospel."

Glorious, enfranchising fact ! Let us praise Him for it. Let all our ransomed powers adore Him. Let our whole moral being be stirred up to chant the praises of Him who has taken the sting from death, and destroyed him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and conducted us into a sphere which is pervaded throughout with life, light, incorruptibility, and glory. May our entire practical career be to His glory !

We shall now proceed to examine, more particularly, the teaching of scripture on this great subject, and may the Holy Spirit Himself be our immediate instructor !

"And Joshua rose early in the morning ; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there, before they passed over. And it came to pass, after three days, that the officers went through the host ; and they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. *Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure ; come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go ; for ye have not passed this way heretofore.*" Joshua iii. 1-4.

There are three deeply important points in Israel's history, which the reader would do well to ponder. There is, first, the blood-stained lintel, in the land of Egypt; secondly, the Red Sea; thirdly, the river Jordan.

Now, in each of these we have a type of the death of Christ, in some one or other of its grand aspects—for, as we know, that precious death has many and various aspects, and nothing can be more profitable for the Christian, and nothing, surely, ought to be more attractive, than the study of the profound mystery of the death of Christ. There are depths and heights in that mystery which eternity alone will unfold; and it should be our delight, now, under the powerful ministry of the Holy Ghost, and in the perfect light of holy scripture, to search into these things for the strength, comfort, and refreshment of the inward man.

Looking, then, at the death of Christ, as typified by the blood of the paschal lamb, we see in it that which screens us from the judgment of God. “I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment; I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.” Exodus xii.

Now, we need hardly say, it is of the deepest moment for the exercised, consciously guilty, soul, to know that God has provided a shelter from wrath and judgment to come. No rightly instructed person

would think, for a moment, of undervaluing such an aspect of the death of Christ. "When *I* see the blood, I will pass over you." Israel's safety rested upon God's estimate of the blood. He does not say, "When *you* see the blood." The Judge saw the blood—knew its value, and passed over the house. Israel was screened by the blood of the lamb—by God's estimate of that blood, not by their own. Precious fact!

How prone we are to be occupied with our thoughts about the blood of Christ, instead of with God's thoughts! We feel we do not value that precious blood as we ought—who ever did or ever could? and then we begin to question if we are safe, seeing we so sadly fail in our estimate of Christ's work, and in our love to His Person.

Now, if our *safety* depends, in the smallest degree, upon our estimate of Christ's work, or our love to His Person, we are in more imminent danger than if it depended upon our keeping the law. True it is—most true—who could think of denying it?—we ought to value Christ's work, and we ought to love Himself. But if all this be put upon the footing of a righteous claim, and if our safety rests upon our answering to that claim, then are we in greater danger, and more justly condemned than if we stood on the ground of a broken law. For, just in proportion as the claims of Christ are higher than the claims of Moses, and in proportion as Christianity is higher than the legal system, so are we worse off, in greater danger, further from peace, if our safety depends upon our response to those higher claims.

Mark, it is not that we ought not to answer to such

claims; we most certainly ought. But we have not; and hence, so far as we are concerned, our ruin and guilt are only made more manifest, and our condemnation more righteous, if we stand upon the claims of Christ, because we have not answered to them. If we are to be saved by our estimate of Christ, by our response to His claims, by our appreciation of His love, we are worse off by far than if we were placed under the claims of the law of Moses.

But, blessed be God, it is not so. We are saved by grace—free, sovereign, divine, and eternal grace—not by our sense of grace. We are sheltered by the blood, not by our estimate of the blood. Jehovah did not say, on that awful night, "When *you* see the blood, and estimate it as you ought, I will pass over you." Nothing of the kind. This is not the way of our God. He wanted to shelter His people, and to let them know that they were sheltered—perfectly, because divinely sheltered—and therefore He places the matter wholly upon a divine basis; He takes it entirely out of their hands, by assuring them that their safety rested, simply and entirely, upon the blood, and upon His estimate thereof. He gives them to understand that they had nothing whatever to do with providing the shelter. It was His to *provide*. It was theirs to *enjoy*.

Thus it stood between Jehovah and His Israel, in that memorable night; and thus it stands between Him and the soul that simply trusts in Jesus now. We are not saved by *our* love, or *our* estimate, or *our* anything. We are saved by the blood, and by God's estimate of it. And just as Israel, within that blood-stained lintel, screened from judgment—safe from the

sword of the destroyer—could feed upon the roasted lamb, so may the believer, perfectly sheltered from the wrath to come—sweetly secure from all danger—screened from judgment, feed upon Christ in all the preciousness of what He is.

But more of this by-and-by.

We are specially anxious that the reader should weigh the point on which we have been dwelling, if he be one who has not yet found peace, even as to the question of safety from judgment to come, which, as we shall see (if God permit) ere we close this paper, is but a small part, though an ineffably precious part, of what the death of Christ has procured for us.

We have very little idea indeed of how much of the leaven of self-righteousness cleaves to us, even after our conversion, and how immensely it interferes with our peace, and our enjoyment of grace. It may be we fancy we have got done with self-righteousness when we have given up all thoughts of being saved by our works; but, alas! it is not so, for the evil takes a thousand shapes, and of all these, none is more subtle than that at which we have glanced, namely, the feeling that we do not value the blood as we ought, and the doubting our safety on that ground. All this is the fruit of self-righteousness. We have not got done with *self*. True, we are not, it may be, making a saviour of our *doings*, but we are of our *feelings*. We are seeking, unknown to ourselves perhaps, to find some sort of title in our love to God, or our appreciation of Christ.

Now, all this must be given up. We must rest simply on the blood of Christ, and upon God's testimony to that blood. He sees the blood. He values it

as it deserves. He is satisfied. This ought to satisfy us. He did not say to Israel, When I see how you behave yourselves ; when I see the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, the girded loins, the shod feet, I will pass over you.

No doubt all these things had their proper place ; but that proper place was not as the ground of safety, but as the secret of communion. They were called to behave themselves—called to keep the feast ; but it was as *being*, not *in order to be*, a sheltered people. This made all the difference. It was because they were divinely screened from judgment that they could keep the feast. They had the authority of the word of God to assure them that there was no judgment for them ; and if they believed that word they could celebrate the feast in peace and safety. "Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them." Heb. xi. 28.

Here lies the deep and precious secret of the whole matter. It was by faith he kept the passover. God had said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you," and He could not deny Himself. It would have been a denial of His very nature and character, and an ignoring of His own blessed remedy, had a single hair of an Israelite's head been touched, on that deeply solemn night. It was not, we repeat, in anywise a question of Israel's state or Israel's deservings. It was simply and entirely a question of the value of the blood, *in God's sight*, and of the truth and authority of His own word.

What stability is here ! What peace and rest ! What a solid ground of confidence ! The blood of Christ, and the word of God ! True—divinely true ;—let it

never be forgotten or lost sight of ; it is only by the grace of the Holy Spirit that the word of God can be received, or the blood of Christ relied upon. Still, it is the word of God and the blood of Christ, and nothing else, which give peace to the heart, as regards all question of coming judgment. There can be no judgment for the believer. And why ? Because the blood is on the mercy-seat, as the perfect proof that judgment has been already executed.

“ He bore on the tree the sentence for me,
And now both the Surety and sinner are free.”

Yes, all praise to His name, thus it stands as to every soul that simply takes God at His word, and rests in the precious blood of Christ. It is as impossible that such an one can come into judgment, as that Christ Himself can. All who are sheltered by the blood are as safe as God can make them—as safe as Christ Himself. It seems perfectly wonderful, for any poor sinful mortal to be able to pen such words ; but the blessed fact is, it is either this or nothing. If there is any question as to the believer's safety, then the blood of Christ is not on the mercy-seat, or it is of no account in the judgment of God. If it be a question of the believer's state, of his worthiness, of his feelings, of his experience, of his walk, of his love, of his devotedness, of his appreciation of Christ, then would there be no force, no value, no truth in that glorious sentence, “ When I see the blood, I will pass over ;” for, in that case, the form of speech should be entirely changed, and a dark and chilling shade be cast over its heavenly lustre. It should then be, “ When I see the blood, and ——.”

But no, beloved anxious reader, it is not, and it never can be, thus. Nothing must ever be added—not the weight of a feather, the breadth of a hair, or the movement of an eyelash—to that precious blood which has perfectly satisfied God as a Judge, and which perfectly shelters every soul that simply believes what God says because He says it. If the righteous Judge has declared Himself satisfied, surely the guilty culprit may well be satisfied also. God is satisfied with the blood of Jesus; and when the soul is satisfied likewise, all is settled, and there is peace, as regards the question of judgment. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." How can there be, seeing He has borne the condemnation in their stead? To doubt the believer's exemption from judgment is to make God a liar, and to make the blood of Christ of none effect.

The reader will note that, thus far, we have been occupied only with the question of deliverance from judgment—a most weighty question surely. But, as we shall see in the course of this series of papers, there is far more secured for us by the death of Christ than freedom from judgment and wrath, blessed as that is. That peerless sacrifice does a great deal more for us than keep God out as a Judge.

But, for the present, we pause, and shall close this paper with a solemn and earnest question to the reader—*Art thou sheltered by the blood of Jesus?* Do not rest, beloved, until you can answer with a clear and unhesitating "Yes." Remember, you are either sheltered by the blood, or exposed to the horrors of eternal judgment.

OBEDIENCE AND DEPENDENCE.

IN our December issue we ventured to call the attention of our readers to the weighty fact, that our God has, in His infinite mercy, provided for His people in this dark and evil world both authority and power—the authority of His word and the power of His Spirit—for the path which they are called to tread, and the work they are called to do. We have ample guidance in the word, and we have the power of God to count upon for all the difficulties and demands of the scene through which we have to pass home to our eternal rest above. We have authority and power for all.

But we must remember, that if God has furnished us with authority, we must be obedient. And if He has provided the power, we must be dependent. Of what use is authority if we do not obey it? I may give my servant the plainest and fullest directions as to where he is to go, and what he is to do, and what he is to say; but if, instead of acting simply upon my directions, he begins to reason, and think, and draw conclusions, to use his own judgment, and act according to his own will, of what use are my directions? None whatever, except it be to shew how entirely he has departed from them. Clearly, the business of a servant is to obey, not to reason—to act according to his master's directions, not according to his own will or judgment. If he only does exactly what his master tells him, he is not responsible for the consequences.

The one grand business of a servant is to obey. This is the moral perfection of a servant. Alas! how rare! There has been but one absolutely obedient and perfectly

dependent servant, in the entire history of this world—the man Christ Jesus. His meat and His drink were to obey. He found His joy in obedience. “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; *mine ears hast thou opened*: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, *I delight to do thy will, O my God*: yea, thy law is within my heart.” Psalm xl.

Our blessed Lord Jesus found in the will of God His only motive for action. There was nothing in Him that needed to be restrained by the authority of God. His will was perfect, and His every movement was of necessity—the very necessity of His perfect nature—in the current of the divine will. “Thy law is within my heart;” “I delight to do thy will;” “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”

Now, what could Satan do with such a Man as this? Absolutely nothing. He tried to withdraw Him from the path of obedience and the place of dependence; but in vain. “If thou be the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread.” Surely God would give His Son bread. No doubt; but the perfect Man refuses to make bread for Himself. He had no command, no authority, and therefore no motive for action. “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord.” So throughout the entire temptation. Nothing could withdraw the blessed One from the path of simple obedience. “It is written,” was His one unvarying answer. He would not, could not, act without

a motive, and His only motive was found in the will of God. "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart."

Such was the obedience of Jesus Christ—an obedience perfect, from first to last. And not only was He perfectly obedient, but perfectly dependent. Though God over all, blessed for ever, yet, having taken His place as a man in this world, He lived a life of perfect dependence on God. He could say, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." (Is. l.) And again, "Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust." And again, "I was cast upon thee from the womb." He was wholly and continually cast upon God, from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary; and when He had finished all, He surrendered His spirit into the Father's hand, and His flesh rested in hope. His obedience and dependence were divinely perfect throughout.

But we must now ask the reader to turn with us, for a few moments, to two examples of the very opposite of all this—two cases in the which, through lack of

obedience and dependence, the most disastrous results followed.

Let us, in the first place, turn to the thirteenth chapter of the First Book of Kings. Doubtless, the case is familiar to us: but let us look at it in connection with our present theme.

“And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah, *by the word of the Lord*, unto Bethel: and Jero-boam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord.” Thus far all was right. He spoke by the word of God, and the power of God accompanied the testimony, and the spirit of the king was humbled and subdued for the moment.

But more than this. The man of God was enabled to refuse the king's invitation to come home with him and refresh himself, and receive a reward. “And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place. *For so it was charged me by the word of the Lord*, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.”

All this was lovely—perfectly delightful to dwell upon. The feet of the man of God stand firm in the bright and blessed path of obedience, and all is victory. The offers of the king are flung aside without a moment's hesitation. Half the royal house cannot tempt him off the narrow, holy, happy path of obedience. He rejects every overture, and turns to pursue the straight path opened before him by the word of the Lord. There is no reasoning, no questioning, no hesitation. The word of the Lord settles everything. He

has but to obey, regardless of consequences. And so far he does, and all is well.

But mark the sequel. "Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel"—reader, beware of old prophets!—And this old prophet followed the man of God, and said unto him, "Come home with me, and eat bread." This was the devil in a new shape. What the word of a king had failed to do, the word of a prophet might accomplish. It was a wile of Satan, for which the man of God was evidently unprepared. The garb of a prophet deceived him, and threw him completely off his guard: we can at once perceive his altered tone. When replying to the king he speaks with vividness, force, and bold decision—"If thou wilt give me half thine house, I *will* not go in with thee." And then he adds, with equal force, his reason for refusing: "For so was it *charged* me by the word of the Lord."

But, in his reply to the prophet, there is manifest decline in the way of energy, boldness, and decision. He says, "I *may* not return with thee nor go in with thee." And in assigning the reason, instead of the forcible word "*charged*," we have the feeble word, "It was *said* to me."

In short, the whole tone is lower. The word of God was losing its true place and power in his soul. No change had passed over that word. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven;" and had that word been hidden in the heart of the man of God, had it been dwelling richly in his soul, his answer to the prophet would have been as distinct and decided as his answer to the king. "By the words of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." The

spirit of obedience is the great moral safeguard against every scheme and every snare of the enemy. The enemy may shift his ground; he may change his tactics, he may vary his agency; but obedience to the plain and simple word of God preserves the soul from all his wicked schemes and crafty devices. The devil can do nothing with a man who is absolutely ruled by the word of God, and refuses to move the breadth of a hair without divine authority.

But note how the enemy urges his point with the man of God. "He said unto him, I am a *prophet* also as thou art: and an *angel* spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house."

Now, what should the man of God have said to this? If the word of his Lord had been abiding in him, he would at once have said, "If ten thousand prophets, and ten thousand angels, were to say, Bring him back, I should regard them all as liars and emissaries of the devil, sent forth to allure me from the holy, happy, path of obedience." This would have been a sublime reply. It would have the same heavenly ring about it as is exhibited in these glowing words of the apostle: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be anathema."

But, alas! alas! the man of God stepped off the path of obedience; and the very man whom Satan had used to draw him off, became the mouthpiece of Jehovah to announce in his ears the terrible consequence. He lied when Satan used him. He spoke truth when God used him. The erring man of God

was slain by a lion, because he disobeyed the word of the Lord. Yes; he stepped off the narrow path of obedience into the wide field of his own will, and there he was slain.

Reader, let us beware of old prophets, and angels of light! Let us, in the true spirit of obedience, keep close, very close, to the word of our God. We shall find the path of obedience both safe and pleasant, holy and happy.

And now, for a moment, ere we close, let us glance at the ninth chapter of Joshua, which records for our admonition the manner in which even Joshua himself was ensnared through lack of simple dependence upon God. We do not quote the passage, or enter into any detail. The reader can turn to the chapter, and ponder its contents.

Why was Israel beguiled by the craft of the Gibeonites? Because they leaned to their own understanding, and judged by the sight of their eyes, instead of waiting upon God for guidance and counsel. He knew all about the Gibeonites. He was not deceived by their tattered rags and mouldy bread; and neither would they, had they only looked to Him.

But here they *failed*. They did not wait on God. He would have guided them. He would have told them who these crafty strangers were. He would have made all clear for them, had they simply waited on Him in the sense of their own ignorance and feebleness. But no; they would think for themselves, and judge for themselves, and reason from what they saw, and draw their own conclusions. All these things they would do; and hence the tattered garments of the

Gibeonites accomplished what the frowning bulwarks of Jericho had failed to do.

Now, we may be quite sure that Israel had no thought of making a league with any of the Canaanites. Nay, they were in terrible indignation when they discovered that they had done so. But they did it, and had to abide by it. It is easier to make a mistake than to rectify it, and so the Gibeonites remained as a striking memorial of the evil of not waiting on God for counsel and guidance.

May the Holy Spirit teach us, from all that has passed before us, the solemn importance of "*obedience and dependence.*"



THE MIDNIGHT CRY.

MATTHEW XXV.

THE long-suffering and patient grace of the Lord Jesus shine very sweetly to faith in the parable of the ten virgins. The heart loves to dwell on Him who lingers in His compassion for those who are still outside. He is unwilling to shut the door. Wide open it stands, both night and day, speaking after the manner of men. Seven times the blood of the cross is sprinkled on the throne, and seven times before it. God's claims are fairly and fully met; the throne and the way up to it are reconciled; and whosoever will may now enter in through faith in that precious blood. All who come are pardoned and "accepted in the beloved." . . . "Him that cometh to me," says the blessed Lord, "I will in nowise cast out." Thus the way is open to faith, and thus it remains, during the period of the Lord's long-

suffering. "And account," says Peter, "that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation." He lingers on the throne, He keeps the door open, for the salvation of souls. Precious thought! He waits for the salvation of lost sinners. May we share in His sympathies, and seek to win souls for Him. Ephesians i. 6; John vi. 37; 2 Peter iii. 15.

But not only is the door open, and the Lord waiting in grace to receive and pardon all who come to Him, His love is active and unwearied—it goes out to seek as well as to save the lost. The midnight cry, so full of solemn warning to the utterly careless and mere professor, is full of comfort to those who are looking and longing for His coming. To the latter it will be a morning of cloudless joy, the dawn of eternal day: to the former it will be the beginning of endless sorrow, confusion, and eternal night.

But why not listen to the cry now? It is full of the purest mercy and affectionate warning. It as good as says, "Why will ye die?" . . . "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Once more hear and weigh these words, of priceless value, because they seek to awaken the careless from their fatal slumbers, and the wise virgins from their unwatchfulness. "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." Who can mistake the meaning of these words? The midnight, we are assured, is past, the morning must be near; hope springs up in the heart; like the chilly night traveller, who hails with transports of delight the first appearance of the morning star. There, unbelief would be folly, or worse. Who would think of denying that

the morning must be near when the midnight is past ? And thus it is now to faith and hope, "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Already the church, as awakened by the Spirit, has heard His voice, and responded to His expecting love. "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation xxii. 16, 17.

But we dwell not at present on the beautiful attitude of the church as here presented ; our thoughts turn for a moment to the foolish virgins and the utterly careless.

The second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven is the one all-important event placed before both saints and sinners in the New Testament. Not death, as is commonly said, or the uncertainty of life. Of course, we may die, and life is always uncertain ; but the testimony of scripture is not to these, in order to arouse the slumbering virgins, but to the coming of the Lord. When He comes, the real condition of all is manifested, whether in the vigour of youth, and dreaming of many years to come, or in the feebleness of age, and feeling that the end is near ; or whether making a profession of Christianity, or living according to the course of this world. And as this great and decisive event may take place, for anything we know, before the dawn of another day—before this paper is finished—should not the thought of it, the terror of it, awaken, alarm, arrest the most careless ?

All who have heard the gospel of the grace of God—

all who have been invited to come to Jesus—and especially all who have heard the midnight cry, but have persisted in a course of unbelief—will then be judged by the Lord as unworthy of that which they have despised, and the door of mercy will then be closed against them for ever. The wise virgins, true Christians, will go in with Christ to the marriage, and the door will be shut. But, like the door of the ark, it will now be shut by the hand of the Lord, and none can open it. Against all who refused to enter in while it stood open, it will be closed for ever. The awakening will now be terrible, but too late. “And the door was shut.” This will prove an overwhelming reality to those who can find no admittance, and no oil to buy. Eternal darkness must now be their doom, and they know it. The scene is too awful to contemplate, but the Lord has said enough to convince us of what will then be, and to warn us while the door still stands wide open.

It is perfectly clear, we think, both from this parable and other scriptures, that great excitement will prevail among the foolish virgins immediately the church is gone. They are evidently taken by surprise, and astonished to find that there is no hope—that the Lord will not open the door to them. Like many in the present day, they intended to be saved, but not until it suited themselves. They never dreamed of being shut out, but of surely being saved at a more convenient season. Nearly all their relatives, friends, and acquaintances, were Christians; they are now inside; the eternal song begins; the sight of Jesus fills the enraptured throng with joy unutterable; their hallelujahs wax louder and louder; all catch the flying joy,

and rolling round the rapturous hosanna, fill the vast regions of glory with their new, eternal song of endless praise. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," with a loud voice they cry, "to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, glory, and blessing." Revelation v. 12.

But, once more, what of those outside? They cry too, but with a loud and bitter wail: "Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." This is decisive; there is no appeal from His tribunal. The heart sinks in despair, to be lifted up no more for ever. Oh! that careless souls would think of such things now; it is lacerating to our every feeling to write them, what must it be to endure them in hopeless despair! In Luke xiii. they are represented as knocking at the door, and saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. This clearly shews that they had not only been professors, but that they had enjoyed great privileges. Of course, there is no door to knock at, but the language conveys the most distressing thought of their disappointment and agony of mind; and this may continue until they fall into the hands of Satan, and believe his lie. (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12.) But how could it be otherwise? From some families all will be gone save two or three; from others, only two or three will be gone; and some houses will be left without an inhabitant. Chiefest friends, too, and nearest relations, will be parted, to meet no more for ever. Then the awful thought will burst upon their bewildered minds with undisguised reality;—What we refused to believe

has taken place—the Lord has come, the church is gone, the door is closed, and over it is written, “There is no hope.” But those who have been caught up will neither hear their cries, nor witness their agonies. In their bodies of glory, they are far and for ever removed from all scenes of suffering. The lower things will be forgotten in our occupation with the higher.

How merciful and gracious, then, my dear reader, is the warning voice of our parable, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh.” Time enough is given thee between the midnight cry and the Bridegroom’s arrival to prove thy state, and find oil to buy. Thou knowest the easy terms on which the oil is sold—“without money and without price!” The door is open, the oil is free, free to the poorest, free to the vilest, free to thee. Come to Jesus just as thou art, but see that thou come now. There is not a moment to lose. Haste thee; flee to Jesus. Canst thou afford to lose Him, and all the friends thou holdest dear? What would be the value of all thy property and thy pleasures, if the door of heaven were shut against thee? Rich thou mayest be now, but then thou wouldst be poor indeed—Christless, friendless, homeless, godless, heavenless, hopeless. Come, then, oh come! Come as thou art! but, oh, come now! Thou wilt find all in Jesus—blessed Jesus! When the sight of Jesus bursts upon the gaze of the wise but once slumbering virgins, what thinkest thou will be the shout of their praise? Better come and join the joyful chorus, than swell with thine own agonies the bitter wail of the lost in hell. I will now leave thee, but I hope not for ever, with the encouraging, assuring, word of Jesus: “I counsel thee

to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." Revelation iii. 18.



REST.

Lines found under the pillow of a soldier who was lying dead in an hospital near Port Royal, South Carolina.

I LAY me down to sleep
With little thought or care,
Whether my waking find
Me here or there.

A weary aching head,
That only asks to rest
Unquestioning upon
Thy faithful breast.

My good right hand forgets
Its cunning now,
To march the weary march
I know not how.

I am not eager, bold, nor strong,
All *that* is past ;
I'm ready, not to do,
At last, at last.

My *half* day's work is done,
And this is all my part,
I give my patient God
A patient heart :

And grasp His banner still,
Tho' all its blue be dim,
These stripes no less than stars
Lead after Him.



CHILD OF LIGHT.

"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation."
1 Thessalonians v. 5-8.

CHILD of light, child of day,
Christian, be of Christ the ray;
Shining in this world of shame,
The brightness of His glorious name.

Child of light, this ray impart
On the sorrow-stricken heart;
Let the orphan feel its glow,
The widow all its beauty know.

Child of day, let Christ still shine
In every act and word of thine;
May thou, midst the sorrow-worn,
The doctrine of the Christ adorn.

Child of day, thy watch-tower keep,
Let not slumber o'er thee creep;
Clothe thy breast with faith and love,
And keep thy heart for Christ above.

Child of light, child of day,
The helmet on thy head display;
The helmet of salvation given
Thro' Him who now is crowned in heaven.

Child of light, child of day,
Christian, be of Christ the ray;
'Mid this scene of ceaseless strife,
Holding forth the word of life!

T. M.



CORRESPONDENCE.

1. "C. S.," Sunderland. It would, in no wise, tend to edification to discuss your first question. As to your second, we consider such a mode of putting the gospel utterly unsound and fatally false. The idea of telling a man that he is saved whether he believes it or not, is so palpably absurd and monstrous as not to be worthy of refutation. Such a statement should not be called "preaching the gospel," but preaching deadly error. There is frequently a very false use made of the last verse of Romans iv., "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." From the mode in which this verse is handled by some, it would appear that a man is justified before he believes. This is utterly false. No one is justified, pardoned, or saved, apart from repentance and faith wrought in his soul, by the Holy Spirit. The entire context goes to prove the erroneous use of the expression, "Now it was not written for his [Abraham's] sake alone, that it [righteousness] was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom, *believing* on him that raised from among the dead Jesus our Lord, who has been delivered for our offences, and has been raised for our justification, it will be reckoned. Therefore having been justified, *on the principle of faith*, we have peace with God." (See Greek.) The foundation is laid in the death and resurrection of our Lord Christ; but the application of it to individuals is inseparably connected with the operation of the Spirit in the heart; and that operation is in pursuance of the eternal counsels of God. It is all of grace—free, sovereign grace from first to last. Thank God that it is so, for otherwise not one of us would ever have entered within the circle of God's salvation.

2. "J. G.," Bucks. The entire form of prayer in which the expression occurs, was adapted to the transitional state in which the disciples were previous to the accomplishment of redemption, and the descent of the Comforter, consequent upon the glorification of Christ

at the right hand of God. (Compare with Luke xi. 4, Col. iii. 13, last clause.) The Lord be praised for what you can say as to blessing received through our pages.

3. "A. M. A.," Weston-super-Mare. See the fourth volume of "Things New and Old," page 25, for the exposition you desire.

4. "Hercules," Portland. The address of the place you ask for in Birmingham, is "Ruston Street, off Broad Street, near the Five Ways." Any further information can be had of "Mr. R. Abernethie, 77, Hagley Road."

5. "R. A. H.," Jersey. A most precious and never failing remedy for depression of soul will be found in looking up to the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. He, blessed be His name, knows how to comfort those that are cast down. May He comfort you, and give you lifting up in Himself!

6. "E. O.," Millbrooke. John x. 28, and Romans viii. 38, 39, contain the divine answer to your question. The case in Acts v. is judicial, and does not touch the question of the believer's security in any way.

7. "A. C. C.," Bradford. Accept our hearty thanks for your truly kind and encouraging letter, and accompanying lines. The latter breathe a sweet spirit. May the Lord abundantly answer your earnest breathings! You will easily understand, dear friend, our difficulty in making room for all the poetry sent to us. It would be absolutely impossible; and we trust our dear friends will not feel themselves aggrieved by our not inserting their contributions. We should recommend them to keep a copy of their lines, as we cannot hold ourselves responsible for any MS forwarded to us.

8. "J. J.," Banff. We cannot see any ground whatever for a difficulty in the matter to which you refer. Scripture says nothing as to what kind of bread we should use at the Lord's Supper.

9. "W. H.," Poole. We should know all the facts before giving a judgment.

“GILGAL.”

(PART II.)

IN our last paper we had before us Israel under the shelter of the blood. A grand reality, most surely; who could duly estimate it? What human language could suitably unfold the deep blessedness of being screened from the judgment of God by the blood of the Lamb—of being within that hallowed circle where wrath and judgment can never come? Who can speak aright of the privilege of feeding, in perfect safety, on the Lamb, whose precious blood has for ever averted from us the wrath of a sin-hating God?

But, blessed as all this is, there is much more than this. There is far more comprehended in the salvation of God than deliverance from judgment and wrath. We may have the fullest assurance that our sins are forgiven, that God will never enter into judgment with us on account of our sins; and yet be very far indeed from the enjoyment of the true christian position. We may be filled with all manner of fears about ourselves—fears occasioned by the consciousness of indwelling sin—the power of Satan—the influence of the world. All these things may crop up before us, and fill us with the gravest apprehensions.

Thus, for example, when we turn to Exodus xiv., we find Israel in the deepest distress, and almost overwhelmed with fear. It would seem as if they had, for the moment, lost sight of the fact that they had been under the cover of the blood.

Let us look at the passage.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon : before it shall ye encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that he shall follow after them : and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host ; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord. And they did so. And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled : and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, *that we have let Israel go from serving us ?*”—mark these words :—“And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him. And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them. And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel : and the children of Israel went out with a high hand. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them, encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon. And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them ; and they were *sore afraid* : and the children of Israel *cried out* unto the Lord.”

Now, we may feel disposed to ask, “Are these the people whom we have seen so recently feeding, in perfect safety, under the cover of the blood ?” The very same.

Whence, then, these fears, this intense alarm, this agonizing cry? Did they really think that Jehovah was going to judge and destroy them, after all? Not exactly. Of what, then, were they afraid? Of perishing in the wilderness after all. “And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.”

All this was most gloomy and depressing. Their poor hearts seem to fluctuate between “graves in Egypt” and death in the wilderness. There is no sense of deliverance; no adequate knowledge either of God’s purposes or of God’s salvation. All seems utter darkness, almost bordering upon hopeless despair. They are thoroughly hemmed in and “shut up.” They seem in a worse plight than ever. They heartily wish themselves back again amid the brick-kilns and stubble fields of Egypt. The mountains on either side of them; the sea in front; Pharaoh and all his terrific hosts behind.

The case seemed perfectly hopeless; and hopeless it was, so far as they were concerned. They were utterly powerless, and they were being made to realize it, and this is a very painful process to go through; but very wholesome and valuable, yea, most necessary for all. We must all, in one way or another, learn the force, meaning, and depth of that phrase, “without strength.”

It is exactly in proportion as we find out what it is to be without strength, that we are prepared to appreciate God's "due time."

But, we may here inquire, "Is there aught in the history of God's people now answering to Israel's experience at the Red Sea?" Doubtless there is; for we are told that the things which happened unto Israel are our ensamples, or types. And, most surely, the scene at the Red Sea is full of instruction for us. How often do we find the children of God plunged in the very depths of distress and darkness as to their state and prospects! It is not that they question the love of God, or the efficacy of the blood of Jesus, nor yet that God will reckon their sins to them, or enter into judgment with them. But still, they have no sense of full deliverance. They do not see the application of the *death* of Christ to their evil nature. They do not realize the glorious truth that by that death they are completely delivered from this present evil world, from the dominion of sin, and from the power of Satan. They, to a certain extent, see that the blood of Jesus screens them from the judgment of God; but there is no bright, happy, emancipating sense of full and everlasting salvation. They are, to speak according to our type, at Egypt's side of the Red Sea, and in danger of falling into the hands of the prince of this world. They do not see "*all* their enemies dead on the sea-shore." They cannot sing the song of redemption. No one can sing it, until he stands by faith on the wilderness side of the Red Sea, or, in other words, until he sees his complete deliverance from sin, the world, and Satan.

Thus, in contemplating the facts of Israel's history, as recorded in the first fifteen chapters of Exodus, we observe that they did not raise a single note of praise until they had passed through the Red Sea. We hear the cry of sore distress, under the cruel lash of Pharaoh's task-masters, and amid the grievous toil of Egypt's brick-kilns. And we hear the cry of terror when they stood “between Migdol and the sea.” All this we hear ; but not one note of praise, not a single accent of triumph, until the waters of the Red Sea rolled between them and the land of death and darkness, and they saw all the power of the enemy broken and gone. “Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians ; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. And *Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians :* and the people feared the Lord and his servant Moses. *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel.*”

Now, what is the simple application of all this to us as Christians ? What grand lesson are we to learn from the scenes on the shores of the Red Sea ? In a word, of what is the Red Sea a type ? And what is the difference between the blood-stained lintel and the divided sea ?

The Red Sea is the type of the death of Christ, in its application to all our spiritual enemies, sin, the world, and Satan. By the death of Christ the believer is completely and for ever delivered from the *power* of sin. He is, alas ! conscious of the *presence* of sin ; but its power is gone. He has died to sin, in the death of Christ ; and what power has sin over a dead man ? It is the privilege of the Christian to reckon himself as

much delivered from the dominion of sin as a man lying dead on the floor. What power has sin over such an one? None whatever. No more has it over the Christian. Sin *dwells* in the believer, and will do so to the end of the chapter; but its *rule* is gone. Christ has wrested the sceptre from the grasp of our old master, and shivered it to atoms. It is not merely that His blood has purged our *sins*; but His death has broken the power of *sin*.

It is one thing to know that our sins are forgiven, and another thing altogether to know that "the body of sin is destroyed"—its rule ended—its dominion gone. Many will tell you that they do not question the forgiveness of their past sins, but they do not know what to say as to indwelling sin. They fear lest, after all, that may come against them, and bring them into judgment. Such persons are, to use the figure, "between Migdol and the sea." They have not learnt the doctrine of Romans vi. They have not as yet, in their spiritual intelligence and apprehension, reached the resurrection side of the Red Sea. They do not know what it is to be dead unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And let the reader particularly note the force of the apostle's word, "*reckon*." How very different it is, in every way, from our word, "*realize*!" This latter word may do very well where natural or human things are concerned. We can realize physical or material facts; but where a spiritual truth is involved, it is not a question of realizing, but of reckoning. How can I realize that I am dead to sin? All my own experience, my own feelings, my inward self—consciousness seems to

offer a flat contradiction to the truth. I cannot realize that I am dead ; but God tells me I am. He assures me that He counts me to have died to sin when Christ died. I believe it ; not because I feel it, but because God says it. I reckon myself to be what God tells me I am. If I were sinless ; if I had no sin in me, I should never be told to reckon myself dead to sin ; neither should I ever be called to listen to such words as, " Let not sin, therefore, *reign* in your mortal body." But it is just because I have sin dwelling in me, and in order to give me full practical deliverance from its reigning power, that I am taught the grand enfranchising truth, that the dominion of sin is broken by the death of Christ.

How do I know this ? Is it because I feel it ? Certainly not. How could I feel it ? How could I realize it ? How could I ever have the self-consciousness of it, while in the body ? Impossible. But God tells me I am dead to sin. I believe it. I do not reason about it. I do not stagger at it because I cannot find any evidence of its truth in myself. I take God at His word. I reckon myself to be what He tells me I am. I do not endeavour to struggle, and strive, and work myself into a sinless state which is impossible. Neither do I imagine myself to be in it, which were a deceit and a delusion ; but by a simple, childlike faith, I take the blessed ground which faith assigns me, in association with a dead and risen Christ. I look at Christ, and see in Him, according to God's word, the true expression of what I am, in the Divine Presence. I do not reason from myself upwards, but I reason from God downwards. This makes all the difference. It is just

the difference between unbelief and faith—between law and grace—between human religion and divine Christianity. If I reason from self, my process of reasoning is carried on in the dark, and all my conclusions must be utterly false. But if, on the other hand, I reason from God, my process of reasoning is carried on in the light, even the light of His eternal truth, and all my conclusions are divinely sound.

It is an unspeakable mercy to get done with self, in all its phases and in all its workings, and to be brought to rest, in all simplicity, on the written word, and on the Christ which that written word presents to our souls. Self-occupation is the death-blow to fellowship, and a complete barrier to the soul's rest. It is absolutely impossible for any one to enjoy peace so long as he is occupied with himself. He must cease from self, and hearken to God's word, and rest, without a single question, on its pure, precious, and everlasting record. God's word never changes. I change ; my frames, my feelings, my experience, my circumstances, change continually ; but God's word is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

Furthermore, it is a grand and essential point for the soul to apprehend that Christ is the only definition of the believer's place before God. This gives immense power, liberty, and blessing. "As he is, so are we, in this world." (1 John iv. 17.) This is something perfectly wonderful ; only let us ponder it. Let us think of a poor, wretched, guilty, slave of sin, a bondsman of Satan, a votary of the world, exposed to eternal judgment—the flames of an everlasting hell—such an one taken up by sovereign grace, delivered completely from

the grasp of Satan, the dominion of sin, the power of this present evil world—pardoned, washed, justified, brought nigh to God, accepted in Christ, and perfectly and for ever identified with Him, so that the Holy Ghost can say, as Christ is, so is he in this world.

All this seems too good to be true ; and, most assuredly, it is too good for us to get ; but, blessed be the God of all grace, and blessed be the Christ of God ! it is not too good for Him to give. God gives like Himself. He will be God, spite of our unworthiness and Satan’s opposition. He will act in a way worthy of Himself, and worthy of the Son of His love. Were it a question of our deservings, we could only think of the deepest and darkest pit of hell. But seeing it is a question of what is worthy of God to give, and that He gives according to His estimate of the worthiness of Christ, then, verily, we can think of the very highest place in heaven. The glory of God, and the worthiness of His Son, are involved in His dealings with us ; and hence everything that could possibly stand in the way of our eternal blessedness, has been disposed of in such a manner as to secure the divine glory, and furnish a triumphant answer to every plea of the enemy. Is it a question of trespass ? “ He has forgiven us all trespasses.” Is it a question of sin ? He has condemned sin. Is it a question of guilt ? It is cancelled by the blood of the cross. Is it a question of death ? He has taken away its sting, and actually made it part of our property. Is it a question of Satan ? He has destroyed him. Is it a question of the world ? He has delivered us from it, and snapped every link which connected us with it.

Thus, beloved christian reader, it stands with us, if we are to be taught by scripture—if we are to take God at His word—if we are to believe what He says. And, we may add, if it be not thus, we are in our sins ; under the power of sin ; in the grasp of Satan ; obnoxious to death ; part and parcel of an evil, Christless, Godless, world, and exposed to the unmitigated wrath of God—the vengeance of eternal fire.

Oh ! that the blessed Spirit may open the eyes of God's people, and give them to see their proper place, their proper portion, on resurrection ground, in association with a risen and glorified Christ.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)



“WHERE ARE THE NINE?”

(A reply to a Correspondent.)

“DELTA,” BRADFORD.

We judge you will do well to study a little more closely and profoundly, the narrative of the ten lepers in Luke xvii. Assuredly the Samaritan was acting according to the mind of Christ, and in the energy of faith, in coming back to give glory to God by bowing at the feet of Jesus.

It is obviously a very grave mistake for anyone to assert that “When the Lord told the ten lepers to go shew themselves to the priests, He did not intend them to do so.” Our Lord spoke according to the truth of their dispensational position, at the moment “He was the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God.”

The Jewish system was still existing, and He would, as far as was possible recognise it. But that did not in any case, prevent the exercise of a faith which could rise above all dispensational arrangements and barriers, and discern in the Person of Christ a glory far beyond aught that the Jewish system could present.

Faith does not attempt to disturb those arrangements, or to remove those barriers. That is no part of its business. God will do that in His own time and manner. It does not touch the barriers, but it soars above them on a vigorous pinion, and finds its place at the feet of Him who, in the glory of His Person, is above all dispensations.

Assuredly the Samaritan was right in turning back to prostrate himself at the feet of Jesus. His act was the act of faith. None but God could cleanse a leper; and hence he concluded that the One who had cleansed him was God; and if God was there, what more did he want? It was all well enough for those who had not eyes to see this, to travel on in the old grooves; but the Samaritan, through grace, had eyes to see in Jesus one who was above and beyond all ordinances and ceremonies, priests and sacrifices.

And, mark, he was a Samaritan stranger. This is in fine moral keeping with Luke's gospel, where our Lord is pre-eminently set forth as the man, not merely a Jew. No doubt, we have similar touches in other gospels, as for example the Syro-phenician in whom we see a lovely instance of faith rising above all dispensational barriers, and laying hold of the fulness of grace shining in the Person of Him who was not only Son of David, but Lord of all; and who, while he could

not touch or alienate a single promise made to the fathers, or give to a stranger a single morsel of the children's bread, yet could never refuse a crumb even to a dog under the table.

We have little idea of the way in which such exquisite touches of faith refreshed and delighted the heart of Christ. The centurion, in Luke vii. ; the Samaritan in Luke xvii. ; and the Syro-phenician in Mark vii. are all examples of faith soaring above and beyond all dispensational arrangements, and legal barriers, into a region in which the soul can bask in the very sunlight of sovereign grace, and drink into all the fulness of God.



GLEANINGS.

GOD ; NOT DIFFICULTIES.—Do not see difficulties, see God. He will only give as much as His people can bear. No heavier burden. Learn to fall back upon God. How calm ! He can do the largest work without neglecting the smallest matters.

We have to do with the same God. He will not neglect the most minute circumstance, nay more, is interested to be brought into them all, aye, and delights to have us bring Him into them.

Measure not God by your feelings and apprehensions of Him, but by His testimony to His own power. Man ever changes. God's power and grace are ever the same, as He was so He is.

His watchfulness, His character is our safe-guard. We have Christ's work, and God's word—that our faith and hope may be in *God*. The soul fears no evil,

resting, and counting on His omnipotence, omnipresence, wisdom, and love. The *living* God our true portion.

What is more wonderful than the truth that the shrine He delights to dwell in is a broken and contrite heart ! Behold God's temple, what nobility ! using the arm of the Almighty to sustain our tottering frame. Oh ! may our constant cry be " Hold thou me up ; " and the more we lean upon that arm, the more does He delight to keep us, and to sustain our weakness.

LIVING BY THE WORD.—In proportion as we desire the sincere milk of the word we grow thereby.

There needs the constant drawing from the source of life—the blessed fountain of God's truth. We shall find in it the cordial, the balm, or the medicine suited to our need, and daily food. Its power on the heart, brings forth the expression in the life.

Until the word has its proper place in the believer's heart, there is no *stability*—we are led by feelings and when these fail, dearth and barrenness come in because we have failed thus to cultivate our strength, drinking in the sincere milk of God's word. Truth does not keep us—dependence only on Him who is the author of it can keep our souls alive to-day. It is a trying day for God's people, so little energy and zeal, and worst of all, too much neglect of the study of His precious Word. *It* only is life and marrow to the soul, a lamp to guide, milk to nurse and meat to strengthen.

MEDITATIONS ON THE BEATITUDES.

(Matthew v. 1-16.)

INTRODUCTION.

As all our natural thoughts of blessedness—like the earthly expectations of the Jews—are in perfect contrast with the Lord's teaching on this subject, it may be well for our souls to examine carefully, as in His presence, the true principles of real happiness. Surely our hearts would desire perfect blessedness, which means perfect happiness—the happiness of heaven, not the uncertain happiness, or rather the transient excitement, of earth. From observation, habit of thought, general impressions, we have all shared largely in the popular notions of what constitutes a life of happiness here: but now, with the instructions of the Great Teacher before us, we shall do well to take our place at His feet, and learn of Him the sure and safe way to a life of holiness and happiness here, and of unmingled blessedness hereafter.

Mankind in general would say, "Blessed are the *rich*, who can surround themselves with every comfort; blessed are the joyful, the high-spirited, the independent, who know nothing of hungering and thirsting." But the Lord, who was from heaven, and knew the character that suited the kingdom of heaven, says, "Blessed are the poor, the mourners, the meek, the hungering and thirsting ones," &c., &c. This is completely reversing the universal judgment of men, and contradicting the cherished thought of every human heart. But what an unspeakable mercy for all classes

that happiness does not depend on our circumstances, nor on how much we possess of this world's goods, but on the state of the mind ; or, in one word, on *character*—a character conformed to Christ ; for the Beatitudes are essentially the character of the blessed Lord Himself. Who so poor in spirit, so meek and lowly in heart, as Jesus ? Who so obedient and dependent as man ? Who so filled with peace, and uninterrupted in communion with His Father in heaven ? He has left us an example, that we should walk in His steps.

But before speaking of the different features of that wonderful character—which ought to be our own—we must notice some of the events in the Lord's public ministry which led to this full and formal proclamation of the kingdom, and the revelation of its fundamental principles. And here, Lord, in studying Thy character and teaching, Thy miracles, and ways in grace and love, guide us by Thy Holy Spirit, reveal Thy varied glories to our souls, and form our characters anew, that we may manifest while on earth the heavenly principles of Thy kingdom. And let it be thine, for thyself, my soul, in meditating on these Beatitudes—on the different features of the faithful One in Israel—to judge thyself in their light, that thou mayest be a true reflection of Him in this self-seeking world. This is clearly thy place and privilege during thy Lord's absence. But thou wilt say, Are not the disciples who are here addressed the remnant in Israel ? Most surely ; the Sermon on the Mount was preached to His disciples, but in the hearing of all Israel, and sets forth the principles of the kingdom in connection with that people, and in moral contrast with the ideas they had formed

respecting it. The character and conduct of those who are suitable to the kingdom, and the conditions of entering into it, are also proclaimed by the Prophet King.* But, alas! through the unbelief of the people, and the rejection of their King, the establishment of the earthly kingdom has been delayed, and the church, which is heavenly, has been brought in, and Christians are now the bearers of God's testimony, and witnesses for Christ in the world.

This is the Christian's mission; a truly blessed, but solemnly responsible one. "As my Father hath sent me," says the blessed Lord, "even so send I you." Here we are told by the Lord Himself that our mission in this world is on the same principle, and of the same character, as was His own. And to this end He reveals to His disciples—not to the apostles merely—the great truth, that, in virtue of His finished work, they are brought into association with Himself, as they had never been before; for it is only now, for the first time, that He says, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." And now, in the full assurance of their pardon and peace with God, and filled with the Holy Spirit, they were to go forth as the bearers of His message, and ever to be characterized by His Spirit.

We will now turn for a moment to the immediate circumstances which led Him to ascend the mountain, and address the multitudes.

More than beautiful on the mountains of Israel were

* For details on this point, see "Synopsis" of Matthew's Gospel, p. 49. J. N. D. Also "Lectures on Matthew's Gospel," p. 71. W. K.

the feet of Him who came as Jehovah's messenger with such healing and blessing to His people. But, wondrous, precious truth! He was Himself Jehovah. The Spirit of God delights to introduce Him to us in Matthew's Gospel as Jehovah Jesus, as Emmanuel, God with us. Oh! mystery of mysteries!—Emmanuel, God manifested in flesh. Not merely as King of glory seated upon a throne in heaven, but as a Babe, born of a virgin, and cradled in a manger; yet the Son of David, the Beloved of God. As Son of man He suffered and died, but infinite value was given to His work by the glory of His Person as Emmanuel, God with us. What a resting place for a troubled soul! For thee, my reader—for all who believe in Him.

“Jesus! Thou King of glory,
I soon shall dwell with Thee
And sing the wondrous story,
Of all Thy love to me.
Meanwhile my soul would enter
By faith before Thy throne,
And all my love would centre
On Thee, and Thee alone.”

For purposes suited to our gospel, the whole of our Lord's history, until the commencement of His ministry after the death of John the Baptist, is here passed over. He then comes before us, in fulfilment of the prophecies of Isaiah, as a great light shining in the land of darkness and of death. “In the land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them

which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." Chapter iv. 15, 16; Isaiah ix. 1, 2.

The whole country, even to the extent of the ancient territory of Israel, it is said, was excited and aroused by His mighty deeds. These were the faithful witnesses of His Messiahship. The tribes of Israel were thus summoned to the standard of their Messiah. Unbelief was left without excuse. He was not only the light of life shining on the darkness of death, but He was the mighty power of God in healing and blessing. The strong man He had bound, and He was now spoiling him of his goods. The need and misery of man, both as to his soul and body, were the great objects of His mission of mercy. He was there to forgive their iniquities, to heal their diseases, to redeem their lives from destruction, and to crown them with loving-kindness and tender mercies. (Ps. ciii.) Thus we read, "And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people, from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan." Verses 24, 25.

The attention of the whole country being thus attracted, and vast multitudes following Him, eagerly desiring to hear His gracious words, He unfolds the character of the kingdom of heaven, and of the people who would enter into it, in what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount, which opens with the Beatitudes.

THE TOUCH OF FAITH.

Luke viii. 43—48.

In the crowd that gather'd there,
 Round the Saviour on His way,
 Going, at a father's prayer,
 Where a maiden dying lay.

One there was whose sore distress
 Prompted her those steps to take,
 Nearer through the crowd to press,
 Trial of His grace to make.

Skill'd physician there was none
 Till this wondrous Healer came;
 Mighty miracles were done
 By the naming of His name.

Healing power in Him resides,
 If I touch, I shall be cured,
 Boundless grace in Him abides;
 She of both was well assured.

Fully in Him she believed,
 Touched Him softly, trembling much:
 In a moment she perceived
 She was healed by that *one* touch.

Jesus turned and looked around,
 Asking of them, "Who touched *Me*?"
 And the woman courage found,
 To confess that, it was she.

Then the Lord rejoiced indeed;
 There was one whom He could bless,
 One who trusted, in her need,
 Both His power and willingness.

Better still than this He gave,
Peace to that poor woman's heart;
Strong to heal and strong to save,
Saving peace did He impart.

Thus His Father's power He shewed,
Thus His Father's love declared;
And His deep content o'erflowed,
For His Father's joy He shared.

There is healing grace for all,
Though He walks not now on earth,
He can hear us when we call,
He can feel the touch of faith.



EFFICACY OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE.

THE two aspects of the death of Jesus must be carefully distinguished in the atoning sacrifice He has accomplished. He has glorified God, and God acts according to the value of that blood towards all. He has borne the sins of His people; and the salvation of His people is complete. And, in a certain sense, the first part is the most important. Sin having come in, the justice of God might, it is true, have got rid of the sinner; but where then would have been His love and His counsels of grace, pardon, and even the maintenance of His glory according to His nature as love, while righteous and holy too?

I am not speaking here of the persons who were to be saved, but of the glory of God Himself. But the perfect death of Jesus—His blood put on the throne of God—has established and brought into evidence all that God is—all His glory, as no creation could have

done it : His truth, for He had passed sentence of death ; it is made good in the highest way in Jesus : His majesty, for His Son submits to all for His glory : His justice against sin : His infinite love. God found means therein to accomplish His counsels of grace, in maintaining all the majesty of His justice and of His divine dignity ; for what, like the death of Jesus, could have glorified them ?

Therefore this devotedness of Jesus, God's Son, to His glory—His submission, even unto death, that God might be maintained in the full glory of His rights—has given its outlet to the love of God—freedom to its action ; wherefore Jesus says, “ I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.” His heart, full of love, was driven back, in its personal manifestation, by the sin of man, who would it not ; but through the atonement it could flow forth to the sinner, in the accomplishment of God's grace and of His counsels, unhindered ; and Jesus Himself had, so to speak, rights upon that love—a position we are brought into through grace, and which has none like it. “ *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.*”

We speak with reverence of such things ; but it is good to speak of them ; for the glory of our God, and of Him whom He hath sent, is found therein established and manifested. There is not one attribute, one trait of the divine character, which has not been manifested in all its perfection, and fully glorified in that which took place between God and Jesus Himself.

That we have been saved and redeemed, and that our sins have been atoned for in that same sacrifice,

according to the counsels of the grace of God, is (I presume to say it, precious and important as it is for us) the inferior part of that work, if anything whatever may be called inferior where everything is perfect: its object at least—we sinners—is inferior, if the work is equally perfect in every point of view.



LEANING ON THEE.

Leaning on Thee, my Guide, my Friend,
My gracious Saviour! I am blest;
When weary, Thou dost condescend
To be my rest.

Leaning on Thee, this darken'd room
Is cheer'd by a celestial ray;
Thy loving smile dispels the gloom—
Turns night to day.

Leaning on Thee, my soul retires
From earthly thoughts and earthly things;
On Thee she fixes her desires;
To Thee she clings.

Leaning on Thee, with child-like faith,
To Thee the future I confide;
Each step of life's untrodden path
Thy love will guide.

Leaning on Thee, though faint and weak—
Too weak another voice to hear—
Thy heavenly accents comfort speak;
"Be of good cheer."

Leaning on Thee, no fear alarms;
Calmly I stand on death's dark brink:
I feel "the everlasting arms;"
I cannot sink.

CORRESPONDENCE.

10. "W. J. E.," Swindon. The Old Testament saints will be raised at the same time as the church, namely, when our Lord shall come to receive His people to Himself. All the dead in Christ shall rise and the living saints be changed at that blessed and longed-for moment. 1 Thessalonians iv. 13-18 ; 1 Corinthians xv. 51, 52.

11. "E. S.," Shepherd's Bush. You should wait on the Lord to open the way for you to do His holy will in this matter. His word has shewn you what His will is. Arise and do it, regardless of all consequences. We must take care how far we allow circumstances to hinder our doing the Lord's will. He can and will make a way for us to keep His commandments, when the heart is true.

12. "E. S.," Deeping. It is evident your own heart condemns you in this thing. It is all wrong. Nothing should induce us to do what we know to be contrary to the mind of God. Better far to disoblige ten thousand friends than disobey your Lord, or do violence to your own conscience. May the Holy Spirit strengthen you to act aright in this matter, and to tread with a firm step the holy happy path of obedience.

13. "J. D." We should say, by all means, let the evangelist wait on God to enlarge his measure exceedingly, and to enable him to enter in at every door which the Master may be graciously pleased to open before him. We do not think Romans xii. 6, applicable to the case you name. The apostle says, "Whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith." The two things are quite distinct. No doubt, we must never attempt to go beyond our faith ; but if the Lord has bestowed a gift upon us we should wait on Him for faith and grace to exercise that gift in whatever sphere He appoints.

14. "T. R.," Near Coleford. In 1 Corinthians x. the apostle is seeking to touch the hearts of the Corin-

thians as to their moral condition and practical ways, and he appeals to them on the ground of that which was most likely to affect them, even the blood of Christ which is the basis of all our blessing. Hence it is, we have "the cup" first. The blood of Christ is made prominent, as that which sets forth His marvellous love. The regular, historic order, as in chapter xi., puts the bread first; but the apostle departs from this in order the more powerfully to move the hearts of the Corinthian saints. As to the word, "Lord" in connection with the Table, it is expressive of authority. It is never, as you rightly observe, termed, "The Father's Table." It is the Lord's Table; the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Body; the Lord's Death. Such is the divine way of putting things, and we must ever adhere to that, even though we may not always know the why and the wherefore.

15. "L. H. T.," Ridgeway. Sometimes, the Spirit of God may lead us to pray for a certain thing, with the fullest assurance that we shall get it; and He may lead us to wait on God, for days or weeks or months or years, in exercise of soul, not getting the answer, but assured that we shall get it. It is not a question of repeating, in so many words, our desire; but, the heart waiting on God for the answer. Then we have that lovely passage in Philippians iv.: "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." And what then? "You shall get what you ask?" Perhaps not. It might not be good for us. But "the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall garrison your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus." Thus, you see, dear friend, we can lay down no rule, in this matter. There is great largeness and freedom in the way of the Spirit; and great breadth and fulness in holy scripture—so unlike our poor narrow thoughts!

16. "J. C.," Stonehouse. You are perfectly right in your judgment as to Genesis ix. 6. It stands unre-

pealed. The law did not touch it ; the gospel does not touch it. It abides in all its solemn force, as an enactment of the government of God ; and if we in our wisdom or tenderness attempt to touch it, we simply make ourselves out to be wiser and more tender than God. We must not confound the grace of the gospel with God's government of the world. Christianity does not interfere with the arrangements of divine providence. It teaches Christians to act in grace toward all ; but to apply the principles of the gospel to the government of this world, would throw everything into confusion. And, further, dear friend, what have we, as Christians, to do with sending petitions or remonstrances to the government ? Nothing whatever. We have to pray for the government, and to obey it ; or to suffer, if it calls upon us to disobey God. But to interfere with its enactments, is practically to deny our heavenly citizenship. And, in the case to which you refer, to attempt to hinder the course of justice, is to fly in the face of God's own direct command, " Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Where has this command been repealed ? Nowhere. Hence let Christians beware how they attempt to tamper with it, under the influence of natural feeling or sentimentality. We dare not add, of Christian principle, because true Christian principle will ever lead us to bow to the authority of the word of God, though we cannot exactly understand it, or reconcile it with our own feelings.

17. " A. S. S. B. G." Your difficulty arises from not distinguishing between God in His eternal essence—God as a Spirit ; and God as revealed in the Person of the Son. One class of passages refers to the former ; another, to the latter. You are perfectly right, dear friend, in judging that all scripture is in perfect harmony with itself. Would that all felt more deeply the force of this. It would save a vast amount of perplexity and confusion. It is a good thing, when we meet with an apparent discrepancy in scripture, just to wait on God for the solution.

18. "J. L.," Bishop Stortford. Accept our hearty thanks for your most kind and encouraging letter. We earnestly pray that the Lord Himself may be with you, filling you with the joy of His presence, and giving you also to taste the rich privilege of communion with those who love His name.

19. "W.," Newport. In John xiv. 27 there is a difference between "Peace I leave with you," and "*My* peace I give unto you." The former is peace through the finished work of Christ; the latter is the peace which He Himself enjoyed. He shares everything He has with us, save His Deity, which is incommunicable. What a marvellous thing to possess the very same peace which our Lord Jesus enjoyed as a man on this earth.

20. "G. E.," Waddesdon. Thanks for your truly interesting letter. May the Lord of the harvest grant copious showers of blessing upon your labours in the gospel. May you be abundantly encouraged to persevere in the glorious work till He come.

21. "B. F. Q. R." The teaching is utterly false. You are quite right in your thought that a new nature is, in every case, required. "*Ye must be born again.*" The expression, "Spirit, soul, and body," takes in the whole man. It is fatally false to teach that "every man has in him a germ, which only needs education and development." We have nothing in us by nature but what is vile. "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." We are by nature dead in trespasses and sins—children of wrath—enemies—sinners—ungodly—without strength. Such is the teaching of scripture, unto which we do well to take heed. We are not surprised, dear friend, at your being, as you say, "fairly puzzled," if you listen to such teaching as that from which you quote. We should strongly advise you to fling all such rubbish aside, and listen to the voice of God in holy scripture; and then, instead of being fairly puzzled, you will be fairly delighted, blessedly edified, and richly comforted.

22. "One of the Flock." We thank you heartily for your most loving little note. May the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls feed and comfort you more and more by His ever living and powerful ministry.

23. "W. B.," Alberta. (1) Matthew xviii. 15-18, refers to the discipline of the assembly, which is called into action if the offending brother will not hear the two or three witnesses. (2) Quickening and sealing are two distinct actions of the Spirit. He quickens dead souls, He seals living believers. Obviously, there must be an interval between the two actions, it may be longer or shorter. The action of sealing is connected with the soul's entrance into the knowledge of accomplished redemption—entire deliverance through faith in a risen and glorified Christ. "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed." Compare John vii. 39; Acts xix. 1-6. (3) Those saints who have fallen asleep are not, for the time being, counted of the body. Disembodied spirits could not be viewed as members of a body. Besides the church is on the earth where the Holy Ghost is. It is a popular error to speak of the church triumphant, and the church militant, meaning, by the former those who have gone to heaven; and by the latter, those who are on the earth. Scripture never so speaks. How could we think of the various "gifts" as applied to heaven? No need of gifts there. The church is on earth for the present. By and by all who have ever formed a part of the body will appear with the Head in glory.

24. "G. T. A." We most fully endorse every sentence of your valuable letter. It is indeed a grave moral mistake, to say the very least, for young people to speak in slighting or disparaging terms of their elders, or indeed of any. Christian parents should discountenance it in every possible way. We should go much further than you do, dear friend, in the way of suggesting a remedy, for we consider that we should never at any time, either in the presence or absence of our children, allow ourselves the habit of speaking of the

failures and infirmities of our brethren. If we have nothing good to say, let us have recourse to the mantle of charity or the curtain of silence ; and, in addition, to the hallowed remedy of loving intercession.

25. "T. G. H.," Bowdon. You must distinguish between the church as the body of Christ, and as a responsible witness for God in the earth. In the former there can be no failure, no ruin, thank God ; in the latter, there has been gross failure and all is in hopeless ruin. Is the church of the present in any way like the church as we have it in the New Testament ? Surely not. It has fallen sadly. Look at the addresses to the seven churches, Revelation ii. and iii. What means the call to "repent" if there was no failure ? Further you must distinguish between what Christ builds and what man builds. He says in Matthew xvi. "Upon this rock I will build my assembly, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." To apply this to what man builds would be a grave error and a deadly delusion. This is precisely what Rome has done, and others have followed in her wake. Man builds with "wood, hay and stubble," and most surely the gates of hell will prevail against such.

Finally, as to the question of the church's sphere, where is it said to be in heaven ? True, Christ our life is there, our citizenship is there ; our home is there. We are in spirit and by faith there ; seated in the heavenlies in Christ. All this is true to faith ; but surely, dear friend, earth is the sphere of the church's responsibility in service and testimony. Is not the Holy Ghost forming the church ? And is not He on the earth ? Most surely, from the day of Pentecost to the moment of the rapture, the church is on earth ; and those who have left the earth are not viewed *for the present*, as of it.

26. "M. M.," Bridport. This is indeed the day of the Lord's long-suffering with the world ; but there is also such a thing as God's government of the world which must not be forgotten.

RESPONSIBILITY AND POWER.

THE question of man's responsibility seems to perplex many minds. They find it difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile it with the fact of his total want of power. If, it is argued, man is perfectly powerless, how can he be responsible? If he cannot of himself repent or believe the gospel, how can he be responsible? And then, again, if he is not responsible to believe the gospel, on what ground can he be judged for rejecting it?

Thus the mind reasons and argues; and, alas! theology does not help it to a solution of the difficulty, but, on the contrary, increases the mist and confusion. For, on the one hand, a certain school of divinity teaches, and rightly so, man's utter powerlessness—that he will not, and cannot, come if left to himself—that it is only by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit that any one ever does come—that, were it not for free, sovereign grace, not a single soul would ever be saved—that, if left to ourselves, we should only go wrong, and never do right.

From all this it *infers* that man is not responsible. Its teaching is right, but its inference is wrong. Another school of divinity teaches—and rightly so—that man is responsible—that he will be punished with everlasting destruction for rejecting the gospel—that God commands all men everywhere to repent—that He beseeches sinners, all men, the world, to be reconciled to Him—that He will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

From all this it *infers* that man has power to repent and believe. Its teaching is right ; its inference, wrong. Hence it follows that neither human reasonings, nor the teachings of mere theology—high or low—can ever settle the question of responsibility and power. The word of God alone can do this, and it does it in a very simple and conclusive manner. It teaches, proves, and illustrates, from the opening of Genesis to the close of Revelation, man's utter powerlessness for good, his ceaseless proneness to evil. It declares, in Genesis vi., that *every* imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is *only* and *continually* evil. It declares, in Jeremiah xvii., that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. It teaches us, in Romans iii., that there is none righteous, no, not one ; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Further, not only does scripture teach the doctrine of man's utter and hopeless ruin, his incorrigible evil, his perfect powerlessness as to good, and his invariable proneness to evil ; but it furnishes us with an array of evidence, perfectly unanswerable, in the shape of facts and illustrations drawn from man's actual history, to prove the doctrine. It shews us man in the garden, believing the devil, disobeying God, and driven out. It shews him, when thus driven out, going on in wickedness until God had to send the deluge. Then, in the restored earth, man gets drunk and degrades himself. Man is tried without law, and proves himself a lawless rebel. He is tried under law, he becomes a

wilful transgressor. Prophets are sent, he stones them; the Baptist is sent, he beheads him; the Son is sent, he crucifies Him; the Holy Ghost is sent, he resists Him.

Thus, in every volume, as it were, of man's history—the history of the human race—in every section, every page, every paragraph, every line, we read his total ruin, his utter alienation from God. We are taught in the most distinct manner possible, that, if left to himself, he never could, and never would—though most surely he should—turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. And, in perfect keeping with all this, we learn from our Lord's parable of the great supper, in Luke xiv. that not so much as a single merely *invited* guest will be found at the table. All who sit down there are "*brought*," or "*compelled*." Not one ever would come, if left to himself. Grace, free grace, must force them in; and so it does, blessed for ever be the God of all grace!

But, on the other hand, side by side with all this; and taught with equal force and clearness, stands the solemn and weighty truth of man's responsibility. In creation, under the law, and in the gospel, man is addressed as a responsible being, for such he undoubtedly is. And further, his responsibility is, in every case, measured by his advantages. Thus, in the opening of the Epistle to the Romans, the Gentile is viewed as without law, but responsible to listen to the testimony of creation, which he has not done. The Jew is viewed as under law, and responsible to keep it, which he has not done. Then, in chapter xi., Christendom is viewed, as responsible to continue in

the goodness of God, which it has not done. And in 2 Thessalonians i. we read that those who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be punished with everlasting destruction. And, finally, in Hebrews ii., the apostle urges home this most solemn question, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

Now, the Gentile will not be judged on the same ground as the Jew; nor the Jew on the same ground as the nominal Christian. Each will be dealt with on his own distinct ground, and according to his light and privilege. There will be the few stripes and the many stripes, as in Luke xii. It will be "more tolerable" for some than for others, as in Matthew xi. The Judge of all the earth will do right; but man is responsible, and his responsibility is measured by the light and advantage afforded him. All are not huddled together promiscuously, as though they were all on one common ground. On the contrary, there is the nicest discrimination, and no one will ever be condemned for slighting and refusing advantages which were not within his reach. But surely, the very fact that there will be a judgment at all, proves, even were there no other proof, that man is responsible.

And by whom, let us ask, is the very highest type of responsibility incurred? By the rejecter or the neglecter of the gospel of the grace of God. The gospel brings out all the fulness of the grace of God. All His resources are there displayed. The love of God; the precious work and glorious Person of the Son; the testimony of the Holy Ghost. Moreover, God is seen in the gospel, in the marvellous ministry of reconciliation, actually

beseeking sinners to be reconciled to Him.* Nothing can exceed this. It is the very highest and fullest display of the grace, mercy, and love of God; and therefore all who reject or neglect it incur the most solemn responsibility, and bring down upon themselves the very heaviest judgment of God. Those who refuse the testimony of *creation* are guilty. Those who break the *law* are guiltier still; but those who refuse God's proffered *grace* are the guiltiest of all.

Will any still object, and say they cannot reconcile the two things, man's powerlessness and man's responsibility? Let them bear in mind that it is none of our business to reconcile them. God has done that for us by placing them side by side, in His own eternal word. It is ours to submit and believe, not to reason. If we listen to the conclusions and deductions of our own minds, or to the dogmas of conflicting schools of divinity, we shall be ever in a muddle and a jumble, perplexed and confused. But if we simply bow to scripture we shall know the truth. Men may reason and

* Some would teach us that the expression, "We pray, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God," refers to Christians who are exhorted to be reconciled to the dealings of God. What a mistake! What a complete overlooking of the plain sense and actual terms of the passage! God was in Christ, not reconciling believers to His dealings, but reconciling the world unto Himself. And now the word of reconciliation is committed to Christ's ambassadors, who are to beseech sinners to be reconciled unto God. The force and beauty of this most lovely passage are sacrificed, in order to support a certain school of doctrine which cannot face the full teaching of holy scripture. How much better to abandon every school and every system of theology, and come like a little child to the boundless and bottomless ocean of divine inspiration.

rebel; but the question is whether is man to judge God, or God to judge man? Is God sovereign, or is He not? If man is to sit in judgment on God, then God is no longer God. "O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"

This is the great question. Can we answer it? The plain fact is, this difficulty as to the question of power and responsibility is all a complete mistake, arising from ignorance of our own true condition, and our want of absolute submission to God. Every soul in a right moral condition will freely own his responsibility, his guilt, his utter powerlessness, his exposure to the just judgment of God, and that were it not for the sovereign grace of God in Christ, he should inevitably be damned. Any one who does not own this, from the very depths of his soul, is ignorant of himself, and virtually sitting in judgment upon God. Thus it stands, if we are to be taught by scripture.

Take a case. A certain man owes me a hundred pounds; but he is unprincipled and extravagant, and he has rendered himself quite unable to pay me. And not only is he unable, but unwilling. He has no desire to pay, no desire to have anything to do with me. If he sees me coming along the street, he skulks away down the first opening, to avoid me. Is he responsible? And am I justified in taking legal proceedings against him? Does his total inability to pay do away with his responsibility?

Further, I send my servant to him with a kind message; he insults him. I send another; he knocks him down. I send my son to beg of him to come to me, and to own himself my debtor, to confess, and take his

proper place, and that I will not only forgive him his debt, but take him into partnership with myself. He insults my son in every possible way, heaps all sorts of indignity upon him, and, finally, murders him.

All this is but a very feeble illustration of the actual condition of things between God and the sinner; and yet some will reason and argue about the injustice of holding man responsible. It is all a fatal mistake, and such it will yet be found to be, in every case. There is not a soul in hell that has any difficulty in the matter. And, most surely, there is no difficulty felt by any in heaven. All who find themselves in hell will own that they receive the due reward of their deeds; and all who find themselves in heaven will own themselves "debtors to mercy alone." The former will have to thank themselves; the latter will have to thank God. Such we conceive to be the only true solution of the question of "responsibility and power."



"GILGAL."

(PART III.)

HAVING glanced at two of the leading points in our subject, namely, Israel under the shelter of the blood; and Israel on the shores of the Red Sea; we have, now, to contemplate for a few moments, Israel crossing the Jordan, and celebrating the paschal feast at Gilgal, in which they represent the true position of Christians now.

The Christian is one who is not only sheltered from judgment by the blood of the Lamb, but delivered from this present evil world, by the death of Christ,

and associated with Him where He now is, at the right hand of God. He is blessed with all spiritual blessings, in the heavenlies in Christ. He is, thus, a heavenly man, and, as such, is called to walk in this world, in all the varied relationships and responsibilities in which the good hand of God has placed him. He is not a monk, or an ascetic, or a man living in the clouds—fit neither for earth or heaven. He is not one who lives in a dreamy, misty, unpractical region; but, on the contrary, one whose happy privilege it is, from day to day, to reflect, amid the scenes and circumstances of earth, the graces and virtues of a heavenly Christ with whom, through infinite grace, and on the solid ground of accomplished redemption, he is linked by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Such is the Christian, according to the teaching of the New Testament. Let the reader see that he understands it. It is very real, very definite, very positive, very practical. A child may know it, and realise it, and exhibit it. A Christian is one whose sins are forgiven—who possesses eternal life and knows it—in whom the Holy Ghost dwells—He is accepted in, and associated with a risen and glorified Christ—He has broken with the world, is dead to sin and the law, and finds His object, and His delight, and his spiritual sustenance in the Christ who loved him and gave Himself for him, and for whose coming he waits every day of his life.

This, we repeat, is the New Testament idea of a Christian. How immensely it differs from the ordinary type of Christian profession around us, we need not say. But let the reader measure himself by the divine stan-

dard, and see wherein he comes short ; for of this he may rest assured, that there is no reason whatsoever, so far as the love of God, or the work of Christ, or the testimony of the Holy Ghost is concerned, why he should not be in the full enjoyment of all the rich and rare spiritual blessings which appertain to the true Christian position. Dark unbelief, fed by legality, bad theology and spurious religiousness, robs many of God's dear children of their proper place and portion. And not only so, but from want of a thorough break with the world, many are sadly hindered from the clear perception and full realisation of their position and privileges as heavenly men.

But we are rather anticipating the instruction unfolded to us in the typical history of Israel, in Joshua iii.—v. to which we shall now turn. “ And Joshua rose early in the morning ; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. And it came to pass, after three days, that the officers went through the host. And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. *Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure : come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go ; for ye have not passed this way heretofore.*” Joshua iii. 1-4.

It is most desirable that the reader should, with all simplicity and clearness, seize the true spiritual import of the river Jordan. It typifies the death of Christ in one of its grand aspects, just as the Red Sea typifies it

in another. When the children of Israel stood on the wilderness side of the Red Sea, they sang the song of redemption. They were a delivered people—delivered from Egypt and the power of Pharaoh. They saw all their enemies dead on the sea shore. They could even anticipate, in glowing accents, their triumphal entrance into the promised land. “Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed; thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them: all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them: by the greatness of thine arm they shall be still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over which thou hast purchased. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.”

All this was perfectly magnificent, and divinely true. But they were not yet in Canaan. Jordan—of which, most surely, there is no mention in their glorious song of victory—lay between them and the promised land. True, in the purpose of God, and in the judgment of faith, the land was theirs; but they had to traverse the wilderness, cross the Jordan, and take possession.

How constantly we see all this exemplified in the history of souls. When first converted, there is nothing

but joy and victory and praise. They know their sins forgiven ; they are filled with wonder, love and praise. Being justified by faith, they have peace with God, and they can rejoice in hope of His glory, yea and joy in Himself through Jesus Christ our Lord. They are in Romans v. 1-11 ; and, in one sense, there can be nothing higher. Even in heaven itself, we shall have nothing higher or better than "joy in God." Persons sometimes speak of Romans viii. being higher than Romans v. But what can be higher than "joy in God?" If we are brought to God, we have reached the most exalted point to which any soul can come. To know Him as our portion, our rest, our stay, our object, our all ; to have all our springs in Him, and know Him as a perfect covering for our eyes, at all times and in all places, and under all circumstances. This is heaven itself to the believer.

But there is this difference between Romans v. and viii. that vi. and vii. lie between ; and when the soul has travelled practically through these latter, and learnt how to apply their profound and precious teaching to the great questions of indwelling sin and the law, then is it in a better state, though, most assuredly, not in a higher standing.

We repeat, and with emphasis, the words, "*travelled practically.*" For it must be even so, if we would really enter into these holy mysteries, according to God. It is easy to talk about being "dead to sin" and "dead to the law"—easy to see these things written in Romans vi. and vii.—easy to grasp, in the intellect, the mere theory of these things. But the question is, have we made our own of them?—Have they been applied

practically to our souls, by the power of the Holy Ghost? And are they livingly exhibited in our ways, to the glory of Him who, at such a cost to Himself, has brought us into such a marvellous place of blessing and privilege?

It is much to be feared that there is a vast amount of merely intellectual traffic in these deep and precious mysteries of our most holy faith which—were they only laid hold of in spiritual power—are calculated to produce the most marked results in practice.

But, we must return to our theme; and, in doing so, we would ask the reader if he really understands the true spiritual import of the river Jordan? What does it really mean? We have said that it typifies the death of Christ. But in what aspect?—For that precious death has many and various aspects. We believe the Jordan sets forth the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, not so much in its application to that from which we are delivered, as to that into which we are introduced. The Red Sea delivered Israel from Egypt and the power of Pharaoh. Jordan brought them into the land of Canaan.

We find both in the death of Christ. He, blessed be His Name, has by His death on the cross—His death for us, delivered us from our sins—from guilt and condemnation—from Satan's power, and from this present evil world.

But, more than this, He has by the same infinitely precious work, brought us, *now*, into an entirely new position, in living union and association with Himself, where He is at God's right hand. Such is the distinct teaching of Ephesians ii. "But God who is rich in

mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, *hath quickened us together with Christ* (by grace ye are saved); and *hath raised us up together*, and made us *sit together in the heavenlies* in Christ Jesus." Verses 4-6.

Note the little word "*Hath.*" He is not speaking of what God *will* do; but of what He *hath* done—done for us and with us in Christ Jesus. The believer is not one who is waiting to go to heaven when he dies. He is there already in the Person of His living and glorified Head—there, too, in spirit and by faith.

Is all this real and true? As real and true as that Christ hung on the cross and lay in the grave. As real and true as that we were dead in trespasses and sins. As real and true as the eternal truth of God can make it. As real and true as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the body of every true believer.

Mark, reader, we are not, now, speaking of the practical working out of all this glorious truth in the life of Christians, from day to day. This is another thing altogether. Alas! alas! if our only idea of true christian position were to be drawn from the practical career of professing Christians, we might give up Christianity as a myth, a sham and a fable.

But thank God, it is not so. We must learn what true Christianity is from the pages of the New Testament; and, having learnt it there judge ourselves, our ways, our surroundings, by its heavenly light. In this way, while we shall ever have to confess and mourn over our shortcomings, our hearts shall, ever more and more, be filled with praise to Him whose infinite grace has brought us into such a glorious position in union

and fellowship with His own Son—a position, blessed be God, in nowise dependent upon our personal state; but which, if really apprehended, must exert a powerful influence upon our entire course, conduct and character.

(To be continued, if God permit.)

NOTE. We would entreat the reader to study prayerfully Romans iii.—viii. and Ephesians i. ii. The former in connection with the Red Sea, the latter in connection with the river of Jordan. This will be a profitable exercise, until we meet again.



LEAVE THE FUTURE.

“LEAVE the future”—let it rest
Simply on thy Saviour's will.
“Leave the future”—they are blest
Who, confiding, hoping still,
Trust His mercy
To preserve them safe from ill.

Thus, like travellers in the dark,
Following the appointed way,
Though no beacon-fire they mark,
Still their faithful spirits say,
“We will follow—
Jesus leads to perfect day.”

Let the present moment pass,
With a blessing on its head;
And as Time metes out his glass,
While our sands are numbered,
Use the present—
Soon 'twill sleep with ages fled.

When with mists thy joys are clouded,
And when darkness fills the air—
When with sin thy soul is shrouded—
Then to Calvary repair;
Jesus gives thee
Beams of pure refulgence there.

MEDITATIONS ON THE BEATITUDES.

(Matthew v. 1-16.)

THE FIRST BEATITUDE.

Verse 3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* If ever it was needful for thee, my soul, to weigh thy words in the balances of the sanctuary, and to meditate in its sacred light, surely it is at this moment. How deeply important to understand the true meaning of the Lord's own words here, and to enter fully into the true spirit of His teaching. Condition of soul and blessing are inseparable ; the one depends on the other. This is what thou must learn. It is also well to remember, that it is not by means of great learning or great opportunities for study—valuable as these are—that we know Jesus, understand His word, or see His glories ; but by the light and teaching of the Holy Spirit. “He shall glorify me,” says the Lord, “for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” John xvi. 14.

The first *Beatitude*, observe, lies at the basis of all the others. It is not only a distinct feature in itself, but it should characterize all the others and all who belong to Jesus. Surely nothing can be so necessary to a soul that has to do with God as poverty of spirit. Not poverty in circumstances merely, or poverty in words and ways, but in spirit—in the heart, the feelings, the inward man, and all before the living God. How often we may have said with reference to one who has injured us, “I freely forgive him, and I will be the same to him as ever, but I can't forget it for all that.” This is not being “poor in spirit ;” it is being outwardly

so, but not "in spirit." It comes from the same root as the spirit of the world which says "I will have it out with him, I am determined not to be beaten." How different to the state of the blessed man, here described by the Lord—"poor in spirit;" not in outward conduct merely, but in spirit. The outward ways should be the true expression of the inward state. This is God's pleasant sacrifice. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psa. li. 17.) This was ever the spirit, in all divine perfection, of the lowly, dependent, Son of Man. But the grace that has brought down the proud spirit of man, and laid him in the dust, humbled and broken, before God, has laid the foundation of a true christian character, and of the soul's richest blessing. True, alas! he may one day forget his right place, and the old spirit of the natural man may be allowed to appear for a time, but the Lord knows how to bring him back, and how to break him down again. Nothing can be more sad than for one who has been down in this place ever to leave it, even during a moment's temptation. It is to lose sight of that Christ-like grace which God especially delights to honour in every dispensation.

Turn again, I pray thee, my soul, and muse a little longer on these mysterious, moral depths. Oh! to fathom them with thine own line, to know them in thine own deep experience! Is it thus? When all is gone from us, when we are nothing—nothing at all, even in thought and feeling, then all comes into us from God—God in Christ Jesus; and we are satisfied? Yes, thank God, this is the condition, this the bless-

ing. The robe, the ring, the fairest mitre, would not be enough; nothing but the fatted calf could satisfy the famished prodigal, after he has spent his all. When he was brought down to the husks, and even these kept from him, he thought of his father's house, where only he could find the fatted calf. It must ever be so. When Naomi returned as an emptied one to the land of Israel, she found it was the beginning of barley harvest. When Abram fell on his face before God, then flowed the many streams of grace from the ocean of eternal love. "I will, I will," runs on freely. It is all grace now. "Thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. I will make thee exceeding fruitful . . . I will make nations of thee . . . I will establish my covenant between me and thee. . . . And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." (Gen. xvii. 1-8.) And so with the leper. When the evil energy of the flesh ceased to work, he was pronounced clean. The priest could now go forth to the unclean place, and bring him into the camp, with the full blessing of death and resurrection, typically seen, and in due time, the eighth day, the consummation of blessing, he comes into his tent. So long as we are seeking to maintain anything of our own, to cherish an unbroken spirit as to some favourite opinion or object, we are resisting God's will and shutting out His grace; but when we are brought down to our real nothingness, and have nothing to maintain but Christ and His glory, the flood gates are thrown open, and grace flows in.

Some have thought that literal poverty, in its ordinary sense, is connected in the Lord's mind with the blessings of the kingdom, and so have parted with their property at once, and become poor for the kingdom of heaven's sake. In place of distributing their income as the Lord's stewards, and as He might call for it, they have entrusted it to others, and taken the place of dependence themselves. The former is certainly a much *easier* way than the latter; but which is right? To hold property for Christ and His service in this world, and to give it out as a steward according to His mind, is a christian service that requires much waiting on the Master, and great liberty of soul in His presence. A scrupulous conscience would be in perpetual bondage.

The idea is founded on Luke iv. "And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed are *ye* poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." The words, "in spirit," are left out. But there is no ground in this text for such an idea. It is the fruit of superstition, not of faith, and savours of monachism. It is a question of the inner man in contrast with the outer. He who is poor as to this world's goods may be of a proud unbending spirit, while the rich may be truly humble. At the same time we believe that the Lord has oftener used a man's miseries than his comforts to bring him to Himself, but that is the Lord's doing, and quite another thing. The steward's place is to meet his Master's mind, and not to indulge his own. The difference between Matthew and Luke in presenting the beatitudes, is to be accounted for by the characteristic and divinely arranged differences of the gospels.

“That in Matthew,” says one, “gives the discourse on the mount in the abstract, presenting each blessing to such and such a class.” “Blessed are *the* poor in spirit.” Luke makes it a more personal address. “Blessed are *ye* poor.” The reason is manifest. In the one case it is the prophet greater than Moses, who lays down the principles of the kingdom of heaven in contrast with all Jewish thought, feeling, and expectation. In the other case, it is the Lord comforting the actually gathered disciples, addressing *themselves* as so separated to Himself, and not merely legislating, so to speak. It was now the time of sorrow; for as bringing the promises in His Person, man would not have him.

Returning for a moment to our text, we would only further add on this beatitude, that the Lord here says, that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the “poor in spirit.” They are the heirs of the kingdom. The riches of the King and the glories of His kingdom have come down to enrich the “poor in spirit.” Who would not be poor in spirit? we may well exclaim. Who would not willingly be self-emptying before the Lord? But oh! the danger of being pre-occupied when the invitation comes. Houses, lands, oxen, the home, the world; and, what is worst of all, deadliest of all—*self*—self-occupation in a thousand ways! But to the poor in spirit, to those who have reached the end of self, to those who are in the dust before God, yet cling by faith to Jesus and His cross; to those whose reason is silent, whose fair forms of religiousness are laid aside, who can only say, I have nothing now but Christ; all that I sought to maintain is gone—nothing, no, nothing now but

Christ. The whole riches of His kingdom, and, better far, He Himself is mine—mine now, mine for ever. Praise His name !

Enough—give thou the humble heart, and I consent;
Oh, make me nothing, and therewith content.
My gain is loss, my trust is in the cross ;
Hold me ! I'm weak, I fall ; be thou mine All in all.

I will be nothing still,
That Christ alone my heaven of heavens may fill,
Yet set me, Lord, a little glowing gem
Upon His diadem ; to shed my tiny ray
Among the splendours of His crowning day ;
Though unperceived, I still should like to shine,
A tribute glory on that brow divine.



THE WRITTEN WORD.

THE word of God is all “pure,” all “tried,” it all testifies of Jesus. Seek to realize that it is *God's word* ; that He *means what He says*, and would have you believe what He says, not because you feel it, but *because He says it*. Very often we are looking for an inward revelation, an inward voice or feeling, instead of simply believing the *written word* of our God, and Satan thus gets a great advantage over us. How strikingly are we taught the value of the word in our conflicts with Satan in Ephesians vi., where the armour of God is described. Our girdle is to be “truth.” “Thy word is truth.” Our feet are to be shod with the “preparation of the gospel of peace.” This gospel of peace is the “word of faith,” the word of God.

(Rom. x. 15-18.) We are to take the "shield of faith;" this also is the word. "His truth shall be thy shield and buckler." (Ps. xci. 4.) It is by this shield that we "shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." Again, the "sword of the Spirit is the word of God." It was in this armour our Lord met Satan when on earth, and triumphed over him. May we be strong in His strength, and clad with the panoply of God.

"*It is written*" is the word of faith, hope, victory, and power. Be not tempted to look inward for peace, it can only be enjoyed by resting simply upon the *written* testimony of the word of God. Desire not to have an inward answer, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee," *apart from the written word*. This is a very common and dangerous mistake. It tends so greatly to lessen the value and authority of the *scriptures*.

If you had come to Jesus when personally present, casting yourself—as you do now that He is bodily absent—upon His grace and love, you would have heard *His spoken word* "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee;" but in His absence you have *His written word*, which declares "By him all that believe are justified from all things." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Indeed, this is the very object of the Holy Ghost in the written word. "These things are *written* that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John xx. 31.) "These things have I *written* unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may *know* that

ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." 1 John v. 13.

JESUS, I will trust thee, trust thee with my soul,
Guilty, lost, and helpless, thou canst make me whole—
There is none in heaven, or on earth like thee!
Thou hast *died* for *sinners*, therefore, Lord, for *me*.

JESUS, I may trust thee! Name of matchless worth,
SPOKEN by the angel, at thy wondrous birth;
WRITTEN, and for ever, on thy cross of shame,—
Sinners, read and worship, trusting in that Name.

JESUS, I must trust thee, pondering thy ways,
Full of love and mercy, all thine earthly days—
Sinners gathered round thee, *lepers* sought thy face,
None too vile or loathsome for a SAVIOUR'S grace.

JESUS, I can trust thee, trust thy WRITTEN word—
Though thy voice of pity I have never heard—
When thy Spirit teacheth, to my taste how sweet,
Only may I hearken, sitting at thy feet.

JESUS, I do trust thee, trust without a doubt,
"Whosoever cometh, thou wilt not cast out"—
Faithful is *thy promise*, precious is *thy blood*,
These my soul's salvation, *thou* my Saviour God.



"HAVE FAITH IN GOD."

How prone we are, in moments of pressure and difficulty, to turn the eye to some creature resource! Our hearts are full of creature confidence, human hopes, and earthly expectations. We know comparatively little of the deep blessedness of looking simply to God. We are ready to look anywhere and everywhere rather than unto Him. We run to any broken cistern, and

lean on any broken reed, although we have an exhaustless Fountain and the Rock of ages ever near.

And yet we have proved, times without number, that “creature streams are dry.” Man is sure to disappoint us when we look to him. “Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?” And again, “Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited.” Isaiah xvii.

Such is the sad result of leaning upon the creature—barrenness, desolation, disappointment. Like the heath in the desert. No refreshing showers—no dew from heaven—no good—nothing but drought and sterility. How can it be otherwise, when the heart is turned away from the Lord, the only source of blessing? It lies not within the range of the creature to satisfy the heart. God alone can do this. He can meet our every need, and satisfy our every desire. He never fails a trusting heart.

But He must be trusted, in reality. “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say” he trusts God, if he does not really do so? A sham faith will not do. It will not do to trust in word, neither in tongue. It must be in deed and in truth. Of what use is a faith with one eye on the Creator, and another on the creature? Can God and the creature occupy the same platform? Impossible. It must be God or—what? The creature, and the curse that ever follows creature-confidence.

Mark the contrast. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

How blessed! How bright! How beautiful! Who would not put his trust in such a God? How delightful to find oneself wholly and absolutely cast upon Him! To be *shut up* to Him. To have Him filling the entire range of the soul's vision. To find *all* our springs in Him. To be able to say, "My soul, wait thou *only* upon God; for my expectation is from him. He *only* is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be moved."

Note the little word, "only." It is ~~very~~ searching. It will not do to say we are trusting in God, while the eye is all the while askance upon the creature. It is much to be feared that we frequently talk about looking to the Lord, while, in reality, we are expecting our fellow-man to help us. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

How needful to have the heart's deepest motive springs judged in the presence of God! We are so apt to deceive ourselves by the use of certain phrases which, so far as we are concerned, have no force, no value, no truth, whatever. The language of faith is on our lips, but the heart is full of creature confidence.

We talk to men about our faith in God, in order that they may help us out of our difficulties. —

Let us be honest. Let us walk in the clear light of God's presence, where everything is seen as it really is. Let us not rob God of His glory, and our own souls of abundant blessing, by an empty profession of dependence upon Him, while the heart is secretly going out after some creature stream. Let us not miss the deep joy, peace, and blessing, the strength, stability, and victory, that faith ever finds in the living God, in the living Christ of God, and in the living word of God. Oh ! let us "have faith in God."



REJOICING IN HOPE, PATIENT IN TRIBULATION.

HOPE scatters radiant beams of light,

And earth's dark shadows flee,

As through the vista here I look,

My loving Lord, for thee.

Thee to behold ! what glories meet,

Beloved Lord, in thee !

Glories which ne'er shall dim nor fade

Through vast eternity.

What deep unmingled joy to see

Thy once-thorned, bleeding brow,

With circling diadems adorned,

The Lord of glory thou !

Thy beauty soon its brightest rays

Unveiled these eyes shall see ;

And while the age of ages rolls,

Still undiminished be.

Thy perfect, thy unmeasured love,
Its fulness shall explore ;
My theme of rapturous delight,
My song for evermore.

The Father's house, the mansions there,
All, all shall I behold !
But ah ! the thought of seeing thee
In ecstasy untold.

Thyself the glory and the light,
Thou spotless Lamb, once slain ;
Where all in adoration bow,
Thy worthiness proclaim.

Heaven's sweet, melodious note shall soon
Pain, grief, and tears dispel ;
No cloud of sorrow there shall mar
The one responsive swell.

In fellowship I'd walk with thee,
Thy sufferings, Lord, to share ;
Would know thy resurrection power,
Daily thy cross to bear.

Nailed to the cross 'tis there I learn
Thy quenchless love to me ;
And in the value of thy blood,
Peace, shelter, victory.

Here, in thy steps I'd follow on,
The world's vain show despise ;
Would press with vigour forth to reach
The bright, unfading prize.

Then help me while I'm waiting here,
Through scorn, reproach, and shame,
To live for thee, beloved Lord,
And magnify thy name.



CORRESPONDENCE.

27. "H. M. A." John xv. 1-8, and 1 John ii. 28 are pre-eminently practical. We cannot conceive how any intelligent person could think of applying such scriptures to the question of our standing in Christ. Is it true that all Christians abide in Christ? If so, where would be the force of the exhortation to do so?

28. "R. W.," Montreal. We have received your kind favour; but we cannot, at all, see with you in the matter to which you refer.

29. "C. M.," Milltown, near Dublin. If you will kindly send those back numbers to us, we can make good use of them.

30. "H. T." The only counsel we can offer you is to wait on the Lord, and ask Him to guide you. He has said, "I will guide thee with mine eye;" and "He cannot deny Himself." It may be, He would have you to plod on patiently with your present occupation. We are in a much safer position, morally, when our business is the burden on the back, and not the idol of the heart.

31. "G. S.," Stow. Mark ii. 5 encourages us to exercise faith for others; but it in nowise collides with the line of truth to which you have referred. It is our happy privilege to count on the boundless grace of God on behalf of any whom we may have upon our hearts; but no one is forgiven and justified before God, apart from repentance and faith wrought in his soul by the power of the Holy Ghost.

In Hebrews ix. 28 the Holy Ghost graciously takes in all the saints of God. He assumes that all are looking for the blessed Saviour. Do you suppose that the Lord will only appear to those who hold the doctrine of His coming? Blessed be His name, there is not a single member of His body upon this earth who shall not rise to meet Him at that happy moment, when the sound of the trumpet announces His coming. Eternal praise to His peerless name!

32. "F. E." The paper you have sent us is not only, as you say, "wanting in some points," but unscriptural. You will, however, excuse our taking it up in this magazine, inasmuch as we have, from the commencement, sought to keep our pages free from everything of a controversial nature.

33. "M. A. G.," Windsor. In 1 John iii. 6, "He that sinneth" refers to one who is morally *characterized* by "sinning" (ὁ ἁμαρτάνων). Such an one has not seen or known "Him." Now, the Christian, though *liable* to commit sin, if not watchful, is, nevertheless, not characterized by it. He stands, thanks be to God, on another footing altogether. He is not a *sinning* one, though having sin in him. In verse 9, the apostle is evidently speaking of the divine nature abstractedly, which can no more sin than Christ Himself. In chapter i., on the contrary, the apostle says, "If *we*." Now, if any one were to say that he had no sin in him, or that he had not sinned, or that he could not sin, we should say he was self-deceived, and the truth was not in him. The believer is a complex person, having two natures; but "whosoever is born of God" is unquestionably the new man, looked at apart from the old nature. To say that I *need* not commit sin, is to state a blessed privilege (chap. ii. 1); to say that I *cannot* is a delusion and a deceit. I have no right to excuse myself in a single sinful thought; but to say that I am not capable of a sinful thought, is a fallacy and a hollow assumption.

As to the expression, "Be filled with the Spirit," it is just what we long for; to be so under the full sway of the Holy Ghost, that Christ may be the one absorbing object of our hearts. Beloved friend, let us never be satisfied with anything short of this. Let us aim at it with our whole souls; and sedulously watch against every moral hindrance.



"GILGAL."

(PART IV.)

THE more deeply we ponder the typical instruction presented in the river Jordan, the more clearly we must see that the whole christian position is involved in the standpoint from which we contemplate it. If Jordan means death, and we have to meet it, then, verily, our prospect is a gloomy one. Death is the wages of sin, and sin is death's sting; and, most surely, if we have to encounter death, there can be but the one terrible issue.

But, thanks be to God, it is not so. The great Anti-type of the ark has passed over before us into Jordan, to stem its torrent for us, and make it a dry path for our feet, so that we might pass clean over into our heavenly inheritance. The Prince of life has destroyed, on our behalf, him that had the power of death. He has taken the sting from death; yea, He has made death itself the very means by which we reach, even now, in spirit and by faith, the true heavenly Canaan.

Let us see how all this is unfolded in our type. Mark particularly the commandment given by the officers of the host. "When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it." The ark must go first. They dared not to move one inch along that mysterious way, until the symbol of the divine presence had gone before.

"Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: *come not near unto it that ye may know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore.*" It was an unknown, an untrodden way. No mortal could tread it with impunity. Death and destruction are linked together. "It is appointed unto men"—not to *all* men, thank God—"once to die; but after this the judgment." (Heb. ix.) Who can stand before the king of terrors? Who can face that grim and terrible foe? Who can encounter the swellings of Jordan? Poor Peter thought he could; but he was sadly mistaken. He said unto Jesus, "Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, *thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.*"

How fully these words explain the import of that mystic "space" between Israel and the ark. Peter did not understand that space. He had not studied aright Joshua iii. 4. He knew nothing of that terrible pathway which his blessed Master was about to enter upon. "Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake."

Poor dear Peter! How little he knew of himself, or of that which he was—sincerely, no doubt, though ignorantly—undertaking to do! How little did he imagine that the very sound of death's dark river, heard even in the distance, would be sufficient so to terrify him, as to make him curse and swear that he did not know his Master! "Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice."

"Yet there shall be a space between you and it." How needful! How absolutely essential! Truly there was a space between Peter and his Lord. Jesus had to go before. He had to meet death in its most terrific form. He had to tread that rough path in profound solitude—for who could accompany Him? "There shall be a space between you and it: come not near to it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore."

"Thou canst not follow me *now*: but thou shalt follow me *afterwards*." Blessed Master! He would not suffer His poor feeble servant to enter upon that terrible path, until He Himself had gone before, and so entirely changed its character, that the pathway of death should be lighted up with the beams of life and immortality. Our Jesus has "abolished death, and brought life and incorruptibility to light by the gospel."

Thus death is no longer death to the believer. It was death to Jesus, in all its intensity, in all its horrors, in all its reality. He met it as the power which Satan wields over the soul of man. He met it as the penalty due to sin. He met it as the just judgment of God against sin—against us. There was not a single feature, not a single ingredient, not a single circumstance, which could possibly render death formidable which did not enter into the death of Christ. He met all; and, blessed be God, we are accounted as having gone through all in and by Him. We died in Him, so that death has no further claim upon us, or power over us. Its claims are disposed of, its power broken and gone for all believers. The whole scene is cleared com-

pletely of death, and filled with life and incorruptibility.

And hence, in Peter's case, we find our Lord, in the last chapter of John, most graciously meeting the desire of His servant's heart—a desire in which he was perfectly sincere—the desire to follow his beloved Lord. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he signifying by what death he should glorify God.” Thus death, instead of being the judgment of God to overwhelm Peter, was turned into a means by which Peter could glorify God.

What a glorious fact! What a stupendous mystery! How it magnifies the cross, or rather the One who hung thereon! What a mighty revolution, when a poor sinful man can, in death, glorify God! So completely has death been robbed of its sting—so thoroughly has its character been changed—that, instead of shrinking from it with terror, we can meet it—if it does come—and go through it with songs of victory; and instead of its being to us the heavy wages of sin, it is a means by which we can glorify God.

All praise to Him who has so wrought for us!—to Him who has gone down into Jordan's deepest depths for us, and made there a highway by which His ransomed people can pass over into their heavenly inheritance! May our hearts adore Him! May all our powers be stirred up to magnify His holy name! May our whole life be devoted to His praise!

But we must proceed with our type.

“ And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people. And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.” Joshua stands before us as a type of the risen Christ, leading His people, in the power of the Holy Ghost, into their heavenly inheritance. The priests bearing the ark into the midst of Jordan typify Christ going down into death for us, and destroying completely its power. “ He passed through death’s dark raging flood, to make our rest secure ;” and not only to make it secure, but to lead us into it, in association with Himself, now, in spirit and by faith ; by-and-by, in actual fact.

“ And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the Lord your God. And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the *living* God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites. . . . Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan.”

The passage of the ark into Jordan proved two things, namely, the presence of the living God in the midst of His people ; and that He would most surely drive out all their enemies from before them. The death of Christ is the basis and the guarantee of everything to faith. Grant us but this ; that Christ has gone down into death for us, and we argue, with all possible confidence, that, in this one great fact, all

is secured. God is with us, and God is for us. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The difficulty of unbelief is, "How shall he?" The difficulty of faith is, "How shall he not?"

Israel might wonder how all the hests of Canaan could ever be expelled from before them; let them gaze on the ark in the midst of Jordan, and cease to wonder, cease to doubt. The less is included in the greater. And hence we can say, What may we not expect, seeing that Christ has died for us? There is nothing too good, nothing too great, nothing too glorious, for God to do for us, and in us, and with us, seeing He has not spared His only-begotten Son, but delivered Him up for us all. Everything is secured for us by the precious death of Christ. It has opened up the everlasting floodgates of the love of God, so that the rich streams thereof might flow down into the very depths of our souls. It fills us with the sweetest assurance that the One who could bruise His only-begotten Son, on the cursed tree, for us, will meet our every need, carry us through all our difficulties, and lead us into the full possession and enjoyment of all that His eternal purpose of grace has in store for us. Having given us such 'a proof of His love, even when we were yet sinners, what may we not expect at His hands now that He views us in association with that blessed One who glorified Him in death—the death that He died for us? When Israel saw the ark in the midst of Jordan, they were entitled to consider that all was secured. True they had, as we know, to take

possession : they had to plant, their feet upon the inheritance ; but the power that could stem death's dark waters, could also drive out every foe from before them, and put them in peaceful possession of all that God had promised.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)



PRAYER AND THE PRAYER MEETING.

In considering the deeply important subject of prayer, two things claim our attention ; first, the moral basis of prayer ; secondly, its moral conditions.

1. The basis of prayer is set forth in such words as the following : “ *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*” (John xv. 7.) Again, “ *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*” (1 John iii. 21, 22.) So also, when the blessed apostle seeks an interest in the prayers of the saints, he sets forth the moral basis of his appeal : “ *Pray for us ; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.*” Hebrews xiii. 18.

From these passages and many more of like import, we learn that in order to effectual prayer, there must be an obedient heart, an upright mind, a good conscience. If the soul be not in communion with God—if it be not abiding in Christ—if it be not ruled by His holy commandments—if the eye be not single, how could we possibly look for answers to our prayers ?

We should, as the apostle James says, be "asking amiss, that we may consume it upon our lusts." How could God, as a Holy Father, grant such petitions? Impossible.

How very needful, therefore, it is to give earnest heed to the moral basis on which our prayers are presented. How could the apostle have asked the brethren to pray for him, if he had not a good conscience, a single eye, an upright mind—the moral persuasion that in all things he really wished to live honestly? We may safely assert, he could do no such thing.

But may we not often detect ourselves in the habit of lightly and formally asking others to pray for us? It is a very common formulary amongst us, "Remember me in your prayers;" and, most surely, nothing can be more blessed or precious than to be borne upon the hearts of God's dear people, in their approaches to the mercy-seat. But do we sufficiently attend to the moral basis? When we say, "Brethren, pray for us," can we add, as in the presence of the Searcher of hearts, "For we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly?" And when we ourselves bow before the throne of grace, is it with an uncondemning heart—an upright mind—a single eye—a soul really abiding in Christ, and keeping His commandments?

These, beloved reader, are searching questions. They go right to the very centre of the heart—down to the very roots and moral springs of our being. But it is well to be thoroughly searched—searched in reference to everything, but specially in reference to prayer. There is a terrible amount of unreality in

our prayers—a sad lack of the moral basis—a vast amount of “asking amiss.”

Hence, the want of power and efficacy in our prayers—hence, the formality—the routine—yea, the positive hypocrisy. The psalmist says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” How solemn this is! Our God will have reality. He desireth truth in the inward parts. He, blessed be His name, is real with us, and He will have us real with Him. He will have us coming before Him, as we really are, and with what we really want.

How often, alas! it is otherwise, both in private and in public! How often are our prayers more like orations than petitions—more like statements of doctrine than utterances of need! It seems, at times, as though we meant to explain principles to God, and give Him a large amount of information.

These are the things which cast a withering influence over our prayer meetings, robbing them of their freshness, their interest, and their value. Those who really know what prayer is, who feel its value, and are conscious of their need of it, attend the prayer meeting in order to pray, not to hear orations, lectures, and expositions from men on their knees. If they want lectures they can attend at the lecture hall, or the preaching room; but when they go to the prayer meeting it is to pray. To them the prayer meeting is the place of expressed need, and expected blessing—the place of expressed weakness, and expected power. Such is their idea of “the place where prayer is wont to be made;” and therefore when they flock thither they are not disposed or prepared to listen to long preaching

prayers which would be deemed barely tolerable, if delivered from the desk, but which are absolutely insufferable in the shape of prayer.

We write plainly, because we feel the need of great plainness of speech. We deeply feel our want of reality, sincerity and truth in our prayers and prayer meetings. Not unfrequently it happens that what we call prayer is not prayer at all, but the fluent utterance of certain known and acknowledged truths and principles to which one has listened so often that the reiteration becomes tiresome in the extreme. What can be more painful than to hear a man on his knees explaining principles and unfolding doctrines? The question forces itself upon us, "Is the man speaking to God or to us?" If to God, surely nothing can be more irreverent or profane than to attempt to explain things to Him. But if to us, then it is not prayer at all, and the sooner we rise from the attitude of prayer the better, inasmuch as the speaker will do better on his legs, and we in our seats.

And, having referred to the subject of attitude, we would very lovingly call attention to a matter which, in our judgment, demands a little serious consideration. We allude to the habit of sitting during the holy and solemn exercise of prayer. We are fully aware, of course, that the grand question in prayer is to have the *heart* in a right attitude. And further, we know and would ever bear in mind that many who attend our prayer meetings are aged, infirm and delicate people, who could not possibly kneel for any length of time—perhaps not at all. Then again, it often happens that, even where there is not physical weakness, and where

there would be real desire to kneel down, as feeling it to be the proper attitude, yet, from actual want of space, it is impossible to change one's position.

All these things must be taken into account. But, allowing as broad a margin as possible in which to insert these modifying clauses, we must still hold to it that there is a very deplorable lack of reverence in many of our public reunions for prayer. We frequently observe young men, who can neither plead physical weakness nor want of space, sitting through an entire prayer meeting. This, we confess, is offensive; and we cannot but believe it grieves the Spirit of the Lord. We ought to kneel down when we can. It expresses reverence and prostration. The blessed Master "kneeled down and prayed." (Luke xxii. 41.) His apostle did the same, as we read in Acts xx. 36, "When he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all."

And is it not comely and right so to do? Assuredly it is. And can aught be more unseemly than to see a number of people sitting, lolling, lounging and gaping about, while prayer is being offered? We consider it perfectly shocking; and we do here most earnestly beseech all the Lord's people to give this matter their solemn consideration, and to endeavour, in every possible way, both by precept and example, to promote the godly habit of kneeling at our prayer meetings. No doubt those who take part in the meeting would greatly aid in this matter by short and fervent prayers; but of this more hereafter.

(To be continued, if God permit.)



A STRIKING INCIDENT.

A FEW years since, a dear servant of the Lord—a man of colour—on his way from London to a town on the sea-coast (where he was going on his blessed Master's service, and also with the hope of recruiting his health a little, which had become much worn down by arduous duties) entered a railway carriage, in which were several passengers. Having had to hurry to the station, he sat down, and, leaning back in his seat to recover breath, looked out of the window.

Presently the train moved on; and, as they passed the busy crowds still left on the platform, he heaved a sigh at the thought of such multitudes of people rushing through this world without, perhaps, any concern about eternity or their immortal souls. It might be the heavy sigh, or it might be his colour and general appearance, that attracted the notice of an elderly lady who was seated opposite to him, for he soon became conscious that she was regarding him with marked attention.

After a time, she said to her companion, "What an interesting-looking person that is!—he looks ill. What a fine race of people he must belong to! I wonder who he is. Do you think he is a Turk, or a Hindoo?" "I should think he is an Indian," said the young lady. "I wish we could speak to him," continued the elderly lady; "I quite long to tell him about the way to heaven. How sad it is that such a fine, intelligent-looking people should bow down to images and stocks and stones. What a pity we can't speak to him, for he does not seem to understand a word we say." "Perhaps

he may be able to read English a little, if he cannot speak it," suggested the young lady. "You might offer him a tract," said one of the gentlemen. The elderly lady opened her bag, and, from a number, selected one, which she presented to him with a smile, and a motion to read it. He received the tract, bowed his thanks, and read it through in silence.

During the time occupied by our friend in reading the tract, a conversation arose amongst the other passengers respecting the desirability of increased exertion, on the part of this christian land, to send the gospel to the heathen, and much was said about the great good accomplished in various parts by missionary efforts, &c., &c.

Availing himself of a pause in the conversation, our friend, in good English, thanked the lady for her care for his soul, telling her it was an all-important object to him, adding, "I heard you say, madam, you longed to tell me the way to heaven; have the kindness now to tell me how I may be sure of going there—I want to hear that. This tract does not tell how I may be sure *now* that I shall be saved. It tells me to repent of my sins and to pray, but how can I know when I have prayed and repented enough? Can you not tell me plainly how I may be sure of getting to heaven? Have you no other book that tells a poor sinner how he may get to heaven?"

"O yes," said the lady; "the Bible, which is the word of God, was given on purpose to shew the way to heaven. Read the Bible, and pray, and you will be sure to go to heaven."

"Can you shew me in God's word where that is

said? Where does it say if I pray I shall go to heaven? I want to be sure of that. Have you a Bible, madam? and can you point out the words which plainly tell how I may be sure of that?"

She had no Bible in her bag. The other three passengers were appealed to for a Bible, but no one carried a Bible about with them.

At last our friend drew the precious volume from his pocket, and, holding it up, said, "Is that the book you mean, madam? If it be the word of God, given on purpose to shew the way to heaven, it will surely give plain directions. Will you kindly shew me where?"

The lady took the Bible, and, turning over the leaves, confusedly said, "I do not know exactly where to find what I want to shew you, but it says if you repent of your sins, and pray earnestly, you will be saved."

"That does not satisfy me. How am I to know that I have prayed enough to satisfy God? Can you not point out one portion that is enough for me to rest upon?"

Turning to her young companion, she said, "Can you find it?" Receiving a reply in the negative, the poor lady applied to the others in turn; and the Bible was offered to each of the passengers, with the entreaty that they would point out some portion that told plainly how the sinner was to get to heaven. But all confessed their inability to recollect where such passages could be found.

The lady, returning the Bible, said, "Well, I cannot find the place, but if you will call upon the Rev. Mr. —, when you reach F—, he will tell you. He is

a very good man; an evangelical clergyman; and he will be happy to direct you."

"But, madam, we may never reach F——. The train may run off the line, and we may all be killed. We may have a collision. Many things may happen; I do not know that I may live to see F——. Can none of you Christians tell a poor foreigner how he may be saved? You are moved with pity for his darkness and ignorance, can you not help him to the light?"

"I have told you you must pray," said the lady. "The Bible says so."

He took his Bible, and, opening at John iii. 14–16, read out the verses: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Then John v. 24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life;" and Acts xiii. 38, 39: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." "Are these the portions you mean, madam?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, "that is what I could not remember."

"But you told me I must pray and repent. This

precious book tells me to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and I shall be saved—to believe on the Son of God, and I shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Praise to His name! the poor foreigner can trust that blessed word, and know he is safe for heaven—safe through the work of that Lord Jesus Christ which was finished on the cross more than 1800 years ago; and is happy in knowing he is justified from all things, in virtue of that blood shed for sinners, and not by his own prayers and repentance—happy in knowing He has made peace by the blood of His cross!”

He then proceeded at some length to set forth to the astonished fellow-travellers the love that led God to send His Son into this world to die for sinners, and the love that brought the Son to do the will of His Father, &c., &c.

“Stop, sir!” exclaimed one of the gentlemen angrily; “this is no place for such holding forth. It is neither the time nor the place, sir.”

“When is the time, and where is the place, in this christian land, for a Christian to speak of Christ?” calmly, but earnestly, asked our friend.

“Sunday is the time, sir, and the church is the place, but not in a railway carriage. This is a very improper place.”

They had reached the end of their journey, and they parted, to meet no more on earth, for our beloved friend and brother was soon after taken to be for ever with the Lord.

NOTE.—The foregoing incident is not only striking, but very suggestive and illustrative. Here we have a

number of professing Christians, all seeming very anxious about the state of the heathen, and appearing to feel the importance of sending the gospel to them; and yet, when appealed to by one who, for aught they knew, was but a poor heathen, and entreated to tell him the way of salvation, they proved themselves utterly ignorant of it; and, not only so, but one of their number angrily stopped him when, in the fulness of his heart, he sought to tell them of God's blessed way of saving sinners.

Christendom—"wise in her own conceits"—vainly imagines that she will be God's instrument in converting the heathen. Alas! alas! she is only a stumbling-block to the heathen, and will never be used to convert them at all. "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, *to take out of them a people for his name*"—not to convert them all. How are the heathen to be converted? Hear the divine reply—"God be merciful unto *us* (Israel); and bless *us*; and cause his face to shine upon *us*. *That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.* God shall bless *us* (Israel); and *all the ends of the earth shall fear him.*" Psalm lxxvii.

It is through Israel, and not through Christendom, that God will ultimately bless all nations. Now He is gathering out a people, and He is using His own word, far and wide, to this end. But how important for the beloved servants of Christ to work with a divine object before their minds. Would it cripple their energies or clip their wings? Nay, it would only guide their movements.—(Ed.)



MEDITATIONS ON THE BEATITUDES.

(Matthew v. 1-16.)

THE SECOND BEATITUDE.

VERSE 4. "*Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.*" In the different beatitudes, we have placed before us in the most interesting way the beautiful varieties and characteristics of grace. This is also most instructive, and ought to go far in forming our own character after this heavenly model. The second beatitude is perfectly distinct from the first, though both features may be found in the same person. The form in which the divine life expresses itself in the second class, is of a broader and more active character than the first. To be poor in spirit is more a condition between the soul and God alone, and might be possessed in perfection though there were none to mourn over. But to be a "mourner" in the sense of our text, is to be deeply and tenderly affected by the condition—especially the moral and spiritual condition—of others around us. For example: The worldliness of true christians; the manifest delusion of mere professors; the godless ways of those who may be our near neighbours, accompanied with a deep sense of inability to witness for God in such a scene, fills the heart with holy sorrow. At the same time, this holy sorrow, which is so good and wholesome, and which leads to much prayer and dependence on God, must not be mistaken for a low, complaining, unhappy, discontented, mournful spirit in ourselves, which we may think answers to this beatitude. Not so; such would be little likely to enter into the sorrows of others,

or mourn over the dishonour done to God and His truth in this world. They are too much occupied with their own state of mind, and that which immediately concerns themselves.

We may, and ought—if we are poor in spirit and true mourners—to be bright and happy in the divine presence, where all is peace and joy, and yet have fellowship with the deep sympathies of Him who was “a man of sorrows,” in our journey through this world. And the more we know of His spirit, the deeper will be our sense of what is due to Him, and the keener will be our sorrow when we see so many who set themselves against His authority, and use His goodness for the display of their own pride and glory. But, wonderful grace, the Lord submits to be despised and rejected still; and as a tinge of sorrow coloured His path and characterized His sayings in this world, so it must ever be with the godly while the world continues as it is. The Lord patiently waits until His kingdom come in power and glory, and then His will shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Now we have the kingdom in *mystery*. (Matt. xiii.) Then it will be in full *manifestation*. Now demons rule, though God overrules; then Christ and His saints will reign. Could we at any moment, by night or day, unveil the world, what should we see? From the den of poverty to the palace of luxury—one vast scene of human sorrow. This makes the Christian’s heart, however bright and cheerful in the Lord’s presence, sombre and sad in the presence of such universal misery, knowing as he does its real source.

But pray, my soul, speakest thou thus of thyself, of

thine own experience, of what thou hast seen and felt in thy christian course? Could there be this character of feeling without entering, in the Spirit of Christ, into the condition of things around us? It is well never to speak or write beyond our measure: all should be done in the divine presence. Still, it is well to have our hearts challenged. But poor indeed would it be, were it possible, to speak of such things unless it be from the depths of the heart's communion with the rejected Lord; and more, from long and varied experience and observation. It can only be tasted when the heart has a true sense of the moral condition of the church and the world. Then we must "mourn" over the fearful effects of sin and apostasy which meet us at every step. We walk in the midst of ruins. Wrecks of every kind lie strewed around us. Blighted hopes, unexpected calamities, with a multitude of little secret sorrows, characterize the land in which we are strangers and pilgrims, so that like captive Israel of old, "by the waters of Babylon," we may "sit down and weep," though we need not hang our harps on the willows; we are privileged to rejoice daily in the blessed hope of the Lord's coming, when we shall be fully and for ever comforted.

But to explain. How many hast thou seen floating down the stream of time as on a calm summer day, dreaming only of worldly ease and prosperity, when, suddenly, the wind of adversity rises, and all is changed in a moment. Death enters—the messenger little thought of, little expected, enters—the head of the family is suddenly struck down; all is desolate; nothing now is heard but the wail of the widow

and fatherless. But, come these things within the sphere of the Christian's sympathies? Most surely they do, and must so long as we have human hearts. But they are looked at in connection with the groaning creation, and lead us to pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, come." Surely the Lord's heart was touched with such a scene as this, and may not ours? Something like what is occurring daily around us must have been in His mind when He described the rich worldling and his fearful end. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then, whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Luke xii. 20.

Singular enough, while writing these lines, a messenger with heavy tidings arrives; a rich man, well known for many years, has died suddenly. The effect on the mind for the moment is overwhelming. The thoughts run rapidly back over those years; the different times a word was said about the Lord, the soul, is recalled; the confession of their importance, and the promise to think more about them. But who at such a moment can feel satisfied with the measure of their own faithfulness? Did I speak plain enough, often enough, earnest enough? conscience will be ready to ask, and it may be to accuse. But all is now of no avail; the scene is closed; the curtain fallen; and we cross not the dark line which separates the two states of being. Still we may heave a sigh and utter a groan over the sad effects of sin, as the Lord Himself did at the grave of Lazarus; yet no uncertainty was there as to the welfare of the precious, immortal soul. Every believer knows something of the value of the soul and salvation, and if both are lost, who would not mourn?

Nevertheless, the sphere of thy meditations lies more within the limits of the kingdom, and here thou mayest pause for a little.

Nothing is more fitted to fill the heart with real sorrow than the immense number of mere professors. And surely a responsibility beyond that which attaches to the mere worldling, rests with those who take the name and profess to be the followers of Christ. They will be judged by a different standard. Many foolish virgins now mingle with the wise, and their lack of oil seems not to be discovered until it is too late to buy. The door shut and the lamps out will leave them in hopeless darkness and despair. This, alas! will be the portion of many who now hold a high place in the professing church. But how difficult it is to reach that class, how difficult to speak to them; how difficult to know which is which. All have lamps, but all have not oil. They are self-deceived and may never be undeceived until, with awful surprise, they open their eyes in hell, being in torment. Still, the spiritual eye can see, that while much is made of mere externals, very little is made of Christ and of that which is due to Him.

Again, the agony of mind peculiar to the sight of such a state of things, with the painful sense that you can render no help, and can only testify against it by complete separation from it all, seeks relief in sighs and groans before the Lord; you *must* be a mourner with Him, in such a scene. And what may draw forth a yet deeper sigh, you see those there who really belong to the Lord but who refuse to see separation, either from the natural or the religious world.

Thus loneliness in spirit is the inevitable path of a true mourner, his only friends are outside like himself. They mourn together. "Yea, we wept when we remembered Zion." And what was it that drew forth the deep sigh from the "man of sorrows" when here, but the sign-seeking unbelief of His people? "And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily, I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation." It is still the same: something like a sign that appeals to the senses is believed in and eagerly run after, while the blessed Lord in rejection, outside the camp, has as little attraction for the sign-seeking multitude now as then. True, Christ and His cross are not left out; that would be equally unpopular; but gather around His name the glory of the world, and multitudes will cry "Hosannah to the Son of David;" but when the cross with its shame and rejection is presented and the pilgrim staff, it is "Away with him, away with him."

The mourner must now retire into his secret chamber and breathe out his sorrow into the bosom of his Lord. He must stand aloof from all this sad mixture of the church and the world, well knowing that he will be judged as wanting in brotherly love, and uncharitably affected towards other Christians. He will not have his sorrows to seek; but the Lord knows it all, and he *shall be comforted*. The time is coming when he will enter into the joy of his Lord, and reap the fruit of his testimony for Him throughout eternity. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Every tear that has been shed, every sigh that has gone up to

God, every groan that has been uttered in sympathy with a rejected Christ, are all treasured by Him as the memorials of His own grace working in us, and will surely be held in everlasting remembrance.

The Lord grant unto my dear reader, the true knowledge of Jesus, not only as Saviour and Lord, but as the Man of Sorrows, who went about doing good, though with the deep abiding sense of rejection in His tender, loving heart. May we enter with our whole heart into the sympathies and hopes of our blessed Lord as to this wide-spread scene of sin and sorrow, until He return to fill it with joy and gladness. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Thy sympathies and hopes are ours ;
Dear Lord ! we wait to see
Creation, all—below, above,
Redeemed and blessed by Thee.

Our longing eyes would fain behold
That bright and blessed brow,
Once wrung with bitterest anguish, wear
Its crown of glory now.



“ COME ! ”

WHAT power and sweetness in this little word “*Come!*” How it lets us into the very secret of the bosom of God, and tells of the loving desire of His heart ; that any and every poor lost one who hears it, should take Him at His word, and “*Come.*” “*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*” Isaiah iv.

Here, every thirsty, needy, penniless one is invited to come. It is the desire of the loving heart of God that he should come—come now—come just as he is and drink at the living fountain of water, so freely opened by the hand of redeeming love. There is no hindrance. Grace has removed every difficulty out of the way. The very fact of God's sending forth the invitation to come, proves that He has taken away every barrier. He would not—He could not say "Come," if the way were not perfectly open—perfectly free. And not only so, but we may rest assured that, when God says "Come," He means what He says. He expresses the language of His heart. In a word, not only is the way open, but God earnestly desires that every thirsty, needy, helpless soul that reads these lines should come now and drink—come and draw water out of those wells of salvation which are freely opened to every creature under heaven.

Take another lovely passage culled from the prophet Isaiah. "*Come now*, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Chap. i. 18.) Here, it is not merely a question of thirst and poverty; but actually of scarlet sins—guilt of crimson dye. Even these need be no hindrance, seeing that God, in His infinite grace, has found a means whereby He can righteously cleanse the guilt and blot out the sins, and render the soul of the poor guilty sinner as white as snow, as the wool just pure from the washing.

And let the reader specially mark the grace that shines in the words, "Come now, and let us reason

together." Only think of the high and mighty One that inhabiteth eternity—the Maker of heaven and earth—the Creator and sustainer of the universe—the One who has power to destroy both soul and body in hell—think of His condescending to reason with a poor guilty sinner, covered from head to foot with scarlet sins! What grace is here! What lovingkindness and tender mercy! Who can withstand it? Who can refuse to come? Who will harden his heart against such love as this? God grant the reader may not do so! Oh! that he may come now and trust in the perfect, because divine, efficacy of that most precious blood—even the blood of God's own Son, which cleanseth *from all sin*, and makes the soul clean enough to stand in the full blaze of the holiness of God.

Take a sentence or two from the gospel—from the very lips of Him who spake as never man spake—the lips of our adorable Saviour and Lord. "*Come unto me*, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. xi. 28.) Here the labouring and the heavy-laden are called to hearken to the same most touching, gracious, winning word, "*Come!*" Every weary, burdened heart—every crushed and broken spirit is invited to come to Jesus, who alone is able and willing—willing as He is able, and able as He is willing to give rest. Oh! what a soothing word is "*rest!*" How it falls upon the poor heart like showers upon the parched and thirsty ground!

Reader, do come, we beseech you. Come now, and have your thirst quenched, your burden removed, your sins forgiven, your guilt cancelled. Come, we

earnestly entreat you, now. Do not linger. Time is so short. Eternity, with all its tremendous realities, is at hand. Oh! do COME NOW!



FOLLOWING CHRIST.

O! can I leave this gay and glitt'ring world,
In fellowship with Jesus now to roam?
Let every prospect to the winds be hurled,
And seek, alone with Him, the rest to come.

And can I bear reproach, and shame and scorn,
Nor dread to meet e'en poverty's cold frown?
And in the wilderness, as one forlorn,
With Jesus bear the cross, and seek the crown?

'Tis hard, to flesh and blood, 'tis hard to part
With every earthly joy, and all forsake;
To tear each fond affection from the heart,
To follow Jesus, and His cross partake.

But has He not forsaken all for me?
The brightest glories of the throne on high,
To live on earth despised, and on the tree
To bear my sins, to suffer, bleed and die?

Can I reflect upon His sufferings deep?
Can I consider well His shame and woe?
And yet, by trifles vain, be lulled to sleep,
Nor watch with Him, one hour against the foe!

'Tis but a little while, and then the hour
Of pain and sorrow, shall have passed away;
Tho' now the clouds be dark and tempests lower,
Soon comes a cloudless, bright, eternal day.

Till then the world may frown, and men despise,
Through all, my Saviour will my soul sustain.
The crown in view, the cross before my eyes,
"To me, to live is Christ, to die is gain."



CORRESPONDENCE.

34. "E. P. F.," Halifax. The gifts named in Romans xii. differ from those in 1 Corinthians xii. and Ephesians iv. In 1 Corinthians xii. it is more a question of divine *power* displayed in man, as a testimony to the *world*. In Ephesians iv. gifts are the precious fruit of Christ's *love* to the *church*—they are for the edifying of the body, and shall continue until that body is complete. In Romans xii. we have ministry flowing from the various members of the body, each acting in his own proper sphere, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith, and according to the grace given. It is not so much the power of God in testimony to the world, or the love of Christ in the edifying of the body; but rather the ordinary ministry of the members exercised in individual faith, from day to day, according to the grace bestowed. It presents ministry as an abiding institution in the church of God, in its simplest and broadest features. It is hardly possible to read the three scriptures in connection, without seizing the main points of distinction. Oh! the moral glories of the volume!

35. "E. H.," Southsea. It was sin that gave Satan the power of death, a power which he brought to bear upon the soul of man, to terrify him. But Christ, by dying, wrested this power out of Satan's hand, and has so completely changed the character of death, that it is actually part of the believer's property. (1 Cor. iii.) Wondrous fact!

36. "J. F.," Basingstoke. We vastly prefer the reading in our Authorised Version.

37. "P. R.," Selkirk. In volume xv. of this publication, page 145, you will find a paper on the subject of your note.

38. "W., an Invalid." Your answer to such curious questions is truly admirable. You could not give a better one.

“GILGAL.”

(Conclusion.)

IN closing this series of brief papers on Gilgal, we must turn our thoughts to the practical application of that which has been engaging our attention. If it be true—and it is true—that Jesus died for us, it is equally true that we have died in Him, as one of our own poets has sweetly put it :

“For me, Lord Jesus, thou hast died
And I have died in thee ;
Thou’rt risen ; my bands are all untied ;
And now thou livest in me.
The Father’s face of radiant grace
Shines now in light on me.”

Now this is a great practical truth—none more so. It lies at the very foundation of all true Christianity. If Christ has died for us, then, in very deed, He has taken us completely out of our old condition, with all that appertained to it, and placed us upon an entirely new footing. We can look back, from resurrection ground, into the dark river of death, and see there, in its deepest depths, the memorial of the victory gained for us by the Prince of Life. We do not look forward to death ; we look back at it. We can truly say, “The bitterness of death is past.”

Jesus met death for us, in its most terrible form. Just as the river of Jordan was divided when it presented its most formidable appearance—“For Jordan overfloweth all its banks all the time of harvest”—so our Jesus encountered our last great enemy, vanquished him in his most terrific form, and left behind, in the very centre of death’s dark and dreary domain,

the imperishable record of His glorious victory. All praise, homage, and adoration to His peerless name ! It is our privilege, by faith and in spirit, to stand on Canaan's side of Jordan, and erect our memorial of what the Saviour, the true Joshua, has done for us.

“And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying, Take you twelve men out of the people, *out of every tribe a man*. And command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, *out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm*, twelve stones ; and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging-place where ye shall lodge this night. Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, *out of every tribe a man*. And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the Lord your God, into the midst of Jordan, and ke you up *every man of you* a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel. That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones ? Then ye shall answer them, that the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord ; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off : and these stones shall be *for a memorial* unto the children of Israel for ever.” Joshua iv. 1-7.

The great fact was to be seized, and practically carried out, by the whole assembly—“of every tribe a man”—“Every man of you a stone upon his shoulder”—a stone taken from the very spot where the priests'

feet stood firm. All were to be brought into living personal contact with the great mysterious fact that the waters of Jordan were cut off. All were to engage in erecting such a memorial of this fact as should elicit inquiry from their children as to what it meant. It was never to be forgotten.

What a lesson is here for us ! Are we erecting our memorial ? Are we giving evidence—such evidence as may strike even the mind of a child—of the fact that our Jesus has vanquished the power of death for us ? Are we affording any practical proof in daily life that Christ has died for us, and that we have died in Him ? Is there aught in our actual history, from day to day, answering to the figure set forth in the passage just quoted—"every man of you a stone upon his shoulder ?" Are we declaring plainly that we have passed clean over Jordan—that we belong to heaven—that we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit ? Do our children see aught in our habits and ways, in our spirit and deportment, in our whole character and manner of life, leading them to inquire, "What mean ye by these things ?" Are we living as those who are dead with Christ—dead to sin—dead to the world ? Are we practically sitting loose to the world—letting go our hold of present things, in the power of communion with a risen Christ ?

These are searching questions for the soul, beloved christian reader. Let us seek to meet them honestly as in the divine presence. We profess these things, we hold them in theory. We say we believe that Jesus died for us, and that we died in Him. Where is the proof ? Where the abiding memorial ? Where the

stone on the shoulder? Let us judge ourselves honestly before God. Let us no longer rest satisfied with anything short of the thorough, practical, habitual, carrying out of the great truth, that "We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." Mere profession is worthless. We want the living power—the true result—the proper fruit.

"And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho. And *those twelve stones which they took out of Jordan*"—stones of peculiar import—no other stones could tell such a tale, teach such a lesson, or symbolize such a stupendous fact—no other stones like them—"those twelve stones did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, *Israel came over this Jordan on dry land*. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over. That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord that it is mighty; that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever."

Here, then, we see Israel at Gilgal. "Everything was finished that the Lord commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua." Every member of the host had passed clean over Jordan, not one had been suffered to feel the slightest touch of the river of death. Grace had brought them all safely over into the inheritance promised to

their fathers. They were not only separated from Egypt by the Red Sea, but actually brought into Canaan across the dry bed of the Jordan, and encamped in Gilgal, in the plains of Jericho.

And now mark what follows. "And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites which were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel. *At that time*"—note the words! when all the nations were paralyzed with terror at the very thought of this people—"At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee *sharp knives*, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time."

How deeply significant is this! How suggestive are these "*sharp knives!*" How needful! If Israel are about to bring the sword upon the Canaanites, Israel must have the sharp knife applied to themselves. They had never been circumcised in the wilderness. The reproach of Egypt had never been rolled away from them. And ere they could celebrate the passover, and eat of the old corn of the land of Canaan, they must have the sentence of death written upon them. No doubt this was aught but agreeable to nature, but it must be done. How could they take possession of Canaan with the reproach of Egypt resting upon them? How could uncircumcised people dispossess the Canaanites! Impossible. The sharp knives had to do their work throughout the camp of Israel ere they could eat of Canaan's food, or prosecute its warfare.

“And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise. All the people that came out of Egypt that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt. . . . And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised ; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way. . . . And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal (“rolling”) unto this day. 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.”

Here, then, we have a type of the full Christian position. The Christian is a heavenly man, dead to the world, crucified with Christ, associated with Him where He now is ; and, while waiting for His appearing, occupied in heart with Him, feeding, by faith, upon Him as the proper nourishment of the new man.

Such is the Christian's position—such his portion ; but in order to enter fully into the enjoyment thereof, there must be the application of the “sharp knife” to all that belongs to mere nature. There must be the

sentence of death written upon that which scripture designates “the old man.”

All this must be really and practically entered into, if we would maintain our position, or enjoy our proper portion as heavenly men. If we are indulging nature, if we are living in a low, worldly atmosphere, if we are going in for this world’s pursuits, its pleasures, its politics, its riches, its honours, its fashions, and its distinctions, then, verily, it is impossible that we can be enjoying fellowship with our risen Head and Lord.* Christ is in heaven, and to enjoy Him we must be living, in spirit and by faith, where He is. He is not of this world; and if we are of it, we cannot be enjoying fellowship with Him. “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” 1 John i. 6.

This is most solemn. If I am living in and of the world, I am walking in darkness, and I can have no fellowship with a heavenly Christ. “Wherefore,” says the blessed apostle, “if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, *as though living in the world*, are ye subject to ordinances?” Do we really understand these words? Have we weighed the

* The reader may here remark that “the old corn of the land of Canaan is a type of Christ risen and glorified. The manna is a type of Christ in His humiliation. The remembrance of Him in the latter is ineffably precious to the soul. It is sweet to look back and trace His way, as the lowly, humble, self-emptied man. This is to feed upon the hidden manna—“Christ once humbled here.” Nevertheless, a risen, ascended, and glorified Christ is the true object for the heart of the Christian; but to enjoy this object, the reproach of this present evil world must be rolled away from us by the spiritual application of the circumcision of Christ.

full force of the expression, "living in the world?" Is the Christian not to be as one living in the world? Clearly not. He is to live in spirit where Christ is. As to fact, He is obviously on this earth, moving up and down, and in and out, in the varied relations of life, and in the varied spheres of action in which the hand of God has set him. But his home is in heaven. His life is there. His object, his rest, his proper *all*, is in heaven. He does not belong to earth. His citizenship is in heaven; and in order to make this good in actual practice, from day to day, there must be the denial of self, the mortification of our members.

All this comes vividly out in Colossians iii. Indeed, it would be impossible to give a more striking exposition of the entire subject of "Gilgal" than that presented in the following lines: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." And now comes the true spiritual import and application of "Gilgal" and its "sharp knives." "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth."

May the Holy Spirit lead us into a deeper and fuller understanding of our place, portion, and practice, as Christians! Would to God that we better knew what it is to feed upon the old corn of the land, at the true spiritual Gilgal, that thus we might be better fitted for the conflict and service to which we are called.



PRAYER AND THE PRAYER MEETING.

(PART II.)

WE shall now proceed to consider, in the light of holy scripture, the moral conditions or attributes of prayer. There is nothing like having the authority of the divine word for everything in the entire range of our practical christian life. Scripture must be our one grand and conclusive referee in all our questions. Let us never forget this.

What, then, saith the scripture as to the necessary moral conditions of prayer? Turn to Matthew xviii. 19: "Again I say unto you, that *if two of you shall agree* on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

Here we learn that one necessary condition of our prayers is *unanimity*—cordial agreement—thorough oneness of mind. The true force of the words is, "If two of you shall symphonise"—shall make one common sound. There must be no jarring note, no discordant element.

If, for example, we come together to pray about the progress of the gospel—the conversion of souls, we must be of one mind in the matter. We must make one common sound before our God. It will not do for each to have some special thought of his own to carry out. We must come before the throne of grace in holy harmony of mind and spirit, else we cannot claim an answer, on the ground of Matthew xviii. 19.

Now, this is a point of immense moral weight. Its

importance, as bearing upon the tone and character of our prayer-meetings, cannot possibly be over-estimated. It is very questionable indeed whether any of us have given sufficient attention to it. Have we not to deplore the objectless character of our prayer-meetings? Ought we not to come together more with some definite object on our hearts, as to which we are going to wait together upon God? We read, in the first chapter of Acts, in reference to the early disciples, "These all continued *with one accord* in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."* And again, in the second chapter, we read, "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were *all with one accord in one place.*"

They were waiting, according to our Lord's instructions, for the promise of the Father, the gift of the Holy Ghost. They had the sure word of promise. The Comforter was, without fail, to come; but this, so far from dispensing with prayer, was the very ground of its blessed exercise. They prayed; they prayed in one place; they prayed with one accord. They were thoroughly agreed. They all, without exception, had one definite object before their hearts. They were waiting for the promised Spirit; they continued to wait; and they waited with one accord, until He came. Men and women absorbed with one object, waited in holy concord, in happy symphony—waited

* How interesting to find "Mary the mother of Jesus" named here, as being at the prayer meeting! What would she have said if any one had told her that millions of professing Christians would yet be praying to her?

on, day after day, earnestly, fervently, harmoniously waited until they were endued with the promised power from on high.

Should not we go and do likewise? Is there not a sad lack of this "one accord"—"one place"—principle in our midst? True it is, blessed be God, we have not to ask for the Holy Ghost to come. He has come. We have not to ask for the out-pouring of the Spirit. He has been poured out. But we have to ask for the display of His blessed power in our midst. Supposing our lot is cast in a place where spiritual death and darkness reign. There is not so much as a single breath of life, not a leaf stirring; the heaven above seems like brass; the earth beneath, iron. Such a thing as a conversion is never heard of. A withering formalism seems to have settled down upon the entire place. Powerless profession—dead routine—stupefying mechanical religiousness are the order of the day. What is to be done? Are we to allow ourselves to fall under the fatal influence of the surrounding malaria? Are we to yield to the paralysing power of the atmosphere that enwraps the place? Assuredly not.

If not, what then? Let us, even if there be but two who really feel the condition of things, get together, with one accord, and pour out our hearts to God. Let us wait on Him, in holy concord, with united, firm purpose, until He send a copious shower of blessing upon the barren spot. Let us not fold our arms and vainly say, "The time is not come." Let us not yield to that pernicious offshoot of a one-sided theology, which is rightly called fatalism, and say, "God is

sovereign, and He works according to His own will. We must wait His time. Human effort is in vain. We cannot get up a revival. We must beware of mere excitement."

All this seems very plausible ; and the more so because there is a measure of truth in it ; indeed it is all true, so far as it goes. But it is only one side of the truth. It is truth, and nothing but the truth ; but it is not *the whole truth*. Hence its mischievous tendency. There is nothing more to be dreaded than one-sided truth ; it is far more dangerous than positive, palpable error. Many an earnest soul has been stumbled and turned completely out of the way by one-sided or misapplied truth. Many a true-hearted and useful workman has been chilled, repulsed, and driven out of the harvest field, by the injudicious enforcement of certain doctrines having a measure of truth, but not *the full truth* of God.

Nothing, however, can touch the truth, or weaken the force of Matthew xviii. 19. It stands in all its blessed fulness, freeness, and preciousness before the eye of faith ; its terms are clear and unmistakeable. "If two of you shall agree upon earth, as touching *anything* that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." Here is our warrant for coming together to pray for anything that may be laid on our hearts. Do we mourn over the coldness, barrenness, and death around us ? Are we discouraged by the little apparent fruit from the preaching of the gospel—the lack of power in the preaching itself, and the total absence of practical result ? Are our souls cast down by the barrenness, dulness, heavi-

ness and low tone of all our reunions, whether at the table of our Lord, before the mercy-seat, or around the fountain of holy scripture?

What are we to do? Fold our arms in cold indifference? Give up in despair? Or give vent to complaining, murmuring, fretfulness or irritation? God forbid! What then? Come together, "with one accord in one place." Get down on our faces before our God, and pour out our hearts, as the heart of one man, pleading Matthew xviii. 19.

This, we may rest assured, is the grand remedy—the unfailing resource. It is perfectly true that "God is sovereign;" and this is the very reason why we should wait on Him. Perfectly true that "Human effort is in vain;" and that is the very reason for seeking divine power. Perfectly true that "We cannot get up a revival;" and that is the very reason for seeking to get it *down*. Perfectly true that "We must beware of mere excitement." Equally true that we must beware of coldness, deadness, and selfish indifference.

The simple fact is, there is no excuse whatever—so long as Christ is at the right hand of God—so long as God the Holy Ghost is in our midst and in our hearts—so long as we have the word of God in our hands—so long as Matthew xviii. 19 shines before our eyes—there is, we repeat, no excuse whatever for barrenness, deadness, coldness, and indifference—no excuse for heavy and unprofitable meetings—no excuse whatever for lack of freshness in our reunions or of fruitfulness in our service. Let us wait on God, in holy concord, and the blessing is sure to come.

(To be continued if the Lord will.)

“CAN I LIVE, SIR?”

So said one, a few weeks ago, to a surgeon in the Middlesex Hospital. She had met with a fearful accident—was all but crushed to death—and carried into the hospital. When the surgeon was examining the nature and extent of the injury, she asked him plainly, “Can I live, sir? Can I get better?” The answer was a solemn one: “No; impossible.” But, happily for her, she was prepared for it, and received it, solemn as it truly was, with great presence of mind. Though life was ebbing fast, she was enabled to raise her hands in the attitude of praise, and exclaimed, “Thank God this did not happen yesterday!” Soon after she passed away to the presence of Jesus in the paradise of God. When absent from the poor crushed body she was present with the Lord. We have not the satisfaction of knowing all she said and felt before she died, precious and interesting as these moments must have been; but we know all was peace as to the salvation of her soul. And a loving Saviour was there; only the light of His presence could comfort and sustain her heart amidst the overwhelming realities of that trying moment.

“Safe in the arms of Jesus, safe on His gentle breast,
There by His love o’ershadow’d, sweetly my soul shall rest.
Hark! ’tis the voice of angels, borne on a song to me,
Over the fields of glory, over the jasper sea.

Jesus, my heart’s dear refuge, Jesus has died for me;
Firm on the Rock of Ages, ever my trust shall be.
Here let me wait with patience, wait till the night is o’er;
Wait till I see the morning break on the golden shore.”

It has seldom been our privilege to see or hear of a

more striking instance of the Lord's sovereign grace, or one more distinctly marked with the merciful and loving hand of the Lord, than the case of this young woman.

Great zeal has been manifested by many Christians during the “mission week,” in many parts of London, in order to induce all ranks and classes to attend these services, and in numberless instances the Lord has blessed these efforts to the salvation of precious souls. Our young friend who met with so violent a death was one of these.

A lady—one of these praiseworthy, zealous workers—observing a young woman with rather an undecided appearance, but not far from the church door, invited her to come in. The girl at first refused; after a little more kind entreaty, she made the excuse of having no bible. The lady at once said, “I will lend you mine.” Being thus overcome by such love and kindness, she accepted the bible, and went in. God was working there. She soon felt His power in her conscience. Her sins—oh, how many, how great—rose up before her! She was thoroughly broken down, and wept very much. Several talked with her; at length she found peace in believing. Now she knew Jesus as her Saviour—she was cleansed by His blood, and saved by His grace for ever. “Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it; and God doeth it that men should fear before him.” Ecclesiastes iii. 14.

The lady, as we may well imagine, was greatly interested in all that had taken place during that eventful evening. When about to part, the girl gave back the

bible to her kind friend ; but, as the Lord would have it, He so filled the heart of His servant with love to her new child in the faith, that she said to the girl, "No, I will not take it back ; you must keep it ; but let me write something in it." She then marked, as we understand, some portions of scripture, for the young woman to read by herself with prayer. Having handed her the bible, they parted, but to meet no more in this world. It was their first and last meeting in this life, but soon to meet where no accident can ever separate them, and where they will live and love, and dwell together in the eternal sunshine of their Saviour's presence. What joy it will give to speak of their first meeting then, of that memorable bible, of the short, but rough, journey home ! And what deep springs of praise such tender recollections will open up, as one after another join the happy throng, to speak of His love, and to be sundered no more for ever !

This same lady, being in the habit of visiting the Middlesex Hospital, happened to call there the following day, when one of the attendants informed her that a bible, with her name in it, had been found in one of the beds. Greatly surprised at hearing this, she had the bible immediately brought to her ; when, to her still greater astonishment, she found it was the very bible she had given to the young woman the previous evening. Then the whole tragical scene was laid before her—the accident, her last words, her death, her dear bible. The lady's feelings, if ever to be described, must be so by herself. The reader must imagine, as the writer does, the joys and the sorrows that must have agitated her mind for the moment. The scenes

of the past evening would flash, quick as lightning, through her mind. The preaching, the weeping, the confessing, the believing, the rejoicing, the parting. Yesterday, a thoughtless sinner; last evening, a saved soul; this morning, crushed to death; this afternoon, in heaven. What a crowding of the most momentous events in human history within the brief space of twenty-four hours! But this is not all, thank the Lord.

Had it not been for the bible, she might have passed off the scene without her christian friends' knowing what had become of her. They might have wondered why she never came back to any of the meetings, and they might have concluded that the case was not a genuine one. Many, we doubt not, will re-appear at last whom we have lost sight of in this world. But the bible led to her identification. A telegram was sent to her mother. And now came out the sweetest part of her wonderful history during that eventful day. It appears that she had written to her mother immediately on her returning from the meeting, and posted her letter before going to bed. And it is from this letter that the state of her mind is best known. She asks her mother's forgiveness before she sleeps; beautiful witness of God's light shining in the conscience.

Without professing to be exact as to words, the facts—as we learnt them from the lips of one who entered most heartily into these mission services, and is personally acquainted with the particulars—are these:—She was a maid servant, but had been so utterly careless and thoughtless, if not wanting in all right feeling,

that she had not written to her mother for two years, and had not been in any place of worship for six years. But now she must tell her mother of the Lord's goodness, of her own naughtiness, and ask her forgiveness before she rests. What grace, we may exclaim, for all heaven to interest itself in such an one! This is a character of grace far beyond our comprehension. But such is the grace of God. The purposes of His love must be accomplished. He who numbers the hairs of our head, can prevent one being injured until His blessed work of grace is done. He knows the end from the beginning, and can provide for the future. We know nothing of to-morrow, and must daily put all our trust in Him. And sweet and sure is the promise, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Psalm ii. 12.

But what of the poor mother! Scarcely had the joyous news of the daughter's conversion and complete change of mind reached her, when the telegram arrived to say what had happened. What a day for that mother! But she could not realize it all at once. What does all this mean? says the bewildered mind, as sorrow follows hard upon the heels of joy. But there is no bitterness in the cup; the bitterness of death is passed for all who believe in Jesus. It comes, though in the roughest form, as the messenger of peace; it comes to close the pilgrim's weary path, and conduct him to the realms of eternal rest.

May the Lord raise up many with good heart to invite and entreat lost and careless sinners to come to where the gospel is preached, especially to where God is working. Have faith in Him. Be much in prayer.

It is work for eternity. When all the monuments of human fame shall have crumbled into dust; when all that bore the name of human greatness or human glory shall be entirely forgotten; the saved soul shall abide for ever, a monument of redeeming love and of christian zeal. Speaking of the two who have been occupying our thoughts, which, we may ask, will know the deeper joy when they meet above? To know this we must wait till then; but in the meantime may we be unwearied in this work of faith, this labour of love. How truly thankful that lady must now feel who did not take the first "no" for an answer, but persevered till the poor Christless soul had entered the place where God was working. May we remember the Master's word, "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." Luke xiv.

But what of those who have been often invited, and still refuse to come? Were they to be removed suddenly, what must the end be? Far away from God, and Christ, and heaven, and happiness; in the dark, distant, regions of hopeless despair. No more loving invitations, no more tears of tender interest, no more mission weeks, no more gospel services, no more companying with those that fear God—all is past; the door of mercy is closed, and the arm of mercy is withdrawn for ever. Come now, we entreat thee; the work goes on, and never more than now. Great numbers are being gathered in. God is working by the gospel everywhere. Come where His grace shines and where faith triumphs by the power of His Spirit, and thou wilt surely be saved. Come with that expectation and no disappointment can be thine.

"Come," said one, a little while ago, to a rough-looking man; "you come in to the preaching—you will find *Jesus there*." With this in his mind, "You will find Jesus there," he entered. At a late hour he was still in his seat, and, when spoken to, he repeated the words. "You will find Jesus there, I was told, and I want to be sure that I have found Him before I leave." All is well, and well for ever, when the heart is so set on having Jesus. No heart ever was set on finding Him that will not possess Him, and enjoy Him for ever. Come, O come, my dear reader, take thy place; it may be in the preaching-room, but be sure that in thy heart thou art at the feet of Jesus, and thou wilt never rise from these blessed feet unsaved. The mighty work is done, the ransom is fully paid, thou hast only to believe the gospel, and rest by faith on the unfailing word of the living God. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." 1 Peter iii. 18.



"LOOK."

HERE we have another of those expressive little words which embody so much in their brief compass, and open up a wide field of truth before the vision of the soul. We have a lovely instance of the use of this word in Isaiah xlv. "*Look unto me*, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Verse 22.

In the preceding verse we have a very fine statement of the character of the One to whom we are told to look. "Assemble yourselves and come; draw near

together, ye that are escaped of the nations ; they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near ; yea, let them take counsel together : who hath declared this from ancient time ? who hath told it from that time ? have not I the Lord ? and there is no God else beside me ; A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOUR ; there is none beside me.”

Here, then, is the One to whom we are told to “look.” He is “a just God.” But if this were all, a guilty sinner dare not look to Him, for anything but judgment and eternal condemnation. The only possible issue of a meeting between a just God and a guilty man, is the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. A just God must punish sin. He cannot pass over a single speck or stain. It would involve the denial of His nature and the overthrow of His government were He to pass over the smallest atom of sin. It cannot possibly be. “He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.” Sin, wherever it is found, can only be met by the just judgment of God.

But mark the beauteous and most marvellous combination ! Blessed be His name, we are not called to “look” merely to “a just God.” This would be terrible. Yea, it would be inevitable destruction. But when we listen to the other title which grace has linked on to “a just God,” all is changed. He is not only “a just God” but “a Saviour.” Precious fact for us poor sinners !

But how can God be just and a Saviour ? The cross yields the glorious answer. There justice had all its very

highest claims answered. There the majesty of heaven was vindicated. There, sin was thoroughly condemned. There, all the demands of the throne were perfectly met. There, all the divine attributes were gloriously harmonised. There, the most convincing evidence was afforded to all created intelligence, that God could never let sin into His presence.

In one word, then, the cross is the only platform on which we can behold "A just God and a Saviour." There we see how God can be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. The atoning death of Christ forms the righteous ground on which God can "receive back His banished." Christ bore the just judgment of God against sin, in order that as a Saviour God He might receive to His bosom the very vilest sinner that simply looks to Him.

But who are they that are called to look? Is it some special class? No, thank God, it is not His way to limit His gracious invitation. Theology does this; but God never does. Hear the seraphic words, once more: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, *all the ends of the earth.*" Such is the wide aspect of God's salvation. When God spoke as a Law-giver, He addressed Himself to one people; but when He speaks as a "just God and a Saviour," He addresses Himself to "all the ends of the earth."

And may any one "look?" It is not only that he *may* but he *ought*—not only is he *permitted* but *commanded*. It is a command issued to all the ends of the earth. This includes every one who hears the message. It includes the reader of these lines. Yes, beloved reader, whoever you are, you are this mo-

ment commanded to "look and be saved." Before you can refuse the application of this word to your self, you must prove that you do not come within the range of "all the ends of the earth."

Here we are at issue with theology, because theology is at issue with the heart of God—the grace of God—the Christ of God—the word of God. Theology limits; God does not. Theology says, "Some;" God says, "All." All are commanded to "look." True they *will* not; but that is their awful responsibility. Theology says, "Man cannot look, and hence it is only deceiving him to tell him to do so." Does a just God deceive people? Will theology dare to say so? Well, it is God who commands "all the ends of the earth" to "look unto him and be saved."

Yes, reader, one look at a Saviour God is salvation for thee. Never mind theology, or the puzzling, withering dogmas of theologians. Harken to God. Remember He commands you to "look unto him and be saved." You cannot get over this. You cannot shake off your solemn, personal responsibility to look, this moment, to a Saviour God. Leave theology and theologians to settle their questions with God; but do you remember that you have a never-dying soul to be saved, and the *only* way of salvation is to hearken to the gracious commandment of "A just God and a Saviour" who says to you, "LOOK UNTO ME."



FAITH TESTED.

JOHN —— was a member of a club, and for a considerable time felt it quite right to be so; he looked upon it

as a prudent provision for his wife and family, in the event of his illness or death.

However, after some time, John began to be exercised in his mind as to his position. That word in 2 Corinthians vi., "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," was brought home with power to his conscience. And, moreover, he began to feel that it was very much better to trust in the living God than in the fund of a club or an association. Wherefore, after much thought and prayer, he sent in his resignation. He did this, not with any thought of condemning other people, but simply because he could not, with a good conscience, continue to be a member of a club.

John was, of course, much blamed by his friends for his imprudent step. Even many of God's people think it quite right to join a club or an association. But John felt that he must, at all cost, obey the word of his Lord. Let others do as they would, he felt that he must walk with God; and he was right.

Some severe remarks were made upon John. Some said, "It's all very well so long as John is able to work; but wait till sickness comes, and we shall see what will become of his faith."

Well, it pleased God to allow sickness to come upon poor John. He was laid aside from work for some time, and all his little stock of money was spent. It was Saturday evening, and there was neither money nor food in the house.

This was a trying moment. John's wife felt keenly to see her children in want, and in the course of the evening she went out to a provision shop, and got some

things on credit. She returned with her apron full, and her husband asked her where she had been. She told him. "Well, my dear," said he, "I am very sorry to have to grieve you ; but I cannot go in debt, for the word of God says, "Owe no man anything!" You must take these things back to Mr. —, and thank him for his kindness in trusting us ; but say I cannot go in debt." He further added, "*Tell him we shall send for the things again.*"

In about an hour after, a person, who knew nothing of John's circumstances, but who had heard of his faithfulness to the truth of God, called, and gave him ten shillings, so that John was able, as he had said, to send for the things again, not now on credit, but in the way of God's appointment.

How important and how beautiful is obedience, in all things, to the word of God ! The selfsame word that says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," says also, "Owe no man anything." John — obeyed both these holy precepts. He did not reason ; he did not attempt to qualify or accommodate the word to his notions ; he simply obeyed ; and God blessed him in his deed, as He ever does and ever will. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." "If a man love me, he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." John xiv.



GOD'S GOOD NEWS.

THE Gospel trumpet now doth sound!
 Glory to the Lamb once slain!
 Come all and spread God's news around!
 Glory to the Lamb once slain!

CHORUS:

The Lamb, the Lamb, the risen Lamb,
 I love the sound of Jesus' name,
 It sets my spirit in a flame,
 Hallelujah to the Lamb!

See sinners how from far they run;
 Glory to the Lamb once slain!
 To hear the Gospel of God's Son;
 Glory to the Lamb once slain!

The Christ hath died upon the tree;
 Glory to the Lamb once slain!
 He tasted death for you and me,
 Glory to the Lamb once slain!

The Lord is risen from the dead,
 Glory to the Lamb once slain!
 Captivity hath captive led;
 Glory to the Lamb once slain!

His blood has washed my sins away,
 Glory to the Lamb once slain!
 God's justice now 's my rest and stay,
 Glory to the Lamb once slain!

My life is now in Jesus risen,
 Glory to the Lamb once slain!
 And I am on my way to heaven,
 Glory to the Lamb once slain!

A. P. C.



CORRESPONDENCE.

39. "C. M. H." We most thoroughly agree with you in judging that "the Lord's table is not the place for cymbals"—that is, we presume, for exuberant manifestations of joy. We remember a Christ dead for us—we recall His cross and passion—His blessed body bruised—His agony—all the attendant circumstances of His last hours—all the ingredients of His bitter cup—all the horrors of that closing scene—we shew forth His death. It is the most solemn and deeply affecting mystery which it is possible for the soul to contemplate; and hence we do not, and cannot, believe that a quantity of hilarious hymn-singing is in moral keeping with such an occasion. True it is, blessed be God, we shew forth His death in the happy consciousness that it is a thing of the past—that "His travail all is o'er"—that that terrible night can never return—that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more. And, further, we celebrate the feast in the deep and blessed sense of His ineffable love in dying for us. But, admitting all this, we feel persuaded that the Lord's supper, as setting forth the Lord's death, is not the occasion for a quantity of desultory hymn-singing—often, alas! a wearisome bodily exercise, as devoid of spiritual intelligence as of moral propriety, and demonstrative only of the ignorance, shallowness, and restlessness, of unsubdued nature. What we long for, on each fresh occasion of surrounding the table of our Lord, is that hush of true spiritual communion and worship, too deep for utterance—that earnest gazing—that profound musing—that devout meditation, which the Holy Ghost alone can produce in our souls. And then, seeing that in the same night in which the supper was instituted, our blessed Lord, and the little band that surrounded Him, sang a hymn ere they went forth to the mount of Olives, we, too, can enjoy a hymn which, in some little measure at least, embodies the

feelings and sentiments proper to such a solemn, holy, and soul-subduing occasion.

Beloved friend, let us unite in entreating our God to grant us all more true devoutness of spirit in all our meetings, but especially at that meeting which takes precedence of all meetings—when we come together to shew forth the Lord's death until He come.

40. "A. H. F." 2 John 10 is not confined to teachers. It says, "If there come *any* unto you," teacher or else. It is a most solemn statement, setting forth the responsibility, even of a Christian lady, to arise and shut the door against any who bring not the doctrine of Christ, lest, by receiving such, or bidding him God speed, she be a partaker of his evil deeds. It is a fine wholesome word for this day of laxity and cool indifference.

41. "J. H. H." If you can lay your hand on volume x. of "Things New and Old," you will find a series of papers on 2 Corinthians v. which will help you. As to Hebrews ix. 27, it does not say "It is appointed unto *all* men once to die." "It is appointed unto men." But the believer is delivered from death and judgment, and brought into a new position altogether, to which death and judgment cannot apply. He has died in Christ, and been judged in Christ, and cannot therefore die and be judged again. True, he may fall asleep, and go to be with Jesus; but this is not death. Christ has abolished death, and brought life and incorruptibility to light by the gospel.

42. "C. M.," Milltown, Dublin. Thanks for the packages of tracts. Had you sent them by book post, with the ends open, they would have come for less than half the postage. We merely mention this for your future guidance.

43. "E. H. C.," Eaton Rise." Procure a copy of "Lectures on the New Testament Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," by W. Kelly. (London: Broom, Paternoster Row.) It can be had also of our publisher, Mr. Morrish, or through any bookseller.



PRAYER AND THE PRAYER-MEETING.

(PART III.)

IF we turn to Matthew xxi. 22, we shall find another of the essential conditions of effectual prayer. “And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive.” This is a truly marvellous statement. It opens the very treasury of heaven to faith. There is absolutely no limit. Our blessed Lord assures us that we shall receive whatsoever we ask in simple faith.

The apostle James, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, gives us a similar assurance, in reference to the matter of asking for wisdom. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that *giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not*; and it shall be given him. But”—here is the moral condition—“let him ask *in faith, nothing wavering*. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall obtain anything of the Lord.”

From both these passages we learn that if our prayers are to have an answer, they must be prayers of faith. It is one thing to utter words in the form of prayer, and another thing altogether to pray in simple faith, in the full, clear, and settled assurance that we shall have what we are asking for. It is greatly to be feared that many of our so-called prayers never go beyond the ceiling of the room. In order to reach the throne of God, they must be borne on the wings of faith, and proceed from hearts united and minds agreed, in one

holy purpose, to wait on our God for the things which we really require.

Now, the question is, are not our prayers and prayer-meetings sadly deficient on this point? Is not the deficiency manifest from the fact that we see so little result from our prayers? Ought we not to examine ourselves as to how far we really understand these two conditions of prayer, namely, unanimity and confidence? If it be true—and it is true, for Christ has said it—that two persons agreed to ask in faith can have whatsoever they ask, why do we not see more abundant answers to our prayers? Must not the fault be in us? Are we not deficient in concord and confidence?

Our Lord, in Matthew xviii. 19, comes down, as we say, to the very smallest plurality—the smallest congregation—even to “two;” but, of course, the promise applies to dozens, scores, or hundreds. The grand point is to be thoroughly agreed, and fully persuaded, that we shall get what we are asking for. This would give a different tone and character altogether to our reunions for prayer. It would make them very much more real than our ordinary prayer-meeting, which, alas! alas! is often poor, cold, dead, objectless, and desultory, exhibiting anything but cordial agreement and unwavering faith.

How vastly different it would be if our prayer-meetings were the result of a cordial agreement on the part of two or more believing souls, to come together, and wait upon God for a certain thing, and to persevere in prayer until they receive an answer. How little we see of this! We attend the prayer-meeting from week to

week—and very right we should ;—but ought we not to be exercised before God as to how far we are agreed in reference to the object or objects which are to be laid before the throne? The answer to this question links itself on to another of the moral conditions of prayer.

Let us turn to Luke xi. “And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves ; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not ; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed ; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his *importunity* he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” Verse 5-10.

These words are of the very highest possible importance, inasmuch as they contain part of our Lord’s reply to the request of His disciples, “Lord, teach us to pray.” Let no one imagine for a moment that we would dare to take it upon ourselves to teach people how to pray. God forbid ! Nothing is further from our thoughts. We are merely seeking to bring the souls of our readers into direct contact with the word of God—the veritable sayings of our blessed Lord and Master—so that, in the light of these sayings, they

may judge for themselves as to how far our prayers and our prayer-meetings come up to the divine standard.

What, then, do we learn from Luke xi.? What are the moral conditions which it sets before us? In the first place, it teaches us to be *definite* in our prayers. "Friend, lend me three loaves." There is a positive need felt and expressed. There is the one thing before the mind, and on the heart; and to this one thing he confines himself. It is not a long, rambling, desultory statement about all sorts of things. It is distinct, direct, and pointed. I want three loaves; I cannot do without them; I must have them; I am shut up; the case is urgent; the time of night—all the circumstances give definiteness and earnestness to the appeal. He cannot wander from the one point, "Friend, lend me three loaves."

No doubt it seems a very untoward time to come—"midnight." Everything looks discouraging. The friend has retired for the night—the door is shut—his children are with him in bed—he cannot rise. All this is very depressing; but still the definite need is pressed. He must have the three loaves.

Now, we cannot but judge that there is a great practical lesson here which may be applied, with immense profit, to our prayers and our prayer-meetings. Must we not admit that our reunions for prayer suffer sadly from long, rambling, desultory prayers? Do we not frequently give utterance to a whole host of things of which we do not really feel the need, and which we have no notion of waiting for at all? Should we not sometimes be taken very much aback were the Lord to

appear to us, at the close of our prayer-meeting, and ask us, "What do you really want me to give or to do?"

We feel most thoroughly persuaded that all this demands our serious consideration. We believe it would impart great earnestness, freshness, glow, depth, reality, and power to our prayer-meetings, were we to attend with something definite on our hearts, as to which we could invite the fellowship of our brethren. Some of us seem to think it necessary to make one long prayer about all sorts of things—many of them very right and very good, no doubt—but the mind gets bewildered by the multiplicity of subjects. How much better to bring some one object before the throne, earnestly urge it, and pause, so that the Holy Spirit may lead out others, in like manner, either for this same thing, or something else equally definite.

Long prayers are terribly wearisome; indeed, in many cases, they are a positive infliction. It will, perhaps, be said that we must not prescribe any time to the Holy Spirit. Far away be the monstrous thought! Who would venture upon such a piece of daring blasphemy? But how is it that we never find long prayers in scripture? The most marvellous prayer that ever was uttered in this world can be slowly, calmly, and impressively read in less than five minutes. We refer to the Lord's prayer, in John xvii. And as to the prayer which our Lord taught His disciples, it can be uttered in less than a minute. See also the comprehensive prayer of the disciples, in Acts iv. 24—30; and those two marvellous prayers of the inspired apostle, in Ephesians i.; iii. Indeed, we may say,

without exaggeration, that if all the prayers recorded in the New Testament were read consecutively, they would not occupy nearly so much time as we have frequently known to be occupied by a single prayer in some of our so-called prayer-meetings.

Are we presuming to dictate to the Holy Ghost? Again we emphatically exclaim, "Far away be the horrible idea!" We are simply comparing what we find in scripture with what we too often—not always, thank God!—find in our prayer-meetings.

Let it, then, be distinctly borne in mind, that "long prayers" are not to be found in scripture. They are referred to, no doubt, but it is in terms of withering disapproval. And we may further add, that, during very many years of close observation, we have invariably noticed that the prayers of our most spiritual, devoted, intelligent, and experienced brethren have been characterized by brevity, definiteness, and simplicity. This is right and good. It is according to scripture, and it tends to edification, comfort, and blessing. Brief, fervent, pointed prayers impart great freshness and interest to the prayer-meeting; but, on the other hand, as a general rule, long and desultory prayers exert a most depressing influence upon all.

But there is another very important moral condition set forth in our Lord's teaching, in Luke xi., and that is "*importunity*." He tells us that the man succeeds in gaining his object simply by his importunate earnestness. He is not to be put off; he must get the three loaves. Importunity prevails even where the claims of friendship prove inoperative. The man is bent on his

object ; he has no alternative. There is a demand, and he has nothing to meet it : " I have nothing to set before my travelling friend." In short, he will not take a refusal.

Now the question is, how far do we understand this great lesson ? It is not, blessed be God, that He will ever answer us " from within." He will never say to us, " Trouble me not"—" I cannot rise and give thee." He is ever our true and ready " Friend"—" a cheerful, liberal, and un-upbraiding Giver." All praise to His holy name ! Still, He encourages importunity, and we need to ponder His teaching. There is a sad lack of it in our prayer-meetings. Indeed, it will be found that in proportion to the lack of definiteness is the lack of importunity. The two go very much together. Where the thing sought is as definite as the " three loaves," there will generally be the importunate asking for it, and the firm purpose to get it.

The simple fact is, we are too vague and, as a consequence, too indifferent in our prayers and prayer-meetings. We do not seem like people *asking for what they want, and waiting for what they ask.* This is what destroys our prayer-meetings, rendering them pithless, pointless, powerless ; turning them into teaching or talking meetings, rather than deep-toned, earnest prayer-meetings. We feel convinced that the whole church of God needs to be thoroughly aroused in reference to this great question ; and this conviction it is which compels us to offer these hints and suggestions, with which we are not yet done.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)



“THE SOWER.”

OF all the parables uttered by our Lord, during His ministry in this world, not one is of more commanding importance than the parable of the sower. The comprehensiveness of its range, the depth and solemnity of its teaching, and its immense practical force, bearing down upon the heart and conscience, render it of unspeakable value; and, we may safely assert, never was that value more apparent to every thoughtful spirit than at the very time in which our lot is cast. May the Holy Spirit interpret and apply it to our souls by His own direct and powerful ministry!

The parable naturally divides itself into three distinct subjects, namely, the *sower*; the *seed*; and the *soil*.

1. As to the sower, it is none other than the Lord Himself. No doubt He employs others in the great work of sowing the precious seed of the kingdom, but He Himself is the great sower. He, when on earth, was ever scattering abroad the seed of the word; and now that He has taken His seat in the heavens, He, by the Holy Ghost, fits, fills, and sends forth men to carry on the same glorious work, while He, blessed for ever be His name, works with them, to give effect to their testimony, and cause the seed to take root in the hearts of men.

This presents our Lord in a profoundly interesting character. It is impossible to look at a sower, moving along the furrows of a field, scattering abroad, with both hands, the seed, and not be struck with the beauty, force, and suggestiveness of the figure.

We must, however, at the very outset, remind the

reader that it does not fall within the scope of this parable to set forth those precious operations of the Spirit of God which are absolutely essential to cause the seed to take root and bring forth fruit in any given case. For these we must look into other portions of the inspired volume. It is always necessary, in studying a parable, to seize with accuracy the main point therein, and not seek to import other things into it. This is a fundamental principle, the application of which is of the very highest importance.

But although the parable of the sower does not treat of the absolutely necessary operation of the Spirit of God, other scriptures do so largely ; and hence we must never forget that not one single atom of genuine fruit could ever be produced, throughout the length and breadth of the harvest field, were it not for the gracious action of the Holy Ghost in preparing hearts for the right reception of the good word of God.

We deem it needful to insist upon this here, because some might imagine that there was any essential difference in the soil: anything, in certain cases, indigenuous, whereby good fruit could be produced, apart from a divine work in the soul. There is nothing whatever of the kind. Scripture teaches us in manifold places that there is no difference ; that in us, by nature, dwelleth no good thing ; that, as in the vineyard of Judaism, nothing but wild grapes was ever produced ; so, in the wide harvest-field of christian profession, nothing but spurious fruit would ever be found, were it not for the ministry of God the Holy Ghost, whereby the soil is prepared to receive the seed, and bring forth fruit to perfection.

This leaves wholly untouched the great question of man's responsibility—a truth quite as fully and clearly laid down in scripture as the truth of the indispensable operations of the Spirit of God.

None of these things lie within the range of our parable, though, we need hardly say, it perfectly harmonizes with them all. It presents our Lord in an entirely new character, even as One who has come down into this world, bearing with Him that which is to produce fruit, seeing that all His previous actings had only brought out man's utter barrenness and good-for-nothingness.

Hearken to the powerful and touching appeal in Isaiah v. : “Now will I sing to my beloved a song of my beloved, touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now, go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up: and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they

rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry."

Such was the sad result of all the divine dealings with the house of Israel—"wild grapes"—"briers and thorns"—utter failure—hopeless ruin—not one redeeming feature, mitigating circumstance, or qualifying clause. The house of Israel, and the men of Judah, notwithstanding all the marvellous painstaking of Jehovah, had failed to meet His mind. The vineyard had not yielded so much as a single cluster to refresh His spirit; and therefore He has to begin on the new, and go forth into the wide harvest-field of this world, there to scatter broadcast the incorruptible seed of the kingdom. "There went out a sower to sow."

Now, there is something not only intensely interesting, but perfectly delightful, in the thought of our Lord acting in this world in the character of a sower. To think of the High and Mighty One, that inhabiteth eternity, that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, that sustains the vast universe by the word of His power, the Object of heaven's worship, the One whom angels serve—to think of Him passing along the rough furrows of this world scattering the precious seed! Oh! beloved reader, what a view it gives us of His character, of His nature, of His heart! How strikingly it illustrates, how touchingly it proves, His loving desire and purpose to have to do with the children of men—to surround Himself with sinners saved by grace.

Why all this toil—this painstaking—this patient labour? Why did He not leave us to our own self-

chosen, downward path? Why not allow us to sink into our merited perdition? Ah! the answer to all these and a thousand similar questions is contained in that one golden sentence—"God is love." Yes, this accounts for it all. His kindness to us wretched sinners—His "philanthropy"—His intense desire for our salvation. All praise to His glorious name! Universal and eternal homage!

We cannot think of our God, in the marvellous character of a sower, without having the profoundest depths of our moral being moved—the deepest and most tender springs of our hearts touched. Truly we may say, God will be God spite of all our wretchedness. Nothing can stop the outflow of His love; nothing can exhaust the fountain of His grace. He is untiring in His patient labour in this world. Is He disappointed in His vineyard in Palestine? Forth He goes into the fields of this wide, wide world, bearing in His hand the seed-basket, to scatter broadcast the precious seed of His own holy word. He *will* save. He *will* surround Himself with the objects of His love—the trophies of His grace. Nothing can satisfy His loving heart but to have His house filled with poor, miserable, outcast, hell-deserving sinners, who shall fill His heavenly courts, and sing the praises of redeeming love throughout the golden ages of eternity. Again, we lift our hearts to Him, and exclaim, All praise to His glorious name! Universal and eternal homage to the Saviour God—the everlasting lover and glorious Redeemer of our guilty, perishing, hell-deserving souls!

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

MEDITATIONS ON THE BEATITUDES.

(Matt. v. 1—16.)

THE THIRD BEATITUDE.

Verse 5. *Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.* In our meditations on the third beatitude, we find ourselves in happy company with that blessed One who was “meek and lowly in heart.” There is evidently, in this third class, a great advance in the soul’s blessedness. The heir of glory has been learning in the school of Christ how to meet the troubles of this life, as *He* met them. This is a great lesson, and greatly needed. Let us see that we master it fully.

In our first lesson we were shewn the true condition of every soul that really knows God, and is conformed to the character of Christ—“poor in spirit.” This condition being the result of what the soul sees itself to be in the divine presence, it is chiefly a question between the soul and God. All is blessed and happy there. But in going forth into the world, and attending to the various duties of this life, so many causes of trouble come in our way, that we *groan* in spirit. This is our second lesson. It is one of daily experience. The great advance in the third class seems to be this: the soul has so grown in grace, that now, in place of a questioning, reasoning, self-willed spirit being manifested in this scene of trial, the disciple meekly bows his head in submission to the Father’s will, and learns of Jesus to be meek and lowly in heart; for, after all, in these circumstances it is a question of either self-will or submission.

The lowly in heart begins to see more clearly that, in spite of everything around him, God is accomplishing the counsels of His own will, and making all things work together for good to them that love Him, and are the called according to His purpose. This fuller knowledge of God and His ways produces a deeply chastened state of mind. Though groaning in spirit, and mourning over the wickedness of man, the rejection of Christ by those we love, and the failure of those who bare His name, the man of faith is quiet and humble! he walks with God in the midst of it all, and refers everything to Him. In the lowest murmur of the enemy, or in his loudest roar, he hears his Father's voice; in the smallest injury or in the greatest outrage, he owns His hand; he envies not the world its pleasures, or the wicked their prosperity; all his resources are in the living God; and he can turn to Him, rest in Him, rejoice in Him, and walk with Him, above the conflicts of this troubled scene. But rest assured, my soul, that this state of blessedness is only enjoyed by those who thus know God, and believe that He is accomplishing the hidden purposes of His love, in spite of the abounding evil and wicked purposes of man. A Father's voice, a Father's hand, a Father's will, a Father's purpose, cannot fail to create and sustain a meek and lowly spirit. Faith has thus forcibly expressed itself in one of our finest songs:—

“Is God for me? I fear not, though all against me rise;
When I call on Christ, my Saviour, the host of evil flies.
My friend, the Lord Almighty, and He who loves me, God!
What enemy shall harm me, though coming as a flood?”

I know it, I believe it, I say it fearlessly,
That God, the highest, mightiest, for ever loveth me.
At all times, in all places, He standeth at my side;
He rules the battle's fury, the tempest, and the tide.

No angel and no heaven, no throne, nor power, nor might;
No love, no tribulation, no danger, fear, nor fight;
No height, no depth, no creature that has been, or can be,
Can drive me from Thy bosom, can sever me from thee.
My heart in joy upleapeth, grief cannot linger there;
She singeth high in glory, amid the sunshine fair;
The sun that shines upon me is Jesus and His love,
The fountain of my singing is deep in heaven above."

But if thou wouldst see, my soul, in absolute perfection, the meekness of which we speak, thou must turn in thy meditations to Him who knew deeper sorrow here, and deeper communion above, than any of His people can ever know. While discoursing to the people of the kingdom, and answering their questions, He has the sense of the true state of the people, and of His own rejection as the Messiah, the King of the Jews. What sorrow must have filled His heart! What relief and rest He ever found in His Father's bosom!

We will now turn for a little to Matthew xi. 20-30. Here we have the distinct expression and the perfect combination of these two things in Jesus—groaning in spirit because of surrounding evil, and entire submission to His Father's will, with praise and thanksgiving. Scarcely had "Woe, woe," fallen from His lips, when He looked up to heaven, and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." With the growing, deepening, sense of the unbelief of the people whom He loved, and their blinded rejection of Himself as Emmanuel in their midst, He meekly bows to His

Father's sovereign will, sees only perfection in it here, and the glory that would follow it hereafter. "Thou hast hid those things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." As it then was, so has it been ever since, and so is it now. Mark well, my soul, what thou art now writing. Thou hast Jesus before thee as the obedient man, and the Father's ways in grace with the meek and lowly. He shields the Person of His beloved Son from the unholy gaze of unbelief, and hides His glory from the pride of man. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." All who have dared to penetrate, in the pride of intellect, into the deep mysteries of His Person, have but revealed their own blindness and folly, and exposed themselves to the snares of the enemy. But to the lowly in heart—the worshipping heart—the full blessedness of the knowledge of Jesus and His ways is made known. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way. . . . The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Ps. xxv., xxxvii.) These passages no doubt refer to the millennial earth, when the God-fearing remnant shall possess it, in association with Christ as their king of glory. It is not said, observe, that they shall inherit heaven, but the earth. The place of their trial and sorrow will one day be the scene of their rest, their glory, and blessedness. The Christian will possess it in a higher way—as one with Christ, who will then feed the poor with bread, and, like the disciples

of old, the heavenly saints may be privileged to distribute it.

But, to return, it may be well for the servant—the Christian, especially tried ones—to look more closely into the nature of the discouragements which led the blessed Lord and Master to turn to His Father as His only resource.

He had come to His own, but His own received Him not. The people He loved, and had come to redeem, had no heart for Him. When John the Baptist came with mournful tidings, they refused to lament; when Jesus came with glad tidings, they refused to rejoice. They would not have Him on any terms. This is the secret of the comparatively small success of the gospel in all ages. The natural heart prefers the enjoyment of present things to a rejected Christ and a heaven that is thought to be far away. The most solemn warnings by John, and the most gracious invitations by Jesus, were alike unheeded by that generation. Enough to break any preacher's heart. When the attractions of grace, the appeals of love, the threatenings of justice, the miseries of hell, the glories of heaven, fail to arrest or awaken the careless—when the preacher's heart is broken because of the hardness of men's hearts—what is he to do? Retire into the presence of God, and in communion with Him learn his lesson more perfectly, both as to service and submission. This is the only refuge and resting-place for the disappointed workman. Let us now see how the Lord acted.

He knew perfectly the state of the people, and how they had refused the goodness of God, both in His

Person and ministry. The inevitable result of such unbelief must be judgment. Accordingly, we read, "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! . . . And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." This is most solemn! A more terrible, a more unsparing, judgment is denounced against these highly-favoured cities in the land of Israel than on the notorious corruptions of Sodom. But has not this a voice to the highly-privileged gospel-hearer of our own day? Most assuredly it has. No judgment will be so heavy, so unsparing, as that which will ere long fall on apostate Christendom. The higher the place of privilege, the deeper must be the fall of those who are untrue—who have merely the name of Christ, without the reality. And do not such abound now, as in the days of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum? Alas! the answer need not be given; the question rather is, where are the real, the true, witnesses for the glory of His Person and the authority of His word? The thought is overwhelming. What is to be done? What did the Lord do? He turned to His Father.

"At that time Jesus answered, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." In a word, in place of complaining of the treatment He received from others, and vindicating Himself, He meekly bows

to the sovereign will of His Father, falls into His hands, as Lord of heaven and earth—the wise disposer of all things; and what is the result? Just what it must ever be—He receives the blessing. Not merely a promise, but the possession—“All things are delivered unto me of my Father.” And this proves to be the occasion, through grace, of a fuller revelation of God, and of a richer blessing to mankind. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” How beautiful and precious this is, as an example to us! it is always the way of blessing, both to ourselves and others. When Jesus was despised as a man, rejected as the Messiah, and refused His crown of glory, He did not stand up for His rights, as we would say, but meekly submitted, and looked up to His Father as Lord of heaven and earth. He could leave all in His hands, and wait His sovereign will. In the meantime the blessing flows, like a wave of life, from the ocean of eternal love—it overflows all Jewish limits.

The Gentiles are brought in here. The Father is revealed as the source of all blessing. “Come unto me. . . . I will give you rest.” The poor Gentile as well as the Jew; are you weary and heavy laden? “Come unto me.” It is pure grace now. No qualification required, save that you are weary and heavy laden. Come, just as you are, just now; “I will give you rest.” The blessed Lord does not here say by what means He will give us rest, but we must trust Him. He can no more trust man, man must now trust Him. There is no other way of blessing now. There is only one question: Is He fit to be trusted? This

is all. Trust Him. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Psalm ii. 12.

But this full, flowing tide of grace does not lead to carelessness of walk, as man might say it would. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The difference between the two verses is very distinct, and has been often noticed. In verse 28 it is, "Come unto me . . . and I will *give* you rest;" in verse 29 it is, "Take my yoke upon you . . . and ye shall *find* rest to your souls." The one is pure, absolute, unconditional grace to the sinner; the other is the yoke of Christ for the believer. The reason why so few have learnt to meet the troubles of this life as He met them, is, because they are not under His yoke, and learning of Him. They are thinking of their own character; how much they have been misunderstood, how grossly they have been misrepresented, how falsely accused, and how unjustly or unkindly treated. They have not learnt that their own reputation is the last thing they should think about; that now they have only to care for the character of Christ. Those who are under the same yoke must walk side by side, and step by step. True, the strong one may pull the weak one through, when the chariot wheels sink deep in the sand of the desert; but they must walk together. The Lord give us thus to learn the great truth of our third Beatitude, "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."

“MY CUP OF JOY RUNS O’ER.”

THE Lord my shepherd is,
The living one who died,
And having Him—the *Lord Himself*,
My wants are all supplied.

In spirit now I’m led
To where He dwells above ;
The object of my heart’s desire
Would have me know His love.

He maketh me lie down
In pastures green to rest.
Not here—but far above this scene
Of turmoil and unrest.

And still He leadeth me
Where waters deep do flow ;
So wondrous is the rest of soul
He causeth me to know.

My soul He doth restore
With fresh supplies each day :
Leads me in paths of righteousness,
That I may never stray.

Though for a little while
My feet must tread this scene,
E’en *there* His footprints mark the path
Where He Himself has been.

Yes, Thou art with me, Lord,
My strength and stay to be ;
And day by day Thou dost unfold
Thy hidden things to me.

My cup of joy runs o’er,
Because ’tis filled by *Thee*,
Thou art my portion even now,
And shalt for *ever* be.

* * * The above hymn was composed by a suffering one, after being informed that she must undergo a severe and dangerous operation. The circumstances greatly increase our interest in the simple lines ; and raise our hearts in praise to God for the faith that so calmly and sweetly reckons on His presence, in the immediate prospect of so great a trial.—ED.

“H E A R !”

WE have now to dwell for a few moments upon another of those precious gospel monosyllables, so full of the rich grace, mercy, and love of our God.

“*Hear, and your soul shall live.*” (Is. iv.) There is no more lovely attitude for the soul of a sinner than that of a hearer. “I will *hear* what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.” (Ps. lxxxv.) “Faith cometh by *hearing*, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom. x.) The sinner is simply called to hear. “The salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and they will *hear* it.” Acts xxviii.

Now, nothing can possibly be simpler than this. We are not asked to do, or to feel, or be, or realize, or give anything. God speaks, and His word conveys life and salvation. There is eternal life and full and free salvation contained in the word which God sends to the ear of faith. “He shall tell thee *words*, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.”

The glad tidings which God sends to the sinner—to every sinner under heaven—contain a message of pardon and peace—a message based upon the finished work of Christ on the cross. This message is full, clear, and distinct. It tells of a finished work, an accomplished atonement—a righteousness complete, and brought so nigh, that it is “to him that *worketh not*, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.” The sinner is not asked to add aught to this message in order to make it true. It does not depend for its truth upon his belief of it; but his salvation depends upon

his belief of its truth. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

It is impossible to conceive anything more expressive of pure, free, and absolute grace than the little word, “Hear.” It proves, beyond all question, that salvation is a divinely-finished thing—an accomplished reality : and all we have to do is to pause and listen, in order that the message may fall, in its own heavenly clearness, upon the ear and upon the heart. The soul that will but listen to God is saved.

But this is precisely what the sinner is not disposed to do. He will listen to anyone and everyone but God. He will hearken to anything and everything but what God the Lord has to say to him. Satan’s lies, man’s nonsense and folly—all will find a wide and ever open entrance through man’s ear into his heart ; but when God speaks, man’s ear is closed and turned away. He will not hear the voice of the divine charmer, charming ever so wisely.

The sinner will not hear. God speaks ; His message is clear and distinct. It tells of eternal life ; perfect remission of sins ; divine righteousness ; perfect acceptance with God ; sonship ; eternal glory in the heavens—all these things it tells of, and presents to every soul that will only hearken and hear. It is clear as a sunbeam, free as the air, full as the ocean’s tide flowing from the bosom of God, based on the finished work of Christ, and set forth on the stable authority to the Holy Ghost ; but man *will* not hear, though solemnly responsible so to do, and exposed to righteous judgment for refusing.

“*Hear*, and your soul shall live.” Precious word! It has precisely the same stamp, the same moral tone, the same lovely evangelic ring, as those other little words, “*come*,” and “*look*.” They are all the same, and all set forth the proper attitude of the soul. If the ear is open, the glad tidings of salvation pour themselves in upon the heart. If the eye is open, the rays of divine light pour themselves upon the soul. And in the expressive little word, “*come*,” is involved the bending of the whole moral being toward that blessed One who speaks in such tender, loving, winning accents to the heart.

And this is life—life eternal; it is full salvation; it is liberty, peace, strength, victory, progress—all; yes, all for time and eternity. There is nothing, from first to last, that is not wrapped up in any one of the three little words, “*come!*” “*look!*” “*hear!*” In each, in all, we learn the same priceless lesson, that all we want as guilty sinners, all we want as needy children, all we want as helpless servants—all is found in the One to whom we come, to whom we look, to whom we listen. All our springs are in Him. We have, as sinners, nothing but our sins; as children nothing but our need; as servants, nothing but our feebleness and ignorance; but in Him we have all, and can get all, by simply coming, looking, and listening.

In short, it is all by faith, from first to last. We come, we look, we listen, in simple faith, and thus we are saved, pardoned, justified; and thus we live, from day to day. It is the obedience of faith. The just shall live by faith, and faith is the free gift of God—

free to each—free to all. Not one is excluded. All are freely invited to come—to look—to hear; and all who obey are saved and blessed; all who refuse shall be eternally damned—damned by their own deliberate act and choice.

Oh! beloved reader, let us entreat thee, now, even this very moment, to come—to look—to hear. “Come” and find rest—“look,” and be saved—“hear,” and thy soul shall live.



NOTHING.

“Oh! the power and the joy of being nothing, having nothing, and knowing nothing but a glorified Christ up there in heaven, and of being ‘careful for nothing’ but the honour of His sweet name down here on earth.”



Oh to be nothing—nothing,
 Only to lie at His feet
 A broken, emptied vessel,
 Thus for His use made meet!
 Emptied, that He may fill me
 As to His service I go,
 Broken, so that unhindered
 Through me *His* life may flow.

Oh to be nothing—nothing,
 An arrow hid in His hand,
 Or a messenger at His gateway
 Waiting for His command:
 Only an instrument ready
 For Him to use at His will;
 And should He not require me,
 Willing to wait there still.

Oh to be nothing—nothing,
Though painful the humbling be :
Though it lay me low in the sight of those
Who are now perhaps praising *me*.
I would rather be nothing—nothing,
That to *Him* be their voices raised,
Who alone is the fountain of blessing,
Who alone is meet to be praised.

Yet e'en as my pleading rises,
A voice seems with mine to blend,
And whispers in loving accents—
“I call thee not *servant*, but *friend* ,
Fellow-worker with Me, I call thee,
Sharing *My* sorrows and joy ;
Fellow-heir to the glory I have above,
To treasure without alloy.”

Oh, love so free, so boundless !
Which, lifting me, lays me lower
At the footstool of Jesus, my risen Lord,
To worship and adore ;
Which fills me with deeper longing
To have nothing dividing my heart,
My “*all*” given up to Jesus,
Not “keeping back a part.”

Thine may I be, Thine only,
Till called by Thee to share
The glorious heavenly mansions
Thou art gone before to prepare.
My heart and soul are yearning
To see Thee face to face,
With unfettered tongue to praise Thee
For such heights and depths of grace.



CORRESPONDENCE.

44. "A. G. T.," Ontario. 1 Corinthians vii. 14 stands in contrast with the Mosaic enactment, which obliged men to put away, not only strange wives, but the offspring of mixed marriages, it is not a question of the practical state of the children themselves—whether they were saved or not saved; the passage simply states that the children were sanctified by the fact of their relationship with the believing parent, and need not therefore be put away. The idea of building upon such a passage the monstrous error that the children of Christian parents are saved, *as such*, without the quickening grace of the Holy Spirit, is too gross to need a moment's consideration.

45. "E. A.," Guernsey. Accept our best thanks for your kind note, and the extracts. The latter we have not yet had time to examine.

46. "E. J.," Aberdeenshire. Your three questions are met by one simple fact, namely, that the collection at the Lord's table is *for the Lord*, whether to pay for the room where His people meet, or to help His poor, or to supply the need of His workmen. Of course, the assembly, as acting for Him, must be just before they are generous, and hence all righteous claims must first be met; and then think of the poor and the workers. Were our hearts a little larger, our Lord's treasury would be better attended to, and there would not be much difficulty in knowing what to do with the contents.

47. "Spa." 2 Corinthians v. 21 contains the divine reply to your question. "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him." This is the glorious truth of God's gospel. Christ took our place on the cross. He bore the judgment of God against sin. God forsook Him because he represented us on the cursed tree. Christ died the just for the unjust. He took our place that we might take His. He got what we deserved, that we might get what He deserves.

And now we are in Him, and as He is before God. Amazing truth! Glorious triumph of redeeming love! Nothing can surpass it. And hence we read, "Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because *as he is, so are we in this world.*" 1 John iv. 17.

This is the perfection of love. Not even the love of God could go beyond this. We are in Christ, and as He is. We are loved as He is loved—accepted in Him. He is the definition of what we are in the presence of God. God thinks of us as He thinks of Him; acts towards us on the ground of what He is. As to our deserts, the cross is the answer. As to His deserts, the throne of the majesty in the heavens is the answer. Our deserts were His, that His might be ours. We are justified in a risen Christ, our *sins* having been put away, and *sin* condemned in the death of Christ. Such is the doctrine of scripture; and as to what theologians teach, it matters nothing to us. We desire to be taught exclusively by the word of God. We would bow down, with absolute submission, to its holy authority in all things.

48. "J. A. S.," Plymouth. Your kind communication has come to hand. We entirely agree with your remarks as to singing.

49. "W. R. C.," Birmingham. Accept our warmest thanks for your truly kind letter and the accompanying extracts.

50. "J. L. R.," Sunderland. In volume xv. of this magazine, page 178, you will find an answer to your question.

51. "J. C. R.," We have the fullest sympathy with your remarks.

52. "T. R.," Windermere. We have replied to the question of Judas in a former volume. See "Answers to Correspondents" (1864–1866), page 3. Thanks for the lines; we like them much. If you have not got the little volume of Answers, you can procure it either from Mr. Broom, or from our publisher, Mr. Morrish.

PRAYER AND THE PRAYER-MEETING.

PART IV.

THE more deeply we ponder the subject which has been for some time engaging our attention, and the more we consider the state of the entire church of God, the more convinced we are of the urgent need of a thorough awakening everywhere in reference to the question of prayer. We cannot—nor do we desire to—shut our eyes to the fact, that deadness, coldness, and barrenness seem, as a rule, to characterize our prayer-meetings. No doubt we may find here and there a pleasing exception, but, speaking generally, we do not believe that any sober spiritual person will call in question the truth of what we state, namely, that the tone of our prayer-meetings is fearfully low, and that it is absolutely imperative upon us to inquire seriously as to the cause.

In the papers already put forth on this great, all-important, and deeply practical subject, we have ventured to offer to our readers a few hints and suggestions. We have briefly glanced at our lack of confidence; our failure in cordial unanimity; the absence of definiteness and importunity. We have referred, in plain terms—and we must speak plainly if we are to speak at all—to many things which are felt by all the truly spiritual amongst us to be not only trying and painful, but thoroughly subversive of the real power and blessing of our reunions for prayer. We have spoken of the long, tiresome, desultory, preaching prayers which, in some cases, have become so perfectly intolerable,

that the Lord's dear people are scared away from the prayer-meetings altogether. They feel that they are only wearied, grieved, and irritated, instead of being refreshed, comforted, and strengthened; and hence they deem it better to stay away. They judge it to be more profitable, if they have an hour to spare, to spend it in the privacy of their closet, where they can pour out their hearts to God in earnest prayer and supplication, than to attend a so-called prayer-meeting, where they are absolutely wearied out with incessant, powerless hymn-singing, or long preaching prayers.

Now, we more than question the rightness of such a course. We seriously doubt if this be at all the way to remedy the evils of which we complain. Indeed, we are thoroughly persuaded it is not. If it be right to come together for prayer and supplication—and who will question the rightness?—then surely it is not right for any one to stay away merely because of the feebleness, failure, or even the folly of some who may take part in the meeting. If all the really spiritual members were to stay away on such a ground, what would become of the prayer-meeting? We have very little idea of how much is involved in the elements which compose a meeting. Even though we may not take part audibly in the action, yet, if we are there in a right spirit, there really to wait upon God, we marvellously help the tone of a meeting.

Besides, we must remember that we have something more to do in attending a meeting than to think of our own comfort, profit, and blessing. We must think of the Lord's glory. We must seek to do His blessed will, and try to promote the good of others in every

possible way ; and neither of these ends, we may rest assured, can be attained by our deliberately absenting ourselves from the place where prayer is wont to be made.

We repeat, and with emphasis, the words, "*deliberately absenting ourselves*"—staying away because we are not profited by what takes place there. Many things may crop up to hinder our being present—ill-health, domestic duties, lawful claims upon our time, if we are in the employment of others. All these things have to be taken into account ; but we may set it down as a fixed principle, that *the one who can designedly absent himself from the prayer-meeting is in a bad state of soul*. The healthy, happy, earnest, diligent soul will be sure to be found at the prayer-meeting.

But all this conducts us, naturally and simply, to another of those moral conditions at which we have been glancing in this series of papers. Let us turn for a moment to the opening lines of Luke xviii. "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, *that men ought always to pray, and not to faint* : saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city ; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while ; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them ? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." Verse 1-8.

Here, then, we have pressed upon our attention the important moral condition of *perseverance*. "Men ought *always* to pray, and *not to faint*." This is intimately connected with the definiteness and importunity to which we have already referred. We want a certain thing; we cannot do without it. We importunately, unitedly, believingly, and perseveringly, wait on our God until He graciously send an answer, as He most assuredly will, if the moral basis and the moral conditions be duly maintained.

But we must persevere. We must not faint, and give up, though the answer does not come as speedily as we might expect. It may please God to exercise our souls by keeping us waiting on Him, for days, months, or perhaps years. The exercise is good. It is morally healthful. It tends to make us real. It brings us down to the roots of things. Look, for example, at Daniel. He was kept for "three full weeks" waiting on God, in profound exercise of soul. "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three full weeks were fulfilled."

All this was good for Daniel. There was deep blessing in the spiritual exercises through which this beloved and honoured servant of God was called to pass during those three weeks. And what is specially worthy of note is, that the answer to Daniel's cry had been despatched from the throne of God at the very beginning of his exercise, as we read at verse 12: "Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel; for *from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand,*

and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But—how marvellous and mysterious is this!—"the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one-and-twenty days : but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days."

All this is full of interest. Here was the beloved servant of God mourning, chastening himself, and waiting upon God. The angelic messenger was on his way with the answer. The enemy was permitted to hinder; but Daniel continued to wait. He prayed, and fainted not; and in due time the answer came.

Is there no lesson here for us? Most assuredly there is. We, too, may have to wait long in the holy attitude of expectancy, and in the spirit of prayer; but we shall find the time of waiting most profitable for our souls. Very often our God, in His wise and faithful dealing with us, sees fit to withhold the answer, simply to prove us as to the reality of our prayers. The grand point for us is to have an object laid upon our hearts by the Holy Ghost—an object, as to which we can lay the finger of faith upon some distinct promise in the word, and to persevere in prayer until we get what we want. "*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.*" Ephesians vi. 18.

All this demands our serious consideration. We are as sadly deficient in perseverance as we are in definiteness and importunity. Hence the feebleness of our

prayers, and the coldness of our prayer-meetings. We do not come together with a definite object, and hence we are not importunate, and we do not persevere. In short, our prayer-meetings are often nothing but a dull routine, a cold mechanical service, something to be gone through, a wearisome alternation of hymn and prayer, hymn and prayer, causing the spirit to groan beneath the heavy burden of mere profitless bodily exercise.

We speak plainly and strongly. We speak as we feel. We must be permitted to speak without reserve. We call upon the whole church of God, far and wide, to look this great question straight in the face—to look to God about it—to judge themselves about it. Do we not feel the lack of power in all our public reunions? Why those barren seasons at the Lord's table? Why the dulness and feebleness in the celebration of that precious feast which ought to stir the very deepest depths of our renewed being? Why the lack of unction, power, and edification in our public readings—the foolish speculations and the silly questions which have been advanced and answered for the last forty years? Why those varied evils on which we have been dwelling, and which are being mourned over almost everywhere by the truly spiritual? Why the barrenness of our gospel services? Why are souls not smitten down under the word? Why is there so little gathering power?

Brethren, beloved in the Lord, let us rouse ourselves to the solemn consideration of these weighty matters. Let us not be satisfied to go on with the present condition of things. We call upon all those who admit the truth of what we have been putting forth in these

pages, on "Prayer and the Prayer-meeting," to unite in cordial, earnest, united prayer and supplication. Let us seek to get together according to God ; to come as one man and prostrate ourselves before the mercy-seat, and perseveringly wait upon our God for the revival of His work, the progress of His gospel, the ingathering and upbuilding of His beloved people. Let our prayer-meetings be really prayer-meetings, and not occasions for giving out our favourite hymns, and starting our fancy tunes. The prayer-meeting ought to be the place of expressed need and expected blessing—the place of expressed weakness and expected power—the place where God's people assemble with one accord, to take hold of the very throne of God, to get into the very treasury of heaven, and draw thence all we want for ourselves, for our households, for the whole church of God, and for the vineyard of Christ.

Such is the true idea of a prayer-meeting, if we are to be taught by scripture. May it be more fully realized amongst the Lord's people everywhere ! May the Holy Spirit stir us all up, and press upon our souls the value, importance, and urgent necessity of unanimity, confidence, definiteness, importunity, and perseverance, in all our prayers and prayer-meetings !

Yes, there's a power which man can wield,
When mortal aid is vain ;
That eye, that arm, that love to reach,
That list'ning ear to gain.

That power is prayer, which soars on high,
Through Jesus to the throne,
And moves the hand which moves the world
To bring deliverance down.



“THE SOWER.”

PART II.

BEFORE proceeding to the consideration of “the seed,” we must dwell a little further on the character of “the Sower.” It is indeed a theme of ineffable sweetness, and one full of instruction, comfort, and encouragement, not only for all those engaged in the glorious work of sowing the seed, but also for all classes and conditions of men. It concerns us all to see what our blessed Lord was as a Sower—to mark what He did, and how He did it—the work which He accomplished, and the spirit in which He accomplished it.

Look, for example, at the opening of the gospel of Mark—that marvellous record of work—the work of an indefatigable workman. “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.” This was His work as the great Sower. Let us ponder it—yes, ponder it deeply. Let all workers ponder it! The Son of God preaching the gospel! Blessed fact! A living, speaking, telling fact! A fact far more powerful than many arguments!

Let every dear evangelist take comfort from this brief but weighty record. Let him place this fact, in all its moral weight and value, over against a thousand theories and notions of the poor human brain, put forth for the purpose of disparaging the glorious work of evangelization, and weakening the hands of those engaged therein. How little it matters who may affect

to speak slightly of such work, when we can lift up our eyes, and behold the Master Himself throwing His whole soul into it! It is His example we are to follow, and not the vapid and worthless theories of men.

Some there are who seem to take special pains to throw the work of evangelization completely into the shade. They speak of it in disparaging terms, and place it in contrast with teaching the church of God, and feeding the flock of Christ.

This, we feel persuaded, is a serious mistake. Each department of work has its own distinct place, and its own peculiar interest and value. Most surely the sheep must be fed; and every one who loves Christ will seek to carry out the loving desire of his great pastoral heart, as expressed in those words, “Feed my lambs; shepherd my sheep.”

But must not the sheep be gathered before they can be fed? Assuredly. And how are they to be gathered, if not by the grand work of evangelization? The preacher of the gospel is called to go forth into the highways and hedges, the lanes, alleys, and slums, and there proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. His mission is to the wide, wide world. He is to tell out the precious story of God’s love and Christ’s finished work to every creature under heaven.

Thus it is the church is gathered. The work of evangelization, therefore, precedes the church; and the evangelist precedes the pastor and teacher. But there cannot be a greater mistake than to put the one before the other in point of interest or value. Both lie equally near the large loving heart of the Master—

the most earnest Evangelist—the most loving Pastor that ever trod this earth. Who ever preached the gospel as He did? Who cares for the flock as He does?

But let us track His blessed path still further.

“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next town, *that I may preach there also; for therefore came I forth.* And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.” Mark i. 35–39.

Mark these words, “*Therefore came I forth.*” For what? To preach the gospel. Who, then, shall presume to speak slightly of preaching the gospel? Surely no one that knows aught of the heart of Christ—no one who has drunk into His spirit—no one that desires to walk in His footsteps.

Hearken to the following touching accents: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because *he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*” Luke iv. 18, 19.

Oh! how sweetly and powerfully do such words fall upon the heart! What encouragement is here for every true and earnest evangelist! Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost for the glorious work of preaching the gospel! How wonderful to think of the Son of God

as an earnest preacher of the gospel! Who can contemplate Him in this character, and speak in lowering terms of the work of the evangelist?

No doubt each workman has to consider his mode of working. We must take care, in doing the Lord's work, that we do it according to His mind. It cannot be denied that, in many cases, things are done, and practices are adopted, in connection with the work of evangelization, which no spiritual, or even sober, mind could, for a moment, endure. Indeed, it not unfrequently happens that a course of acting is pursued at gospel services eminently calculated to throw the whole work into contempt.

All this is much to be deplored, and should be sedulously avoided by all the Lord's dear servants. We should seek to work soberly as well as earnestly; wisely as well as zealously; modestly as well as energetically. For while we quite feel the force of a remark made by a recent writer, that “it is the blunderers that do the work,” still, we believe that the work may be done without blundering. The blessed gospel of the grace of God can be preached in all its living depth, fulness, and power; and souls can be saved, without offering violence to the rules of good taste or common propriety. The Gospels instruct us as to the mode in which the Master carried on His work; and in the Acts we learn how the Holy Ghost taught the first great preachers to carry on theirs. The word must be our guide in all things.

But, oh! let the work be done—yes, earnestly, devotedly, constantly done. In spite of all the opposition, all the difficulties, all the discouragement, let the

simple gospel of God be diligently preached. Let us not be scared away from this divine work by the fact that some think proper to dub it "Revivalism," "The low evangelical level," and such like. With these things the true evangelist has nothing whatever to do. He has to do with the heart of his Master. He has to fulfil His commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." He has to attend to this, come what may. Let him not regard opprobrious epithets, or the sneer of contempt; yea, rather let such things only have the effect of bracing him up for his precious and deeply important work. The devil will use anything and everything to hinder a service which he cordially hates; and while it is truly solemn, yea, perfectly awful, to think of any Christian giving utterance to sentiments calculated to damp the ardour of earnest workers, yet we are to proceed with our work, paying no more attention to such sentiments than we should to the pattering of rain upon the windows. All those who affect to speak contemptuously of the work of evangelization shall have to account to their Lord for so doing, but we must sedulously attend to our work. "I charge thee, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; *preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; . . . do the work of an evangelist; make full proof of thy ministry.*"

Here lies the solid basis of the work. Here is the authority, clear, distinct, and unquestionable. And for our comfort and encouragement—yea, for the deep consolation and refreshment of our hearts, in pursuing

our work, we have the perfect model of our own blessed Lord and Master, whose delight it was to pour the glad tidings of salvation into the poor broken and wearied heart ; and who, when even one poor outcast creature had received His word into her heart, could address His co-workers in these glowing words : “ I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest ? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal ; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.” John iv. 32-36.

What an outpouring of heart ! And all this in connection with the salvation of one soul ! What a lesson for all evangelists ! What a withering rebuke to all who disparage or despise their work !

2. But we must turn for a moment to the second division of our subject, namely, “ the seed.” We have glanced at “ the Sower ”—His mode of working, and His spirit in the work. We shall now, very briefly, consider what He sows.

“ The sower soweth the word.” This is of the deepest possible moment. The word of God is the grand instrument for producing fruit—for quickening and blessing souls. True, it is the Holy Ghost, who must unfold and apply the word ; but it is the word which He unfolds and applies. This must never be lost sight of by the subordinate sower. He is to sow the word ; nothing else. Be the vehicle what it may, a line of a hymn, a simple illustration from nature or actual life,

still, the word is *the* means which God the Holy Ghost uses in the great work of quickening souls.

It does not, as has been already remarked, come within the scope of the parable of the sower to present the work of the Holy Ghost in the application of the truth to souls; for this we must look into other scriptures. But no human language can adequately set forth the value and importance of the word in the great work of evangelization. We want nothing else. It is amply sufficient. There is no need of aught to act merely on the natural feelings—no demand for sensational effort. The word of God, in its own holy dignity, weight, and authority, is all the sower has to use; and if we only use this peerless instrument, with more simple faith in its efficacy, we should see more results.

It is impossible to read the Gospel narratives or the Acts of the Apostles; and not be struck with the prominence, yea, the exclusive place, given to the word, in the work of evangelization as carried on by our Lord in the days of His flesh, and by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. To quote the passages would fill a volume; but we press the fact earnestly upon all our beloved and honoured fellow-labourers, and pray their serious attention to it. If we are to be taught by holy scripture, we must believe that the word of God is the specific instrument which the Holy Ghost uses in quickening souls. “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

“THE SOWER SOWETH THE WORD.”

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

MEDITATIONS ON THE BEATITUDES.

(Matt. v. 1—16.)

THE FOURTH BEATITUDE.

Verse 6. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.* The perfect answer of the Father's love to the various spiritual feelings and conditions of the children is most interesting and instructive. The riches of the kingdom are promised to the poor in spirit—"Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Divine comfort is the sure portion, in due time, of those who mourn—"They shall be comforted." And, as saith the prophet: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." (Isa. lxvi. 13.) The coming possession of the land of Israel is the promise held out to those who meekly bow to the will of God in the land of their strangership, and leave all their interests in His hands—"They shall inherit the earth." And to the fourth class, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, full satisfaction of soul is promised—"They shall be filled."

This is grace, and like the ways of the Lord in grace, from the beginning. His answer meets the felt need of the soul. He creates the desire that He may satisfy it. When the heart desires that which is good, we may be sure that His grace is there. As there is nothing spiritually good in the natural heart, the first, as every good desire after, must come from God. "I will arise, and go to my father," was the effect of grace working on the heart of the prodigal; and he was then as safe as when he was in his father's arms, though he

did not know it. So that a good desire is the fruit of grace, and, in a certain sense, the possession of all that is desired. It is like the earnest of the inheritance.

Surely there is great encouragement in these facts to those who are earnestly seeking the Lord, as they say, but who are fearful and doubting as to whether they have found Him; whereas it is just the opposite; Christ has sought and found them, and is causing the heart to feel that nothing can ever satisfy it but Himself. The world, its pleasures, its riches, its society, are all too small to fill it. Even a Solomon found that all under the sun could not fill his heart. At the same time he is made to tell us, in his beautiful song, that a poor out-door slave finding the Messiah, or rather found of Him, her heart overflows with His love. "Thy love," she says, "is better than wine"—better to me now than all the social joys of earth. This must be the work of His grace. No true desire, we know, for the Christ of God can ever spring from our depraved hearts; and sure we are that neither the world nor Satan has put it there: from whence, then, must it come? From the grace of God alone. And the longing desires and expectations He has awakened He waits to fulfil. But He would have us to say with the Psalmist, "My soul, wait thou *only* upon God: for my expectation is from him. He *on'y* is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence: I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God." (Ps. lxii.) It is the word "only" in this beautiful psalm that so searches and tries our hearts. The Lord give us to weigh it up in His presence.

We conclude, then, from these reflections—and reflections they are, for very little is said about pardon, salvation, or redemption, in the Beatitudes—that every desire of the heart after Christ shall be satisfied for ever. So far this is true now. May the Lord awaken and draw forth many deep, earnest, longing desires after Himself, in these last and closing days. We will now return to our Beatitude.

As we are all well acquainted with the force of the figure, we can easily see its spiritual application. To hunger and thirst after righteousness evidently means an earnest desire of the renewed mind to do the will of God in this world; and this desire is increased from finding the world opposed to what is right in the sight of God—to righteousness. Hence the intensified feeling of hungering and thirsting. The effect of thus seeking to maintain that which is according to the will of God is great *blessedness* to the soul. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.” But though *blessedness* is the sure reward of righteousness, the righteous path will be one of great trial and many difficulties. The maxim of the world is, not what is *right* before God, but what is convenient, profitable, or suitable to self. What the mind of God may be on the subject is never thought of; and he who would suggest the inquiry would be set down as unfit for the practical realities of this life.

But this looseness of principle is not confined to the world; we find it in the professing church. How many things are introduced and practised there, with all the show of divine authority, and made terms of membership, which have no sanction in the word of God? So

that he who would seek to maintain the authority and the glory of God, or, in other words, to walk in the paths of righteousness, either in the church or in the world, must meet with trial at every step. Grace must *mourn* when the will of man is in the place of the righteousness of God. The *meekness*, also, of the divine life will be in exercise, as looking up, and leaving all to God.

But whatever others may do, the maxim of the man of God must ever be, Is it right? Is it in harmony with the revealed will of God? Not merely is it most practical, most likely to gain the end in view, but Is it right? "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness: his countenance doth behold the upright." (Ps. xi. 7.) Righteousness, we admit, had a special place with the Jew who was under law, and who was to see that all things were done according to the letter of the law; but surely in the New Testament we have both deeper and higher principles than in the Old, and which were brought out, not so much in the sermon on the mount, as after the death and resurrection of Christ; and a broader righteousness is looked for, just because we are to reckon ourselves as dead and risen in Him, and not under law, but under grace. Hence the apostle says, in Romans vi., "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

As a test of the real character of much that we allow and do, it would be impossible to over-estimate the

value of this short and simple question, Is it right? Not that we are to expect an express passage of scripture for everything we do or allow; but we may seriously inquire, is this in accordance with the revealed will of God in Christ? Are we sure that it has His approval? If not, what is it worth? It is worse than useless, it is wrong. It may be a religious observance, or an acknowledged principle in the affairs of this life; but if it has not the sanction of God, better give it up. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is the earnest desire to maintain what is right in the sight of God, though it may expose us to the opposition and oppression of the world, or to the worldly-minded Christians.

But would not, thou mayest say, my soul—would not this seeking to walk in conformity to a rule or given standard tend to a spirit of legalism? Not in a christian point of view; on the contrary, the word of God is “the perfect law of liberty” to the divine life which we have as Christians. But this leads us to the root of this great subject, on which thou wilt do well to meditate deeply and prayerfully for a little while. Here thou wilt discover the secret of real, holy liberty.

The life of Christ, which is ours, as thou knowest, and in which we are to walk, can never dislike or be opposed to His word. The new nature delights in the words or commandments of Christ; they are but His authority to do what the divine life desires to do. Let us suppose a case. A young Christian, from the purest motives, has an intense desire to go to the prayer-meeting; this would be right—according to the

mind of Christ—righteousness. But the way is not clear, he is under another. He quietly waits on God. By-and-by he is told to go—this is what his heart was desiring; he rejoices to obey; it is the law of liberty. The bent of his new life and the word of Christ are one. But take another example. A young Christian is indulging in a worldly state of mind; he is asked to go to the prayer-meeting, but he dislikes going; the will of his fleshly mind is opposed to the will of Christ; His commandments are not at present joyous, but grievous; they are not the law of liberty, but of bondage, he is most unhappy. Thus it is that obedience, walking in righteousness, is perfect liberty, holy joy, and divine power to the life of Christ in the soul. True, the Holy Spirit is the power, but we cannot separate the power of the Spirit from the authority of the word. The desires of the new life, the authority of the word, and the power of the Spirit, go together.

The first epistle of John, especially the second chapter, is a divine exposition of this great practical principle of Christianity. “Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” The words of Christ were the expression of His life when here on earth—that life is thine, my soul—that very life—wondrous, precious, blessed truth! And this shall be thy life for ever, and the basis of thy happy fellowship, and of thy divine intimacies, with Christ throughout the countless ages of eternity. “When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” But, in the mean-

time, suffer His words so to guide and direct thee, that thou mayest walk even as He walked.

Before closing our Meditations on this Beatitude, it may be well to turn for a moment to Psalms xvi., xvii. Here we have the same great lines of truth—life and righteousness—but in immediate connection with Christ and the godly remnant in Israel. In the former we have the path of life with God, and that through this world, through death, up to the fulness of joy in His presence. “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” In the latter we have the path of righteousness in entire dependence on God. Absolute faithfulness in heart and life, both to God and man, marked the steps of Jesus through this world. “Hear the right, O Lord,” was His cry, and this should be the Christian’s motto—“Hear the right, O Lord.” His one grand object was to meet His Father’s mind, to do His Father’s will, and mark out a path for us, that we might walk in His steps. And here the heart is proved, and the value of the word. “Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress concerning the works of men; by the word of my lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.” This could only be absolutely true of Christ, and only true of us in so far as we live the life of Christ. Nevertheless, we should be able to appeal to God as to the *purpose* of our hearts and the desire of our lives.

The Lord enable us by His grace thus to walk before Him, with proved hearts and consistent lives, notwith-

standing the opposition and persecution we may have to bear. *Hungering and thirsting after righteousness*—after the whole mind and will of God in Christ Jesus, and practical conformity to the blessed path of the Son of man in this world—we shall surely be filled. This beautiful psalm, observe, begins with, “Hear the right, O Lord,” and ends with the grand consummation, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.” Glorious end ! Shall it be thine, my reader ? Pause, consider—hast thou faith in Christ ? Is His life thine ? His practical ways in this world thy delight ? Wondrous, blessed hope ! What is to be compared with it ? To awaken from the long sleep of death, to arise from the ashes of the tomb, and come forth in the radiant beauty and the heavenly glory of the Lord Jesus, is a prospect worthy of thy deepest consideration now. Another, while I write, and a near neighbour, has just passed off the stage of time. His credit at the bank in this world is counted by millions, but, if that be all, many millions, could he take them with him, would not buy a foot of ground in the paradise of God, or one drop of cold water in the regions of hell. How many fall from the lap of luxury to the depths of eternal misery ! Nothing can purchase the blessings of heaven, or deliver the soul from the doom of sin, but the precious blood of Christ. It is the sinner’s only passport through the gloomy gates of death, and his only title to the mansions of glory. Prayers, penance, charity, with the devout observance of religious ordinances, may pass current in this life, but without Christ and His cleansing blood they are valueless, and must be rejected

as counterfeit coin at the gate of heaven. The work that saves the soul is a finished work.

See, "sprinkled with the blood,
The mercy-seat" above;
For justice had withstood
The purposes of love:
But justice now withstands no more,
And mercy yields her boundless store.

Yes, be assured of this, my dear reader, that no good works are acceptable to God that are not the fruit of living union with Christ Himself. The branch that is wild by nature must be grafted into the true olive, and drink of the fatness of its roots, before it can bear fruit to the glory of God the Father. Have faith, then, in the blessed Jesus; trust His precious blood to cleanse thy sins away; trust to His holy word without a misgiving; and patiently wait His return, when He will do more and better far than thou hast either asked or thought of. "We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Galatians iii. 26.



GLEANINGS.

"CURIOUS QUESTIONS WISELY ANSWERED."—C. What are you?

S. The chief of sinners, sir. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." 1 Timothy i. 15.

C. But of what denomination are you?

S. I am a Christian, sir. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." Acts xi. 26.

C. No doubt of that ; but I mean, what is your persuasion ?

S. "I am persuaded," sir, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans viii. 38, 39.

C. Oh, yes ! but what is your hope ?

S. "The glorious appearing," sir, "of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," "who is in me, the hope of glory." Titus ii. 13 ; Colossians i. 27.

C. In you ! How is Christ in you ?

S. "By faith," sir. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." (Eph. iii. 17.) And, sir, He and I are one—"He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." 1 Corinthians v. 17.

C. To what body of Christians do you belong ?

S. To the one body, sir ; for there is *only* one body, according to Ephesians iv. 4, which says, "There is one body." There are not, therefore, many bodies.

C. Well, what are you a member of ?

S. Of that one body, sir. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Cor. xii. 27.) I am also a member of Christ, sir—"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ ?" 1 Corinthians vi. 15.

C. Do let me know something of what you are—what name do you call yourself ?

S. "A child of God," sir, "and joint heir with Christ." Romans viii. 16, 17.

C. Who orders your mode and plan of worship ?

S. The Lord Jesus, sir. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matthew xviii. 20.

C. Tell me, then, what is your creed?

S. The word of God, sir. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Timothy iii. 16, 17.

It may be that the person giving the foregoing answers would be deemed by many a little weak in the intellect, but they are sound answers; and if given in simple faith, in humility of mind, as in the divine presence, they cannot fail to silence all merely curious, and to satisfy all really anxious, inquirers.

GOD HIMSELF OUR COMFORTER.—"Have you never observed, when a little child has been in very deep distress, if a *stranger* has attempted to compose and comfort him, that all his efforts have only increased the anguish of the child; but that as soon as he has *heard his father's voice, and felt his father's embrace*, his sorrows have been hushed, and a smile of gladness has lighted up his countenance?"

Child of God, your Father will not leave it to *strangers* to comfort you. He will not suffer a servant's hand rudely to touch His child. "God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

BRIEF TIME.

'Tis but a speck of time at best,
 A quickly measured span—so small
 That in that long eternity of rest
 'Twill cease—'twill fade far past recall.

We surely shall look back and trace
 Our footsteps in the wilderness;
 Wond'ring at all His patient grace,
 At all His love and faithfulness.

'Twill but add fulness to our praise,
 In learning then His guiding hand
 Which led us in our pilgrim days
 Right onward to the looked-for land.

And there we may look back and meet
 A child who oft would sigh and say,
 "How long, O Lord!—these bleeding feet
 Are weary with the rugged way."

For here we cannot always know
 His ways,—but, there Himself shall tell
 How that in days of weal and woe
 He led us, doing all things well.

And now we look beyond brief time,
 Counting its griefs as nought compared
 With joys unknown, save in yon clime
 Of gladness now for us prepared.

And what though griefs and cares oppress—
 Look up and catch His tender smile,
 Telling in all thy weariness
 "'Tis only for a little while."

A little while—He'll come again,
 A little while to serve Him here,
 And then the King Himself shall deign
 To serve *thee*, wiping off each tear.

E'en now at times we catch a gleam
 Of glory from the living light,
 And hail with joy that star whose beam
 Heralds a dawn that knows not night.

CORRESPONDENCE.

53. "R. S. F.," Liverpool. Our papers on "Prayer and the Prayer-meeting" may help you. We should say by all means persevere in prayer for the object you name. God may see it good to keep you waiting. The exercise is very healthful for the soul. There is a very encouraging word in Philippians iv.—"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." And what then? Does he say, "You shall immediately receive what you ask for?" No; but "The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus." This is a most precious word. It presents a character of prayer so blessedly simple. We are encouraged by it to come to God about everything, no matter how small, and that, too, without raising a question as to whether we have faith. We are to "make known our requests to God"—though surely He knows them before. He loves to have us coming to Him about all our little matters, and resting in the happy assurance that He will do what is right, and give us what is good; and whether He gives or withholds, His peace shall garrison our hearts and minds.

54. "J. S.," Devonport. You have completely mistaken the statement to which you refer. A moment's reflection would enable a sober mind to see that nothing is further from the writer's thoughts than to lay down any rule in the matter. But we are most thoroughly convinced that there is need of more profound waiting upon God in this as in all beside.

55. "E. S. B.," Newtown. We assuredly judge that Philippians iv. 5 refers to the Lord's coming. "Let your moderation [yieldingness] be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." If our hearts are set upon the blessed hope of the Lord's coming, we shall not be standing up for our rights, or grasping after the perishing things of this world. He may come to-night, and

then we shall leave all these things behind for ever. It is interesting to notice the two expressions in this passage. Our *moderation* is to be known unto *men*; our *requests* are to be made known unto *God*. Men are to see that we are perfectly content with our portion and prospect. We should never go to men with our wants. God is sufficient. Man is sure to disappoint us. God never fails a trusting heart—no, never, blessed be His holy name.

The judgment in Revelation xix. is what we may call “warrior judgment.” Most surely it is after the church has left this scene. This is obvious from the fact that the saints come forth with the Rider on the white horse.

56. “J. W.,” Hunslet. Scripture says nothing as to the age at which persons should be admitted to the table of the Lord. To refuse a person *merely* because he is young, is about as absurd as to admit him because he is old. The grand question is, does he enjoy the spirit of adoption, enabling him to cry Abba, Father. There is a place at the table of the Lord for every member of the body of Christ, be he old or young, provided always that the discipline of the assembly be not involved.

57. “E. B., Grosvenor-square. People “hold the truth in unrighteousness” when their conscience is not exercised, their character formed, or their conduct governed by what they hold. This is very serious indeed, and has an awfully solemn application to the present condition of things on all hands. As to the other matter to which your letter refers, it is well to be exercised in heart before God, as to all our habits and ways; but you must remember, dear friend, that we live under the blessed reign of grace. The Lord be praised for this most glorious and enfranchising truth! May we walk in the power of it!

58. “C. B.,” Great Grimsby. Does not verse 19 (James v.) answer one of your questions? “Brethren, if *any of you*,” &c, The “him” of verse 20 is the “*converter*,” as you say.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND ON THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THINGS.

DEAREST A.

It has occurred to me that it might not be unprofitable to follow up the papers on "Prayer and the prayer meeting" with a few jottings on the present condition of things in the professing Church of God. It is not, by any means, a pleasant subject; and, most assuredly, it will not prove a popular one; and this perhaps is one reason why I adopt this method of dealing with it, in preference to writing a formal treatise. There is a peculiar charm about correspondence, inasmuch as you can pour out your heart with such freedom to a friend in whom you have confidence: and you almost forget that any other eye save your correspondent's is to scan the lines which your pen is tracing.

It may be, however, you will protest against being called to wade even through a single letter on such a depressing theme. I fancy I hear you, at the very outset, exclaiming against the bare idea of my taking up your time or my own with all the evil and error, the confusion and *débris* involved in the very title of my letter—"The present condition of things." You may feel disposed to say to me, "Alas! my friend, I know too much about that subject already. I see no good in dwelling upon evil and error, failure and folly. I do not find such things in the precious catalogue penned by the inspired apostle, in Philippians iv. 8. I vastly prefer the holy subjects there indicated to aught con-

nected with your proposed theme—‘The present condition of things.’ It is infinitely better and more strengthening to dwell upon the faithfulness of God, the moral glories of Christ, and the living depths of holy scripture, than upon our poor state or the low condition of things in the church of God. We shall never get either comfort or power by looking at ruin and failure.”

Well, I freely admit all this—most fully and cordially; and hence, were I to please myself, or even to indulge my own spiritual feelings, I should not pen another line on the subject of my letter. But, as you are aware, I have recently been laid aside with a severe illness which almost unfitted me for the mere effort of thinking, to say nothing of writing or preaching. Well, when I was at the very lowest point of physical prostration, a voice seemed to say, deep down in my heart, “Rise, and write a paper on the present condition of things in the church of God.” And then as I waited on God for guidance as to the mode, it was suggested to me to write a series of letters to my old friend and yoke-fellow. Thus much as to the origin of the matter now in hand which seems, as it were, a burden laid upon me which I dare not—nor do I desire to—shirk. May the good Lord vouchsafe me grace to do His will!

I am fully aware of the fact that people do not like to be called to consider their ways, Self-judgment is not a very agreeable task. Solemn review of ourselves or our surroundings is what none of us very much like. But we may rest assured it is, at times, most needful, most healthful. Indeed, at all times, it is safe and

good to judge ourselves, to review our path, to know the times, to understand the real condition of things within and around, and to be divinely instructed as to how we ought to carry ourselves in the midst of the actual state of the professing church. One thing is certain, it is the height of folly to seek to shut our eyes to the present appalling condition of Christendom in all its ramifications. Turn where you will, and you are met by the most unmistakable evidences of the downward course of christian profession.

Doubtless, my dearest A., this may sound very morose and severe. Some may pronounce me a gloomy croaker. I may be accused of gross one-sidedness and exaggeration, of wilfully shutting my eyes to a thousand hopeful features in the scene, and deliberately overlooking many encouraging pledges of brighter and better days to come. I may be told to open my eyes and look at the progress of education—to mark the rapid strides of science—the onward march of civilization—to contrast the England of to-day with the England of a hundred years ago; and in the face of all this brilliant array of redeeming features, I may be triumphantly challenged to produce my “evidences of the downward course of christian profession.” My attention may be called to the soul-stirring statistics of Bible and missionary societies, of the various philanthropic and scientific associations of this highly-favoured age.

Well, I can only say, I rejoice, with all my heart, in every atom of good that is being done, and in every encouraging feature on which the eye can rest. I bless God for all that He, by His Spirit and word, has wrought in our midst, during the last few years. And

further, I delight to think of the thousands of God's beloved people who are scattered up and down amid the various religious organizations of the day—living stones amid the *débris*—burning coals amid the smouldering ashes. I fondly trust that you and I do, most fully, appreciate all these things. God forbid we should not.

But in the face of all that can possibly be presented of a hopeful nature, allowing as broad a margin as the most sanguine spirit can demand in which to insert all the encouraging features and elements that are traceable around us, I return, with calm decision, to my statement that, "On all hands we are met by the most unmistakable evidences of the downward course of christian profession."

And why insist upon this? Is it a mere morbid desire to dwell upon the dark side of things? Is it that we would not rejoice as heartily as others in seeing the progress of what is true and good, if such were really visible? By no means. We can in our tiny measure, say with the apostle, "Would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." Assuredly, if the true and the good were really in the ascendant, we should have our share in it as well as others.

But no; my beloved brother, I believe that holy scripture and living facts coincide in demonstrating my statement as to the downward course of things. I shall, if God permit me to write this series of letters, furnish an array of evidence from the pages of inspiration, and from undeniable facts, patent to all who will only open their eyes to see, to prove that Christendom, as such, is travelling, with terrific speed, down an inclined plane

to the blackness and darkness of an eternal night; that there is not the smallest shadow of scripture authority on which to base a hope of improvement; and, finally, that there is not a single fact in Christendom's history, not a single feature in Christendom's present state that does not perfectly coincide with the predictions of our Lord Christ and His holy apostles, as to what we are to expect. It is perfectly useless for men to seek to shut their eyes to these things, or in any way to set them aside. The word of God and the facts of the case are against them. There is judgment—dire judgment—impending over the scene. Ere ever the beams of millennial glory can shine forth upon the world, the besom of destruction and the sword of judgment must do their appalling work.

I speak only of the great mass of christian profession. God has His people everywhere, blessed be His name! Amid all the darkness, the gross evil, and puerile superstition of popery, and in every section of Protestant profession, there are beloved members of the body of Christ. All these will rise to meet their Lord, when He comes to gather His own. Not one shall be left behind. Every grain of genuine wheat shall be gathered into the heavenly garner. And this may take place to-night! And what then? Yes, we may ask, what then? I shrink from penning down the answer; but it must be told—Strong delusion and eternal perdition for Christendom and every Christless professor therein.

I shall close this brief introductory letter by subscribing myself, as ever, dearest A.,

Your deeply affectionate yoke-fellow,

* * *

“THE SOWER.”

PART III.

WE shall commence this paper with the sentence which closed our last, “the sower soweth the word.” It is indeed a sentence of singular weight and power, demanding the attention of all who go forth to preach. The word should ever form the great staple of our preaching. Illustrations drawn from nature or from the scenes of real life may occasionally be introduced. The great Sower Himself used them with marvellous power; and all preachers and teachers will find them most helpful in conveying truth to the hearts and minds of their hearers. Very often a simple illustration will do more than the most elaborate and powerful argument, in bringing home a truth to the understanding. Indeed it may be safely asserted that for one that could understand the argument, you may find a hundred who could most thoroughly seize the illustration.

Still, the word of God must ever be the great agent, if the preaching is to be divinely effective. A profusion of illustration or anecdote weakens the preaching and lowers its tone. However useful, as an occasional auxiliary—and it is most useful—yet if it predominate it really displaces the word instead of illustrating and enforcing it. We should seek to preach with a more profound faith in the word itself—its divine power, fullness and sufficiency. It needs no addition or adornment from us. A single clause of holy scripture, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, is quite enough to reach the very depths of the soul and there become the germ of eternal life. It is more than questionable whether

our lack of faith in the power of the word is not the secret of the lack of fruit in our preaching. We all need a more thorough persuasion that “ The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”

Yes ; the gospel itself, in its own intrinsic excellence and divine fulness, apart from all that man may have to say about it—the precious gospel, flowing full from the very heart of God—the blessed tidings of accomplished redemption, coming home to the soul in the power of the Holy Ghost—the record of God’s free love, of Christ’s finished work, on the authority of the inspired word—this is the power of God unto salvation to every soul that believeth, be he Jew or Gentile.

It is not that we would overlook or undervalue a deep toned earnestness or whole-hearted zeal and energy in the preacher. Far be the thought ! Would to God we had more of these things, for, most assuredly, they are sadly needed amongst us, in this day of so much official preaching, heartless machinery and dead routine. We do long for more of heavenly fire in our preaching—more fervent outgoings of the heart after precious souls—a more intense longing to snatch our perishing fellow-sinners from everlasting burnings—a bolder grasp and an ever present sense of the horrors of an eternal hell and the unutterable joys of heaven. We want all these things to give character and tone, depth and power, earnestness and solemnity to our preaching ; but let us never lose sight of the weighty fact that “ *The sower soweth the word.*”

III. We shall now briefly glance at the third great subject of our parable, namely, the *soil*.

We have already sought to guard the reader against

the false idea that there is any essential difference in the hearts of men with regard to the word of God. Scripture teaches us, with all possible clearness, and unanswerable force, that "There is no difference." Men may not like this; but that, in no wise, affects the truth of God. Looked at from a divine stand-point—measured by a divine standard—weighed in a divine balance, there is no difference. Looked at from man's point of view, measured by a human standard, weighed in an earthly balance—viewed morally and socially, there are shades and grades and conditions which must never be overlooked. But when it is a question of "the glory of God"—and this is *the* one grand and all-important question—the Holy Ghost declares "there is no difference" inasmuch as "ALL have come short" of that one great standard from which there is and can be no appeal.

But does not our Lord, in this parable of the sower, speak of "good ground"? He does. Well, then, do we not learn from this that there is a difference? Is there not a material difference between good and bad? No doubt; but our Lord does not tell us what it is that makes the ground good. This is not His object or design in this parable. All scripture proves, beyond question, that "there is none good;" and therefore it follows, of absolute necessity, that the good ground, referred to in our parable, is rendered good by divine operation. There is not so much as the breadth of a hair of good ground in all the realms of fallen nature—in the entire extent of the old creation—not a single spot in which good fruit can grow save where the dew of heaven falls, and the hand of the divine Husbandman displays its gracious operations.

But we repeat our statement, and call the reader's special attention to it; it is not the object of the parable of the sower to set forth the truth as to the inherent nature of the soil, or the absolute necessity of divine grace in every instance in which good fruit is produced. It has been well remarked by an able writer, that a parable is like a globe touching a flat surface. It touches in one point, and if you try to make it touch in more, you smash the globe. It is important to bear this in mind in expounding the parables.

We shall now proceed to consider the various kinds of soil. “Behold there went out a sower to sow. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.” In our Lord's explanation given in private to His disciples, He says, “These are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard *Satan cometh immediately*, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.” Mark iv.

This is deeply solemn for all who sit under the sound of the gospel, or, in any way, come in contact with the word of God. The devil is ever on the alert. He is in earnest, at all events. He knows something of what is at stake, how careless soever men may be. And oh! how careless men are as to their immortal souls! As hard as the wayside. “The word that is sown in their hearts” sets forth, in terms plain and impressive, their real condition in the sight of God, their guilt, their danger, their utter ruin, their awful responsibility. It tells them of judgment to come, of the deathless worm, the fire unquenchable. It holds up before the vision of their souls the ineffable blessed-

ness and glory of that heaven which surely awaits all who simply and truly believe in Jesus.

But all in vain. These poor wayside hearers remain unmoved—hard as the beaten highway on which they tread, or as the benches on which they sit. The Lord's messengers plead with them earnestly and tenderly; they entreat, beseech and warn; they weep over them; their very hearts bleed for them; but all to no purpose; they remain careless and impenitent; and Satan, ever on the watch, ever active, never ceasing, speedily snatches away the word which is sown in their hearts, and thus retains them in his grasp, blind, hardened and impenitent.

How sad to think of these precious souls! How amazing to think that any one can be careless about his eternal salvation—careless as to the momentous question of his eternal destiny—careless as to where he is to spend those endless ages which lie before him! If any one were assured that he had a hundred years to live in this world, and that just one hour were allotted to him during which to make provision for the hundred years; but for the space of that hour, the Bank of England were flung open to him, and full permission given to help himself to as much gold as ever he could carry away, with what eagerness and earnestness would he address himself to the important business! How diligently would he provide bags and fill them with the precious treasure so that he might have enough for the hundred years.

But what should we say or think of such an one, if during that momentous hour, we found him indolently lounging on the steps of the Bank, or engrossed with

a puppet show or a band of music in the street? Assuredly we should pronounce him a fool or a madman. Ah! reader, if thou art careless about the salvation of thy immortal soul, thou art incomparably more mad than he. For just in so far as eternity exceed the short span of a hundred years; and so far as the interests of the never-dying soul exceed in importance the wants of the body, in so far do thy folly and madness exceed those of the man whose case we have attempted to portray.

There is no one so mad as the man who neglects his soul's salvation. And yet what countless millions display this madness, from day to day, week to week and year to year! On they go, like people blind-fold to the brink of that precipice which overhangs the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. They heed no warnings; they regard no entreaties; they turn a deaf ear to every argument and every appeal; they will not listen to the voice of the charmer. They are, with blind fatuity and obstinate purpose, bent on their eternal destruction. They *will not* have Christ and heaven; they *will* have the world and Satan and an everlasting hell.

It is of no use for any one to say he cannot help being a wayside hearer—he cannot make himself good ground—he cannot prevent Satan snatching away the word out of his heart—he *would* retain it if he could. This will not stand, for a moment, in the day of judgment: indeed such a line of argument or character of objection will not be attempted by any one in the light of that great day. Even now, it is utterly baseless and worthless. There is not a single soul, this day, beneath the canopy of God's heaven, who has the slightest desire for the word of God, or for the salvation

which that word reveals who may not have it *now*, in all its fulness, all its freeness, all its divine and eternal preciousness. Nay, more, there is not a single soul on the face of this earth who has ever heard the glad tidings of God's salvation, or who has within his reach a copy of the New Testament, who is not solemnly responsible to believe and be saved; and who, if he perish, will not have himself and no one else to blame. His blood shall be upon his own head throughout the everlasting ages of a black eternity.

We feel it imperative upon us to press this upon all who attempt to shelter themselves behind the plea of their not being responsible. They may rest assured it is a refuge of lies. Yes, a refuge of lies though deriving a shadow of support from a one-sided theology. The way-side hearer is responsible, and guilty of rejecting the good word of God. Who or what made him a way-side hearer? The plain fact, as to all such, is simply this, they do not want—do not desire—do not feel their need of salvation, of Christ—of heaven; and they weave a flimsy cobweb of excuses which, so far from averting, will only deepen and aggravate their eternal condemnation.

We constantly find, in scripture, that the very excuses which men bring forward are made the ground of their condemnation. Adam said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." Mark what follows. "And unto Adam he said, *Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all*

the days of thy life,” &c. So also, in the case of the wicked and slothful servant, in Luke xix. He says, “Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin. For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.” Does this preposterous plea avail him? Assuredly not. “And he said unto him, *out of thine own mouth will I judge thee*, thou wicked servant,” &c. His very excuse becomes the plain and palpable, just and equitable ground of his condemnation.

Thus it will be in every case. Every mouth will be stopped. Each one, when challenged before the judgment seat of Christ, will stand speechless; and we are persuaded that, if any one shall feel more confounded than another, it will be that man who denies his responsibility to believe the gospel, and dares to charge the living God with being the author of his unbelief and hardness of heart.

Oh! then, awake! awake! careless sinners—way-side hearers—gospel neglecters! Rouse yourselves to a sense of your tremendous responsibility! Suffer not the birds of the air—Satan and his co-workers, to snatch away from your hearts the precious seed of the word of God. Be in earnest, we beseech you, about your souls’ salvation. God is in earnest; Christ is in earnest; the Holy Ghost is in earnest; and, we may add, Satan, your great adversary, is in earnest. Will you alone be indolent and careless? Let it not be so, we earnestly beseech you. Oh! do come, now, just now. Come to Jesus. Believe in Him and be saved.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

THREE PRECIOUS GIFTS.

"I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish." John x.

"The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi.

"He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John viii.

"Christ shall give thee light." Ephesians v.

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John viii. 6.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

THE scriptures quoted above—and they are but a few of the many that might be adduced—teach us, very distinctly, that there are three things bestowed upon every soul that, through grace, simply and truly and heartily believes in Jesus, and these are "*Life*"—"Light"—and "*Liberty*"—three most precious gifts, surely—gifts in comparison with which all earthly riches, pleasures and distinctions are but as the small dust of the balance.

But there are very many who ought to be in the full and settled enjoyment of these immense privileges who actually do not know that they possess them at all, and consider it the height of presumption for any soul to think of possessing them. There are many sincere and earnest souls—truly converted persons—children of God who, through bad teaching, self-occupation or legality, are thoroughly in the dark as to the very elements of christianity—the simplest truths of the gospel. The dark atmosphere which enwraps the

whole of Christendom, so obscures the light of divine truth that they really do not know where they are or what they have got. In place of life, light and liberty, they are practically in the shadow of death, in darkness and bondage. They are robbed of those three precious gifts which God, in the fulness and riches of His grace, liberally bestows upon all who believe on the name of His only-begotten Son.

Now, it is for the special purpose of helping that large and interesting class of persons who are thus robbed and spoiled, that we have penned the few inspired sentences at the head of this paper; and we affectionately entreat of such to give earnest heed to them. We are not, now, going to expound them; nor yet to enter upon a full statement of the doctrines indicated in them. Our object is rather to exhort than to expound. We want—yea, we long to see all the dear children of God in the full enjoyment of the things which are freely given to them of God in Christ.

Let all such, then, hear what our Lord Christ saith, "*I give unto my sheep eternal life.*" "Ah! yes," some exercised soul may say; "I quite see that all Christ's sheep have eternal life; but my great, my sore—my soul-crushing difficulty is to know that *I* am a sheep of Christ. If I only knew that, I should count myself happy indeed."

Now this, though no doubt the language of hundreds, is a mistake. It is beginning at the wrong end. It is putting self and its feelings before Christ and His word; and, most surely, as long as any one is doing this, he must be in doubt and darkness. It is utterly impossible it can be otherwise. If it is some-

thing about myself I am called to feel or believe, in order to be saved, then, assuredly, I never can have the settled knowledge or assurance of salvation. I must have something entirely outside and independent of myself—something divinely solid—something eternally stable—some settled and absolute truth—something true in itself, apart from all my thoughts and feelings respecting it—in short I must have God's own revelation to rest upon, or I never can know what abiding peace really is. It is the eternal truth of God, and that alone, which forms the real basis of the soul's peace—a basis which not all the powers of earth and hell, men and devils can ever disturb. It is by believing in Christ, and not by feeling or believing something about myself, that I get eternal life. He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life.

Anxious reader, do ponder this. It is of the very deepest moment. It concerns the peace and rest of your soul. We would call your earnest attention to the weighty fact that what you are called upon to believe is not something about yourself, but something about Christ. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, *He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*" (John vi. 47.) Do you simply and heartily believe in Jesus? Do you confide in Him? Are you thoroughly satisfied with Him? If so you have eternal life, and you should, from this moment, know it and rejoice in it. Our Lord does not say, "He that feeleth he is one of my sheep shall have eternal life." Nothing of the kind—nothing like it—nothing approaching to it. "He that believeth on me." So also, in that well-known passage in John v. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that *heareth my*

word and believeth on him that sent me *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but *is passed* from death unto life."

Can aught be plainer than this? Every one who hears the word of Jesus, and believes in the One who sent Him, is the happy possessor of eternal life, and shall never come into judgment. Hence it follows that if we have not got *eternal life*, *we do not believe on the Son of God*, we have not heard His word, do not believe in God at all. Thus it stands if *we* are to be governed by the veritable teaching and authority of our Lord Christ. Every true believer in Jesus hath eternal life; and every one who has not eternal life is an unbeliever. So speaks the word of the living God.

But the believer should know what he possesses. Of what use or value could it be for any one to be left a large fortune in Canada, if he did not know anything about it? God would have us to know what He has freely given to us in Christ. The life is in Christ, so he that hath Christ hath the life, and he who hath not life hath not Christ. "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Precious, all important word!

Nor is it otherwise with respect to the second of our "three precious gifts." As we get "life" so we get "light"—in Christ. "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." God would not give us life and leave us in the dark. This would not be like Him. He has given us His Son; and, believing in Him, we get life; and, following Him, we get light—the *light of life*. Beauteous words! Words full of divine power! Enfranchising words for

the soul that has been groping in darkness and the shadow of death! "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth;" and the proper sphere for the life which we now possess is the light in which we are called and privileged to walk. The darkness is past, the shadows are gone; the clouds are rolled away; the dim twilight has given place to the full orb'd light of life streaming down into our souls, and upon our path, and enabling us to judge ourselves and our surroundings—to judge everything according to the true light that now shineth within, upon, and around us—shineth from the Father—shineth in the Son—shineth in the power of the Holy Ghost—shineth on the page of inspiration.

Finally, it follows, of blessed necessity, that as we get "life" and "light," so we get "liberty." It is all in Christ. He quickens; He enlightens; He emancipates; yea, more, He is our life, our light, our liberty. Blessed, throughout all ages, be His peerless name! "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Surely, it must be so. He would not give us life and leave us in the dark. He would not give us life and leave us in bondage or slavery. No, no; such is not His way. He sets us divinely and eternally free—free from guilt and condemnation—free from the dread of wrath and judgment to come—free from the fear of death—*free from the present power of sin*—quite as free as from its future consequences.

May the reader lay hold of these things in simple, childlike faith, and join us in a note of fervent praise to the Giver of these "Three precious gifts."



“THERE IS NO NEED TO BE ANXIOUS NOW.”

THE blessed fulness of these words, “There is no need to be anxious now,” may have been little understood by the one who first uttered them; but those who heard them, are not likely soon to forget them. And when understood in connection with the work of Christ and a present salvation, they are expressive of the soul’s blessing, and peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

One Lord’s day evening, a few months ago, after the preaching of the gospel, several persons passed into a side room for the purpose of having some personal conversation about the salvation of their souls. Amongst the number were two boys about fourteen years of age. One of them was known as a happy believer, the other was quite a stranger. When the room became tolerably clear, the boys were spoken to. On hearing that the christian boy had brought one of his school-fellows to the preaching, and that this was his first appearance, we did not expect to find much in the way of soul exercise; and simply said to him in a pleasant way—half playful—“Well, my boy, and has the preaching made you feel anxious about your soul to-night?” when, without hesitation, and in a quiet serious voice, he replied in the words at the head of this paper, “There is no need to be anxious now.” Being unprepared for an answer so complete, so full, so true, but so rarely given, we stood in thoughtful silence for a moment, and felt rebuked for our unbelief. It was exactly what we had been preaching, and insisting upon as the truth of God, and yet when it is

received into the heart in simplicity, by the blessing of God, we stand amazed and wonder. We are not prepared for that which should always and invariably be the result of preaching the gospel of God. What can be truer? Why should it not be at once believed?

The answer was right, and nothing more than simply correct, the only true answer that could be given. In further conversation with the dear boy as to why he thought there was no need for anxiety now, he almost seemed surprised that we should have asked such a question. In great simplicity he had received the truth concerning the Lord Jesus, and the blessedness of all who believe in Him. He believed that Christ had died for him on the cross, and that His precious blood had washed all his sins away, and that all who believed in Jesus were saved; and so he felt sure that he was saved. Nothing could be more simple, nothing could be more true, and there was nothing in our conversation beyond what we have found in many; and there we would leave it. Our only object in referring to the circumstance at all, is to bring before inquiring and anxious souls the unspeakable importance of simplicity of mind in all that concerns the truth of God and our faith and practice. If we allow the mind to reason in place of believing—to speculate about human opinions in place of receiving the truth of God—to be occupied with our own feelings in place of the love and goodness of the blessed Lord, farewell to decision, farewell to peace, to rest, to happiness.

Hearing so often from the lips of gospel hearers and from earnest souls too, the discouraging, uncertain sound, "I hope I believe—I wish to believe—I am

trying"—a clear, a distinct, a certain sound, "There is no need to be anxious now," came with a freshness which we cannot fully describe. But is it so? the reader who has been long troubled about his soul, may inquire. Most certainly it is so, we reply. Has not Jesus died? Did He, or did He not, finish the work required of God for salvation? Did He not say in solemn testimony, before He bowed His head, and died, "It is finished"? Was the work—the work that glorifies God, that saves every soul that believes—perfectly and eternally complete? Most assuredly it was! "It is finished," embraces all that was required of God, all that was needed by the sinner; and from the moment that the guiltiest of the children of men believes the gospel, he enters into all the blessedness of God's full salvation. Not that the believer always, or often, does so practically; unbelief so often hindering; but there it is. Were he looking to the word of God, and acting in simple faith, he might sit down with his Bible, and read over the long rich roll of blessings which are most surely his in Christ Jesus; and his beyond the possibility of failure, for the work on which they rest can never change in value. And if this were the case, surely he would say in intelligence as well as in faith, "There is no need to be anxious now."

When the sin-convicted soul bows before God, or as he may say, bows at the feet of Jesus, and from his heart cries, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner;" what will, what can, the Lord say? "I have no mercy for thee?" Never! This would be to deny Himself and the whole truth of God. Then and there, on the spot, the sinner receives mercy according to the goodness of

God and the value of the sacrifice of Christ. It is no longer a question of the sinner's thoughts and feelings, important as these may be in their own place, but all is now measured according to the value and the extent of the work of redemption—standing before God in the name and in the credit of Christ, he receives what is due to Him.

This grand and glorious truth is most clearly presented to us by the apostle in the ninth and tenth of Hebrews. In the early part of the ninth chapter, when speaking of the work of Christ, he points out, amongst many, three results, which ought to set the heart for ever free as to all anxiety about the future.

1. He refers to the rent veil, in contrast with the state of things under the law, when the way into the holiest was not made manifest. But now, the veil is rent, the way into the holiest of all is laid open, every obstacle is removed; the same stroke of judgment that slew the spotless Lamb, rent the veil asunder. "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom." This is a truth of immense importance, as removing all ground of doubt or fear and giving the believer perfect confidence in the presence of God. Was it not God's own hand that rent the veil from top to bottom? And why? Because the great work was accomplished that blots out sin, that establishes righteousness, that glorifies God, and meets every need of the lost sinner. And now mark the unspeakable blessedness of this result of the sacrifice of Christ: the believer—every believer—has access to God Himself, to where He is in the light. Could the

soul's blessedness be more complete? Impossible! Standing in the unsullied light of that throne—in the bright effulgent beams of that presence without a thought or fear ever crossing the mind that this happiness may one day be interrupted, is perfect rest. It is the dwelling-place of the believer—the Father's house—the home of the bride, the Lamb's wife, for ever. What grace! What happiness! What security! What a glorious result of that shed blood, which has cleansed from all sin? His blessed name shall have all the praise!

2. Not only has the precious blood of Jesus thrown wide open the gates of glory, and consecrated a pathway to the immediateness of God's presence, but it has given the believer a perfect fitness to be there; it fully meets all his personal need. The sacrifice of Christ, in contrast with the offerings under the law, makes the believer perfect, as pertaining to the conscience. He has no more conscience of sins. In the tenth chapter we have the detailed proof of this precious result of the work of Christ. Knowing the eternal efficacy of the blood of Jesus, we can go into the sanctuary of His holiness without an idea of fear as to the question of sin being raised—that awful question was settled—was closed for ever on the cross. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." The conscience bears the reflection of the sacrifice. A perfect sacrifice must give a perfect conscience; just as the imperfect sacrifices under the law never gave a perfect conscience. This gives the sweet sweet thought—yes, the inexpressibly sweet thought—*I am in the light without a spot or stain of sin!* Not

only are my sins all forgiven, but my conscience, once so bitter, is sweetened for ever, through the purifying power of the blood of Jesus Christ, my Saviour and Lord, to whom alone be all praise and glory.

3. The value of a good thing is greatly affected by its duration. Some of our sweetest joys on earth are marred by the thought that we may soon lose them. The opening bud of beauty may be blighted before its concealed glories have been fully blown. But faith will never weep over the disappointed hopes of heaven; every bud of promise shall shine in its full blown glories for ever. Already Christ has entered into the holy place, having obtained *eternal redemption* for us: and that we might receive the promise of an *eternal inheritance*. Everything, blessed be the name of the Lord, is *eternal* now. That precious blood can never lose its power; that work is completely and for ever finished; our High Priest is in heaven in virtue of an *eternal* redemption accomplished, and an *eternal* inheritance secured. It is not, as some would have it, a *conditional* redemption; that is, conditional on our consistency. We ought to be consistent, surely, and it is our sin and shame if we are not; but, thank the Lord, our redemption, our inheritance, our heaven, does not depend upon our consistency, but on the eternal efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son. That blood has been shed, that blood has been sprinkled on the throne, that blood has met the claims of heaven, that blood has met the necessities of fallen man, that blood shed once for all is eternally efficacious.

And now, my dear reader, canst thou say, "Amen,

and amen,” to these blessed truths? If so, thy soul is saved. If so, thy first answer may well be, “There is no need to be anxious now.” Souls converted by means of such a full gospel, generally come into peace at once, and not unfrequently leave the preaching room, or rather the conversation room, in the assurance and joy of salvation. And why not? Why should this be thought a strange thing? Has not Jesus died for the chief of sinners? And if for the chief, surely for the subordinate. What then, my friend? Believe it, only believe it. Believe what? thou mayest say. I answer—the testimony of God concerning His Son. Yes, the work is all done—finished; as we have been seeing. By nature we are the children of wrath, by faith we are the children of God. These are the unchangeable sayings of the living God.

But thou mayest still be careless, thoughtless, indifferent to these things altogether. Or art thou sometimes uneasy about the future, and disposed to calm thy conscience by embracing or pretending to embrace some of the vain notions of speculative minds? But after all, sooner or later, it must come to this: What saith the word of the Lord? That only endureth for ever. Let it judge thee now. It makes short work with reasoners—“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John iii. 36.) Be assured, then, my dear reader, that this is the truth of God, the unalterable statute of heaven, and must remain for ever unaffected by the thoughts of men.

Come then, at once, in all thy need to Jesus. He is

waiting to receive thee, and to put thee in possession of all the glorious results of His finished work. What a prize is before thee ! It is free to faith ! Dost thou hesitate for a moment to accept it ? Let all else fall from thy hand. Lay hold on eternal life. It may soon be far beyond thy reach.

Oh, let the spell of unbelief be broken ; let the web which Satan has woven around thee be rent in pieces. Let nothing on earth keep thee from the unreserved surrender of thy heart to Jesus—the Jesus that died to save thee ; who has already secured an open heaven, a purified conscience, an eternal redemption, for all who believe in Him ! What a prize for an immortal soul ! And yet the half has not been told. That which can never be fully revealed—His love—His unchanging love—sweetens all. Oh, to be loved by Him ; to be welcomed by Him ; to be needed by Him ; to be appreciated by Him ; to be introduced by Him ; to take rank with Him in those bright, bright scenes of love and glory. But what can I say more ! Wilt thou come ? Oh arouse thee, arouse thee, *come, come, COME !* The veil is rent, the gates stand open night and day ; the broad fields, the sunny hills of glory lie open before thee ; the myriad hosts of happy saints are ready to welcome thee. How different to the gloomy regions of hell ; to the blackness and darkness that must reign for ever there ; to the hopeless agonies ; the unceasing blasphemies ; the lurid glare of the flames that will never be quenched ; the ten thousand stings of the worm that will never die.

Farewell, then, for the present, my dear reader ;

forsake not the counsel of one whose whole heart desires thy salvation. Believe with all simplicity what thou hast read, and entering with joy into the three grand results of the death and resurrection of Christ, thou wilt be free and happy to say, "There is no need to be anxious now."



SOLOMON'S SONG.

Chapter ii. 17.

UNTIL the morning breaketh, until the shadows flee,
Until the earth awaketh, her absent King to see;
I'll get me to the mountain, to commune with my Lord,
I'll *drink* the living fountain, and *feed* upon His word;

I'll sit with Jesus yonder, upon His throne of light,
And on His grace I'll ponder, with rapturous delight.
Then from my starry tower I'll issue forth to tell
The riches of Thy power, Thou Great Emmanuel!

I'll bear to men the story of pard'ning love and grace,
And far proclaim the glory which shines in Jesu's face.
And thus until the singing of seraph choirs on high
Announce my Saviour bringing eternal glory nigh:

Telling of full redemption, and every foe o'erthrown,
And Satan's condemnation, and God supreme alone;
I'll never cease to enter within the courts above,
And from that mighty centre, go forth to tell of love—

Of love that never faileth, of grace that's always free,
Of might which now prevaieth, of Jesu's victory!
Thus in my Saviour's presence, abiding day by day,
I'll labour in His absence, till shadows flee away!



CORRESPONDENCE.

59. "Perplexed." We have already gone into your question, in our replies to correspondents. See "Answers to Correspondents," page 88. Also an answer in the second part, page 128.

60. "J. W.," Leeds. Both your communications have come to hand. We thank you heartily for your kind interest. As to the matter to which you refer, you must wait much on God. He alone can set all straight. "My soul, wait thou *only* upon God." Prayer is our grand resource. May we know its value and prove its power more and more each day!

61. "J. W. S.," Kilcommon. We heartily thank you for your kind note. The lines hardly suit our pages.

62. "S. E.," London. *The first grand business* of a person in debt is to get out of it. We must be just before we are generous. The parable at the close of Matthew xviii. applies, *primarily*, to God's governmental dealings with Israel; but the principle always holds good. If we do not cultivate a forgiving spirit, we shall soon lose the sweet sense of forgiveness. The more we enjoy grace, the more we shall display it; and the more we display it, the more we enjoy it. It is thus our heavenly Father deals with us in His daily government of His household.

63. "F. S.," Downham Market. There is nothing in Ephesians ii. 20 about *our building* upon the cornerstone. The words are as plain as possible, "*And are built* upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner." The apostles and prophets—that is New Testament prophets—were the first layer of the building of which Christ is the chief corner. Of course it is on earth the Holy Ghost is carrying on this great work. Whether we contemplate the church as the House or the Body, it is on the earth we see it now. By-and-by, it will be seen in its full heavenly glory.

“THE SOWER.”

PART IV.

THERE is an expression in Matthew xiii. in reference to the wayside hearers, which the reader will do well to ponder, “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and *understandeth it not.*”

How many there are of this class ! How many come under the sound of the word without having the least idea of applying their hearts to the understanding of it ! They attend the preaching-place, and hear the word, as a matter of course—a piece of religious routine ; but they have no perception of the truth ; they have no interest in it. It shoots over their heads, and they heed it not. If such persons are asked, at the close of the preaching or reading, “Do you understand what you have been hearing ?” Not they. They have not gotten a single definite idea ; and the consequence is that Satan cometh *immediately*, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

This is peculiarly solemn, and ought to act very powerfully on the consciences of all who hear or read the word of God. It is a most serious thing to be brought, in any way, into contact with the divine word. People may regard it as a light thing to attend a preaching, or to read the Bible in the family circle ; but it is very far indeed from that. On the contrary, it involves a most weighty responsibility, for which all will have to answer. The man, woman, or child, who hears the word of God read or faithfully spoken, is placed, by that simple fact, under the very heaviest responsibility which any mortal can incur.

It is vain to say they do not understand it, and therefore cannot be held accountable. Why do they not? Have they ever tried? Have they ever bent their mind earnestly to it? Have they ever made one earnest effort to understand it? Where is the obscurity? Holy scripture is plain, lucid, and distinct in its statements. There is no excuse on this score. And we may assert, without fear of contradiction, that no one yet ever truly desired to understand the word, to whom the power to understand was not freely imparted. A man may seek to screen himself behind the plea that he cannot understand divine things without divine teaching. But whose fault is this? Is the sinner responsible, or is he not? At whose door does the guilt lie? If man—any man—the writer or the reader of these lines, is not responsible, then on what ground will the judgment proceed? Clearly, if there is no responsibility, there can be no judgment. This seems perfectly unquestionable.

True it is—most true—the measure of responsibility varies, and so does the consequent ground of judgment. The heathen are responsible for rejecting the testimony of creation. The Jew is responsible for breaking the law. And the hearer of the word of the kingdom is responsible for rejecting or neglecting it. Will it be argued that the heathen do not understand the voice of creation, or that the Jew does not understand the voice of the law? Why not? Where is the obscurity? Is it not most obvious that the real ground of the difficulty lies, not in the character of the testimony, but in the condition of the heart? Yea, verily; and hence it follows that man is justly exposed to judg-

ment; and the judgment will in every case be according to the measure of responsibility, and the measure of the responsibility incurred is according to the measure of the light imparted.

It is precisely here, we are increasingly persuaded, that one grand and most serious defect of Calvinistic theology is apparent. Human responsibility is not maintained. The disciples of this school of divinity do not see how divine sovereignty, man's utter depravity, the absolute necessity of the operation of the Holy Ghost in conversion, can comport with man's solemn responsibility. But the humble disciple of Christ, who has learnt to bow, with meekness and reverence, to the divine teaching of holy scripture, finds no difficulty whatever in the matter. To such an one all is plain, because laid down with unquestionable authority in the word of God.

It is of the utmost importance that the reader should thoroughly seize the great moral roots of this question. We may depend upon it, there is a great deal more involved in it than mere theology: the true state of the heart is involved. A man may say, with great apparent plausibility, “If I cannot understand the word of the kingdom, why am I held accountable? Why should I be judged for not doing what God knows I have no power to do?” This is the ground constantly taken by those who reject the gospel, and go on in a life of sin and folly—a life of utter forgetfulness of God, of eternity, and of their own salvation. But the ground is as false as anything can be; and its utter falseness will at once be seen, if applied to the heathen on the one hand, or to the Jew on the other.

If the reader will turn with us for a few moments to the opening of the Epistle to the Romans, he will see how this weighty question is handled and settled by the inspired apostle.

In the first chapter he takes up the state of the heathen, and proves their responsibility on the ground of the testimony given to all in the visible creation. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. *Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse.*"

Nothing can be plainer than this. Man, as such—man, looked at in the broadest aspect in which he can be viewed—the Gentile, apart from all special dispensational dealings, is here proved to be "without excuse," and this simply on the ground of creation. In treating the question of Gentile responsibility, the apostle does not say one word about the law, for the simplest of all reasons, that the Gentiles were never put under the law at all; on the contrary, he says, "The Gentiles which *have not the law* are a law unto themselves." Their state is described as "lawless," that is, not under law. They are spoken of, not as *transgressors*, but "*sinner*s of the Gentiles;" and, as St. John tells us, "sin is lawlessness."* In a word, the Gentiles are

* The rendering of 1 John iii. 4, last clause, in our Authorized Version, is extremely defective. To define sin as "the transgression of the law" is a palpable mistake. What about the long period

held accountable to listen to the voice of creation. It is on this ground they shall be judged, and not on the ground of the law; "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." Romans ii. 12.

Then, in chapter iii., the inspired apostle sums up the evidence in the case of the Jew—an overwhelming body of evidence, drawn from their own scriptures, in which they made their boast, and of which they claimed the exclusive possession. "What then? Are we (Jews) better (than the Gentiles)? No, in nowise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." And then, after various quotations from the Psalms, he adds, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may

from Adam to Moses? There was no law then, and consequently no transgression, for the apostle expressly tells us, that "Where no law is there is no transgression." How could there be? If no line be laid down, how can you step over it?

But was there not *sin* from Adam to Moses? Yes, verily; and as a consequence death reigned. Still, sin and transgression are not the same thing. In order to have transgression, there must be a law. Now Adam had a law, and so had Israel; and hence we read in Hosea, "But *they* (Israel), like *Adam*, have transgressed the covenant" (chap. vi. 7, margin). But from Adam to Moses there was, and could be, no transgression.

It seems strange that our translators should have rendered the word *ἀνομία* (anomia), "the transgression of the law," since any well-instructed school boy would know that the word is simply "lawlessness;" whereas their rendering would demand the Greek phrase, *παράβασις τοῦ νόμου*. But theology may often warp the judgment of the soundest scholar.

be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."

Yes ; all are guilty, though not on the same ground, or according to the same measure. The Gentile stands on his ground, and the Jew on his, each according to his responsibility. Every mouth shall be effectually stopped. All man's proud reasonings shall be eternally hushed. All those who dare to reply against God—to sit in judgment upon His dealings—to call in question the enactments of His moral government—shall have their eyes open to see their fatal mistake—to see it when too late—to see it amid the everlasting torments of the lake of fire.

But there are those who incur a very much higher type of responsibility than the Jew or the Gentile. And who are they ? Those who have heard the gospel of the grace of God—the glad tidings of a full salvation through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ—those who have heard the precious message of God's free love to a lost world—heard, and rejected it—heard, and turned a deaf ear to it—those who have taken upon themselves the name of Christ, but know Him not, trust Him not, love Him not—mere baptized professors of Christianity. These incur the very heaviest responsibility, and shall have to meet the very heaviest judgment. For, just in so far as the testimony of Christ exceeds in value, importance, and moral glory, the testimony of creation ; and in so far as the glorious gospel of the grace of God exceeds the law of Moses—just so far does the responsibility of the rejecter of the gospel exceed that of the Jew or the Gentile.

Hearken to these tremendous words from the pen of the blessed apostle : “ The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” (2 Thess. i. 7-9.) And again : “ For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. That they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” Chapter ii. 11, 12.

Thus, then, we have three distinct degrees of responsibility, namely, the Gentile, the Jew, and the gospel rejecter. Each is left without excuse. Each must stand upon his own ground, and each will stand there speechless. There will be no replying against God when the reckoning time comes. Every mouth shall be stopped before the judgment-seat of Christ. Each will be judged according to his works ; but the heaviest judgment, the darkest doom, the most direful punishment, is reserved for those who have rejected the glorious gospel of the grace of God.

And of this we may rest assured, that no wayside hearer will then be found excusing himself on the plea that he could not understand “ the word of the kingdom.” No, no ; he will then see the folly and guilt of having allowed the devil to catch away the seed that was sown in his heart. It is only in this life that men argue, and reason, and reply. In that day which is rapidly approaching all such things will be hushed into eternal silence. All will be con-

strained to say, "We receive the due reward of our deeds."

Oh! that men would rouse themselves to think of these things in this the day of God's long-suffering. The storm is gathering. The door of mercy will soon be closed for ever against those who have heard the sound of the gospel, or have had within their reach an open Bible; and from within that closed door will come forth those appalling words, "I NEVER KNEW YOU: DEPART FROM ME, YE WORKERS OF INIQUITY."

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)



MEDITATIONS ON THE BEATITUDES.

THE FIFTH BEATITUDE.

VERSE 7. *Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.* We now enter on what may be called the *second* section of the Beatitudes. They are evidently divided into four and three—a division not uncommon in scripture. The first four are characterized by righteousness, or that which is due to God: the last three by grace, or the activities of grace towards others. There is great moral beauty, order, and instruction, in these two classes. The division is no doubt divine, and may well engage thy thoughts, O my soul, in happiest meditation. When the sinner is first awakened, brought into the presence of God, sees his true condition there, and learns the vanity of what man is, there must be humbling and breaking down. He will now side with God, and maintain His cause against himself.

Repentance is real. He is content to be nothing. Thus we see that the first blessedness is poverty of spirit, and introduces the soul to the other blessings. We will now look at the first of the last three.

“Blessed are the merciful.” No word within the compass of our language has a sweeter sound than *mercy*; and no other word could bring the character of God more fully before thy mind. This leads to thy deepest joy, and thy richest blessing—dwelling on the character of God. He is “the Father of mercies.” Mercy is not merely a resource of God, but He is its source—“the Father of mercies.” He is the well-spring of all the pity, compassion, tenderness, kindness, and charity, whether temporal or spiritual, which flow through this world of misery. And this mercy, blessed be His name, is *from* everlasting and *to* everlasting—without beginning, before time, without end, and when time is past. “The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.” (Ps. ciii. 17.) But in the meantime, on this “narrow neck of land,” this world of sin, between the incomprehensible past and future, mercy flows as a mighty river, and unites, as it were, the ocean of eternity. There is no interruption to His mercy; it is the active principle of His being in this world of sin and misery. “For his mercy endureth for ever.” Who can speak of the transcendent blessedness of such a truth in such a scene of sorrow as this world is! But for the ceaseless flow of His mercies, it could only be like that place where His mercies are clean gone, and where He will be favourable no more for ever. When the ear of mercy is closed, and the arm of mercy is withdrawn,

nothing remains but the agonies of despair. But now He delights in mercy, and will delight in it.

“For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” (Rom. ix. 15.) God only can say, “I will, I will,” and He only has a right to say so. No creature can say, “I will”—God only; but His “I wills” are mercy and compassion, and are all ours in Christ Jesus for ever. Satan may deny it; the poor human heart may doubt it; but the word of the Lord standeth firm and sure, it cannot be broken. “I will sing,” says the psalmist, “of the mercies of the Lord for ever. . . . For I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever.” Psalm lxxxix.

How shall I meet those eyes?—

Mine on Himself I cast,

And own myself the Saviour’s prize:

Mercy from first to last.

But tell me, my soul, is this rich, tender, everlasting mercy free to all who cry to God for it? Most surely! Are none now who hear of His mercy excluded? Only those who exclude themselves. The door of mercy now stands wide open, and the ear of mercy patiently waits to hear the cry, and quicker far than the electric spark is Heaven’s answer. Take a well-known example; and remember that Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

When the poor blind beggar (Luke xviii.) heard that short sermon, “Jesus of Nazareth passeth by, he cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!” What was His answer? Could He say, I have no mercy for thee? Impossible! that would

have been to deny the character of God, and the whole truth of the Bible. The fulness of divine mercy was his from the moment of his heart's first utterance. The faithless multitude might rebuke the blind man, and seek to drive him back; but not Jesus. The moment the cry for mercy fell upon His ear, He stood still; and the vast procession stood still, and, if it had been necessary, the spheres too would have stood still. All must give place to this service of mercy. "And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him; and when he was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee." Surely this is mercy, full and free; and such mercy is free to all, "For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." And these things are written, remember, that thou mayest believe. The same cry will bring the same blessing to-day.

And here learn also, as a believer, how to shew mercy. Give not thy alms to the poor as thou wouldst throw a bone to a dog. With what grace Jesus bends over the poor man, and asks, as if He were his servant, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Far from taking a place of manifest superiority, and causing the poor man to feel as if in a far distant place, He gave him to know and feel that He was dealing with him in love and grace, and drew the heart of the helpless one entirely to Himself. The Christian must not only be merciful—most merciful, always merciful—but he must learn to shew mercy after the manner of his Lord and Master. The way of the world is to patron-

ize, and to be esteemed as benefactors ; and many will give for the sake of this honour. But not so those on whom the Lord lays His hand and pronounces blessed. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Learn, then, I pray thee, from this narrative both the freeness and the style of divine mercy. He who cries to God for mercy, though physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually poor and blind—the weakest or most degraded of mankind—is instantly answered by Him, "who is rich in mercy." God never has, never can, and never will, say to the cry of the dependent heart, I have no mercy for thee. Hence the absolute certainty of God's mercy to every one who feels his need, and looks to Him to meet it. There is nothing either in the heart or in the circumstances of the sinner that can hinder the flowing spring of mercy, if he only bows at the feet of Jesus in dependence on Him. But there is no possibility of salvation to a single soul, save through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, His blessed Son.

Ho! all ye heavy laden, come!
Here's pardon, comfort, rest, a home,
Ye wanderers from a Father's face,
Return, accept His proffered grace.
Ye tempted ones, there's refuge nigh,
"Jesus of Nazareth passeth by."

But if you still His call refuse,
And all His wondrous love abuse,
Soon will He sadly from you turn,
Your bitter prayer for pardon spurn.
"Too late! too late!" will be the cry—
"Jesus of Nazareth *has passed by.*"

Having thus spoken of mercy in a general way, we will now notice more particularly its true character, and how it is to be manifested by all who have found mercy of the Lord.

MERCY AND GRACE.

In what way, we may inquire, does mercy differ from grace? Clearly they are not the same thing, though they may come very near to each other. They are carefully distinguished in scripture, and we will best learn their meaning by the use made of them there.

Both words, we find, are prominent in the character of God, as proclaimed to Moses—"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious." He is merciful to forgive, and gracious to help in every time of need. The distinction is also maintained in the most marked way by the apostolic writers. When addressing the church, they wish "*grace and peace*;" but when writing to individual Christians, they say, "*Grace, mercy, and peace*." The reason of this significant change not only marks the essential difference of the two words, but it reveals the peculiar position of the church. It is viewed as raised up in Christ, and in the same place of privilege, blessing, and acceptance as Himself. Hence the word "*mercy*" is never introduced when she is addressed in this relationship. The blessed Lord Jesus, though in this world as the lowly Son of man, never was, and never could be, the object of divine mercy; but "*Grace was poured into his lips*," and the richest gifts of heaven surrounded the path of the perfect One. The church is now seen as

one with Him. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, *so also is Christ.*" The last clause of this verse is a truly remarkable one—"so also is Christ." It shews the perfect oneness of Christ and the church. But for this unity, the apostle must have said, "so also is the church." He is speaking about the church, not Christ; why then say, in apparent violation of the ordinary rules of language, "so also is Christ?" Because the whole body, Head and members, are here viewed as "one body," and in the same place of privilege and blessing. Surely this should be rest, eternal, perfect rest, for the heart; and also the complete settlement of every question as to the heavenly character and relationships of the church. The Lord grant it!

But to return.

On the other hand, individual Christians are looked at as men in the body, and as encompassed with infirmities, passing through conflicts, and constantly needing mercy—and grace too, of course. Hence the apostle says to Timothy and Titus, "Grace, mercy, and peace;" and in writing to the Hebrews, he says, "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. iv.

The term grace evidently conveys the idea of *free gift, favour*; without obligation on God's part, without claim on ours; or without raising the question of the condition of the one so favoured; it may be called the indulgence of love. (See John iii. 16; 2 Cor. viii. 9, where we have grace in its divine fulness.) But *mercy*

always marks the receiver as a wrong-doer. To be "merciful" is to be ready to overlook or forgive a wrong, at the same time conscious that he to whom mercy is shewn deserves a contrary kind of treatment. It answers to what is called among men a tender, forgiving disposition; only it is to be exercised by believers on the higher ground of having obtained mercy of the Lord themselves, and looking forward to obtain it more fully, they are "merciful" to their fellow men.

But thou mayest yet inquire, my soul, what is the promised reward here assured to the merciful—"They shall obtain mercy?" We cannot need mercy in heaven. Surely not. Nevertheless, the promise is future, whether strictly applied to the Jew, or morally to the Christian. Onesiphorus was no doubt a Christian, and Paul prayed for him, "that he might find mercy of the Lord in that day"—the time of future rewards. So filled with gratitude was the heart of the apostle for the special kindness of Onesiphorus, when he risked his own life in finding him out, and in ministering to him in prison, that he prayed for a reward that would be the reflection of, and that would commemorate for ever, that noble service of love. This, we doubt not, is the way of heaven, but especially during the millennium. Every service of love, from a cup of cold water and upwards, shall not only be rewarded in that day, but the reward will characterize the service, and thus be held in everlasting remembrance. This is clear from many passages of scripture; we quote one of exquisite beauty. "And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, *and that thou shouldest*

give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great." (Rev. xi. 18.) The small as well as the great will be remembered on that blessed day. What grace! What a day that will be! May we think of it now in all our service for Him!

But thou mayest say with many, what can I do? If I am only there myself, I shall not think of a reward. Stay, my soul, see that thou venture not on wrong ground here. Many may speak thus as an excuse for spiritual indolence and worldliness. What is the teaching of the Lord in these beatitudes? Surely that the vital principle of each feature here pronounced "blessed," is in every soul that is born of God, though they are not alike prominent in all. We see poverty of spirit in one, and great activity in another. But those who mourn shall be comforted; the meek shall inherit the earth; the merciful shall obtain mercy.

May the Lord lead thee, and all who read this paper, to abound more and more in this heavenly, this God-like, grace of mercy. In the exercise of mercy towards others, thou shalt taste afresh the sweetness of God's mercy to thine own soul. A gracious eye, a tender heart, an open hand, carry with them their divine reward. Who abhors not the character of the steward who was forgiven ten thousand talents by his master, but would not forgive his fellow-servant a hundred pence? On the other hand, who admires not the mercy that shines in the good Samaritan, who did the neighbour's part? This is the mercy of the gospel, seek especially to shine here—in the mercy that would seek to save the lost sinner; but forget not the mercy

that shines in words, looks, and deeds. Mercy is the great need of mankind—sinners need it, saints need it, all need it. God in Christ Jesus is its source. May we be the channels of its many streams, both to the bodies and to the souls of men.



A SECOND LETTER TO A FRIEND ON THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THINGS.

DEAREST A.

Since writing my last letter to you, my mind has been dwelling a good deal on three great facts presented to us throughout the inspired volume—facts with which, I doubt not, your mind is very familiar, but which, I am thoroughly persuaded, must be laid hold of by a vigorous faith, if we would contemplate with a well-balanced mind the present condition of things throughout the entire professing church.

In the first place, then, we learn from scripture that, in every instance in which man has been set in a place of responsibility, he has utterly failed. Total failure has marked man's history, from paradise to pentecost. There is not so much as a single exception to the dark and melancholy rule. Let man be tried under the fairest possible circumstances, and he is sure to break down. Let him be started in business with the very brightest prospects, and hopeless bankruptcy is the certain issue. There is no denying this fact—no getting over it. It runs like a dark, broad line along the page of human history, from first to last.

Let us refer to our proofs—a melancholy but necessary task. When first man was placed in the garden of Eden, surrounded by all that the hand of an Almighty and Beneficent Creator could do to make him happy, he believed the serpent's lie, and turned his back upon God. He proved, in a manner perfectly unmistakable, that he had more confidence in the serpent than in Jehovah Elohim—more respect for the word of the devil than for the word of the blessed Creator. He trusted Satan rather than God blessed throughout the everlasting ages.

This, dearest friend, is our first proof. It may seem to some to be very harshly stated. It may seem coarse, severe, vehement, and ultra. But no; it would not be possible for the human pen to portray, or the human voice to enunciate, this terrible proof in features too exaggerated, or in language too severe. The first man, the great parent stem of the human family, the head of the entire human race, was guilty of the terrible act of which we speak. He preferred the devil to God.

Thus the matter stands in its simplest, truest form. Men may seek to mould it off, and soften it down, as they will; but no moulding or softening can alter, in the smallest degree, the essential features of this tremendous fact. There it stands recorded on the eternal page of inspiration, nor can all the fine-drawn theories of philosophy, falsely so called, nor all the plausible reasonings of infidelity, ever alter its real nature, character, or bearing.

It may be said, perhaps, that Adam did not know he was listening to the devil. But how does that affect the real merits of the case? It, most assuredly, was

not the way of the enemy to come forward openly and boldly, and say, "I am the devil; and I am come to slander Jehovah Elohim, and get you to turn your back upon Him altogether." Yet this was precisely what he did, no matter how he did it. He led man to surrender the truth of God, and to accept the lie of the serpent. Thus the fact stands before us, if we are to be guided by the imperishable testimony of holy scripture.

I do not by any means intend to expatiate upon the various links in the chain of evidence; but this first link is one of such grave moral import, that I cannot—nor would you, I am sure, wish me to—pass it rapidly by. I consider it a fact of the most overwhelming nature, that the head of the human family—the great parent stock—did, in very deed, reject the truth of God, and accept and act upon the lie of the serpent. This he did in the face of an array of evidence of the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, which ought to have furnished a most triumphant answer to the foul lie of the arch-enemy.

I think you will agree with me, beloved brother, in thinking that this fact demands our gravest consideration. It will, even though we were to proceed no further with our series of proofs, go far to prepare us for the contemplation of the present condition of things, in which we shall find superstition and infidelity playing such an appalling part. If it be true—and who will dare to deny it?—that the first man, the head of the race, the parent stem, believed the devil instead of God—hearkened to the creature rather than the Creator—need we wonder at the murky clouds of superstition that enwrap his fallen family, or at the audacious

flights of infidelity in which so many of his unhappy children indulge? The heart of man—of every unrenewed man beneath the canopy of God's heaven—is formed by the lie of the serpent—yea, not only formed, but filled and governed by it. Solemn thought! Fallen human nature is based upon and characterized by a lie as to God; and hence it must be false as to everything divine and heavenly. Man's moral being is utterly false—false at its very centre—he is corrupt at his very heart's core. Thus it is he has a ready ear for everything untrue, impure, and unholy—everything against God. You will always find the human heart at the wrong side of any question concerning God and His truth. No marvel, therefore, that superstition and infidelity are rapidly gaining ground in Christendom.

But I must proceed with my proofs, and not anticipate what is to come before me in a future letter, if God permit.

Passing down along the page of man's history after the fall, we see him progressing, with terrible strides, until at length his iniquity rises to a head, and God sends the deluge. Noah is carried safely through the judgment, and placed at the head of the restored earth, with the sword of government in his hand.

This, truly, was a high position—a place of immense power, privilege, and responsibility. How does Noah carry himself therein? He gets drunk, and degrades himself in the presence of his sons! Such is the plain, palpable fact. Men may reason as they will. They may seek to smooth, soften, and pare down, as is their wont whenever any great truth is stated which bears down upon human pride and self-gratulation.

But they cannot set aside the humiliating fact that the head of the restored earth got drunk. Yes, the very man concerning whom his father Lamech prophesied, that "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." This man "planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent."

I do not dwell upon this, but hasten on to another link in our chain of evidence. When Israel were redeemed out of Egypt, they deliberately undertook, and solemnly pledged themselves, to do all that Jehovah had spoken. What was the issue? Ere ever they had received the tables of the law, they, under the leadership of no less a personage than Aaron himself, actually made a golden calf, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

How terrible! how deeply humiliating! how astounding! to think of a whole congregation of men, headed by such a man as Aaron, actually accepting a golden calf in lieu of Jehovah! What a proof of our thesis is here, beloved friend! Jehovah displaced by a calf! Who would have thought it possible? But the heart recurs to Adam accepting the serpent instead of Jehovah Elohim, and this prepares us for anything. We are not surprised, when we behold Noah lying drunk in his tent, or Israel bowed before a golden calf. Man fails always, and everywhere. Adam is driven from the garden; Noah despised by his son; and Israel sees the tables of testimony shattered to atoms at the foot of the palpable mount.

But Jehovah institutes priesthood. The very man who did all the terrible mischief is invested with the high and holy office. What is the issue? Strange fire; and Aaron never appears in the presence of God in his garments of glory and beauty!

One more proof, and I close this letter. A king is in process of time set up. What follows? Strange wives, gross idolatry, and the nation rent in twain.

All these, my beloved friend, are plain, undeniable facts, which cannot be set aside, and they prove, so far as they go, the truth of my statement, that failure is stamped, in characters deep and broad, on man's history from first to last.

Ever, my dearest A.,

Your deeply affectionate yoke-fellow,

* * *



“ACCEPTED” AND “ACCEPTABLE.”

“HE hath made us *accepted* in the beloved.” (Eph. i. 6.) “Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be *acceptable* to him.” 2 Cor. v. 9.

The two words which form the heading of this paper, though rendered by the same word in our Authorized Version, are not at all the same. The former has respect to the person of the believer, the latter to his practical ways. That refers to his standing, this to his state. It is one thing to be accepted; it is quite another to be acceptable. The former is the fruit of God's free grace to us as sinners; the latter is the fruit of our earnest labour as saints, though, most surely, it is only by grace we can do anything.

It is well that the christian reader should thoroughly understand the distinction between these two things. It will preserve him effectually from legality, on the one hand, and laxity on the other. It remains unalterably true of all believers, that *God hath made* them accepted in the Beloved. Nothing can ever touch this. The very feeblest lamb in all the flock stands accepted in a risen Christ. There is no difference. The grace of God has placed them all on this high and blessed ground. We do not labour to be accepted. It is all the fruit of God's free grace. He found us all alike dead in trespasses and sins. We were morally dead—far off from God, hopeless, Godless, Christless—children of wrath, whether Jews or Gentiles. But Christ died for us, and God has co-quickenened, co-raised, and co-seated us in Christ, and made us accepted in Him.

This is the inalienable, eternal, standing of all, without exception, who believe in the name of the Son of God. Christ, in His infinite grace, placed Himself judicially where we were morally, and having put away our sins, and perfectly satisfied, on our behalf, the claims of divine righteousness, God entered the scene, and raised Him from the dead, and with Him all His members, as seen in His own eternal purpose, and to be called in due time, and brought into the actual possession and enjoyment of the marvellous place of blessing and privilege, by the effectual operation of the Holy Ghost.

Well, therefore, may we take up the opening words of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who

hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein *he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*" All praise to His name throughout the everlasting ages!

All believers, then, are accepted—perfectly and for ever accepted—in the Beloved. God sees them in Christ, and as Christ. He thinks of them as He thinks of Him; loves them as He loves Him. They are ever before Him, in perfect acceptance in the blessed Son of His love, nor can anything, or any one, ever interfere with this their high and glorious position, which rests on the eternal stability of the grace of God, the accomplished work of His Son, and attested by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

But are all believers *acceptable* in their practical ways? Are all so carrying themselves as that their dealings and doings will bear the light of the judgment-seat of Christ? Are all labouring to be agreeable to Him?

Christian reader, these are serious questions. Let us solemnly weigh them. Let us not turn away from the sharp edge of plain practical truth. The blessed apostle knew he was accepted. Did that make him lax, careless, or indolent? Far from it. "*We labour*," he says, "*to be acceptable to him.*" The sweet assurance that we are accepted *in Him* is the ground of our labour to be acceptable *to Him*. "The love of Christ

constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.” 2 Corinthians v. 14, 15.

All this is pre-eminently practical. We are called upon, by every argument which can bear sway over the heart and conscience, to labour diligently to be acceptable to our blessed and adorable Lord. Is there aught of legality in this ? Not the slightest tinge. The very reverse. It is the holy superstructure of a devoted life, erected on the solid foundation of our eternal election and perfect acceptance in a risen and glorified Christ at God’s right hand. How could there be the very smallest atom of legality here ? Utterly impossible. It is all the pure fruit of God’s free and sovereign grace from first to last.

But ought we not, beloved christian reader, to rouse ourselves to attend to the claims of Christ as to practical righteousness ? Should we not zealously and lovingly aim at giving Him pleasure ? Are we to content ourselves with vapidly talking about our acceptance in Christ, while at the same time there is no real earnest care as to the acceptability of our ways ? God forbid ! Yea, let us so dwell upon the rich grace that shines in the acceptance of our persons, that we may be led out in diligent and fervent effort to be found acceptable in our ways.

It is greatly to be feared that there is an appalling amount of antinomianism amongst us—an unhallowed traffic in the doctrines of grace, without any godly care as to the application of those doctrines to our

practical conduct. How all this is to end, it would be hard to say ; but, most assuredly, there is an urgent call upon all who profess to be *accepted in Christ* to labour fervently to be *acceptable to Him*.



“OUR SPRINGS ARE ALL IN THEE.”

As pilgrims and as strangers
We tread the desert way,
In conscious weakness, leaning
On God, our strength and stay.

Though oftentimes long and dreary
The way may seem to be,
Yet, Lord, Thy strength and love is ours,
And we can joy in Thee.

Though everything should fail us,
Still we can count on Thee ;
Thou art the ever faithful One,—
Our springs are all in Thee.

'Tis thus in Thee confiding
We tread the desert way,
Proving Thy love and faithfulness
So constant day by day.

The wilderness is barren,—
A place where drought abides ;
But our resources are in Thee,
Our need Thy love supplies.

We know Thou wilt sustain us
Until the journey's o'er,
Then we shall meet with Thee above
And praise Thee evermore.

May 26th, 1874.

L. W.

CORRESPONDENCE.

64. "F. A.," Swindon. In the words, "Take ye away the stone," and again, "Loose him, and let him go," we see the lovely grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in permitting His people to be co-workers with Him, in so far as they can. He merely does what they cannot do. Such is His gracious way always, blessed be His Name! Well we know He could do all His work without us; but He delights to link us with Himself in all that blessed work which He is carrying on in this world of sin and death. Oh! that we may more fully prove our appreciation of this rare privilege!

65. "C. M. H.," West Green. We have repeatedly gone into this question. See, especially, "Answers to Correspondents"—(1864-1866, page 1.)

66 "T. E. P.," Edinburgh. Thanks for the lines. The circumstances under which they were penned would, no doubt, impart a special interest to them in the judgment of personal friends; and indeed they breathe a sweet devotional spirit.

67. "A. M.," Kingston. We are not to suppose that the Syrians would be governed by the teachings of holy scripture, as to leprosy or anything else. What did the king of Syria know about the teachings of Leviticus xiii. and xiv.?

68. "C. J.," near Stoneham. If it wounds your conscience, do not, on any account, engage in it.

69. "A Reader," London. If you are, through grace, thoroughly settled on the rock, you need not be troubled by the statements of the book to which you call our attention. It does not lie in our province to review books. We have looked through the one you refer to, and we do not sympathise with it. It lacks tenderness.

1 Peter iv. 18, refers to the moral government of God, and His present judgment of His house.

70. "D. N.," D——. We assuredly judge the position to be a wrong one, inasmuch as it is, most

distinctly, being unequally yoked together with unbelievers. It is also clearly wrong to be in debt: why not, at once, abandon the false position; and, so far as in you lies, get out of debt? There would then be no reason for suspending your meeting.

71. "J. C.," Doncaster. You have not quoted Hebrews iii. 14 correctly; the meaning is simply this, the holding the beginning of their confidence stedfast unto the end would prove the reality of their profession. The epistle to the Hebrews abounds in the most solemn warnings.

In Hebrews ii. 10 "Him" refers to God. Hebrews x. 29—"the person who sins wilfully," most surely. How could anyone think otherwise? In 1 Corinthians xi. the assembly is not mentioned till verse 17.

72. "J. F.," Jersey. Where is there any warrant in scripture for confining the Lord's supper to the first day of the week? No doubt the disciples did specially celebrate it on that day; but it was originally instituted on a week-day. We should rejoice to break bread at any time, provided people were up to the mark for it, and that all the circumstances of the case were according to the mind of God.

73. "T. D.," Halifax, N.Y. John xvii. 1 refers to Christ's being glorified at the right hand of God. A moment's reflection would enable one to see this: Christ glorified God on the cross; and the Father glorified Him by setting Him at His right hand in heaven. Our Lord in John xvii. is in spirit, at the close of His earthly path, His work is done; and He looks to the Father to glorify Him, that He may glorify the Father.

74. "G. G.," Sunderland. Your interesting communication has come to hand. The Lord be praised for all you can tell of His great goodness to you, both as regards your own soul, and the work which He has given you to do for Him. Accept 1 Corinthians xv. 58 as a precious motto, from Himself, and may He abundantly bless your labours in the gospel!

“THE SOWER.”

PART V.

WE come now to consider the case of the stony ground hearers. In them we have something quite distinct from the wayside class. These latter never exhibit anything approaching to a practical result. The most sanguine evangelist could not think for a moment of reckoning them amongst the fruit of his work. They leave the preaching place as they entered it, unreached, unimpressed, uninterested.

But, on the other hand, many a workman might be deceived by a stony ground hearer, inasmuch as there really seems to be some result, something hopeful, something leading to the conclusion that a divine work has begun in the soul. Let us read the Lord's own testimony respecting this class of hearer.

“Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth.” There is *some* “earth” — something soft. It is not all hard rock, or beaten highway. “And *forthwith* they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up they were scorched; and because they had *no root* they withered away.” (Matt. xiii.) The words in Mark are almost identical. In Luke we read, “Some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up it withered away, because *it lacked moisture*.”

Then we have the explanation, in which the divine Teacher informs His disciples fully as to the stony ground hearer. “But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon *with joy* receiveth it; yet hath he not root in him-

self, but *dureth for a while*: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."

Now here we have something demanding the gravest consideration, on the part of all engaged in the great work of evangelization. Every earnest evangelist longs, and ought to long, for results. Not to do so would argue a heart far removed from the deep throbbings and tender yearnings of the great Evangelist. Every true lover of Christ and of souls must long ardently for the salvation of those to whom he preaches. But then this very longing may lay the workman open to deception as to the result of his work. It may lead to a hasty accrediting of cases which may turn out not to be genuine. How many stony ground hearers have been entered in the returns at the close of gospel services! Yea, how many are reported as converts who do not even afford the measure of promise presented in Matthew xiii. 20!

This is very serious, and should lead all evangelists to wait much on the Lord for wisdom and holy discernment, to enable them to judge the various cases that come before them in the course of their ministry. Some of us may be inordinately eager for present palpable results; that is to say, our motive for seeking cases of conversion under our preaching may not be pure, spiritual, and heavenly. In this way we are tempted to a premature acceptance of cases which are not genuine.

All this must be sedulously guarded against by the Lord's dear workmen. There are dangers on every side. We have to watch against the tendency to cast

a damper upon any who really desire to flee from the wrath to come and to follow the Lord. We should hold ourselves in readiness to accredit all that we possibly can, and to lend a helping hand to young disciples. It is very sad indeed to find those who have been long in the ways of the Lord casting stumbling-blocks in the way of anxious souls. This, alas! is frequently done by persons with the very best intentions: they are afraid of being deceived, and of deceiving others, by leading them to think themselves converted, when they really are not. They deem it necessary to observe extreme caution in accepting any case as genuine, lest they should sanction a false profession, or commit themselves to a superficial work.

Then, again, there are some who find it exceedingly difficult to accredit any cases of conversion save those with which they themselves have been in some way connected. This is utterly contemptible—wholly unworthy of any one calling himself a Christian or a minister of Christ. We ought ever to exhibit a bright, hopeful, gracious spirit and bearing toward all who seem to be in any way the subjects of a spiritual work; and, even though we may not be able to accredit, we certainly ought not to repulse. We have little idea of the chilling effect produced upon the newly-awakened soul when matured Christians treat them with suspicion, or even indifference.

Still, admitting in the very fullest manner the truth and importance of all that we have been saying, we must not forget the fact that there are stony ground hearers, and further, that they may very easily be mistaken for genuine cases. “He that received the seed

into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it." This looks very hopeful, and might very readily be reported as a case of blessing at the close of a gospel preaching. Hundreds of such cases, we doubt not, have been reported, and talked about in all our great religious awakenings.

But mark the melancholy sequel: "Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." It is well not to be too sanguine. Better far to wait a little. God's work is sure to manifest itself in due time. Be as earnest as ever you can. Be prayerful. Eschew all indifference; but do not be hasty to accredit mere stony ground hearers.

And if it be asked, How are we to know this particular class? The Lord Himself gives us a very plain mark by which to judge, in the expression, "anon with joy." It is not by any means a good sign when people receive the word all at once with joy. It argues a lack of that deep exercise of conscience, so essential in the formation of solid christian character. It is a serious thing to have one's eyes opened to see the true state of his case—to see his guilt, his misery, his danger. It is not a joyous thing to have the whole moral being broken up by the ploughshare of conviction. The process of self-judgment and true repentance is not likely to be characterized by joyful feelings. Saul of Tarsus was not very joyful during those three days and nights that followed his conversion.

Ah, no; repentance is a serious matter; and we may rest assured that where the Spirit of God is really at

work in a soul—when He is carrying on His great work of conviction, there will be profound exercises of heart and conscience—exercises wholly incompatible with demonstrations of joy. It is not a joyous thing to look in upon a ruined, wretched, guilty self; or back upon a misspent, sinful, rebellious life. Joy and peace are sure to come *afterwards*, but not "*anon*." The prodigal did not come tripping back with elastic step to the father's house. He would, no doubt, be profoundly happy in the father's bosom; but on his way back, we may say, with confidence, he passed through something very different indeed from "*anon* with joy."

In a word, then, stony ground conversions never last. There is no "*depth* of earth," and therefore "no *root* in themselves." "They lack *moisture*;" and "wither away." It is important to have a deep furrow; but this cannot be where there is no depth of earth. If the mere feelings of nature are wrought upon; if there be no deep work of the Spirit of God in the conscience, it will all end in nothing, or worse than nothing. "When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."

Thus much as to the stony ground hearers, who awaken bright hopes in those who are interested in them; but those hopes are speedily blighted by the painful discovery that all is superficial and false. Our Lord's words respecting this class, as recorded in Mark, are peculiarly solemn and striking. "And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground, who, when they have heard the word, *immediately receive it with gladness*; and have no root with themselves, and

so endure but for a time ; afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, *immediately they are offended.*"

Their abandonment of the word is just as immediate as their reception of it. It has not penetrated into the depths of the soul. The stony substratum—the unbroken material underneath the shallow surface, prevents the precious seed from sinking down into the heart and conscience. The power of the truth is not felt. Its value is not appreciated—not known ; and hence the moment they are called into trial for the truth's sake, they are offended and give it all up, because they do not value it enough to submit to privation or trial on account of it. It is all very well to hear the glad tidings of salvation through the blood of the Lamb—to have the sweet story of God's free love told out in our ears—to be told of forgiveness flowing freely and fully from the very heart of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—to be assured of God's willingness to save us from an everlasting hell, and to bestow upon us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory—all this is very beautiful and very blessed ; but if it be only received as so much abstract truth into the region of the understanding—if the fallow ground be not thoroughly broken up by the powerful ministry of God the Holy Ghost, then when difficulties, privations, and trials come—when bold and uncompromising decision for Christ would manifestly involve "persecution and afflictions"—in a word, when the reproach of a crucified Christ has, in any measure, to be faced, it becomes apparent that there is no living link between the soul and Christ ; no depth, no power, no divine

operation in the heart, no stability, no endurance:
"These are they which are sown on stony ground."

Reader, it becomes us to ponder these things very deeply. They are most serious. It is impossible to overstate their solemn importance. Let us look well to it that we are not stony ground hearers. Let us see that the precious word of God—the incorruptible seed of the kingdom has found a deep and permanent lodgement in our souls. If ever there was a moment in the history of the professing church when such considerations claimed attention, it is just now, in this day of easy-going shallow profession, when there is so much that is merely "in word and in tongue," and so deplorably little "in deed and in truth."

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)



HERE AND THERE.

FAIREST scenes are changing—fading,
 Dearest friends must one day part,
 Fondest hopes and brightest prospects
 Die, and disappoint the heart,
Down here.

But beyond earth's transient pleasures,
 Fleeting joys and changing friends,
 Faith sees One whose changeless glory
 Far this mirage-scene transcends,
Up there.

There Lord, let mine eye be fixed,
 Heart and mind repose at home,
 Listing as time's shadows deepen—
 For thy loving welcome, "Come"
Up here.

H. S.

A THIRD LETTER TO A FRIEND ON THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THINGS.

DEAREST A.

It need not surprise us to find that Christianity forms no exception to the melancholy rule which we have been pursuing through the pages of Old Testament scriptures. At the opening of the Acts of the Apostles we have a most charming picture presented to our view, in the condition and practical ways of the early church. The very record is refreshing to read. What must the living facts have been? I am sure you will not object to my penning a few lines in illustration.

“Then they that gladly received the word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed *were together*, and had all things common: and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily *with one accord* in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.” Acts ii. 41–46.

Here we have a lovely sample of true Christianity—some rich clusters of the fruit of the Spirit—the glorious triumph of grace over all the narrow selfishness of nature—the exquisite merging of all personal interests and considerations in the common good. “They were

together," and "they had all things common." They were "of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and *great grace was upon them all*. Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to every man according as he had need." Acts iv. 32-35.

It is impossible to conceive anything more lovely on this earth. It is a display of the moral glories of heaven—a fair and touching illustration of what it will be, by and by, when our God shall have things His own way, and when He shall throw open the fair fields of the new creation in view of all created intelligences, when the heavens above and the earth beneath shall exhibit the benign influence of the Saviour's reign, and reflect the beams of His moral glory.

But alas! alas! this lovely picture was marred. There were unhallowed elements working underneath the surface of this fair scene, which very speedily made their appearance. Covetousness, selfishness, hypocrisy and deceit broke out in the very midst of all this moral loveliness, proving that man is the same, always and everywhere. In Eden, in the restored earth, in Canaan, and in the very presence of the Pentecostal gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, man utterly breaks down. Unfaithfulness, failure, sin and ruin are stamped on every page of man's history, from first to last. It is

perfectly useless for anyone to deny this. The proofs are too strong. Every section of the melancholy story, every page, every paragraph, is but a tributary stream to swell the tide of evidence in proof of the fact that man is not to be trusted. In the bowers of Eden; amid the impressive scenes of the restored world; surrounded by all the splendour of Solomon's reign: yea, in presence of the Pentecostal gifts and powers of the Holy Ghost, human sin and folly have displayed their hideous forms. There is not so much as a solitary exception to the dismal and humiliating rule.

It may be, however, that some will object to the use I am making of the covetousness and deceit of Ananias and Sapphira, and the murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews. It may be deemed unwarrantable to argue the failure of the entire christian dispensation from a few plague spots appearing at the opening of its history.

Well, dearest A., the very same objection may be urged in reference to our entire series of proofs. What drove Adam out of Eden? Eating a little fruit. What degraded the head of the restored earth? Drinking too much wine. What stripped Aaron of his garments of glory and beauty? Strange fire. Thus, in every instance, it is not a question as to the magnitude of the thing done, but as to the gravity of the principle involved. It is of the very deepest moment to see this, in all cases. What appears on the surface may, in our poor shallow judgment, seem very trivial: but the underlying principles may involve the very gravest consequences.

However, it is not to be supposed that we base our

judgment as to the utter failure of Christianity, as a witness for Christ on this earth, upon the facts recorded on the opening page of the church's history. Far, very far, from it. Our Lord's prophetic teachings, delivered before the foundation of the christian system was laid, furnish the fullest and clearest warnings as to the future destiny of that system. What means the parable of the tares? of the leaven? or of the mustard tree? "*While men slept the enemy came and sowed tares in the field, and went his way.*" What are we to learn from this? Surely not the uninterrupted progress of the good—the pure—the true; but the corruption of these latter by the mischievous hand of the adversary; the marring of the beauteous work of God, the hindrance of the divine testimony by adverse influences.

Similar is the testimony of the parables of the leaven and the mustard seed. Both lead us to expect the hopeless failure of the christian system, through the unfaithfulness of man and the crafty vigilance of the arch-enemy. True it is that many look upon the leaven as typical of the gradual progress of the gospel until all nations shall be brought under its mighty influence. And in like manner, the mustard tree is viewed as illustrating the marvellous progress of the christian system.

But it is not possible that the parables of the leaven and the mustard seed can contradict, in their teaching, the parable of the tares; and most surely this latter does not teach the progress of good, but the sad admixture of evil. And further, how is it possible for the careful student of scripture to admit that leaven is ever used as a type of anything good? I believe, beloved friend, you will concur with your correspondent in the

opinion that leaven is only used to set forth that which is evil. And as to the mustard tree, the fact of its offering shelter, in its wide-spreading branches, to "the fowls of the air," stamps its character; for where, we may inquire, are those "fowls" ever used as a figure of what is holy or good?

But the entire New Testament actually teems with evidence in proof of our thesis. Every prophetic voice that falls on the ear, as well as every historic statement goes to establish, beyond all question, the hopeless ruin of the church as a responsible witness for Christ on the earth.

I am not now treating of the church as the body of Christ. In this aspect, thank God, there can be no failure, no ruin, no judgment. Christ will infallibly maintain His church according to the divine integrity of His own work. He will present His church ere long without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. He has expressly declared that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His assembly.

But on the other hand, looked at as a responsible witness for Christ, as a steward, a light-bearer, in this world, the church, like every other steward or witness, has miserably failed; and is rapidly ripening for judgment. If we do not distinguish these two aspects of the church or Christianity, we shall be involved in thorough confusion.

But I must proceed with my chain of evidence.

Turn for a moment to that touching scene in Acts xx. where the blessed apostle is taking leave of the elders of the church at Ephesus. Let us hearken to the following words of deep solemnity, "Take heed therefore

unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. *For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of [or from among] your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*" Verse 28-30.

Now, I feel assured, beloved friend, you admit that we have something more in the above passage than the mere fact of a servant of Christ taking leave of the sphere of his labours, and of his fellow-labourers. I believe we have here that solemn epoch in the church's history, in the which she was to be deprived of the personal presence of apostles. And what, let me ask, is she taught to expect? Is it spiritual progress? Is it the gradual spread of the gospel over the whole world? Is it the introduction, by moral and spiritual agencies, of the millennium? Is it a succession of godly, devoted, earnest men who should carry on the blessed work begun by the apostles? Nothing whatever of the kind—nothing approaching it. On the contrary, she is taught to look for "grievous wolves"—"men speaking perverse things"—perverters of the truth of God and of the souls of men.

Such is the gloomy prospect presented to the church's view in this pathetic farewell address of the most devoted servant that ever stood in the vineyard of Christ. It is vain—utterly vain, to seek to shut our eyes to this solemn fact. I know people do not like to hear such teaching. Smooth things are far more agreeable and more popular. But we must speak the truth. We dare

not attempt to prophesy smooth things—to cry peace, peace, when there is no peace, but palpable ruin and imminent judgment. Of what possible use is it to daub the wretched walls of Christendom with the untempered mortar of human thoughts and opinions? “Use,” did I say? It is positive cruelty; for as sure as God is in heaven, those walls shall, ere long, be demolished and swept away by the stormy blast of divine judgment. There is nothing before Christendom—the false professing church—root, trunk and branches, but the unmitigated wrath of Almighty God. Is this a mere human opinion? Nay, it is the voice of holy scripture.

Let us listen to further testimony.

Turn to Paul’s Epistle to Timothy. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.” 1 Timothy iv. 1–3.

It will, perhaps, be urged, by the protestant reader, that in the passage just quoted we have a photograph of popery. Granted. The features are far too salient—too striking, for the most cursory observer not to trace the picture of popery, with its monastic and ascetic absurdities.

But let us cull for protestantism a passage from the second Epistle.

• This know also, that in *the last days* perilous [or

difficult] times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves [not abstaining from aught that self may desire], covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." 2 Timothy iii. 1-5.

Here we have, not the superstition of the middle ages, but the infidelity of the last days of Christendom, with all its appalling adjuncts so flagrantly displayed, on every side, in this our own day. Thus in 1 Timothy iv. we have popery; and in 2 Timothy iii. infidelity plainly delineated by the pen of inspiration. In neither are we taught to look for the progress of truth; but in both the progress of error and evil, and the consequent judgment of God.

Precisely similar is the teaching of the Apostle Peter, who tells us that "There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." 2 Peter ii. 1-3.

So also the Apostle Jude gives us a most appalling

picture of the corruption, the ruin, and the final doom of Christendom. Nothing can be more awful than his delineations. "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds: trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

Finally, when we turn to the addresses to the seven churches, the same solemn testimony is conveyed to the heart. The church is under judgment. It has left its first love. Balaam, Jezebel, and the Nicolaitanes are at work. This responsible witness for Christ—the last of the series—proves no better than all the rest. The ruin is hopeless; and nothing remains for the professing church but to be spued out as a nauseous and insufferable abomination.

Here I pause, dearest A., for the present. The chain of evidence is complete. It is impossible for any one who bows to scripture to resist or gainsay it. My first point is established unanswerably, namely, that wherever man has been set in a place of responsibility, he has miserably failed. Hopeless ruin and judgment cover every page of human history, from Adam in the garden of Eden down to the christian era. There is not so much as a solitary exception to the gloomy and humiliating rule.

But I must close this long letter. In my next, if God permit, I shall glance at other great root-principles to which I have referred. Meanwhile, may our souls be kept above the murky atmosphere that envelops the professing church, basking in the sunlight of our Father's love, and realizing abiding fellowship with Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever !

Ever, my much loved brother,

Your deeply affectionate yokefellow,

* * *



WHY WEEPEST THOU ?

God careth for thee, weeping one,

His hand is round thee now ;

For thee His *best* is always done ;

O then, why weepest thou ?

God loves thee well, thou troubled one,

Heaven wonders at such love ;

He loves thee as He loveth none

In angel ranks above.

Throughout the earth His earnest eye

Hath careful searched, to see

What spot it was beneath the sky

That *best* befitted thee.

Yet thou that chosen, holy place

Profanest now with tears ;

And when thy soul should sing its praise,

It weeps its idle fears.

O wherefore, wherefore, dost thou wrong
 His heart who loves thee so ?
 And rob Him of thy tribute song,
 To nurse thy thankless woe ?

If thou must weep, then weep for joy
 That God THY FATHER is ;
 Whose grace does all its powers employ
 To load thy soul with bliss.



MEDITATIONS ON THE BEATITUDES.

THE SIXTH BEATITUDE.

VERSE 7. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* We now approach the most heavenly and lofty of all the beatitudes, and in some respects the most difficult to make plain to others. Not, surely, that we should be less acquainted with a pure heart than with a merciful heart, but the object of the pure heart, and the effect of seeing that object, is a blessedness which transcends the power of language. This may be understood from the effect of lower objects which come within our own experience. We look on an object of interest or affection—a face, it may be—a mother's face, for example, as sung our christian poet on receiving his mother's picture.

“ Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,
 The same that oft in childhood solaced me :
 Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,
 ‘ Grieve not my child, chase all thy fears away.’ ”

Thus we stand, we gaze, absorbed with the tender

recollections of the past, the bright anticipations of the future, and the passing over of that "little while" which comes in between. And still we stand in silent meditation; the heart moved to its deepest depths; the eye fixed on that countenance with melancholy delight, until self and all outward things are forgotten. Such deep emotions may be spoken of to a few—very few—but they must remain for ever undescribed. We must have both the condition of heart and the object to know their full meaning; and so it is with the heart's vision of heavenly things—the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. Let us now endeavour to explain.

The moral condition of the heart or soul, is here the important question. God only being pure absolutely, there must be purity of heart to appreciate Him. There is no thought here, we need scarcely say, of bodily sight, for even Jesus is now hidden from our view. It is only with the eyes of the heart or the moral vision of the soul—which is simply faith—that we can see God or appreciate His excellency and glory; and this blessedness is made to depend on the condition of the heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The purer the heart is, the more clearly it will see God, and the more clearly it sees God, the purer it must become. Thus the one acts and re-acts upon the other.

The purity of heart which is here pronounced "blessed" may be the result of faithfully following in the line of the earlier beatitudes, especially the first of this class, which leads to the contemplation of God in one of the most attractive aspects of His character—divine

mercy. From the commencement to the close of scripture, mercy is spoken of as the grand prerogative and glory of God. The Psalms especially speak much of His "mercy and his truth." To Him "belongeth mercy;" "He is plenteous in mercy;" it is "above the heavens;" and "the earth is full of his mercy." Now the simple or normal effect of drinking at this fountain of mercy is to become "merciful," and this grace immediately precedes and leads the way to that moral perception of God, which results in purity of heart.

It may be well to notice here, that we cannot make or keep the heart pure by trying to do so. Were we to look within and make the condition of the heart our study and our object, we should sink down, as many have done, into a state of mere mystical, self-occupation. To be merciful, the heart must have an object that is the perfect expression of the divine mercy; to be pure, it must have an object that is absolute in purity. As the heart is not inherently pure, it can only be accounted so by reflecting a pure object; and that object being Christ, we find in Him the true explanation of a pure heart and seeing God. The heart is purified by faith in Christ, who is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His Person. (See Acts xv. 9; 1 Peter i. 22; Heb. i. 3.) What relief, what rest, the heart finds in finding Him! No theories, no analogies, no efforts, no experience can solve the question or give rest to the mind, but Himself—Himself known as the once lowly but now exalted Man in glory.

Now then, my soul, let thine eye rest on Him—the eye of faith, the eye of thy heart. Meditate long, meditate deeply on Him. Gaze now on that "coun-

tenance transcendent." Blended there are the rays of all divine perfection, and of every beatific vision. Majesty divine as "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God," mingling its many glories with the sweet and lowly graces of godly sorrow, meekness, righteousness, mercy, holiness, and peace, together with all goodness, wisdom, and love, is the God whom the pure heart sees; but not only sees, its privilege is to bask in the beams of that moral glory now and for evermore.

But see, I pray thee, that Christ is thy one object; a pure heart must be an undivided heart—a whole heart. Thus and thus only shall thy whole body be full of light. All other objects but dim thy spiritual vision. "They looked unto him," says the psalmist, "and were lightened." When darkness is loved rather than light, there can be no perception or appreciation of moral beauty. Such was Israel's blindness, and such it is now, but the day is coming when they shall look on Him whom they rejected, and see in Him the glories and perfection of the Godhead. Then, truly, shall they see God, and know the blessedness of being "pure in heart."

" In Thee most perfectly expressed,
The Father's self doth shine;
Fulness of Godhead, too, the blest—
Eternally divine.
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow."

With the people of Israel, we know, this is future; but what of thine own purity of heart, O my soul? Is it a present, deep, divine, blessed reality? Is *thy* heart

pure ? Seest *thou* God ? These are solemn questions, but proper ones ; and God forbid that any of us should speak of these things without knowing them personally in the divine presence. But surely we know Him in whom the holiness of God is perfectly reflected. There only we can see God and have communion with Him.

Throughout the New Testament there is much said about *purity of heart*. It is looked for as the true condition of all Christians, though, alas, all are not “ pure in heart.” So much is said, and said truly, about the deceitfulness of the human heart in our discourses and papers, that the expression “ pure in heart ” is supposed, even by most Christians, to be a figure which is not intended to mean what it says, and thus it is passed over. But scripture means a great deal that is most definite by *pureness of heart*. The apostle in writing to his son Timothy, says, “ Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a *pure heart*.” This passage clearly teaches what we are to look for and expect in all who come to the Lord’s table. Only such will suit Him who says, I am “ he that is holy, he that is true.” The Apostle Peter in his address to the council (Acts xv.), speaks of the Gentiles as “ *purifying their hearts by faith*,” and therefore as entitled to christian fellowship as the Jewish believers. And in his Epistle he says, “ seeing ye have *purified your souls* in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a *pure heart* fervently.” The Apostle James in his exhortations uses a similar form of expression : “ and *purify your hearts*, ye double minded.”

John, also, in speaking of the Lord's coming, says, "And every one that hath this hope in him *purifieth himself*, even as he"—that is, Christ—"is pure." Here the Lord Jesus is brought before us, not only as being in Himself essentially pure, but as the measure and standard of purity for us. "Every one that hath this hope in him *purifieth himself* even as he is pure."

The hope of the Lord's coming has thus a *transforming* power. In looking for Him and waiting for Him now, we seek to purify ourselves even as He is pure. But when we see Him as He is in the glory, we shall be like Him—perfectly *conformed* to Him in all things. Now we are *transformed* by degrees, then we shall be *conformed* completely and for ever.

This is also the teaching of 2 Corinthians iii. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The meaning is plain and most important; with unveiled face we look on the glory of the Lord—the exalted Man in the glory—and are transformed according to the same image from one degree of glory to another, by the Lord the Spirit. But we are not only transformed into His likeness morally, we are the reflectors of His glory. Now the believer is the glass in whom the image of the Lord should be seen.

Forget not this great truth, O my soul; what can be more important? Oh that this one thought may take possession of thy whole being! What! mirrored on thy spirit and ways should be the moral image of thy absent Lord: oh see that nothing comes between thy heart and Him, that the likeness be not marred! The

purser the mirror, the more distinct will each feature appear. O wondrous theme ! O mystery divine ! O blessing infinite ! Language fails to express the heart's joyous wonder in meditating on this highest expression of sovereign grace. To be maintained in outward purity as men reckon, is a great mercy, and one for which we never can be too thankful. Who sees not that Joseph had a purer heart, practically viewed, than Reuben and Judah, and on which have mankind set the seal of their approval ? But to be brought so near to the Lord, and to be so purified by faith as to become like a polished mirror, on which may be reflected His glory, transcends all power to express the praise and thanksgiving due to His most blessed name.

But the day is near when thou wilt see thy Lord face to face, and as He is—in all the deep realities of His love and glory. Then no forgetfulness, no failure, no defilements by the way, shall ever dim the lustre of thy mirror, or mar the reflection of His glory. The great promise of the New Jerusalem shall be fulfilled ; “ they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their forehead.” The likeness will then be complete and manifest to all. Higher than this we can never rise ; richer in blessing we can never be ; and for this consummation of all blessedness, not we only, but our Jesus prays—“ that they may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.” John xvii.

And now, in parting with thee, my dear reader, for another month, as we may never meet again, allow me to ask, Is this to be thy eternity of celestial blessedness ? Or art thou still undecided in thy soul about the Lord

Jesus as thy Saviour? Why hesitate? Why be in doubt? The work required has been done by Jesus; done for thee, if thou wilt only believe; done for the chief of sinners. Thou hast nothing to trust to but His finished work. Oh then, believe in Him, put thy trust in Him, wait for Him, never doubt Him, and thy celestial blessing is secure for ever. But remember, I pray thee, that without faith—faith in Jesus—there is no blessing, no purity, as we have been seeing, and without purity there can be no heaven for thee. The city of our God is a pure city, and over its pearly gates these words are written, “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth.” Whatever its inhabitants once were, they are all pure now; and their robes of unsullied white can meet with no defilement there. The confusing mixtures of time—law and grace, faith and works, Christ and the world, flesh and Spirit, are unknown there—purity characterizes everything. The streets are of pure gold, as it were transparent glass; the walls are jasper, and “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Revelation xxi.

The Lord give thee, my dear reader, to come to Jesus *now*; give thy heart undividedly to Him: this is the first grand step towards purity of heart. Oh at once bow at His blessed feet. The dark regions of hell, where the lurid glare of its fire unquenchable will only make the darkness more visible, contrasts awfully with the city of glories. “The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

Which of those two places, my dear reader, is to be thine—thine for ever? With both before thee, couldst thou hesitate another moment? Surely not. I must now leave thee with the Lord. May thy motto henceforth be “All for Jesus.”



“WHO LOVED ME.”

THREE little sunbeams gilding all I see
Three little chords each full of melody
Three little leaves, balm for my agony.

“Who”—

He loved me, the Father's only Son,
He gave Himself, the precious spotless One;
He shed His blood, and thus the work was done.

“Loved”—

He loved, not merely pitied, here I rest:
Sorrow may come—I to His breast am pressed;
What should I fear while sheltered on His breast?

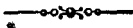
“Me”—

Wonder of wonders, Jesus loved *me*,
A wretch—lost—ruined—sunk in misery,
He sought me, found me, raised me—set me free;—
My soul, the order of the words approve,
Christ first, me last—nothing between but love.

Lord, keep me always down, Thyself above,
Trusting to Thee, not struggling restlessly—
So shall I daily gain the victory;
I, yet not I, but Christ “who loved me.”

H. W.

Scarborough, August 12th, 1874.



CORRESPONDENCE.

75. "W. L.," Plymouth. The greatest care, tenderness and wisdom are needed in cases such as you refer to. A man may be "overtaken in a fault," as in Galatians vi. In an unguarded moment a person may be led to take more stimulant than he ought, and perhaps he may seem to be the worse for drink. Should such an one be hastily thrust out of the assembly? Assuredly not. He should be lovingly and tenderly admonished by "*the spiritual*"—who alone know how to do it. He should be carefully looked after, not for the purpose of finding accusation against him, but to "restore" and deliver him thoroughly from the effect of his "fault."

In short, there is a demand for the most tender, judicious, pastoral care, in cases of this nature; and as to the assembly, it should never be called into action save when there is no hope of restoration in any other way. Excommunication is the last sad act of the assembly, to be performed with broken hearts and weeping eyes, *and only with a view to restoration*. Salvation and not destruction is the object of the assembly's discipline.

The assembly should never be called to discuss cases. It is called to act in simple obedience to the word of the Lord. The case should be so plain, so palpable, that all discussion is closed, and nothing remains but solemn and unanimous action. If this were more understood and attended to, we should have fewer complicated "cases" of discipline. If the assembly be called to discuss, you will rarely, if ever, get a unanimous judgment; hence if discussion be needed, the case is not fit to come before the assembly; and the spiritual must still wait on God in prayer, and watch the case in patient pastoral love. There should be no *haste*, on the one hand; no *indifference*, on the other.

The thirteenth chapter of Leviticus is a fine study

for all who are really interested in the condition of the assembly. We cannot attempt to dwell upon it here ; but we earnestly commend it to the attention of our brethren. The priest was not hastily to pronounce judgment in any given case. The most patient care was needed, lest any one should be put out as a leper who really was not one ; or lest any real case of leprosy should escape. There was to be no haste, and no indifference.

It is of the deepest importance to understand the real object, nature and character of discipline in the church of God. It is to be feared they are very little understood. Some of us seem to look upon discipline as a means of getting rid of people whose ways may be displeasing or discreditable to us. This is a fatal mistake. The grand object of discipline is the glory of God as involved in the holiness of His assembly ; and the real good of the soul towards whom the discipline is exercised.

And as to the nature and character of discipline, we should ever remember that in order to take part in it, according to the mind of Christ, we must make the person's sin our own and confess it as such before God. It is one thing to stand up, in heartless formality, and read a person out of the assembly ; and it is quite another for the whole assembly to come before God in true brokenness and contrition of heart to put away, with tears and confession, some evil that could not be got rid of in any other way. If there were more of this latter, we should see more divine restoration.

We feel the deep solemnity and interest of the subject which your question has brought under our notice ; and we trust it may receive more profound attention from the Lord's people everywhere.

76. "R. M. C.," Edinburgh. Thanks for your note and the accompanying lines.



“THE SOWER.”

PART VI.

“And some fell among thorns.” What depth, what significance, what suggestive force in these few words ! How constantly the thoughtful reader of holy scripture is struck by what we may venture to call its condensing power. Sometimes a whole volume of profound practical truth is wrapped up in a single sentence. What human pen can unfold all that is involved in those few words which we have just quoted ? How much is included in that one word “thorns” ! Truly, we may say, none but the One who used the figure can interpret to our hearts its marvellous significance ; we shall, therefore, quote for the reader the precious exposition of the Master Himself.

“He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word ; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” Matthew xiii. 22.

Here we have what may be called two opposite influences both producing the same effect. “Cares” and “riches” seem very unlike, and yet they both alike choke the precious seed of the kingdom. Thousands and hundreds of thousands are so eaten up with cares of this life that they seem not to have a moment to devote to the grand and all-important business of their soul’s salvation. From Monday morning till Saturday night they are driven, as we say, at the very top of their speed, to make both ends meet. They have no

time for thought, except in reference to the things of this life; and if, for a few passing moments on the Lord's day, they are brought under the sound of the word, their minds are so occupied with worldly things that, although the word falls upon their outward ear, it gains no entrance into the heart, by reason of the cares which block up the way. They are filled with anxiety about to-morrow; as to their children; their business; as to how they are to meet the various claims which may come upon them; how they are to get through the anticipated difficulties of the year. In a word, they are "choked with cares of this life."

Now one great difficulty in reaching the conscience of this class, arises from the fact that the things which engross their time and thought, seem to be quite lawful and right. They are not outwardly immoral. They do not drink, swear, or gamble. They seem to be very-worthy, hard-working, well-meaning people, trying to pay their way, support their family, and live respectably. They never appear at a public house, at a theatre, a race course, or a billiard table. They live what might be termed a thoroughly harmless life, simply attending to their honest calling, and seeking to maintain their family in a respectable manner. If you venture to offer them a word of counsel as to their immortal souls, and the urgent need of being prepared for that boundless eternity which stretches away beyond the narrow archway of time through which they are so rapidly passing, they will tell you that business must be attended to—they have to live and support the family—rent and taxes have to be paid—food and

clothing must be provided. It would be all very well if they had a little money laid by—if the children were all educated and provided for—till then they must work. Indeed God has so ordained that they should work, and hence it cannot be wrong to do so. Has He not said, “If any provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”? And again, “If any man will not work, neither shall he eat.” It cannot, therefore, be wrong, nay, it is perfectly right to work.

Such are the plausible arguments by which this class of people seek to turn aside the edge of the word, lest it should reach the conscience and penetrate the heart. And then the fact that their manner of life is so far removed from anything like gross immorality, renders it all the more difficult for them to see their true state or realize their imminent danger. They do not understand that “cares” as well as “riches”—“pleasures” and “lusts” choke the word and render it unfruitful. Such people would be greatly shocked to be classed with the openly immoral, the profane, and the pleasure-hunting multitude; and yet with all alike the word is choked, Christ is rejected, the soul is lost.

It may be said that “cares” are not so guilty, not so degrading, as “lusts” and “pleasures;” but if those as well as these cause people to lose their souls—what shall we say? There may be different roads to hell; but hell is hell for all that; and when the careful, plodding, industrious, hard-working man, who has toiled day and night for his wife and family, who never spent a farthing on drink, or an hour in a theatre, who has

lived a life of blameless morals and honest industry—when such an one finds himself in the lake of fire, side by side with some poor pleasure-hunter, he will not feel much disposed to plume himself on the difference between them. They have both found their way, it may be by different routes, to that terrible place where hope can never come, and where all shall realize the full import of those words, so little understood, so much resisted here—“There is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

But some may feel disposed to ask, Are we then to neglect our duties? Must we abandon the sphere of action which providence has assigned to us? Are we not to provide for our families? Are we to lead an idle life in order to think of our souls and eternity? Are we to give ourselves up to a life of idleness and dreamy contemplation?

Reader, your own conscience, without a single word from us, gives the answer to such inquiries. You know full well that no such thing is taught or implied. But bear in mind, we pray you, that the first duty—the one great care—the all-absorbing interest of a lost sinner is to think of his soul's eternal salvation. Till this is divinely settled, all other duties, cares, and interests are of less moment than the small dust of the balance. When our Lord was asked by the men of His day, “What must we do that we may work the works of God?” What was His reply? Mark it well, and give it your deep, earnest, and immediate attention. “This is *the* work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” This is the first grand duty of every man,

woman, and child on the face of the earth; and to do this is eternal life—eternal salvation—eternal glory; and whatever hinders you in this momentous business is not and cannot be a duty but a sin and snare—some of the “thorns” wherewith the devil seeks to choke the word. Depend upon it, dear friend, until your soul is saved, you can do no duty for God; but when it is saved, you can eat and drink to His glory. He has afore prepared a path of good works in which His redeemed people are to tread; but in order to tread it, “you *must* be born again,” for none but the redeemed can walk therein. There, blessed be God, neither duties nor cares can choke the word, inasmuch as the duties can be discharged to His praise; and as to the “cares,” He commands us to cast them all on Him.

But we must not forget that there are other “thorns” beside “the care of this world.” Our divine Teacher speaks also of “the deceitfulness of riches.” It may be that the poor man imagines that if he only had riches, he could then take time to think of his soul’s salvation. Alas! alas! there is no more terrible hindrance than riches. They deceive the soul and draw it away from God—away from Christ—away from heaven. “The rich man” builds upon his wealth. He is lifted above want and care, unless it be that he wants to make more money—to increase his capital—to spread himself “like a green bay tree.” Our Lord Himself has said, “It is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” He cannot enter it *in that capacity*. God can, blessed be His name, save rich men, by giving them to see and to feel and own their deep poverty—to know and confess that they are poor and

miserable and wretched and blind and naked ; and then drawing them to Jesus in whom they find “ unsearchable riches,” yea, “ durable riches and righteousness.”

But “ a rich man” *as such* is far removed from the kingdom of God. He is the subject of another kingdom altogether. He gives the allegiance of his heart to another than Christ. He worships at the shrine of the god of this world. Wealth is his object—money his idol—gain his pursuit. His riches deceive his heart by hiding from his view his true condition of moral need and spiritual misery. The poor man is eaten up with cares ; the rich man is surfeited with his riches. In both alike the seed of the kingdom is choked ; both alike reject the truth—turn their backs upon Christ, and descend to the gloomy shades of a never ending hell. Yes, reader, “ cares” and “ riches” do, both alike, ruin immortal souls and send them to eternal perdition. So the blessed Master teaches us ; and to His heavenly teaching we do well to take heed.

But how awful the thought of a man dropping from the lap of luxury into the lake of fire ! How dreadful to think of one who has lived a life of ease, softness, elegance and splendour, passing, in one moment, into all the horrors of that place where there is not so much as a single drop of water to cool the burning tongue ! What a contrast ! On earth he knew no want. He was surrounded with everything that wealth could procure. His table was ever covered with all the delicacies of the season. Liveried attendants anticipated his every desire. His cellar was filled with the richest and rarest wines. He rolled about the streets

in his splendid equipage, gazed at by the passers by. He avoided the nipping frosts of winter and summer's scorching sun by travelling from clime to clime. He could exchange the fogs of London for the bright blue sky of Italy, or the sunny region of the south of France.

Thus the rich man lived on earth. But, ah ! how changed ! “ In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham *afar off*, and Lazarus in his bosom. And *he cried* and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame.”

Can aught be more awful than this ? How dreadful the contrast between the purple, the fine linen and the sumptuous fare on earth, and the tormenting flames of hell ! It is perfectly appalling. The very thought of it is overwhelming. And, be it remembered, that in all this we have a picture drawn by the Master's own hand. It is no monastic legend or old wife's fable. No, no, reader, it is nothing of this kind. It is the blessed Lord Himself who thus draws aside the curtain and shews us the actual condition, and gives us the veritable utterance of a rich man in hell. It is not the turgid effort of the human imagination to produce something sensational. It is the solemn and holy presentation of the real truth of the case, from the lips of Him who spake as never man spake before or since. It is He who tells us of hell-fire. Indeed He has said very much more about it than any or all of His holy apostles. Again and again, He speaks of it ; and in the passage from which we have just been quoting,

He goes into the most solemnizing detail. "Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

But there is not one drop of water in hell—no heart to think of it—no hand to administer it. There is nothing in that dreadful region save excruciating agony and ineffable misery: and all this for ever—and ever—and ever! The bare contemplation is too much for the heart. What will the actual, living experience be? God grant the reader may never know it. If he has not already, may he even now—just now—flee from the wrath to come. If he be a rich man, we would say to him, in all loving solicitude, Let not your riches hinder you, for a moment. Trust not in them; lean not on them; cling not to them. In themselves they are but dust in your hands; used of Satan, they are rust on your soul. Let them not stand in your way. What are they all worth? In one moment they may all pass away. Your sovereigns may melt like snow flakes beneath the mid-day sun, and your bank notes may be scattered like autumn leaves before the blast. Why let such things keep you from Christ—from heaven—from eternal glory? Why let them deceive you? Why suffer them to choke the word? O, do come, just now, to Christ. Linger not, we beseech thee. Time is short. Eternity is at hand, Do come!

But we must draw this paper to a close; and ere doing so shall briefly glance at another class of "thorns" indicated by that most suggestive term, "*The lusts of other things.*"

What a wide field is opened to us here! Who can

attempt to explore it fully ? It takes in that extensive range over which the poor human heart, in its insatiable longings, is wont to travel in search of objects of amusement and gratification. “Lusts of *other* things”—unholy cravings, wandering desires which can never be satisfied by the shifting scenes of a world that lieth in the arms of the wicked one. It is not within the compass of this wide, wide world, to fill the void—the aching void in the heart ; Christ alone can do that, and He does it for ever, blessed be His name !

We shall not attempt, in a paper like this, to enter upon an elaborate exposition of the weighty and comprehensive clause now before us ; it would be a simple impossibility to detail “the lusts of other things ;” they are positively numberless and nameless. But we may just say, that scripture speaks of two very distinct classes of lusts or desires, namely, “Lusts of the flesh,” and “Lusts of the mind.” These differ widely in their outward development. The former stand connected with all that is gross, vile, repulsive, and abominable. The latter, on the contrary, present the idea of what is refined, polished, cultivated, and elegant.

The reader will do well to ponder this distinction. Let us conceive an example of each class. Take, on the one hand, a wretched, degraded, drunken profligate, whose very breath pollutes the atmosphere, whose very look suggests the thought of all that is thoroughly vile and abominable. He wallows in the indulgence of every impure desire that springs up in a heart reprobate as to all good works.

We shall not enlarge. But take another case—that of a highly cultivated, polished, and educated gentle-

man—a man of refined taste, elegant manners—scientific pursuits—a splendid scholar, a profound thinker, a thorough philosopher—one whose society is courted by all who have a taste for the refined and the elegant—the centre of a wide circle of educated, literary, scientific men—an extensive reader—a popular author—a man of unblemished morals—a large-hearted philanthropist.

Can two such cases ever be classed together? Is it possible that both these may be found in the same category, and on the same platform? Can we conceive such extremes meeting in one common point? Alas! alas! reader, it is even so. They may both find a common ground here in rejecting Christ; and common ground hereafter in the lake of fire. In both alike the word is choked. Both alike are carried away by “the lusts of other things.”

True, the one is governed by “the lusts of the flesh;” the other by “the lusts of the mind;” and moreover, the latter might disdain to be ranked with the former; but, just like “the lewd fellows of the baser sort,” and “the devout and honourable women,” in the Acts of the Apostles, though so unlike outwardly, they find a point of contact in rejecting the gospel and in hating, with equal intensity, the preachers of it.

Reader, let us thoughtfully muse on these things.

(To be concluded in our next.)



A FOURTH LETTER TO A FRIEND ON THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THINGS.

DEAREST A.

I have now to invite your attention to another great principle which I have found most helpful in preparing the mind for the contemplation of the present condition of things in the church of God, namely, that God never restores a fallen witness. When man fails in his responsibility—which, as we have before proved, he always does—God does not reinstate him. He brings in something better, as the fruit of His own sovereign grace; but He never puts a new piece upon an old garment.

Thus, when Adam failed in the garden, he was driven out, and never reinstated. “And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man: and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” Genesis iii. 22–24.

There were the two trees; the tree of responsibility, and the tree of life; and man having utterly failed as to the former, he could not be suffered to eat of the latter. His title to the tree of life was hopelessly forfeited. He had lost his innocence, never to regain it; and he must leave the garden, never to be reinstated. True it is—blessedly, gloriously true—God could give

him righteousness instead of innocence ; heaven instead of Eden—a far better thing and a far better place ; but He drove him out of Eden ; and not only drove him out, but placed an insuperable barrier in the way of his return—" a flaming sword which turned *every way*, to keep the way of the tree of life."

Now this is a most weighty principle, and it runs all through the word of God, side by side with that on which I have dwelt in my last two letters. The first man fails in everything, as we have already proved beyond all question. Everything he touches goes to ruin under his hand. He is turned out of every stewardship on the ground of manifest unfaithfulness, and never can be reinstated. God never re-constructs a fallen economy. He introduces a new thing on a new footing, and leads, through grace, the believer into the enjoyment of it ; but the first man is completely set aside, and his history closed for ever. The cross is the termination of the career of the first man ; and the second Man, risen from the dead, is the basis and centre of God's new creation. He is invested with all the dignities and all the glories. All that the first man lost, the second Man has regained. He has won back all, and much more beside. He has glorified God in every position in which the first man had dishonoured Him. He has faithfully discharged every responsibility, and executed every stewardship ; and He has laid the foundation of all the eternal counsels of God by His accomplished atonement, so that He can associate believers with Himself in the new creation of which He is the glorious Head and Centre.

But, my beloved friend, it may be that some would

at this point feel disposed to inquire, Whatever can all this have to do with "the present condition of things in the church of God?" Much every way. Has the church failed in its responsibility? Has the christian system utterly broken down? Has Christianity hopelessly failed as a witness, a steward, a light-bearer for Christ in this world? Has it? or has it not? This is the question. I am quite sure that you, my beloved brother, have no question in your mind as to this. But many who shall read this letter may seriously doubt if indeed the church has signally failed. There are millions throughout the length and breadth of Christendom who would consider me the merest croaker in all that I have advanced on this subject.

They look upon Christendom as a splendid success. They consider that the gospel, like the rider on the white horse, has gone forth conquering and to conquer; that it has achieved most glorious triumphs. They look back to the opening of the fourth century, when persecution ceased, and when Constantine spread his sheltering wing over the church of God, as a glorious epoch in the history of Christianity—the commencement of an era which has gone on increasing in brightness from that day until now.

Such, we may feel assured, is the fondly cherished opinion of ninety-nine out of every hundred professing Christians at the present moment. But I am thoroughly persuaded that scripture and facts are entirely against them. You and I most fully believe that scripture is quite enough in the establishment of any position: and I think we have had before us a body of evidence drawn from scripture quite sufficient to carry conviction

to any mind that will only bow to the authority of the word. I have quoted historic records and prophetic announcements all tending to prove that the church, as a responsible witness for Christ on this earth has, like all other witnesses, stewards and office-bearers, entirely failed. The parables of the leaven, the tares, the mustard tree, and the ten virgins, all combine to establish our thesis. Paul's farewell address to the elders of Ephesus; his first and second Epistles to Timothy, to say nothing of the close of his own ministry and his disastrous voyage to Rome—all go to prove the utter ruin of the church in its earthly service and testimony. So also the Apostle Peter, in his second Epistle; and Jude in his appalling picture, set forth the same solemn truth.

And as for John, he never names the church in his Epistles, save once, and that is to speak of it as governed by the spirit of Diotrephes, excommunicating the brethren, and actually refusing the apostle himself. Finally, in the closing section of the inspired canon, the book of Revelation, the church is actually presented as under judgment. Hardly was it set up, ere it left its first love; and its progress is only downwards, until it is spued out of the Lord's mouth as a nauseous and insufferable abomination; and finally is flung, like a great millstone, into the lake of fire.*

Some may, perhaps, call in question my right to adduce the seven churches in evidence, inasmuch as they were addressed as distinct local assemblies which have

* I speak only of the professing body. The true saints of God, the members of the body of Christ, shall be all taken to heaven.

passed away like numerous other churches. But I believe it will be admitted by most who have studied the book of Revelation that those seven addresses have a double character. They are, at once, historic and prophetic—historic of what has existed—prophetic of what should exist. True, there were those seven local churches actually existing, and in the exact spiritual conditions indicated by these addresses. But why were those seven selected? Simply because their respective condition served to illustrate the various phases of the church's history from the moment in the which the first symptom of decline manifested itself until it should be finally set aside as a witness for Christ on the earth.

However, as to this last link in our chain of evidence, I have only to say, "I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say." My thesis is unanswerably established even without the proof drawn from the seven churches of Asia. Scripture establishes, beyond question, the fact of the utter ruin of the church as a light-bearer for Christ on the earth; and as to facts, we have but to say to the reader, Lift up your eyes and look upon Christendom, and say if you can trace a single feature of resemblance to the church as presented in the New Testament.

Where is the one body? Suppose a letter addressed "To the church of God in London;" to whom should it be delivered? Who could claim it? The postmaster and the letter-carrier would be sorely perplexed to know what to do with it; and, doubtless, it would ultimately find its place in the dead-letter office. Could the church of Rome claim it? No; for there are hundreds of thousands of God's people outside her pale.

Could the National Establishment claim it? By no means, for the self-same reason. And so of all the various organizations of the day—the sects and parties into which christian profession is divided. Not a single one could dare to call at the post-office and demand the letter, for the simplest of all reasons, that not one of them is the church of God, and not one of them is even on the ground of the church of God.

No, no, my dearest A., we must admit that Christendom, so far from being a splendid success, has proved a most deplorable and humiliating failure. Christendom has not continued in the goodness of God. What therefore? “Thou also shalt be cut off.” Is there no restoration? As well might Adam have thought of getting back to innocence and to Eden. As well might Israel have attempted to put together the broken fragments of the tables of testimony. As well might Aaron or his sons after him have attempted to seize and put on the garments of glory and beauty.

It cannot be. The attempt to reconstruct the church is as futile as the attempt to build the tower of Babel, and must issue in the same confusion. Men may say, “The bricks are fallen down: but we will build with hewn stone.” It is all vanity. The bare idea of men—whether you call them churchmen or dissenters—attempting to form or re-form—to construct or reconstruct the church, is the most hopeless labour possible. The very bodies which we carry about with us might tell us a tale if we would only bend our ears to listen. Can they be restored? Never. They must die or be changed; never reconstructed. God will give a body of glory; but never patch up a body of sin and death.

And as to the church so-called, its history on earth is a history of failure and ruin, of sin and judgment, and all human efforts to mend or re-model must prove utterly vain. Christ, blessed be His name, will present the true church to Himself, by-and-by, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. That glorious body shall yet be seen descending from heaven, like a bride adorned for her husband, shining in all the brightness of the glory of God and the Lamb. But as for the false, the faithless, the corrupt church—that vast mass of baptized profession which calls itself by the name of Christendom, nothing remains for it but the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God—the lake of fire—the blackness of darkness for ever.

Oh! my beloved brother, do you not long to see the Lord's people rightly instructed as to all this? Is it not deplorable to see them attempting to form churches and organize bodies, as they say, upon the apostolic model? Where is their warrant? Where is the power? Nowhere. They are seeking to do what God never does. The word of God is against them. Where have we a line of instruction in the New Testament as to forming a church? Where is such a thing hinted at in the most remote manner? That which God set up at the first has utterly failed in man's hand. It was set up in power and beauty; but man ruined it. And now what do we see? Churchmen and dissenters presuming to model and re-model churches after the apostolic pattern. Alas! alas! they will soon learn their sad mistake.

But what is to be done? That is another question altogether; and a question abundantly answered, when

we ask it on right ground and in a right spirit. But first of all, have we learnt that the church is a ruin, and that it is not God's purpose to restore it? If we have really learnt this, we shall be in a moral condition to receive an answer to that oft put question, What is to be done? If we only take our true ground, in reference to this matter; if we see and own the ruin; if we confess our individual part in that ruin; if we make the church's sin our own—as every truly spiritual person most assuredly will—if we are truly broken and penitent before our God; then verily shall we put far away from us all proud pretensions and futile efforts to set up a church of our own devising and workmanship. We shall learn something very different indeed from this. We shall see it to be our place to bow down in lowliness and meekness at the feet of our Lord, confessing our common sin and shame, taking our place amid the ruin to which we ourselves have so largely contributed, and instead of busily asking, What is to be done? we shall learn to cast ourselves upon the rich mercy and sovereign goodness of our God, and the boundless resources treasured up in Christ our glorious Head and Lord who, though He never will reconstruct a fallen church upon earth, can nevertheless sustain and comfort, feed and nourish, strengthen and encourage all those who in true devotedness of heart and humility of mind cast themselves upon His faithfulness and love.

That you and I may be of that happy privileged number is, dearest A., the earnest prayer of

Your deeply affectionate yokefellow,

* * *

MEDITATIONS ON THE BEATITUDES.

THE SEVENTH BEATITUDE.

VERSE 9. *Blessed are the peace-makers : for they shall be called the children of God.* The mission of the children of God in this world, has a character which far exceeds, we fear, the measure of our intelligence, faith, and practice. There is a dignity—a moral beauty and glory connected with it, which we too often fail to appreciate. It emanates from God the Father ; it partakes of His own moral attributes ; it is the reflection, however feeble, of the blessed Lord, who was the perfect reflection of the divine glory. Every thought, every feeling, of His heart breathed the perfect rest, and rose to the height of the absolute purity and peace of the Godhead. The seven beatitudes shine in all their divine perfectness in the lowly path of the Son of man—Emmanuel, God with us. And He being our life, the features of His character should be produced in us, by faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

This is the believer's mission whether of Jewish or of christian faith. In our meditations we muse on both ; but chiefly on the application of truth to the latter ; though we rejoice in the assurance that Israel will manifest the character, and be crowned with the benedictions of all the beatitudes, in the latter day. However valuable they may be to the Christian now, they look forward to the setting up of the kingdom in power and glory, and will have their complete fulfilment in that future day. But in the meantime, the Christian should seek to shine in all the graces which are here pronounced "blessed." They ought all to be found in

every Christian, though some will be more manifest in one than in another.

Mark then, my soul, and weigh well, what thy mission is, and how it should be characterized. And see that thou begin well. Let thy first step be a right one: this is always important. Thou must begin with God, and work out from Him. There is no such thing as working up to God, thou must work from Him. This only is the right way. First learn thy own nothingness in His presence; be weighed and measured there. Thou wilt find a just balance for self nowhere else. O, how many things, unworthy of the Christian, this would save him from! In place of being characterized by humility, dependence, and obedience, as the blessed Lord was, we are, from lacking these graces, self-willed and self-sufficient. But having learnt thy lesson well at the Master's feet, thou wilt be fitted to go forth and bear testimony for Him, according to the portrait here given of the believer. Because of the dishonour done to His name, thou wilt mourn; and like Him, thou wilt meekly bow to that which may be personally trying, and calmly leave things in His hands. Thou wilt also seek to do the will of God, to be merciful to those around thee, and to walk before God with a pure heart. And this brings us to the last of the seven *beatitudes*.

“Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.” It is not, observe, they who live in peace, walk in peace, or keep peace, that are crowned with the divine blessing, but they who *make peace*—“peace-makers.”

The distinction is important, as many who have a

peaceable nature are the least qualified to make peace, and are in danger of being unfaithful for the sake of peace. But peace-making is quite another thing. It is the grace of the Lord Jesus in blessed activity, pouring oil on the troubled waters—on the tumultuous passions of men. And this, mark, without compromising the holiness of God, or saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. It may occasion much self-denial, much anxiety, much waiting on God, much disquiet to one's own mind. The most opposite feelings, convictions, interests, affecting character and happiness for life, may have to be dealt with and weighed in the balances of the sanctuary. But the peace-maker must be impartial; he must see that "mercy and truth meet together, that righteousness and peace kiss each other." There must be truth as well as grace, purity as well as peace. Time must be given for God to work; peace cannot be forced. But wherever there is the smallest possibility, consistently with the holiness and truth of God, of bringing peace into a scene of trouble and sorrow, the Christian should remember his privilege and calling, and if in the scene, should reckon upon God for guidance and blessing. "Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God."

But is every Christian, it may be asked, called to be a peace-maker? Every one has the grace and the privilege of the grace in Christ Jesus for this blessed work, but all have not used it alike. The quality or measure of grace necessary in a peace-maker, depends upon his own state of soul in the presence of God. Are the other features of the Lord's character manifest, we would inquire? Is he enjoying, for example, the

blessedness of the last beatitude? "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." This is the divine preparation for a peace-maker. He must be right with God himself, and breathe the sweet peace of communion with Him.

The pure in heart are at peace with God through the precious blood of Christ. Cleansed from all sin—whiter than snow—they see God, and have learnt much in the divine presence that fits them for peace-making. He who walks with God must live in the spirit of self-judgment—must judge all that belongs to himself naturally, and thereby gain complete control over his own spirit, temper, words, and ways. The pure heart is a peaceful heart, loves peace, and earnestly desires the peace and happiness of others. Love rules in such hearts, and overflows in truest charity to all who are in a condition to need the peace-maker. But sound spiritual judgment is necessary, it will be said, in cases of dispute and discipline. Most true; but who so fit to judge spiritually as those who judge themselves, and walk in the light as God is in the light? The sixth beatitude, we have no doubt, is the true preparation for the exercise of the God-like grace of the seventh; or as James says, "First pure, then peaceable." Chapter iii. 17.

But what shall we say of those who forget their heavenly mission of peace, and often cause trouble; who, in place of being well shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and carrying peace with them at every step, carry a spirit of fault finding and contention? Few such there are, we humbly trust; but troubles do arise, and the elements of discord must be

at work. Yet this may be done by a mistaken zeal for what is called truth and righteousness. With some minds, a mistake is magnified into an offence; an inaccuracy of statement, into a deliberate falsehood; and different things being put together, a grave charge is constructed and made against one who is unconscious of his guilt. And both up to a certain point may be right, but who is to judge between them?

Oh, for a son of peace at such a moment! A little wisdom, a little patience, a little charity, a little consideration of human infirmity, a little waiting on the Lord, might save the weak, and satisfy the scruples of the strong. There is no moral or doctrinal evil in the case, it is only a question of apparent inconsistencies, which some minds are too quick in censuring, and others too slow in detecting. But less than we have just described, has sometimes caused trouble and heart-burnings, which time itself has failed to heal. Thank God, they extend not beyond our present condition of infirmity; all is peace in the paradise above. But a little of that sweet peace brought down by the hand of faith into our present imperfect state, would only be Christ-like, and would save us from many a sorrowful heart and bitter tear. "Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God."

But there is another class less excusable, who forget so far their peaceful mission as to manifest no small disappointment if they suppose that their services are not appreciated. Displeased and unhappy in themselves, they draw others into their sympathies. A party spirit is apt to spring up, and sorrow must be the result.

Wounded vanity, ministerial jealousy, will be found at the root of all such troubles. What could be more sad than for a servant of the Lord being more concerned for his own importance, than for the peace of his brethren? But self in some of its ten thousand forms is the prolific source of all our troubles, both spiritual and social. Could we but sink self, and care only for the Lord's glory in walking worthy of that sweetest of all titles—"They shall be called the children of God"—all would be peace and love.

How unspeakably important then it must be for every believer to consider well this expression of his character. What can make up for its absence? What can excuse its opposite? Nothing. He who sows discord from whatever motive, in place of keeping and making peace, has missed his way as a child of God. True, a Christian may be the *occasion* of much dispeace in certain circles through his faithfulness to Christ; but that is quite a different thing. Satan may stir up many against him because of his whole-heartedness for Christ. Indeed he may expect this, as our Lord says in Matthew x. 34: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword." Still, he will study to give no offence, and, if possible, take none. He will keep clear of strife and contention, meekly suffer for Christ's sake, and pray for the unbelieving and careless around him. The assemblage of the seven beatitudes with which God has enriched him, should now shine forth according to the position in which he finds himself. A little prudence, a little patience and waiting on God may go far to silence the strife of tongues, to calm the ruffled temper, to remove

opposition, and to win hearts for Christ. None of the christian graces so distinctly reveals God in His children as this peace-making spirit. "They shall be called the children of God."

That which God is, and delights in, is seen in them. The moral resemblance is manifest, and their sonship is declared. So let *thy* sonship be verified, O my soul, always, earnestly, fervently pray !

God is the great Peace-maker. This is what He *has* been doing, what He *is* doing, and what He *will* do until peace is established for ever in the new heavens and the new earth. He delights in the title "God of Peace ;" which occurs seven times in the Epistles. He loves peace ; strife and contention cannot dwell with Him. When the demon of strife enters, the God of peace retires. Without peace there can be no edification.

When the birth of Jesus was heralded by the heavenly host, they proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." And during His lowly path of peace-making, God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses. He is the great Reconciler ; and hath committed to His ambassadors the word of reconciliation. And thus the blessed work should go on.

"Peace be unto you : as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." The true ground of peace between God and man was laid in the great work of the cross. There God was glorified, and there His good pleasure in men was manifested. Christ made peace by the blood of His cross ; and when His blessed work

was finished, He returned to His Father, leaving behind Him the full blessing of peace for His disciples: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The peace which He made on the cross, and His own personal peace which He enjoyed with His Father while passing through the sorrows of this world, He leaves as the rich legacy of His love for all who believe in Him.

What a legacy! thou mayest well exclaim, O my soul; and what a legacy for thee, and for ever! Peace with God for ever! and nothing less than the sweet peace of thy Lord's own mind in His Father's presence. Such is thy peace, thy portion; and see that thou go forth as filled and clothed with peace; and that all thy paths may indeed be paths of peace.

Oh! that all who read this paper may know in their sweet experience what this blessedness is! Surely it is to be in the presence of God, cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus—reconciled to God through the death of His Son. He has no charge against us now. Christ has answered for all. Peace is established on the solid ground of accomplished righteousness. And this is the immediate, sure, everlasting portion of all who believe in Him. He has bequeathed it as the birth-right of all who are born of God. Read it for thyself, my fellow-sinner, in John xiv., and believe it for thyself, and trust in Him for thyself; and make good use of thy legacy, it can never grow less by the most extravagant indulgence or the most liberal distribution. Seek to share it with all who will accept it—to scatter it freely in the cottages of the poor and in the mansions of the rich.

Yes, thou canst afford to be liberal, if thou art an heir of peace ! Thy portion can never fail. Its spring, the heart of God ; its channel, the cross of Jesus ; its power, the Holy Spirit ; the instrument by which it becomes thine, the word of God. But, remember, I pray thee, unbelief heirs nothing but the righteous judgment of insulted goodness. Unbelief rejects everything that divine goodness has provided—peace, and the God of peace ; salvation and the Saviour ; heaven and its happiness. And this is what so many think of as a mere passive or negative evil. But in God's account, it is the active energy of all evil. It rejects the truth, it believes a lie ; it refuses peace, it cherishes hostility ; it shuts the door of heaven, it opens the gates of hell ; its every breath is defiance, its every act is suicidal.

This is unbelief—the fatal sin of unbelief. But faith, even as a grain of mustard seed, will put thee in possession of the sevenfold blessedness of these beatitudes now, and fit thee for the endless blessedness, and unfading glories of thy Father's house on high. “ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Acts xvi. 31.

Peace with our holy God,
Peace from the fear of death,
Peace through our Saviour's precious blood,
Sweet peace, the fruit of faith.

We worship at Thy feet,
We wonder and adore,
The coming glory scarce more sweet
Than sweet the peace before.



LINKS!

"Master, where dwellest thou?" He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day; for it was about the tenth hour." John i. 38.

"Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, *Come!*" Matt. xiv. 28.

"How sweet to recall the varied links by which the Lord has bound our hearts to his!"

LORD! 'twas Thy voice of love first bade me "*Come!*"

And find redemption at Thy wondrous cross;

A weary, wandering, child, Thou brought'st me home—

Rescued from sin, from sorrow, and from loss!

Again I hear that word, above earth's noise,

Sounding across life's dark and stormy sea;

O may the deep attraction of Thy voice

Draw me from all around, to follow Thee!

From earthly scenes and ties, however sweet,

From *all* that here would backward hold my heart;

I would go forth, with footsteps firm and fleet,

To be with Thee, dear Lord, where'er Thou art!

Smooth let the waves of life be, Lord, or rough,

Without Thine arm to lean on, I must fall;

But while upheld, by Thy sustaining grace

Calmly I walk, superior to them all.

And as I gaze upon Thee *where thou art*,—

The vague, wild tumult of life's inner sea,

The feverish throbblings of this restless heart,

Are calmed, as, risen Lord! I walk with Thee.

For since I've seen Thee seated far above,

At God's right hand in yonder glorious sphere,

The light which led me to that place of love

Revealed the wreck of everything down here!

All longings stilled, while gazing on Thy face;
 My heart would find with Thee its quiet home:
 And o'er life's waves, through Thine unfailing grace,
 Would walk, responsive to Thy gentle "*Come!*"

The long night watch of life will soon be o'er,
 'Tis sweet to pass it, blessed Lord, with Thee;
 My hands in Thine; until on yonder shore,
 Fair land of peace! I rest eternally.

A. S. O.



GLEANINGS.

DEVOTEDNESS.—Devotedness is a much deeper, and, at the same time, a much simpler, thing than many suppose. Most think that if they are earnestly engaged in the Lord's work, and looking to Him for guidance and blessing, this is being devoted; but it is much more. It is having Christ Himself as the delight and resource of my heart, and the bent of my mind towards Him. The highest service we can render the Lord is, to *serve His heart*, and that is a service to which few devote themselves. Occupation with Christ, with a view to becoming more intimately acquainted with His character; *studying Him*, that we may learn what pleases Him, is *very rare* indeed. Many can be found who are occupied *for* Christ, like Martha; few who are occupied *with* Him, like Mary. When we have reached this, we have reached the foundation-stone of true devotedness. This is the Gilgal where the serving one returns to encamp, and whence he issues like the sun

to run his course, and like a giant refreshed with new wine. It is because the saints know so little of this Gilgal in the Lord's presence that there is so much unsanctified activity and really profitless work. If there is zeal and ability, without a knowledge of God's mind where and when to use it, how can there but be a turning to take counsel from nature; and how can we expect that the results flowing from such a source will be otherwise than profitless?

“LIBERTY AND NECESSITY.”—“Disputes on liberty and necessity are vain and idle, as much as if you were placed *within* a spherical surface, and I *without* it, and we were to enter into abstruse arguments on the question, whether the surface between us was *concave* or *convex*. In *my* situation it is *convex*; in *yours* it is *concave*. If we consider events in reference to THE DIVINE MIND, it seems utterly impossible to think of them as otherwise than *fixed*; if we consider them with reference to *responsible agents*, it seems as impossible to regard them as otherwise than *contingent*.” Let the adherents of contending schools of doctrine think of this.

LIVERY—“As every lord giveth a certain livery to his servants, charity is the very livery of Christ. Our Saviour, which is the Lord above all lords, would have His servants known by their badge, which is love.”—*Latimer*.

CORRESPONDENCE.

77. "J. A.," Oxon. We cannot see how Galatians iii. 19 can possibly negative the true reading of 1 John iii. 4, which any schoolboy, tolerably instructed, can see at a glance is, "Sin is lawlessness." It seems to us that the two passages are in perfect harmony. "Wherefore then the law? It was added because of transgression." So also in Romans iv. 15: "Because the law worketh wrath: *for where no law is there is no transgression.*" Is it not perfectly obvious that in order to have transgression there must be law? Yes; and it is equally obvious that where there is a law there must be transgression because man is a sinner. The law raised the question of righteousness, and proved that man had none. Without law man was a lawless sinner. Under law, he was a wilful transgressor. From Adam to Moses, there was no law, and therefore no transgression, though surely there was sin, and therefore death—sin's wages. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned *after the similitude of Adam's transgression.*" (Rom. v. 14.) Adam had a law, and therefore his act was transgression. So we read in Hosea vi. 7, "They [Israel] *like Adam*, have transgressed." See margin. We are at a loss to understand the difficulties of some of our friends, in reference to a matter so exceedingly plain.

78. "J. D.," S. Priesthood is unfolded to us in Hebrews as that which maintains the link between *God* and *men*. Advocacy we have in John, as maintaining the communion of the *children* with the *Father*. They are essentially one; the difference arises out of the distinct lines of truth set forth by the Holy Ghost in the writings of Paul and John. The former unfolds the counsels of God and man's relation to Him. The latter presents the great truth of eternal life manifested in Christ and communicated to us, constituting us children with the Father.

79. "Z.," Brighton. The moment of our quickening is when we hear the voice of the Son of God. John v. 25. This voice is heard in the gospel when the incorruptible seed of the word of God is lodged in the soul, by the power of the Holy Ghost. (See 1 Pet. i. 23-25, James i. 18.) Very many, however, are quickened who are not emancipated. This latter is connected with the finished work of Christ, which places the believer before God in perfect righteousness, peace and liberty, accepted in a risen and glorified Christ, and sealed with the Holy Ghost.

80. "F. M.," North Brixton. We are much interested in your kind letter and the accompanying lines. May the Lord fill you with His own love and glory as you draw near the haven of His own eternal presence.

81. "Altofts." All the leading authorities omit the word "broken" in 1 Corinthians xi. 24. The term "Synagogue of Satan" refers to those who rest merely in a traditional religion, with its orders and offices, and have no vital connection with Christ. All such shall yet have to own that the despised and feeble followers of the Son of God are beloved of Him.

82. "D." and "J. W. N." Our answer to "J. A." will, we trust, meet your difficulty.

83. "B.," Near Stroud. Procure a copy of a tract entitled, "A Scriptural Inquiry into the true nature of the Sabbath, the Law and the Christian Ministry." It can be had of our publisher by sending him 2½d. in stamps. We could not attempt to handle such a subject in our very limited space for correspondence.

84. "E. A.," Pimlico. It would not, by any means, comport with the character of our publication to insert such matters as you name.

85. "A. W. H." We should know more of the facts of your case before giving a judgment; and we more than question the propriety of introducing such personal and local matters into the pages of a magazine designed for general edification.

“THE SOWER.”

(Conclusion.)

HITHERTO, we have been occupied with the various kinds of unproductive soil, namely, the beaten wayside ; the stony ground ; and the thorns. These three classes set forth, very distinctly, the effect of the varied hostile influences with which the gospel has to contend in this scene, and which are summed up in those three comprehensive terms, “the world, the flesh and the devil.” In the case of the wayside hearer, the *devil* acts directly. The stony ground exhibits the worthless and deceptive character of the *flesh* ; while, in the thorns, we have illustrated, with great vividness and power, the varied phases of this present evil *world*.

Looked at, from this standpoint, there is a vast field opened up to our view, upon which we cannot attempt to enter just now. This series of papers on “The Sower” has already extended beyond our original thought ; and as we have reached the close of our volume, for this year, we must close our papers rather more abruptly than we should otherwise have done.

There is, however, one fact which we must briefly notice with regard to all the three classes above named, and that is that *neither the plough nor the harrow ever passes over any of them*. This speaks volumes. We know, full well—every one knows, that unless the ploughshare enters, the seed cannot penetrate ; and unless the harrow passes over the surface, the seed cannot mingle with the soil. The fallow ground must be thoroughly broken up, in order that the precious seed of the kingdom may enter into the deep furrows of

the soul. And then the harrowing process causes the word to mingle itself with the whole moral being, and bring it under its heavenly sway.

Nothing of all this most essential work is known by the wayside hearer. The seed lies exposed to view on the unbroken surface, and is at once carried off by the wicked one. So also, in the stony ground hearer, the word is merely taken up in the intellect. It does not penetrate in its flesh-cutting power into the soul. Mere religious nature, in an entirely unbroken, unjudged condition, seems to take hold of the gospel, for a season. The word does not enter, in its assimilating power or formative influence ; and hence there is no endurance. "The flesh profiteth nothing." And finally, as to the thorny ground, the plough cannot do its work. If it could but enter and tear up the thorns, so that they might be thrown to the surface and burnt, then verily the seed might find a lodgment, deep, deep, down in the soul. In other words, if the world, in all its phases, were thoroughly judged, it would not have any power to choke the good word of God. In short, the heart and conscience must be duly wrought upon by the power of the Holy Ghost ; and the word of God must become, as it were, a part of our very selves—part of our moral, mental and spiritual constitution in order to yield any permanent result or bring forth any genuine fruit.

Here it is that the striking contrast of the good ground comes so forcibly out. "He that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and *understandeth it* ; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty."

(Matt. xiii. 23.) So also in Mark, "And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and *receive it*, and bring forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred." (Chap. iv. 20.) Luke's testimony is very full and expressive: "But that in the good ground are they, which in an *honest and good heart*, having heard the word *keep it*, and *bring forth fruit with patience*." Chapter viii. 15.

Putting all these together we have the three grand distinguishing features of the good ground hearers, namely, *understanding, receiving, and keeping* the precious word of God. The result is—"bringing forth fruit with patience."

Blessed result! Would to God we could see more of it in this our day. Every true-hearted workman must long for it. Alas! alas! how little there is to be seen! How vastly do the bad ground hearers exceed the good! How many wayside hearers throng our preaching places! How many stony ground hearers deceive the hearts of evangelists over-anxious for *present palpable results*! How many thorny ground hearers disappoint the hearts of those who sigh for *permanent results*! How few there are who really understand, savingly receive, and faithfully keep the word of God, and bring forth fruit with holy patience to the joy of those who are set for the defence of the gospel!

We cannot but think that it demands the grave consideration of all who are engaged in the work of the gospel, why there is so little result compared with what we ought to expect. Surely there must be a cause. Our God has most graciously granted us, in these last days, very much light. He has opened to us a very

full gospel. The true ground of a sinner's peace, and the true character of the Christian's standing have been set before us with a fulness, clearness, and power unknown for eighteen centuries.

How is it then that we see so few genuine conversions? That there are but few, the most sanguine will hardly deny. And even of those who are reported as converts, but few prove to be of the good ground class! How many spurious cases crop up continually to disappoint and to sadden! How few come to perfection!

Brethren beloved, honoured fellow labourers, let us bend our hearts to the serious consideration of this most weighty question. There must be a hindrance. Let us search and see what and where it is. Let us judge ourselves, in the Master's presence. Let us get on our faces, in genuine exercise of soul as to this matter. Are we really looking for results? Do we preach with a real purpose of heart to bring souls to Christ? Are we content to get through a certain round of meetings, regardless of whether they are barren or fruitful? Are we living before God with direct reference to the fruit of our preaching? Do we long for the salvation of souls? Does our longing amount to a positive passion for immortal souls?

May the Lord Himself waken up all His beloved servants, everywhere, to the vast importance of this great subject! May He graciously revive His work in our own souls, and in our midst, so that His word may have free course and be glorified, and multitudes of souls be led not only to hear, but to understand, receive and keep the word, and bring forth fruit with patience, a hundred fold, to His praise and to the exceeding joy and refreshment of His servants!

A FIFTH LETTER TO A FRIEND ON THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THINGS.

DEAREST A.,

The principle which I have to bring under your notice in this letter, is one full of the richest consolation to the heart of every faithful servant of Christ. It is this, *In all ages, and under all the dispensations of God, whatever may have been the condition of God's people as a whole, it was the privilege of the individual believer to tread as lofty a path and enjoy as high communion as ever was known in the very brightest and palmiest days of the dispensation.*

Such is my present thesis which I hope to be able to prove from the word of God. I have, in former letters, sought to prove that, in every instance in which man has been placed in a position of responsibility, he has utterly failed. And, further, that God never restores a fallen witness. I trust I have fully established these two points. My present task is a much more pleasing one, inasmuch as it involves the setting forth of the great truth that, in darkest days, faith has ever found its springs in the living God Himself, and, therefore, the deeper the moral gloom all around, the brighter are the flashes of individual faith. The dark background of the corporate condition has thrown individual faith into bright and beauteous relief.

Now I confess, my beloved friend, that this line of truth has peculiar charms for my heart. I have for many years found in it solace and encouragement; and I doubt not we have often dwelt upon it, both in our

personal intercourse and in our public ministry. I do not think it is possible to overstate its value and importance, and I am thankful for this opportunity of bringing it out and throwing it into permanent form.

There is a strong and constant tendency in the mind of God's people to lower the standard of devotedness to the level of the general condition of things. This must be carefully guarded against. It is destructive of all service and testimony. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2 Timothy ii. 19.

This weighty passage embodies in its brief compass the whole subject which I desire to unfold in this letter. God is faithful. His standard ever remains the same. His foundation can never be moved ; and it is the province and the privilege of the individual believer to rest on that foundation and abide by that standard, come what may. Faith can count on God, and draw upon His inexhaustible resources, though the public condition of things be characterized by hopeless ruin. Were it not so, what would have become of the faithful in all ages ? How could the Baraks, the Gideons, the Jephthahs, the Samsons, have stood their ground, and wielded the sword against the uncircumcised, if they had allowed themselves to be influenced by the general condition of the people of God ? If any one of these illustrious servants had folded his arms and abandoned himself to the paralysing power of unbelief, because of the state of the nation, what would have been the issue ? Assuredly they would never have achieved those splendid victories which the Holy Ghost has

graciously recorded for our encouragement, and which we may study with such spiritual delight and profit.

But I think I must seek to prove and illustrate my thesis by bringing before you in an orderly manner some prominent cases in which its truth is specially exemplified. Knowing as I do your profound interest in the word of God, I shall not attempt to offer any apology for copious references to scripture ; or, if needs be, elaborate quotation from it. I fancy I hear you saying, "By all means give me scripture. There is nothing like the word. It must be our only standard of appeal—our one grand authority which settles all questions, solves all difficulties, closes all discussion. Give me scripture." This I know is your mind ; and thanks be to God, it is the mind of your correspondent also.

To scripture therefore we shall turn, in dependence upon the guidance and teaching of Him by whom that scripture was indited.

The first proof then, my beloved friend, which I shall offer you will be found in Exodus xxxiii. What, let me ask, was at that moment the condition of the nation of Israel ? Let chapter xxxii. furnish the sad and humiliating reply. The very highest and most privileged man in the whole congregation had made a golden calf ! Yes ; here is the terrible record : "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us ; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."

What a picture is here, dearest A., of the debasing and

absurd folly of the human heart ! Only think of a whole congregation of people giving utterance to such gross and palpable absurdity. "*Make us gods.*"* We listen with amazement to such accents, emanating as they do from the lips of those who not long before had lifted their voice to heaven in a triumphal hymn of praise. Who would have thought that the worshippers on the shore of the Red Sea should ever give utterance to such words as "*Make us gods which shall go before us*" ? They had said in their magnificent song, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods ? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ?" Had they now found out some one like Him ? It would seem so. And who ? A golden calf ! How dreadful ! And yet this is man. Yes ; man, in every age. If we duly ponder the scene of the golden calf—if we thoroughly seize the moral of it—if we fully apprehend its teaching, it will go far in preparing us for some of the grossest features in the present condition of things. "These things happened unto them for ensamples : and they are written for our admoni-

* Do not these words of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, remind us of the blasphemous absurdity of popery as displayed in the sacrifice of the Mass ? Does not the priest undertake in that ordinance to make God ? And do not millions throughout the length and breadth of Christendom prostrate themselves in adoring homage before a wafer god which a mouse may carry off and devour ? And this is an integral part of the present condition of things in the professing church of God—this is a prominent feature in the scene through which we are passing. Is a scrap of bread a higher object of worship than a piece of gold ? O Christendom ! Christendom ! think of thy present condition—think of thy destiny—ponder thy doom !

tion, upon whom the ends of the world are come." (Literally, "upon whom the ends of the ages have met.")

But let us proceed with our subject.

"And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, To-morrow is a feast to the Lord. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."

What a picture! A whole assembly—the entire nation of Israel sunk, in a moment, into absurd and degrading idolatry—all, with one consent, bowed before a god made of the earrings which a little before had hung from the ears of their wives and daughters! And this, too, in the face of all they had witnessed of the mighty acts of Jehovah. They had seen the land of Egypt trembling under the successive strokes of His judicial rod. They had seen the Red Sea laid open before them, and a pathway formed for them by His omnipotent arm through these very waters which proved a grave for Egypt's armies. He had sent down manna from heaven, and brought forth water from a flinty rock, to

meet their need. All this they had witnessed ; and yet, in a moment, as it were, they could forget this marvellous array of evidence, and mistake a piece of gold for the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. Terrible exhibition, this, of what is in man, and of what we are to expect from him if left to himself !

Nor should we, my beloved friend, ever forget who it was that led the people into this most disastrous course of action. It was no less a personage than Aaron—the elder brother of the lawgiver himself. It may be deemed a digression to refer to this ; but it is a profitable digression ; because it tends to illustrate the exceeding folly of leaning on, or looking to, the very highest and best of men.

In the early part of the book of Exodus we find Moses shrinking from the divine legation. He hesitated to go into Egypt at the bidding of God, though assured again and again that Jehovah would be with him, that He would be a mouth and wisdom to him, nevertheless, he shrank and would fain retire from the responsibility. But the very moment he heard that Aaron should accompany him, he was ready to go. And yet this very man was the source of the deepest sorrow that Moses ever tasted. This was the man who made the golden calf !

How admonitory is all this ! What a sad mistake it is to lean on an arm of flesh ! And yet how prone we are all to do so in one way or another ! We lean on our fellow-mortal instead of leaning on the living God, and in the sequel we find we have been trusting to a broken reed. “ Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint.”

“Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils ; for wherein is he to be accounted of ?”

But we must return to our theme, and consider the path of the man of God, in the face of the condition of things with which he was surrounded—a condition, to say the least of it, gloomy enough.

The heart of Moses might well sink and cower as he beheld the whole congregation of Israel, with Aaron his brother at their head, sunk in abominable idolatry. All seemed hopelessly gone. But “the foundation of God standeth sure.” This is a grand and immutable truth in all ages. Nothing can touch the truth of God. It shines out all the brighter from amid the deepest and darkest shades into which man is capable of sinking. We can form but very little idea of what the heart of Moses, that beloved and honoured servant of God, passed through when he saw his Lord displaced by a golden calf. But he could count on God. Yea, and he could also act for God. The two things ever go together. The man of faith cannot afford to spend his time in unavailing lamentations over the condition of things. He has his work to do, and his path to tread, and that work and that path are never more marked than in the very midst of abounding error and hopeless confusion. “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.”

See how blessedly this fine practical principle was carried out by Moses, the man of God—a principle as true in the day of the golden calf, as amid the appalling ruins of Christendom. “And Moses took the taber-

nacle, and pitched it without the camp, *afar off from the camp*, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that *every one which sought the Lord* went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation which was without the camp."

Here we have what we may call a bold and magnificent piece of acting. Moses felt that Jehovah and a golden calf could not be together, and hence if a calf was in the camp, Jehovah must be outside. Such was the simple reasoning of faith; faith always reasons aright. When the public body is all wrong, the path of individual faith is outside. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." It never can be right, and, thanks be to God, it is never necessary, to go on with iniquity. No, no, "*depart*" is the watchword for the faithful soul, when iniquity is set up in that which assumes to be the witness for God on the earth. Cost what it may, we are to depart. It may look like exclusiveness, and a setting ourselves up to be holier and better and wiser than our neighbours. But no matter what it looks like, or what people may call it, we must "*depart from iniquity*." "Every one which sought the Lord" had to go outside of the defiled place to find Him, and yet that very place was none other than the camp of Israel where Jehovah had taken up His abode.

Thus we see that Moses on this occasion was pre-eminently a man for the crisis. He acted for God, and he was the honoured instrument of opening up a path for God's people whereby they might escape from a scene of hopeless pollution, and enjoy the rich and rare privilege of communion with God in an evil day. And

as for himself, we learn what he gained by this marvellous transaction from the following record, "*And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face as a man speaketh unto his friend.*"

Am I wrong, dearest A., in adducing Moses in proof of my thesis, "That no matter what may be the actual condition of the people of God as a whole, it is the privilege of the individual believer to tread as lofty a path and enjoy as high communion as was ever known in the brightest and palmiest days?" I think you will say, No.

And here I must close this long letter. If you so desire, you shall hear again from

Yours, my dearest A.,

Most affectionately in Christ,

* * *



MEDITATIONS ON THE BEATITUDES.

THE BEATITUDE OF POSITION.

VERSE 10-12. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in heaven ; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.* Were it not that we leave the children of the kingdom in a hostile world, we might here conclude our "Meditations," in the full assurance of their perfect blessedness. Seven times blessed is divine completeness. But however blessed, however happy in the divine presence, however fit to

inherit the earth in its bright millennial day, however fit to reign with Christ in the higher regions of glory, they still stand in this world just where they stood before they were born of God, and surrounded it may be with the same persons and circumstances as they ever were.

This we may see every day. The home that was once cheerful and happy is now a cheerless wilderness. How often the young convert has found himself an alien and a stranger in his father's house—the very house in which he lived all his unconverted days! But now, he being completely changed, the family not, he has no fellowship with their ways, and they have none with his. All is changed; opposition is inevitable, and persecution in some way or other, especially if he reaches the sevenfold blessedness of his Master's image. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.” (2 Tim. iii. 12.) ‘Hold thy peace, art thou wiser than thy father and thy mother, than thy brothers and thy sisters, must we all give in to thee?’ may be the lightest form of persecution experienced. Still it is resistance to the grace of God and the Spirit of Christ, as manifested by the young convert. He must now pursue his path alone.

So far, it will be observed, we have spoken chiefly of the *character* of God's children, now we turn to meditate for a little on their *position* in an evil world. The moral character of those who belong to Christ, rising in grace to the seventh beatitude, must necessarily arouse the spirit of persecution, and expose them to trial, until the kingdom of heaven is set up in power and glory. Had no special blessing been pronounced on

this condition of things, the disciples might have been ready to say that their state was anything but blessed ; that the benediction of heaven on their character only brought down upon themselves the hatred and oppression of mankind. True, this would have been natural, not spiritual, walking by sight, not by faith ; but what will unbelief not say and do ? much unbelief still lurks in the hearts of believers. But oh, the grace, the rich, the abounding grace, of our Lord Jesus ! He pronounces those twice blessed who are exposed to persecution from the world. This completes the beautiful picture of His people's character and condition, and adds great interest and fulness to every circumstance of their position while the kingdom is in abeyance.

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This must have been a strange language to those who were looking for outward glory, or a reign of peace, a paradise on earth. But the Lord plainly sets before his disciples what their new position would be in this world, and the more distinct their likeness to Himself, the heavier would be their persecutions. But He especially refers in this first blessedness of position, to the first group of beatitudes, which are characterized by righteousness ; as the last three are by grace. “Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Every new-born soul must have the sense, more or less, of its own nothingness, and a sincere and earnest desire to be found in obedience to the will of God. This is righteousness, and the righteousness which brings persecution in this life. For example, a Christian who is walking with the Lord, fears to do what

is wrong, he desires to do what is right ; he seeks to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man. This is the breastplate of righteousness. But he is offered, it may be, certain preferment in his position if he will agree to do something which he fears not to be right. The offer may be a tempting one and he is needy ; but no ; he waits on the Lord ; he brings the matter before Him ; light shines, the tempter's object is seen, he positively refuses, righteousness prevails, but he suffers for it. He is misunderstood, is called foolish, or it may be fanatic and madman. He not only loses what was offered, but what he had ; he is no use, he is turned out. Still he can say, My present loss, under the righteous government of God, will prove my eternal gain. He has a clear conscience, a happy heart ; he is drawn closer to the Lord in dependence on Him. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." When the king returns from the far country, and calls His own servants around Him, what will it be to hear Him say, " Well done, thou good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy Lord ?" Matthew xxv. 21.

Here, O my soul, pause a little. Let thy meditations be deep, patient, and prayerful, on this most practical subject. Consider, weigh well, I pray thee, the many ways in which thou mayest be faithful or unfaithful ! Are there not many shades of practical unrighteousness in the affairs of this life ? But they must all be brought up again and measured by a righteous standard. How solemn, though how blessed the thought, of being mani-

fested before the tribunal of Christ—of having every thought, word, and act, brought into the light, examined and estimated there. Dost thou expect to hear Him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant?” I press not for an answer, but let thy heart answer to Him. Be manifested before Him now; seek to do the whole will of God in all things, and during all thy earthly days. After what the Lord has said of blessedness here, what must it be hereafter, when He will have everything His own way, and when every blessedness shall have its full and everlasting reflection in us. Now, may we fear to sin, though we may have to suffer for it.

We have now come to the closing beatitude of the kingdom of heaven. It goes back and takes up the last three of the seven, which are characterized by grace—the graces of mercy, pureness, and peace. Thus the different graces of the divine life which ought to shine in all the children of God, are here assembled under the heads of righteousness and grace—that which is right before God, and that which is grace towards man. “Blessed are *ye*, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, *for my sake*.”

The promised blessing to the sufferers for Christ’s sake has some sweet and precious peculiarities in it. Nor need we wonder at this; what name like His! There is nothing higher, nothing better; they who have His name have all that God can give; they have every blessedness that will ever be possessed throughout the endless ages of eternity. The promise, observe, is directly personal. “Blessed are *ye*”—not in the ab-

stract, "Blessed are *they*." He is looking at the disciples around Him, and knowing what they would have to pass through, He speaks direct to their hearts, and gives them to feel His personal interest in them, and their personal nearness to Himself. This must always be the case when we suffer for His name's sake. This is a much higher thing than suffering for righteousness' sake, though the two may often go together. Many an upright mind has suffered for righteousness' sake who knew not the Saviour's love or His saving grace. Naturally upright, they would not stoop to deceive, and suffered for it. Even natural uprightness is too straight for the crooked ways of this sad, deceitful world. Oh, how difficult and trying is the path of the Christian in the midst of it all! He must live and walk by the word of the Lord and in communion with Him, if he would be preserved from a defiled conscience and a feeble testimony.

Suffering for Christ's sake is the result of speaking about Him to others. Not merely a decided *no*, when we are asked or enticed to do what is wrong, but an earnest heart that watches every opportunity to speak about the blessed Lord and salvation; and if possible to those who would put difficulties in our way. There are always plenty of worldly-wise Christians near us to check zeal and hinder faithfulness, by what passes under the fair name of *prudence*.

There is a time and place for everything, it may be suggested, and there is no use in offending others, losing your influence, and throwing away your prospects for life. Surely we are not called upon to be always speaking about Christ and the gospel; you may

cause your good to be evil spoken of. Such fair speeches and plausible reasons may come from the lips of some lukewarm Christian or mere professor, and so far, at least for a time, may do the enemy's work. The voice is his, from whose lips soever the words may come, and ought to be treated as such. Certain we are it is not the voice of Jesus; and His sheep hear His voice and follow Him.

When Christ is precious to our hearts, such reasonings have no power. We see Him to be worth infinitely more than all that the world can do or give. The fair words of prudence fall to the ground; grace triumphs. Christ is before the soul; He commands all its energy; His love inspires the tongue; the lips cannot be refrained; His name burns in our hearts, it burns in our words, and we long for it to burn in the hearts and on the lips of others.

Speakest thou thus, my soul, of thyself, of thine own ways, or of what thou oughtest to be? My answer is plain and ready. I speak of myself and of all others. The rule is one. In the proportion that Christ is before the soul; in the proportion that He commands it; in that proportion will be our faithfulness and our sufferings. It may not be bodily suffering, or even worldly loss; but a very narrow path will be left for such to walk in, and a wide path of rejection. Save for those who are in the same narrow way, such an one would be alone and despised in the world. You may speak of religion in a general way, of preachers, of churches, of missions to the heathen, of societies for doing good, and be popular; but speak of the Lord Himself, of His precious blood, of the full assurance of salvation, of one-

ness with Him in heaven, of separation from the world, of standing apart from all its shows and entertainments, and you will rapidly reduce the number of your friends. And as far as the enemy can gain power, you will be reviled and persecuted for His name's sake. It may be nothing more than cold rejection, a contemptuous sneer, but the same spirit would lay the faggots and silence the witness in the flames of martyrdom. Who were the most implacable enemies of the Lord and His servant Paul? The most religious men in Israel. Is the world or human nature changed? We believe not.

But here thou art anxious to inquire, O my soul, and I wonder not, why there is so little persecution for Jesus' sake now? There may be more than thou art aware of. The Christianity that is positive and aggressive, and pursues its path outside the camp where Jesus suffered, must taste the bitterness, or rather the sweetness, of persecution. Such Christians will be avoided, if not despised, by those in favour with the world. The outside place, the unworldly life, is a stinging rebuke to the time-serving, or merely professing Christian.

Such witnesses are everywhere spoken against, and frequently by those in high places who know little or nothing about them; they are unjustly characterized as the secret propagators of heresy, as seeking to draw away and deceive the simple; and held up under the grossest misrepresentation to the scorn and derision of all Christendom. So far this may be harmless, thou wilt say; true, it opens no dungeons, it breaks no bones, it kindles no fires, it sharpens no swords; but how much further would the spirit of persecution go if

let loose? Let the history of the church say. He who stoops to defame his fellow Christians because they differ from him on certain points of doctrine and practice, is not far from the spirit of Rome, which was the first to persecute for a difference of opinion.

But all this was anticipated by the blessed Lord, and graciously provided for. He thinks of everything. The saints are never dearer to His heart than when despised and suffering for His sake. "Blessed are ye," is His own sweet word of comfort to their hearts, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Should they suffer unto death, heaven will be their immediate home. "Great is your reward in heaven." And they will also have the honour of following in the footsteps of those who suffered as the heralds of His coming—who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. As this was true of the prophets, and is true of Christians in all ages, so will it be true of the Jewish remnant who shall be slain for their Messiah's sake in the last days. Revelation vi. 9-11.

In rising from these meditations, O my soul, see that thou hast learnt this lesson well.—To be careful what thou sayest of the Lord's redeemed, and how thou actest towards them. They are not only dear to His heart; He delights in them. Grieve Him not by any unkindness to them. If plain speaking or faithful dealing with some be needful, let all be done in love

and tenderness. "Let brotherly love continue." That must never be interrupted, though brotherly kindness may, with the Lord's sanction.

The Lord grant that our meditations on these beautiful beatitudes may leave an indelible impression of the Saviour's character, not only on the whole life of the writer, but also of the reader. So shall we answer to the divine emblems here spoken of; "salt" and "light"—the preservative principle or energy in the place where light has already come, where truth is already professed: and the blessed activities of love that go out in the light of grace and truth to a dark benighted world. Be this thy mission, O my soul, unweariedly, unchangeably, that many may be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith which is in Christ Jesus. Acts xxvi. 16-18.

WE welcome still Thy faithful word—
 "The cross shall meet its sure reward:"
 For soon must pass the "little while"
 Then joy shall crown Thy servants' toil:
 And we shall hear Thee, Saviour, say,
 "Arise, my love, and come away;
 Look up, for thou shalt weep no more,
 But rest on heaven's eternal shore."



A WORKMAN'S MOTTO.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Corinthians xv. 58.

Here we have an uncommonly fine motto for the

christian workman—and every Christian ought to be a workman. It presents a most valuable balance for the heart. We have immoveable stability linked with unceasing activity.

This is of the utmost possible importance. There are some of us such sticklers for what we call principle that we seem almost afraid to embark in any scheme of large-hearted christian activity. And, on the other hand, some of us are so bent on what we call service, that in order to reach desired ends, and realise palpable results, we do not hesitate to overstep the boundary line of sound principle.

Now, our motto supplies a divine antidote for both these evils. It furnishes a solid basis on which we are to stand with steadfast purpose and immoveable decision. We are not to be moved the breadth of a hair from the narrow path of divine truth, though tempted to do so by the most forcible argument of a plausible expediency. "To obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams."

Noble words! may they be engraved, in characters deep and broad, on every workman's heart. They are absolutely invaluable; and particularly so in this our own day, when there is such wilfulness in our mode of working, such erratic schemes of service, such self-pleasing, such a strong tendency to do that which is right in our own eyes, such a practical ignoring of the supreme authority of holy scripture.

It fills the thoughtful observer of the present condition of things with the very gravest apprehensions to mark the positive and deliberate throwing aside of the word of God, even by those who professedly admit it to be

the word of God. We speak not now of the insolence of open and avowed infidelity; but of the heartless indifference of respectable orthodoxy. There are thousands, nay millions, who profess to believe that the Bible is the word of God, who, nevertheless, have not the smallest idea of submitting themselves absolutely to its authority. The human will is dominant. Human reason bears sway. Expediency commands the heart. The holy principles of divine revelation are swept away like autumn leaves, or the dust of the threshing-floor, before the vehement blast of popular opinion.

How immensely valuable and important, in view of all this, is the first part of our workman's motto! "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye *stedfast* and *immoveable*." The "therefore" throws the soul back upon the solid foundation laid in the previous part of the chapter in which the apostle unfolds the most sublime and precious truth that can possibly engage the Christian's heart—truth which lifts the soul completely above the dark and chilling mists of the old creation, and plants it on the solid rock of resurrection. It is on this rock we are exhorted to be *stedfast* and *immoveable*. It is not an obstinate adherence to our own notions—to some favourite dogma or theory which we have adopted—or to any special school of doctrine, high or low. It is not aught of this kind; but a firm grasp and faithful confession of the whole truth of God of which a risen Christ is the everlasting centre.

But then we have to remember the other side of our motto. The christian workman has something more to do than to stand firmly on the ground of truth. He

has to cultivate the lovely activities of grace. He is called to be "always *abounding* in the work of the Lord." The basis of sound principle must never be abandoned ; but the work of the Lord must be diligently carried on. There are some who are so afraid of doing mischief that they do nothing ; and others, who rather than not be doing something will do wrong. Our motto corrects both. It teaches us to set our faces as a flint, where truth is, in any wise, involved ; while on the other hand, it leads us to go forth, in largeness of heart, and throw all our energies into the work of the Lord.

And let the christian reader specially note the expression, "*The work of the Lord.*" We are not to imagine for a moment that all that which engages the energies of professing Christians is entitled to be designated "the work of the Lord." Alas ! alas ! far from it. We see a mass of things undertaken as service for the Lord with which a spiritual person could not possibly connect the holy name of Christ. We do not attempt to go into details ; but we do desire to have the conscience exercised as to the work in which we embark. We deeply feel how needful it is in this day of wilfulness, laxity, and wild latitudinarianism, to own the authority of Christ in all that we put our hands to in the way of work or service. Blessed be His name, He permits us to connect Him with the most trivial and commonplace activities of daily life. We can even eat and drink in His holy name, and to His glory. The sphere of service is wide enough, most surely ; it is only limited by that weighty clause, "*The work of the Lord.*" The christian workman must not engage in

any work which does not range itself under that most holy and all-important head. He must, ere he enters upon any service, ask himself this great practical question, "Can this honestly be called 'the work of the Lord?'"



GLEANINGS.

ABOUT five or six years ago, when staying in Birmingham for a short time in the service of the gospel, I was asked by some christian friends to go to Dudley, in Worcestershire, to see Robert P., a great invalid, a Christian. I consented to do so, and shall never, I think, forget my visit. It has been my lot in former days to see very much suffering in connection with the most painful diseases; I have seen the poor body tortured and racked by pain and anguish that neither the pen nor tongue of man could describe; I have seen limbs distorted and certain organs destroyed or rendered useless in one or another poor patient by painful diseases: but I doubt if I ever saw (save perhaps in one case) such an instance of accumulated sufferings of the most terrific kind in any one person, as I found in R. P. At the time of my visit he was 38 years of age, and had been ill for 18 years. He evidently had been a large, fine man; but to the eye of nature it was pitiable to see the "outward man" as I saw him. He was bent down almost double, his face turned in toward his chest, with his chin pressing hard upon his breast-bone, so that for two years he had seen nothing but the light. His jaws were so locked that he could only take food the thickness of a penny, which had to be

slipped in between his teeth. His limbs were not only deformed, but perfectly useless to him. He could only *move* two fingers when I saw him; all the rest of his body was as immoveable as if it had been a wood carving, save his tongue. This his Father was pleased to leave him the full use of, and as he had a heart completely at rest and fully satisfied—for he had CHRIST there—he used the member left him to speak of the love and mercy of that gracious God who gave His Son for sinners, and of that blessed Lord Jesus Christ who had filled his soul with sunshine. Some time after I had seen him, his God and Father, to fill up his cup of sufferings, was pleased to cause even the eyes, which could before see the light, to fail before the ravages of that direful disease, so that, physically, he was to sit in darkness for the rest of his days on earth. Besides this, the two fingers that he had been able to move, became as rigid as the rest of his body. When in this state it was that he called some one to him to write down from his lips the good matter which his heart was inditing, and he spoke as follows :

Once I could see, but ne'er again
Shall I behold the verdant plain,
Jewelled with flowers of colours bright,
Bathed in a flood of golden light.
The birds, the brilliant butterflies,
These all in *thought* before me rise;
The shining rivulet, whose song
Comes sweetly murmuring along;
The sky, the clouds, the grass, the trees,
All waving, glancing in the breeze—
I see them pictured in my mind
But *there alone*, for I am blind.

Blind, did I say? how can that be?
Since I, by faith, my Saviour *see*
Exalted on the throne above,
Beaming with *mercy, grace, and love.*
A view like this is better far
Than sun, or moon, or glittering star,
Or glowing landscape, sunny skies,
Or sight that's *fair to mortal eyes.*
I THANK *my God* that He has put
A veil before mine eyes, and shut
All earthly objects from my sight,
And *Christ* revealed in glory bright.
Henceforth my word shall ever be—
Once I was blind, but NOW I see.

Dear reader, I need say but little more. R. P., beloved of the Lord, has gone to be for ever with Him whose he was. Converted from the darkness and evil of Unitarianism—chastened, not in wrath, but in love, he enjoyed that which of faith he possessed. HE HAD CHRIST—his heart was satisfied. And are you now unsaved? Then *you* are unsatisfied; your experience proves to you what the word of God declares in so many ways, that the world is not big enough to fill your heart. Do you know the plague of sin? Then the Saviour, Jesus, whom God sent, is waiting to bless you, and satisfy your heart.

“ *Only believe!* ”

F. C.

