

With kind regards
of the Editor

THE REMEMBRANCER.

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE
FOR
THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

“Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you
always in remembrance of these things, though
ye know them. Yea, . . . I think it meet, . . .
to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.”

2nd Peter i. 12, 13.

VOLUME IV.

HAMILTON, ONT., CANADA:

BIBLE TRUTH AGENCY, BOX 274.

1894.

INDEX.

	PAGE
Affliction's Lessons. A letter from a friend on the death of a child,	50
A Solemn Lesson as to the principle of Metropolitanism. (Joshua xi. 1-13.)	132
"At that time Jesus answered,"	202
A Word of Exhortation,	18
Brief Thoughts on 2nd Corinthians iii.,	102
Devotedness,	188
Fragment on Service,	168
Fragments, 29, 47, 54, 60, 68, 80, 94, 108 133, 170, 182, 189, 190	
"GOD—I."	30
Jesus Christ come in the flesh,	42
John i. and Proverbs viii.,	160
John xvii. (Notes of a Lecture.)	183
Mark ix. 49, 50,	48
MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES,—	
Preface,	19
Introduction. The condition of Israel at the time of Joshua's death. (Chap. i. 1-16.)	35
What characterizes declension. (Chap. i. 17-36.) .	55
The origin and consequences of declension. Chap. ii. 1-5.)	70
Israel's Ruin looked at in reference to God. (Chap. ii. 6—iii. 4.)	75
Othniel. (Chap. iii. 5-11.)	97
Ehud. (Chap. iii. 12-30.)	117
Shamgar. (Chap. iii. 31.)	120
Deborah and Barak. (Chap. iv.)	134
Deborah's Song. (Chap. v.)	141
Gideon. The word of God reaching the conscience. (Chap. vi. 1-10.)	170
Gideon prepared for service. (Chap. vi. 11-40.) .	173
What characterizes God's witnesses in the day of Ruin. (Chap. vii. 1-14.)	190
What testimony consists in. (Chap. vii. 15-25.) .	195
Difficulties and snares in Service. (Chap. viii. 1-23.)	214
Gideon's Ephod. (Chap. viii. 24-35.)	234

iv.

INDEX.

	PAGE
My God my salvation,	32
"No more conscience of sins." (Hebrews x.)	62
Occupation with self,	95
Priesthood. (Exodus xxix.)	82
Samuel's Reply to Saul. (1 Samuel xv.)	157
Texts, 21, 90, 133, 159, 160, 161, 207, 220, 236	
The Atonement,	211
The Cross. (Gal. vi. 14.)	221
The full import of conversion. (1 Thess. i. 9, 10.)	162
The Good Shepherd. (John x. 1-18 ; 25-30.)	208
The Joys of Christ,	233
The Nail,	100
The Red Sea and the Wilderness. (Exodus xv.)	22
The Refiner of Silver,	15
The Swallows are gone,	225
The Times of Jeremiah,	109
The Vail rent, not removed,	3
Thoughts on Joy and Worship. (Extracts from a letter. A Translation.)	91
Who has charge of your Money-Box?	154
Woman's place in service. (Matt. xxvii. 55, 56, etc.)	69

POETRY.

"For ever with the Lord,"	153
His Beauty,	161
Hymn of Praise,	201
"In everything give thanks : for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (1 Thess. v. 18.)	181
John iv. "With Thee is the Fountain of Life,"	41
"Lord Jesus, Come,"	21
My Beloved,	1
O What a debt I owe!	156
"The Glory of that Light." (Acts xxii. 11.)	101
The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,	61
"Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth I desire beside Thee." (Psalm lxxiii. 25.)	81
"Yet a little while,"	221
Verses,	211

The Remembrancer.

MY BELOVED.

*"What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?"—
Canticles v. 9.*

Oh, what is thy Beloved ?
They oft inquire of me ;
And what in my Beloved
So passing fair I see ?
Is it the heavenly splendour
In which He shines above ?
His riches and dominions,
That won my heart's best love ?

Oh no ! 'Tis not His glories ;
He's worthy of them all !
'Tis not the throne and sceptre
Before which angels fall !
I view with heart exulting
Each crown His head adorns ;
But, oh, He looks most lovely,
Wearing His crown of thorns.

I'm glad to see His raiment,
Than snow more spotless white,
Refulgent with its brightness,
More dazzling than the light ;
But more surpassing lovely
His form appears to me,
When stripp'd, and scourg'd, and bleeding,
He hung upon the tree.

With warmest adoration
 I see Him on the throne,
 And join the loud hosannas
 That His high virtues own ;
 But, oh, most blessèd Jesus,
 I must confess to Thee,
 More than the throne of glory
I love that sacred tree.

I joy to see the diadems
 Upon Thy royal brow ;
 The state, and power, and majesty,
 In which Thou sittest now ;
 But 'tis *Thyself*, Lord Jesus,
 Makes heaven seem heaven to me—
Thyself, as first I knew Thee,
Uplifted on the tree.

Though higher than the highest,
 Most mighty King Thou art ;
 Thy grace, and not Thy greatness,
 First touch'd my rebel heart ;
 Thy sword, it might have slain me,
 Thine arrows drunk my blood ;
 But 'twas *Thy cross* subdu'd me,
 And won my heart to God.

Thy sceptre rules creation,
 Thy *wounded hand* rules me ;
 All bow before Thy footstool,
 I but the *nail-prints* see :
 Aloud they sound Thy titles,
 Thou Lord of lords most high ;
 One thrilling thought absorbs me —
This Lord for ME did die !

Oh, this is my Belovèd,
 There's none so fair as He ;
 The chief among ten thousand,
 He's all in all to me :
 My heart it breaks with longing
 To dwell with Him above,
 Who woo'd me first, and won me
By His sweet dying love.



THE VAIL RENT, NOT REMOVED.

“Thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work : with cherubims shall it be made : and thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold : their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver. And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony : and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy [place] and the most holy.” (Exodus xxvi. 31-33.)

Very precise are these directions about the vail ; its substance, its colours, its place, and its use, all are described, leaving nothing to be supplied by the wit of Aholiab, the device of Bezaleel, or the wisdom of Moses. And as God instructed Moses, so Solomon, four hundred years afterwards, made a vail for the house which he built, of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and wrought cherubims thereon. (2 Chron. iii. 14.) To divide between the holy place and the most holy was one great use of it ; but also, whilst it hung there in its pristine completeness, it

marked the limit of approach for the sons of Aaron to the presence chamber of the Lord God of Hosts. Before that vail in the sanctuary, and up to it, each priest, when in the holy place, could go, but behind it none could venture, except the High Priest, once every year on the day of atonement. Within it was that chamber, where, after the death of Moses, unbroken silence reigned, except when the High Priest passed behind the vail. Whilst Moses lived, at times, as we learn from Numbers vii. 89, the silence which characterized that chamber was broken by the oral communications to the mediator from the Lord Jehovah. When he died these communications ceased, and, though daily the holy place must have resounded with the footsteps of the officiating priests accomplishing the service appointed them, no sound from within that curtain broke on their ears who were without. Yet God's throne upon earth was within that vail. He dwelt between the cherubims, and the bright cloud of glory—the Shechinah—betokened His presence in the Sanctuary. (Levit. xvi. 2.) How solemn must that stillness have been to the priests as they went about in the holy place ! They knew the character of the chamber within, but heard no sound of life proceeding from it, though the living Lord Himself made His earthly throne the mercy-seat. In thick darkness He dwelt, and in an atmosphere which was not to be disturbed by the presence of those who caused din and discord without ; for when Aaron entered, he

entered only as the type of the High Priest of the Heavenly Sanctuary, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Very jealously did God guard the entrance into the holiest. Redeemed by blood, as the children of Israel were, they never could get beyond the brazen altar in the court of the tabernacle. Consecrated though the sons of Aaron had been, in accordance with a ritual of Divine appointment, they could never get behind the vail, within the holiest of all; and Aaron, though privileged by virtue of his office to enter that innermost sanctuary, could only pass within by blood, having first taken in a censer filled with sweet incense, but lighted with live coals from off the altar that was before the Lord (Levit. xvi. 12), that the cloud of incense might cover the mercy-seat, from which shone out in brightness the only light of the holiest.

For hundreds of years did this condition of things continue, viz., a nation in relationship of with God, owned by Him as His people, yet never allowed access into His immediate presence; for the vail, stretched across the full width of the sanctuary, proclaimed that there was a spot on earth on which even the feet of God's priests could not tread. Very clear and very marked was the message conveyed thereby from God to man—that as yet the way of the holiest had not been made manifest, though the typical meaning of the vail itself, and the typical teaching as to its colours, were subjects all that time unrevealed. That a way would

one day be opened, could be learnt from Aaron's periodical entrance on the great day of atonement ; but how that way would be opened out, and when, remained for all those centuries a close, an insoluble mystery.

At length the day and the hour arrived when that mystery was to receive its solution ; and as, by Divine teaching, Israel had understood that no child of Adam could remain in God's immediate presence, so, by a Divine act on the part of Him who directed the erection of the vail, the way and the ground of access to Him were disclosed in a moment of time.

But God's thoughts are not like our thoughts, nor His ways like our ways ; for that which, in accordance with all human thought, would have sealed man's doom for ever, and taken away irrecoverably all hope of being before God without the fire of His judgment descending on him—viz., the death of God's Son on the cross—was the efficacious ground on which He could righteously act in the fullest grace to sinners, and permit, what never had been known before, the soul to enter with boldness into His very presence, and to be at rest before the throne. All that men could do to express their hatred of God, and of all that savoured of God, that they had done. Jesus hanging on the cross, and there at that moment dead, betokened what man must be, whose hands were stained with the blood, not merely of a righteous man (for that was nothing new in this

world's history), but of the Holy One, the first and the only, in the fullest sense, faithful and true witness for God upon earth. "Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost ; and behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." (Matt. xxvii. 50, 51.) Never before had men such an opportunity for showing themselves to be unworthy of favour from God, and they did not miss it. For Him, who went about doing good (Acts x. 38), they had thus openly rejected ; and though no charge worthy of death could be substantiated against Him, they had not paused for one hour in their restless activity till their wish had been gratified, and the plans of Satan carried out in the ignominious and agonizing death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

Beyond that they could not go. All that they could do against Him personally, that they had done ; but death, to which they had delivered Him, barred all further pursuit of the object of their hatred, and demonstrated that the outward actors in that scene were but creatures, and creatures of very limited capacity. They could judge Him to be worthy of death ; they could urge the governor, as permitted by God, to wield the sword of judgment against the Lord ; but death, to which they delivered Him, shut them out from further ill-treatment of Him. Their power as men was limited, though they might, as they did, put forth all their strength.

But when they had done all that they could, having put out of the world by death the Prince of life Himself, God began to work, to manifest what He is, and what He could do. He rent the vail—a fact narrated in a very few words—an act done in a moment of time, but a fact and an act of great and abiding importance ; and, as such, three times over stated in the word. Matthew, Mark and Luke narrate it—the first two in its historic order in relation to the other events of that day ; the last in a moral order, in accordance with the plan often to be traced in the Gospel which bears his name, bracketing together, as it were, the supernatural events of the crucifixion, the great darkness over the land, and the rending of the vail in its midst. At the ninth hour, the hour for prayer, the Lord died, and, at the same time, the vail was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. God, in accordance with whose command the vail, through all the changes and vicissitudes of the tabernacle and the temple, had divided the holy place from the most holy, and screened from the gaze of the priests, as morning and evening they burnt incense on the golden altar before it, the ark and the mercy-seat ; God, I say, by His own act, without the intervention of a single human creature, rent the vail—a testimony, as was afterwards explained, to the opening up of a new and living way into His presence. And this divine act was one of immense significance. It spoke of an evening sacrifice, at length offered,

which was perfectly acceptable to God. It told of the character and purpose of the death of God's Son on the cross, who gave Himself to die as the sin-offering, and to make atonement for sinners. It bore witness, likewise, that God could now allow men to enter into His presence, whilst He maintained at its full height, by the way of approach, the standard of His holiness.

God rent the vail. We should mark the word. God did not remove it Himself, nor did He authorize its removal by others. He did not withdraw it, nor did He roll it up from the bottom, nor lower it from the top like a curtain. He rent it in the midst. And, perhaps, the priest who ministered that afternoon at the golden altar of incense, or, certainly, those who entered the sanctuary shortly after its occurrence, must have seen the vail still hanging up on some of the pillars or hooks to which it was attached, but with a way into the holiest at the same time displayed by the rent made in its midst. "A new way, and a living way." A new way it was, for no high priest had, in such manner, entered the holiest before. Year by year, as often as they observed the ritual appointed for the day of atonement, they must have passed behind the vail; but, now that it was rent, such a way into the holiest was unneeded. A living way it was, and is. For, whereas none of the sons of Aaron could penetrate within the vail, save the high priest, and then in the prescribed manner, else

death would have awaited them and him; now that the vail has been rent by God, there exists no barrier on His part against the entrance of His people, who are a holy priesthood unto Him, into the place where He is on His throne. But, let it ever be remembered, they can enter only through the vail. The way opened, but opened in this manner; and the vail, as we learn in Hebrews x. 20, being a type of the Lord's flesh, the typical meaning of its colours can be discerned as well as the teaching about the vail itself. Christ died, then the vail was rent, and that of which there had been no type was immediately disclosed. Types there were of the Lord's death as the voluntary offering on His part, as well as the sinner's Substitute. Types, too, there were of Him as a man upon earth, nor were there wanting in the ceremonial law those which had respect to His resurrection (Levit. xiv. 6, 7; xxiii. 11); but no type could there be to illustrate the way into the holiest, to be opened up by His death. Of this the rending of the vail is the only illustration, and that, once rent, was an operation which could never be repeated. The ground, on which the entrance would be based, was typified as often as the high priest went within the vail with the blood of others; but, as the way was to be through the vail—the flesh of Christ—the same vail could only be rent once, if the truth as to the death of Christ once for all was to be taught to, and maintained by, His people. He died, and God's immediate

response to the voluntary surrender of His Son to do His will on the cross, and to be the sinner's Substitute, was the significant rending of the vail. Till He died, none, born in sin, could go with boldness to the mercy seat; but, when He died, before ever He was taken down from the cross, men, we learn, were no longer to be kept out of the innermost sanctuary, if only they would approach through the rent vail.

And now, as to the typical meaning of its various colours, etc. There was but one vail, into the fabric of which different colours were introduced. And, since that vail was the type of the flesh of Christ, the different colours of blue, purple and scarlet, with the fine twined linen, and cherubim of cunning work, typify certain things, which in combination are to be met with only in the Virgin's Son, conceived by the Holy Ghost. The heavenly Man He was (1 Cor. xv. 47); so blue is the first colour mentioned. Purple, the royal colour, suitably finds a place in that vail which was type of the flesh of Him who was born king of the Jews (Matt. ii. 2; see also John xviii. 37); and, though rejected as such by the representatives of the nation (John xix. 15), He will be set by Jehovah as His King upon His holy hill of Zion (Psalm ii. 6; Luke i. 32, 33), Rev. xix. 12 and 16, showing us, moreover, that there will be "*many crowns*" on His head, and that He will be "**KING of Kings.**" Scarlet is the emblem of worldly glory, and Psalm viii. tells us

that *all things* will be put under Him, as well as that He will be crowned with glory and honour ; Solomon's reign typifying that time as having all worldly glory and magnificence connected with the kingdom. Then we have the fine twined linen, declarative of His spotless holiness—"That holy thing that shall be born (Luke i. 35). Lastly, since cherubims are mentioned in Scripture in connection with the judicial action of the throne (Gen. iii.; Psalms xviii., xcix.; Ezek. i., x.; Rev. iv., v.), how fitting that the cherubims of cunning work should be wrought on the fabric of that curtain, indicating that the One of whom it was the type, was appointed by God to wield the power of His throne, *all* judicial action having been committed to Him as Son of Man (John v. 22, 27).

But not only do we read of the vail being erected, and subsequently of its being rent. These are historical facts of which the word informs us ; but facts, too, with the practical bearing of which every Christian should be acquainted. Hence we read in Hebrews x. the exhortation to make use of the road, so graciously made for us into God's presence. We approach on the ground that Christ's blood has been shed, but through the vail—His flesh. Thus, whilst God has opened up for us one way in His grace, He would impress surely on our hearts, that no other road can lead us into His presence, if divine judgment is not to overtake us. And as we are indebted to His grace for opening up the way, we are indebted likewise to

His goodness for acquainting us with it. Those, to whom the sacred writer wrote about it, were those best acquainted with the meaning of the vail when unrent ; and he would have them, and have us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to make use of the way which Christ has consecrated, or dedicated, for us through the vail—that is to say, His flesh.

Believers, then, may now with boldness enter the holiest of all, for it is to believers that the exhortation is addressed. For, as of old, none but the priests could enter the sanctuary, so none now but those who believe in the Lord, and as such are members of the “ holy priesthood ” (1 Pet. ii. 5) can enter the holiest of all, and then only through the rent vail—that which, as rent, reminds us of Divine judgment poured out on the Son of God’s love.

Truth this is, suited for Christians at all times, and most needful in this day when lax views are abroad concerning God and His grace. Grace is free to all who accept it, and a man’s former state and ways are no hindrance, if a believer on the Lord, to his entering the holiest now. But when he enters, and by the way he enters, he bears witness to the holiness of God, whilst sharing in the riches of His grace. He enters by a road which speaks of judgment borne for him by God’s own Son. He enters on the ground of the value of Christ’s precious blood. He enters, by means of His death, through the vail—His flesh. Merciful

and gracious God is, but never at the expense of His holiness. One road, and one only, has there ever been made by which we could enter into His presence. God rent the vail, and by it teaches us the need there was for His Son to become incarnate, but the imperative necessity, too, of His death. As incarnate, the vail unrent was a type of Christ ; but, as such, showed that then no way to enter the holiest had been made manifest. It was the rending of the vail which disclosed the living way into it. Incarnation and crucifixion were both necessary before that way could be made known.

How a simple fact like this and the Divine teaching about it, preserve the soul from being led away by human thoughts, and men's erroneous conclusions ! To be brought into God's presence, in a way in accordance with His mind, whilst refusing to believe in the mystery of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, is thus shown to be impossible. To profess to believe in His incarnation without bowing to the truth of His atoning death, will shut out a soul from God's presence, as completely as the sons of Aaron, the priests, were excluded from all entrance into the holiest. The thought that God is too merciful to punish sinners is refuted by the fact, that the Holy One of God had to die before the way into the holiest could be made manifest. Divine judgment has been executed on Him. God has shown at the cross what His holiness demands, whilst displaying there also

what His love could give. And, though believers on the Lord Jesus, and they only, have permission to enter the holiest because of the efficacy of His atoning blood, the very road upon which they must travel to reach the mercy seat and the throne, attests both the necessity and the validity of His death. The need of the incarnation and the death of Christ believers bear witness to when they enter the holiest ; and, entering through the rent vail—the flesh of Christ—they own that every other avenue, by which men would seek to make a way into God's presence, is barred as effectually as ever ; for one way, and one only, has ever been opened, and that by God Himself—that true and living way, which declares in clear, solemn language, that only because His Son had died to make atonement, could He rend the vail. For gracious and merciful though He is, He never can be gracious, He never will be merciful at the expense of His holiness.



THE REFINER OF SILVER.

Some months ago, a few ladies, who met together in Dublin to read the Scriptures and make them the subject of conversation, were reading the third chapter of Malachi.

One of the ladies gave it as her opinion that the “ Fuller’s Sope ” and the “ Refiner of Silver ” was the same image ; both intended to convey the

same view of the sanctifying influence of the grace of Christ ; while another observed, “there is something remarkable in the expression in the third verse, ‘He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.’ ”

They agreed that possibly it might be so, and one of the ladies promised to call on a silversmith, and report to them what he said on the subject. She went accordingly, and without telling him the object of her errand, begged to know the process of refining silver. This he fully described to her ; “but,” said she, “do you *sit* while the work of refining is going on ? ”

“Oh, yes, madam,” replied the silversmith, “I must *sit* with my *eye* steadily fixed on the *furnace*, for if the time *necessary* for refining is exceeded, the silver is sure to be injured.”

At once she saw the beauty and the comfort of the expression, “He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.”

Christ sees it needful to put the children *into* the furnace—but He is seated at the *side* of it—His eye is steadily intent on the work of purifying, and wisdom and love are both engaged in the best manner for them. Their trials do not come at random. The very hairs of their head are all numbered.

As the lady was leaving, the silversmith called her back, and said he had further to mention that he only *knew* when the work was complete by *seeing his own image* reflected in the silver.

A beautiful figure ! When Christ SEES *His* own image in His people, the work of purifying is accomplished !

It has been well said : “ If thou art a child of God, there is no exemption from the household discipline. The voice that speaks may *seem* rough, but the *hand* that smites is gentle. The furnace may be seven times heated, but the refiner is seated by. His object is not to consume, but to purify. All, be assured, will yet bear the stamp of love. The saint on earth can say regarding his trials, in faith and in trust, ‘ I *know*, O Lord, that Thy judgements are right.’ The saint in glory can go a step further, ‘ I *see*, O Lord, that they are so ! ”

“ Believer, on a calm retrospect of thy heaviest afflictions, say were they unneeded ? Was this what Augustine calls ‘ the severe mercy of God’s discipline ’—was it too severe ? Less would not have done. He may have led thee to a Zarepath (‘ *a place of furnaces* ’), but it is to show thee there ‘ one like unto the Son of God ! ’

“ When was thy God ever so near thee, or thou to thy God, as in the furnace-fires ? The spices in the temple of old were *bruised*. The gold of its candlestick was *beaten* gold ! My soul, be still ! Thou hast in affliction one means of glorifying God which even angels have not in a sorrowless world : *Patience* under the rod *submission* to thy Heavenly Father’s will.”

“ Yes, patience ! there may come a time,
 When these *dull ears* shall hear aright,
 Strains that outring earth's drowsy chime,
 As heaven outshines the taper's light ! ”

“ That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold which perisheth, *though it be tried with fire*, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter i, 7.)



A WORD OF EXHORTATION.

2 Peter i. 12-15 : “ Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance ; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover, I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.”

The Lord has taught us much and many blessed truths, and when they were fresh and new, what power they had upon our souls ! They filled our thoughts ; we spake often one to another about them. Now, I am thinking that one great reason why we have become so weak, why so much failure, is just this, that what we have *known* we have not kept “ *always* in remembrance.” Had the church not forgotten what it did know, surely she would not have failed as she has. Did we individually walk as *always in remembrance* of what we learn from the Lord by His word, I am sure we should find ourselves gaining strength, and increasing, too, in knowledge of Him.

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

“For 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.

PREFACE.

The contrast between the books of Joshua and Judges is immense. Joshua, a striking type of the spirit of Christ in power*, leads Israel on to conquer and dwell in peace in the land of promise. The book of Judges gives us quite another order of things. Starting from the blessings conferred by Jehovah in Canaan, and confided to the responsibility of the people, it shews us what use Israel made of them. Did they justify the confidence God had placed in them? Did they live up to their privileges? The answer will be found in the book of Judges.

Israel's history is repeated in that of the church. The Epistle to the Ephesians answers, in the New Testament, to Joshua; for in it we see the assembly seated in heavenly places, enjoying all spiritual blessings in Christ, and wrestling no longer, like Israel, “against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places.” (Eph. vi 12—margin.)

* See “Meditations on the Book of Joshua,” by same writer.

Judges corresponds with 2 Timothy. The church, not having kept its first estate, there are, as for Israel, divine documents which prove its unfaithfulness, and which shew the people of God abandoning their first love and following a path of declension which ends in utter and irremediable ruin.

The history of man—blessed of God, but responsible—is ever the same. Adam, Noah, Israel, the nations of the church—the sad picture never varies. Ah! how the Word of God depicts to us what we are, but blessed be His name, we also learn to know God. He exhorts and entreats us without ceasing. Beware, says He, not to let slip from your hands the blessings with which I have filled them! Return to me when you have turned aside! Neither does He limit Himself to warnings, but unfolding before us the riches of His grace, He shows us that He has resources, when we have lost everything; that His voice can awaken those who sleep among the dead (Ephes. v. 14); that His arm can deliver those whom unbelief has replaced under bondage; that there is a fight of faith for perilous times; that in the midst of the rubbish accumulated by man, there is a path which the vultures' eye hath not seen, well known to faith, accessible to the simplest believer; in a word He shews us, that in a day of ruin, God can be as fully glorified as in the church's brightest days.

(To be continued, D. V.)

ERRATUM.—On line 10 of this page, read, "the nations, the church," for "the nations of the church."

LORD JESUS, COME.

Rough is the wilderness,
Barren and drear ;
Pleasure or happiness,
Who would seek here ?
There, where the Saviour is,
Is our blest home ;
Longing, our spirits cry,
“ Lord Jesus, come !”

We, of the Spirit born,
Seal'd as God's own,
Passing the desert through,
Cannot but groan.
Jesus while waiting for,
Far from our home,
Can we forbear to say,
“ Lord Jesus, come !”

Soon shall we see Thy face,
Know as we are known ;
Glory shall crown Thy grace,
There on Thy throne.
We, then, encircling Thee,
No more shall roam ;
Till then our cry shall be,
“ Lord Jesus, come !”



“ I JESUS . . . am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come . . . Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus.”—
REV. xxii. 16, 17, 20.

THE RED SEA AND THE WILDERNESS.

EXODUS XV.

It is easy to understand Israel's distress—the sea before shutting them in, and Pharaoh and his host pursuing, so that they were sore afraid, and cried unto the Lord, and said to Moses, “ Because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness ? ” Although, as we see, they had cried to the Lord, they had not in their hearts reckoned on His delivering them. It must, therefore, have been a wondrous thing to them when God was so publicly manifested to be on their side. And so is it with our hearts, when thus tested with trial on every side ; shut in, as it were, with trouble of one sort or another, our hearts are often found buried under the circumstances, instead of calculating upon the God who is above them either to sustain us under them or deliver from them.

Israel was dealt with in unqualified grace, whatever might be their murmurings, etc., till they reached Sinai, that they might know how entirely God was for them. Afterwards, through their folly in putting themselves under the law, which they ought to have known they could not keep, they brought upon themselves a different line of treatment. In the sixteenth chapter, when they murmured for food, God gave them quails (as well as manna) without any reproach, that Israel might know that God was feeding them on

the ground of perfect grace. But afterwards, when they again murmured for flesh (being then under law), we read that, while it was yet in their mouths, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote them with a very great plague. But God would first have them know how entirely bent He was on doing them good, bad as they might be.

It is well to distinguish, for our soul's profit, the difference between the Passover and the Red Sea. For a person may hear the Gospel and receive it with joy, and be rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins ; he may see the loveliness of Christ, and have his affections drawn out towards Himself ; but if full redemption is not known, as typified by the Red Sea, if he does not know himself to be risen with Christ, on the other side of death and the judgment, he is almost sure to lose his joy when temptation comes and he feels his own weakness. The joy of chapter xv. is, that God has absolutely redeemed them out of Egypt, and brought them in His strength to His holy habitation. A very different thing from the joy of the Passover—being delivered from just and deserved judgment. In the Passover Jehovah had made Himself known to them as the God of judgment. The blood on the door-posts screened them from judgment ; it kept Him out, and He did not come into their houses to destroy. Had He come in, it must have been in judgment. At the Red Sea it was another thing—even God coming in strength

as their salvation. The Passover delivered them from His judgment, the Red Sea from their enemies. The moment His people are in danger from Pharaoh, He comes in. The very sea they dreaded, and which appeared to throw them into Pharaoh's hands, becomes the means of their salvation. Thus through death God delivered them from death; like as Christ went down into the stronghold of Satan, went down under the power of death, and, rising again from the dead, delivered us from death. Thus was there an end of Pharaoh and Egypt to them for ever. The Red Sea is redemption out of Egypt; God Himself is their salvation. He whom they had feared, and justly, as a Judge, is become their salvation. They are redeemed; no longer were *hoping for mercy*, but able to rejoice that judgment was past, and to sing His praises for having brought them to His holy habitation—to God Himself; in the light as He is in the light; and brought there before they had taken one step in the wilderness, or fought one battle with their enemies.

There is no conflict properly till redemption is known. They did not attempt to fight with Pharaoh, but only to get away from him. They groaned under his yoke, but did not combat against him. How could they? They must be brought to God first; be the Lord's host before they can fight His enemies or their own. And so it is with an individual soul. I have no power to combat Satan while I am still his slave. I may

groan under his yoke, and sigh to be delivered from it ; but before my arm can be raised against him, I must have a complete and known redemption. The Israelites are not only happy in escaping the pursuer : it is a full, conscious redemption from Egypt and Pharaoh ; and they can count on God's power for all the rest. "The people shall hear and be afraid, the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away." (Ver. 15, 16.) Their joy does not arise from having no enemies, but from God's own divine power taking them up, and putting them in His own presence.

"Thou shalt plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance." (Ver. 17.) This was yet to be done ; but they were already with Him in His holy habitation—not *theirs* but *His*. And thus are we in His presence, brought *to God*, though not yet in the place prepared for us on high. So, in Ephesians i., the apostle prays "that they may know what is the hope of *His* calling, and the glory of *His* inheritance in the saints." It was God's land they were to dwell in—the Father's house in which our home shall be. It is His glory, and He will bring us unto it. No fear of the enemies by the way : to faith they are powerless. Full confidence belongs to redemption. Is it, then, as men would say, all plain sailing now ? In no wise. It is the wilderness, and there is no water ; and, mark, it was by the Lord's command they pitched in Rephidim.

Does this make redemption uncertain ? Not at

all. Yet it is a dreadful thing to have no water ; it was certain death in those countries. Had He then brought them through the Red Sea and unto Himself to kill them with thirst ! When at length they did come to water, it was bitter. But this was to prove them, and bring out what was in their hearts. The bitter water did not show what was in God's heart (redemption had shown that) ; but in their hearts lay much that had to be manifested and corrected. They must drink into the power of death. Being redeemed for ever, they must learn that there is nothing for them in the wilderness. All supply must be from God Himself. This is the very effect of redemption, and there is so much in us to be brought out and corrected. But He makes the water sweet.

We must all learn death (being redeemed we have life) and it cannot be learnt in Egypt. They had no Marah in Egypt. It is wilderness experience. Redemption must be known first, and the effect will be death to sin, to selfishness, to one's own will ; and all this is very trying. A person might be tempted to say, all this trial comes upon me because I have not redemption. Not so ; it is just because you are redeemed. We may seek to avoid the bitter waters of Marah, but God will bring us to them. He must break down all that is of the old man, and then, in His own good time, He will put in that which sweetens all. But because God has brought me to Himself, He is putting His finger on everything (be it love of the world,

setting up self, my own will, or whatever it may be) that hinders complete dependence on Him, or my soul's full enjoyment of Himself. But count it not strange, though it be a fiery trial which is to try you ; for as surely as you are redeemed, so will He break down your own will. Yes, beloved, God will make you drink of the very thing (death) that redeemed you.

And now Israel is going on with God, and He is dealing with them.

He gave them statutes, etc. He did not do so before He had redeemed them. They had been troubled before by Pharaoh, but now it was from God. This was the effect of having to do with God, and now they learn God in a new character — “the Lord that healeth.” A different thing from His promise, that if obedient He would bring none of the diseases of Egypt upon them. They are exercised by God, but it is that they may know Him as the Healer ; it is for this that the whole heart has to be brought out before God. We cannot escape it. He will so order circumstances as to bring it about. Sometimes we are humbled before men : this is very trying, very bitter water ; but then, what a wretched thing it was to be seeking to magnify one-self ! As soon as the tree (the cross) is in the waters, they refresh the soul. This is joy in tribulation. Joy in redemption first, but now in the healing. First, God makes us to sing in the knowledge of redemption ; and then, if we are to have the practical effect of redemption,

which is the enjoyment *of God* Himself in our souls, the flesh, which would always hinder this, must be broken down in whatever form it works. It was to prove them. God knew what was in their hearts ; but they did not, and they must learn it.

After this they come to Elim. Now they experience the natural consequences of being with God—the full streams of refreshment—as soon as they were really broken down. Had Elim come first, there would have been no sense of their dependence on the Lord for everything, and nature would have been unbroken. But trial produces dependence, and dependence, communion. It is only for this that He delays, for He delights in blessing His people. The numbers 12 and 70 are different figures of perfection. : perfect refreshment, perfect shelter, and all this in the wilderness, and rest then.

They must be exercised at Marah, that they may fully know and enjoy Him at Elim. Redemption brought them indeed *to* God, but now it is joy *in* God. And so it is with us. Although we are redeemed, we cannot have these springs from God Himself, flowing through our souls, with unbroken flesh. But whatever trial we are in, however deeply we may have to drink into death, there is resurrection as well as death ; and when we see God's hand in it—when we see the cross of Christ in the bitter waters—we understand God's mind and purpose in them, and they become sweet to us.

We cannot walk in the way of faith without faith, so we must be put to the test. Not that, for the present, tribulation seems joyous, but grievous ; but afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits unto them that are exercised thereby. Flesh is not faith. If I lose my trust in God for one minute, that very minute the flesh comes in, under some form or other. Whenever I feel perplexed, at a loss, the eye is not single : it shows I am out of communion, otherwise I should know what to do. If the eye were single, the whole body would be full of light. Or there is something yet to be detected in us, something we have not yet found out in our own hearts. It may not be wilful sin ; but there is something He will exercise our hearts about, something as to which He will manifest Himself as Jehovah-Rophi. Thus we learn to rejoice in tribulation also, and then to rejoice in God—finding springs of joy, refreshings in the wilderness in that God who brought us there. Let us, then, not count trial a strange thing ; for we know its purpose, even that we may joy in God Himself.



In our service for Christ, we commonly resemble scholars who display an immense diligence in *tracing a quantity of lines, among which the master's eye will with difficulty accept two or three passably good uprights.* Thank God we have to do with One who will recognize all He can.

“GOD—I.”

Faith sets a man with God, and, as an individual, alone with God. Abel acted as an individual; Enoch walked alone with God; Noah found grace in His sight; Abram was called out from all, and was the friend of God. Joseph, and Moses, and Samuel, and David, and Daniel, and all the worthies of Faith's household, each found his springs to be in God—and his guidance to be from God.

How individual and solitary, too (not only on the ground of His being the only sinless, the only perfect One, but also in *the mode* of His walk), was the Blessed Lord! “Lo! I come to do Thy will, O God.” “The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?” These were the mottoes of His life here below.

How beautifully, too, in the thief upon the cross, do we find his faith (divinely taught) setting Him *alone* with God—able to condemn, not only his own past course, but all that the religious of that day were doing; and able to give to Christ a title true of him *alone* from among men. “This man hath done nothing amiss.” He adds, “Lord! remember me . . . in Thy kingdom!” And the Lord's word to Peter is to be noted: “If I will that he (John) tarry till I come, *what is that to thee?* FOLLOW THOU ME.”

The secret of all practical holiness in a believer is found in this individual walk with God—a walk which, as it keeps him in the light, where Christ

is at the right hand of God, keeps him in humble self-judgment, because he sees the contrast between Christ and himself—yet in firmness, because he has to do with God, and acts *for* and *from* God.

Directly I can say, God's word proclaims a thing to be unholy, I am to cease from it *at once*. It is unholy to *me* at least, and to tamper with it would be defilement. Every godly soul (that knows even Rom. xiv.) would assent to this : every godly soul must say, "Obey God rather than man ; obey God according to your light, and do not go beyond it."

I have been asked (alas for the askers !) when so acting, "Are *you* infallible ? Are *you* going to lord it over the conscience of others ?" My answer is simple : "I walk with God, and judge *myself* ; not an inch for me on the road God's word seems to me to prohibit ; right onward where the word enjoins me to go forward."

'Tis replied, "How do you know *you* are right ?" I answer, "While walking in dependence upon God alone to lead me to see His mind, that I may do it—do you think He'll not be faithful to Himself ? (John vii. 17). And, as to the consciences of others, I lord it over no soul. Let each walk with God ; but only let each remember, that if my walk is with God, alas ! for him whose walk is not in the same pathway : be he before me or behind."

There is no holiness in communion—no "com-

munion of *saints*," apart from this solitary walk with God—of the saints as individuals.

The restless disquietude of many around, convinces me *they* are not walking with God.



MY GOD MY SALVATION.

God hath, as it were, made Himself over to believers. Job doth not say, God will give or bestow salvation upon me, but he saith, "He shall be my salvation."

It is God Himself who is the salvation and the portion of His people. They would not care much for salvation if God were not their salvation. It more pleaseth the saints that they enjoy God than that they enjoy salvation. False and carnal spirits will express a great deal of desire after salvation. O, they like salvation, heaven, and glory very well ; but they never express any longing desire after God and Jesus Christ. They love salvation, but they care not for a Saviour. Now that which faith pitcheth most upon is God Himself. He shall be my salvation : let me have Him, and there is salvation enough. *He is my life*, He is my comfort, He is my riches, He is my honour, and He is my all.

Thus David's heart acted immediately upon God. (Ps. xviii. 1, 2.) It pleaseth holy David more that God was his strength than that God gave Him strength—that God was his Deliv-

erer than that he was delivered—that God was his fortress, his buckler, his horn, his high tower, than that He gave him the effect of all these. It pleased David, and it pleases all the saints more, that God is their salvation (whether temporal or eternal) than that He saves them. The saints look more at God than at all that is God's.

They say, We desire not Thine, but Thee ; or, Nothing of Thine like Thee. “ Whom have I in heaven but thee ? ” saith David again (Ps. lxxiii. 25). What are saints, what are angels, to a soul without God ? 'Tis true of things as well as of persons. What have we in heaven but God ? What is joy without God ; what is glory without God ; what is all the furniture and riches, all *delicates*, yea, and all the diadems of heaven, without the God of heaven ?

If God should say to the saints, “ Here is heaven, take it amongst you, but I will withdraw myself,” how would they weep over heaven itself, and make it a Bacca—a valley of tears indeed ! Heaven is not heaven unless we enjoy God. 'Tis the presence of God which makes heaven. Glory is but our nearest being unto God (our being nearest to God). As Mephibosheth replied when David told him (2 Sam. xix.), “ I have said, thou and Ziba divide the land : ” “ Let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace to his own house,” where I may enjoy him. So if God should say to the saints, “ Take heaven amongst you,” and withdraw Himself, they would soon say,

“Nay ; let the world take heaven if they will, let them take glory if they will ; if we may not have Thee in heaven, heaven would be but an earth, or rather but a hell to us.” That which saints rejoice in is that they may be in the presence of God—that they may sit at His table and eat bread with Him—that is, that they may be near Him constantly, which was Mephibosheth’s privilege with David. That’s the thing, say they, which they desire, and which their souls thirst after—that’s the wine they would drink.

“My soul (saith David) thirsteth for God, for the living God ; when shall I come and appear before God ? ” He spake this in the greatness and heat of his zeal to enjoy God in the ordinances of His public worship. How much more was his soul on fire to enjoy God when he should be above ordinances ! The usual saying of Christians is, “Come let us go to prayer,” or “Let us go to church.” We should rather say, “Come let us go to God.”

We should prize duties no farther than as we obey and enjoy God in doing them. Nor should we prize heaven itself farther than as we shall have there a more full and perfect enjoyment of God. Salvation itself were no salvation without the God of salvation. “He also shall be my salvation.”

(From an Old Book, 1652.)

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 20.)

CHAPTERS I-III, 4.

INTRODUCTION.

The condition of Israel at the time of Joshua's death.

(I. 1-16.)

Chap. i. 1-16 may be considered as a preface to the book of Judges, and the words, "Now after the death of Joshua, it came to pass," are the key to the whole book. It is not as yet, properly speaking, declension, but that which precedes it. What follows is governed by the fact, that Joshua, a type of the Spirit of Christ in power, was no longer in the midst of Israel. So also, in the church's history, the unhindered activity of the Spirit of God lasted but a short time. No doubt, as in the days of "the elders that outlived Joshua" (ii. 7), the presence of the apostles stayed the tide of evil; but in both cases, the presence and working of certain deleterious principles, caused it to be foreseen, that when once the obstacle should be removed, the tide of declension would set in.

All was apparently going on well in Israel. The tribes take their several places in presence of a hostile world. They enquire of Jehovah, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first? God says: "Judah shall go up, behold I have delivered the land into his hand." (v. 1, 2.) The answer was plain, Judah could count implicitly on

God's faithfulness to His promise ; but, already we see that the simplicity of faith was lacking in him, and that his dependence on Jehovah was not so real as it appeared to be. "And Judah said unto Simeon, his brother, come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites ; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him." (v. 3.) Judah seems to mistrust his own strength ; but, instead of finding his resource in the God of Israel, he seeks it in Simeon, and in reality lacks confidence in Jehovah. True, he does not ally himself with the enemies of God ; if his faith fails, he turns to his brother Simeon, only to his brother ; but, nevertheless, under the pretext of pushing forward the work of God, we see, in principle, the dawn of human associations and alliances, which have become the ruling feature of all the present activity in Christendom. Did God require Simeon, in order to give Judah the lot of his inheritance ?

The result of this combined action was apparently magnificent. We learn from Joshua xix. 9 that "the part of the children of Judah was too much for them." But the inheritance of the children of Simeon was not the best, for it was taken from what Judah could not keep ; thus they received their portion out of that which was superfluous to another, at the southern limit of the land of Israel, in the border which looked towards the desert. It was not that God disowned either tribe, for it is written (v. 4), "the Lord delivered

the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand ;” but warfare undertaken on the footing of a *human* alliance, bears more or less the imprint of its origin. The allies seize upon Adoni-bezek and “cut off his thumbs and his great toes.” (v. 6.) This was not what God commanded of old, nor what Joshua did to the kings of Jericho, of Ai, of Jerusalem, of Makkedah, and all the kings of the mountain and of the plain. To mutilate the enemy was simply human retaliation. It had been, likewise, the custom of Adoni-bezek thus to humble his enemies ; keeping them, however, at his court, as their presence served to increase his glory as conqueror. We see similar things in the church’s history. How many times she has made a show of past victories to exalt herself in her own eyes and those of others. The conscience of a humbled foe is often more accessible than that of the people of God in prosperity. Adoni-bezek smitten by Judah, acknowledges having acted wrongly towards the vanquished kings, and bows to the judgment of God.

“And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba) and they slew Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai. And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir : and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher ” (v. 10, 11). Joshua xv. 14, 15, ascribes to Caleb what our chapter attributes to Judah. Caleb’s energy, perseverance and faith on this occasion were such

that his whole tribe bore the imprint of it. In the early days of the church it was not so, when all were of one heart and soul, and advanced with oneness of faith towards the goal. The coming to the front of individual faith is manifested far more distinctly in the course of the history of the judges raised up to deliver Israel ; we see it, too, in the revivals which God works in our days ; and while it is encouraging for the individual, it is humbling for the rest. What an honour for Caleb, that Judah should have gained the victory ! On the other hand, let us not forget that each one of us may help to imprint weakness on the people of God as a whole. God grant that the church, though unfaithful, may have many Calebs in her midst to-day.

There is further encouragement to be gathered from the history of this man of God. Individual faithfulness, even in the most corrupt days of the church, arouses and stimulates spiritual energy in others. Othniel, seeing Caleb's faith, is stirred up to act likewise. He serves his first campaign under him, and acquires for himself a good degree, for he becomes the first judge in Israel. But he is not satisfied with belonging to Caleb's family ; he fights for the enjoyment of a new *relationship*, that of the bridegroom with the bride, and he gets Achsoh to wife. Joshua xv. relates the fact in the same terms, for individual faith enjoys the same privileges as fully in a time of declension as in the brightest day of the church's history. The church

has been unfaithful and has lost the sense of her relationship with Him, who, by His victory had acquired it for Himself; but this relationship may be known and enjoyed to-day in its fulness by every one who is faithful.

This union gave Othniel a *personal possession* in the inheritance of him whose son he had become, and he had thenceforth an estate of his own. Our portion resembles his; we realize our heavenly position when we have taken our stand as regards the world, our hearts being attached to the person of Christ. Still this precious domain does not suffice to Achsah. The south land would be a barren field to her if her father did not give springs to water it. Achsah obtained the upper and the nether springs, just as in different circumstances, the saint passing through the valley of Baca, on the one hand makes it a well, and on the other sees rain from heaven filling the pools. Achsah is a thirsty soul, but she thirsts for Canaan's blessings. A Christian coveting the world is in a terrible condition, but God approves of and delights in one who thirsts for heaven. He satisfies such longings by copious springs, spiritual blessings which descend upon us and flow out from us. Those who covet the world, He visits with chastisements such as fell on Achan when he coveted the accursed thing.

The sixteenth verse, which closes this first division of the book, tells us of "the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law." The history of

this family, come out of Midian and allied to Moses, is full of interest. When Jethro returned to his own land, after having visited Israel in the desert (Ex. xviii. 27), Moses asked his son Hobab to be to the children of Israel instead of eyes, to lead them in their encampments in the wilderness (Numbers x. 29-32); and in spite of his refusal, his sons, like Caleb, faithfully followed in the steps of the people of God. (Judges iv. 11, 1 Sam. xv. 6.) Like Rahab, these children of a stranger amongst the nations, went up out of Jericho, the city of palm trees (i. 16, c. f., Deut. xxxiv. 3), to cast in their lot with Israel. In cleaving permanently to Judah, they resembled Ruth. And like Othniel, they allied themselves with the family of Caleb, and out of it they had more especially for their chief, the faithful Jabez, the son of sorrow, who made his requests with understanding to the God of Israel, and to whom God granted that which he asked (1 Chron. ii. 50-55, iv. 9, 10). The Rechabites were descended from the Kenites (1 Chron. ii. 55, 2 Kings x. 15, Jer. xxxv.), and when their history closes in the Bible, they are praised as true Nazarites in the midst of the ruin of Israel. But alas! this faithful remnant come out from amongst the nations, plays its part also in the book of declension. We have an instance of it in Heber, the Kenite, in ch. iv. I cannot refrain from applying this history of the Kenites to the church called out from amidst the nations. Her testimony, too, is gone, but like the sons of Rechab amongst the Israelites, a faithful remnant in the midst of the ruin, can go on to the end in holy separation from evil, obeying the Word committed to them by their Leader.

(To be continued, D.V.)

JOHN IV.

“With Thee is the Fountain of Life.”

Who is that weary Man, so lone and pale,
Beneath the shade that falls on Jacob's well?
A lowly pilgrim, from the noon-tide heat,
He sitteth there to rest His tired feet.
No more He seems : but heavenly hosts attend
And wait on Him, where'er His footsteps bend.
They looked with wonder when they sang His birth,
The greatest marvel ever seen on earth.
That humble Man is Israel's promised King,
Though for His head a crown of thorns they'll bring.
Yes, He Immanuel is, The Eternal Word,
Of heaven and earth, of men and angels, Lord,
The Eternal Son hung on a woman's breast,
The mighty God * beside the well takes rest.
... My soul tread softly ! for 't is holy ground,
No finite mind can this deep mystery sound,
But worship and adore the wondrous love
That could the blessed God so freely move
Towards thee, a sinner, and an enemy !
Yes, Lord, Thou hast revealed this grace to *me*.
But see—a woman comes, unconscious, who
Sits by the water, and as careless too.
He asks to drink, and coldly she replies,
Yet gazes on the stranger with surprise,
For there was something in His eye and tone,
That ever marked Him as the Holy One.
Ah ! didst thou dream, poor sinner, that for thee,
Thus faint and weary, He's content to be,
That for the joy of giving thee to know
The living fountains from His heart that flow,
The garden's agony, the Cross, the grave,
He'll suffer all, His guilty ones to save.

But thou *didst* know, the grovelling heart was won,
And found a treasure, ere the setting sun,
Thy happiest hour, thou could'st rejoicing tell,
That hour of noon, which brought thee to the well,
Alone with *Jesus*,—from His lips to hear
What drew the publicans and sinners near,
The gracious words for which our spirits yearn.
O blessed Lord ! we too would sit and learn,
And drink abundantly, yea, drink for ever,
Pleasures of pure delight from God's own river !

* Isaiah xl. 28.

JESUS CHRIST COME IN THE FLESH.

The ark and the camp were, in some sense, necessary to each other during the journey through the wilderness. The ark, seated in the tabernacle on which the cloud rested, had to guide the camp ; and the camp, in its order, had to accompany and guard the ark and all connected with it.

This was the business of the camp. There was to be subjection to the will of Him who dwelt in the cloud ; dependence on Him who led them daily ; conscious liberty because of having left Egypt behind them, and hope because of having Canaan before them. Such a mind as this was to be in the camp ; but its business was to conduct the mystic house of God onward to its rest, "the possession of the Gentiles." (Acts vii. 45.)

Their journeying through that desert would not have constituted divine pilgrimage. Many a one had travelled that road without being a stranger and pilgrim with God. In order to be such, the ark must be in their company.

The mind of the camp, of which I have spoken, might betray its weakness, or forget itself, and this might lead, as we know it did, to chastening again and again. But if its business, of which I have also spoken, were given up, there would be loss of everything. And this did come to pass. The tabernacle of Moloch was taken up, instead of the ark of Jehovah, and the camp, therefore, had its road diverted to Damascus or Babylon, far

away from the promised Canaan. (Amos v. 25, Acts vii. 43.)

And thus it is with ourselves. We are to maintain those truths or mysteries which the tabernacle and its furniture represented : and the apostle commits our entrance into Canaan to that. " If ye continue in the faith ;" and again, " if ye keep in memory what I have written unto you." Our safety, our rest in the heavenly Canaan, depends on our keeping the truth.

This, however, is to be added—that not merely for our own safety's sake, but for Christ's honour, is the truth to be kept.

This is to be much considered. Supposing for a moment, that our own safety were not concerned in it, Christ's honour is, and that is enough. Such a thing is contemplated in 2 John 10: the elect lady was inside the house—she was in personal safety, but she has a duty to perform to " the doctrine of Christ ;" so that if one come to her door, and bring not that doctrine, she must keep him outside, and refuse to have him where she is.

Title to entrance is confession to that doctrine, a confession of " Jesus Christ come in the flesh," a confession that involves or secures the glory of His person. A full confession to His work only will not do. The one outside may profess a sound faith as to the atonement, sovereignty of grace, and like truths ; but all this is not a warrant for letting him in. There must be confession as to His person also. " Whosoever transgresseth, and

abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God : he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed ('and give him no greeting.' R. V.) : for he that biddeth him God speed ('that giveth him greeting.' R. V.) is partaker of his evil deeds." 2 John 9, 10, 11.

Surely this is clear and decided. I believe this is much to be considered. The truth touching Christ's person is to be maintained by us, even though our soul's safety were not involved in it. I grant that our salvation is involved. But that is not all. He who owns not that truth is to be kept outside. It imparts tenderness as well as strength to see that the name of JESUS (The One of whom the ark was a type) is thus entrusted to the guardianship of the saints. This is what we owe Him if not ourselves. The wall of partition is to be raised by the saints between them and Christ's dishonour.

Mere journeying from Egypt to Canaan will not do. Let the journey be attended with all the trial of such an arid, unsheltered, and trackless road, still it is not divine pilgrimage. A mere toilsome, self-denying life, even though endured with that moral courage which becomes pilgrims, will not do. There must be the carriage of the ark of God, confession to the truth, and maintenance of the name of JESUS.

Now, in John's Epistles, the name "Jesus Christ" expresses or intimates, I believe, the deity of the Son. The Holy Ghost or the Unction, so filled the mind of that apostle with the truth, that "the Word" which had been "made flesh" was God, that though he speaks of Him by a name which formally expresses the Son in manhood or in office, with John that is no matter. The name is nothing—at least, nothing that can interfere with the full power of prevailing assurance, that He is "that which was from the beginning," the Son in the glory of the Godhead. This is seen and felt at the very opening of the First Epistle, and so, I believe, throughout. (See chap. i. 3, 7 ; ii. 1 ; iii. 23 ; iv. 2 ; v. 20 ; 2 John 3-7.)

In the thoughts of this Epistle, "Jesus Christ" is always this divine One, so to speak, the eternal Life manifested. With John, "Jesus Christ" is "the true God." Jesus is the "He" and the "Him" in the argument of his First Epistle ; and this "He" and "Him" ever keeps before us One who is God, though in assumed relations and covenant dealings.

The confession, therefore, which is demanded by them is this—that it was God who was manifested, or who came in the flesh. (See 1 John iv. 2 ; 2 John 7.) For in these epistles, as we have now seen, "Jesus Christ" is God. His name as God is Jesus Christ. And it is assumed or concluded that "the true God" is not known, if He who was in the flesh, Jesus Christ, be not understood

as such ; and all this simply because He is God. Any other received as such is an idol. (1 John v. 20, 21.) The soul that abides not in this doctrine "has not God," but he who abides in it "has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.)

This, I judge, is the mind and import of the required confession that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." I here speak of God under the name of Jesus Christ, and it is, therefore, the demand of a confession to the great mystery of "God manifested in the flesh."

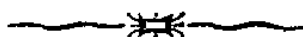
The very adjunct (as another has written to me), "come in the flesh," throws strongly forward the deity of Christ ; because if He were a man, or anything short of what He is, it would be no such wonder that he should come in the flesh. And verses 2 and 3 of chapter i., guide us to John's thoughts in the use of the name "Jesus Christ." That which was from the beginning, the eternal Life which was with the Father, was the Person he declared to them. The words "with the Father" are important, making it evident that the Son was the eternal One, the name of this eternal Son being Jesus Christ. And it is interesting to compare the close with the commencement of this Epistle—"This is the true God and *the* eternal life."

I desire to bless the Lord for giving my soul fresh assurance, on such simple ground of Scripture, that this duty lies on us of maintaining the honour of the name of JESUS.

In the course of our Lord's journey on earth, we see Him in the following ways :

1. As the born One—holy, meeting God's mind in the nature or human material.
2. As the circumcised One—perfect under the law, meeting God's mind in it.
3. As the baptized One—meeting God's mind in dispensational order and righteousness.
4. As the anointed One—meeting God's mind as His image or representative.
5. As the obedient One—doing always those things that pleased the Father.
6. As the devoted One—meeting God's mind in all things; and in laying down His life. (John x. 17, 18.)
7. As the risen One—sealed with God's approval in victory for sinners.

Thus does He meet all the mind of God while providing for us. All was magnified in Him and by Him, all made honourable. God's proposed delight in man, or glory by him, has been richly answered in the blessed JESUS. While in His person He was "God manifest in the flesh," in the succession of His stages through the earth He was accomplishing all the divine purpose, delight and glory, in man. Nothing unworthy of God was in the man Christ Jesus, His person, experiences or ways.



A perfectly humble man would be one who was always thinking of the *Lord Jesus*, and never of *himself*.

MARK IX. 49, 50.

“For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good ; but if the salt have lost its saltiness, wherewith will ye season it ? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.”

The Lord here lets us know that all should be tested by the perfect holiness of God, and that in judgment by one means or another. Every one should be salted with fire—the good and the bad. Where there was life, the fire would only consume the flesh ; for when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. If the judgment reaches the wicked (and assuredly it shall reach them), it is condemnation—a fire that is not quenched. But, for the good, there was also something else : they should be salted with salt. Those who were consecrated to God, whose life was an offering to Him, should not lack the power of holy grace, which binds the soul to God and inwardly preserves it from evil. Salt is not the gentleness that pleases (which grace produces without doubt), but that energy of God within us which connects everything in us with God, and dedicates the heart to Him, binding it to Him in the sense of obligation and of desire, rejecting all in oneself that is contrary to Him (obligation that flows from grace, but which acts all the more powerfully on that account). Thus, practically, it was

distinctive grace, the energy of holiness, which separates from all evil ; but by setting apart for God. Salt was good : here the effect produced in the soul, the condition of the soul, is so called, as well as the grace that produces this condition. Thus they who offered themselves to God were set apart for Him ; they were the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith can it be salted ? It is used for seasoning other things ; but if the salt needs it for itself, there is nothing left that can salt *it*. So would it be with Christians ; if they who were of Christ did not render this testimony, where should anything be found, apart from Christians, to render it to them and produce it in them ? Now this sense of obligation to God which separates from evil, this judgment of all evil in the heart, must be in oneself. It is not a question of judging others, but of placing oneself before God, thus becoming the salt, having it in oneself. With regard to others, one must seek peace ; and real separation from all evil is that which enables us to walk in peace together.

In a word, Christians were to keep themselves separate from evil, and near to God in themselves ; and to walk with God in peace among one another.

No instruction could be more plain, more important, more valuable. It judges, it directs, the whole Christian life in a few words.

AFFLICTION'S LESSONS.

A LETTER FROM A FRIEND ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD.

MY DEAR SISTER :—I thank you and dear M— much for having thought of sending me the account of the accident to your dear babe. It is indeed a sore trial to see one who is a part of ourselves thus taken off at one blow, and unexpectedly. Still, what a difference, to have the Lord's love to look to, and to believe one's babe—as I surely do—the object of it. It is a consolation which changes everything, because everything is changed. The knowledge of the love of God, which is come into this place of death, has brightened with the most blessed rays all its darkness ; and the darkness even only serves to show what a comfort it is to have such light. There is nothing in the heart but light ; nothing can make darkness when we have it. It is a world of sorrow ; and the longer we know it, and the nearer even we walk to the Lord, the better we shall know it to be such. I do not mean that none of our sorrows are chastenings : we know that they often are such to His most beloved ones, as we see in Job. By all, save Christ, there is all grace to be learned by them ; and even He entered into the sorrows of others, as arising from their faults and foolishness ; for His sympathies were perfect, and, blessed be God, they are.

He suffered for righteousness, and He suffered

for sin ; but, besides this, He entered, as taking by grace a place among the godly remnant in Israel, into all which that remnant would feel as seeing the state of Israel (of which they were actually part) under the chastening hand of God for sin. All this He felt as none else could feel. His sympathy is as perfect now, though no longer passing through the sorrows by which He gained the experience of it. Besides, it is only in the part which has to be broken and corrected that we suffer ; a touched affection, when Christ is with us in the grief, is of infinite sweetness, though the sweetness of sorrow. It is only when the will mixes itself up with the sorrow that there is any bitterness in it, or a pain in which Christ is not. But then this is all useful, and what we need. The Lord takes your dear babe to heaven (certainly he has no loss); what is the rest of God's dealings in it with us—with one's heart? He who has made a mother's feelings knows what they are—knows what He has wounded, and knows why—has a purpose of love in it. There is a mass of things in the sincerest of us, of which we are not aware, which are not brought into subjection to God, which work and shew themselves unsuspected. God breaks in upon us ; how many things He shews—how many cords He cuts at one blow ! A whole system of affections is touched : we feel that death has its place and part in them. I never saw a family the same thing after the first death that it was before. There

was a breach in the circle. What belonged to the whole body of affections and life of this world was touched, was found to be—mortal; it was struck in its very nature. The course of life went on; the wave had closed over that which had been cast into it; but death, and the affections which belong to this world, had been found to meet. But all this is well; for death is come in. Besides, we live in these things; our will lives in them; and when the will is broken, so far as it is so, it is broken for everything. We learn more to lean on what never breaks—not to lose our affections, but to have them more in connection with Christ, less with this will of our own nature; for nature must now die as well as sin. But then Christ never makes a breach, except to come in and connect the soul and heart more with Himself; and it is worth all the sorrow that ever was, and more, to learn the least atom more of His love and of Himself; and there is nothing like that, nothing like Him; and it lasts.

But, besides, there is a useful work by it in our own hearts; and so more capacity to know, and enjoy, and learn communion with, Him; more capacity to delight in and understand God; to know, and to know the value of, what He delights in; more moral capacity to delight in what is excellent. We little know what high and blessed things we are called to. Oh, that the saints knew it better! to be with, and have common joy and communion with, God!

Some have much of it down here. It is opened out to them. But all that is of nature and will can have no part in this; and often the saints, though not directly dishonouring the Lord, are living in nature. Then the Lord deals with them, "turns man from his purpose, and hides pride from man." (Job xxxiii. 17.)

Oh, what a profitable thing it is to have that hidden from us! And how completely it is when God deals with us, and brings us into His presence, whatever means He may employ, for He knows the springs of our hearts and how to touch them. But oh what grace is this daily, constant care!—"He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous." (Job xxxvi. 7.) What a God we have to do with! And all in love! And when the storm is all passed, the brightness for which He is preparing us will shine out unclouded, and it will be Himself—Him we have known in all this tender care. Yet in the brightness of His glory, the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb will be its light. (Rev. xxi. 23.) We shall be with the Son, with Jesus, enjoying as and with Him the brightness and divine favour which shine out on Him. And oh, how blessed the love, Jesus' love, that has brought us there forever with Him, in virtue of it, and now in the full blessed enjoyment of it with Himself!

I do earnestly pray that this sorrow may be blessed to you and to all your dear children, that they may see how near death is, but the Lord still nearer. Assure dear M—— how truly I sympa-

thize with him. A father's sorrow, though of another character, is not less deep than a mother's. You must expect that, as time passes on, the present feeling of loss will diminish, and, in a certain sense, pass away, too. Not that the affectionate remembrance of your dear little babe will be at all gone, but its character will be changed ; and your living children and daily occupations will make it less absorbing. This is natural, and, in one sense, right. Living duties have their place, which cannot be rightly yielded to absorbing affections. What I would earnestly recommend to you is to profit by the moments when the impression and present effect of it is strong ; to place yourself before God, and reap all the fruit of His dispensations and tender grace. It is a time when He searches, and manifests His love to, the heart at the same time. May you grow much by this—surely to a mother's heart—painful occurrence.

Ever faithfully yours in Christ, —————



To be indifferent to the presence of evil in the Church, is to be guilty of high treason against God ; it is taking advantage of His love to deny His holiness, despising and dishonouring Him before all. God acts in love in the Church ; but He acts with holiness and for the maintenance of holiness : otherwise it would not be the love of God which acted ; it would not be seeking the prosperity of souls.

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 40.)

What characterizes declension?

(Ch. I 17-36.)

We have seen signs of declension in the verses which we have been considering, while the state of the people was still good. Now we shall see in what declension, properly speaking, consists. It is not the same as ruin, which is declension fully matured, such as we find in Ch. ii. Both reappear in the history of the Church, and in proof of this we have but to read the epistles to the seven churches. (Rev. ii, iii.) Declension in Ephesus leaving her first love,—ruin in Laodicea, whom the Lord is obliged to spew out of His mouth.

What, then, is declension? In a word, we may say, *worldliness*. The heart, principles and walk are in unison with the world. This is invariably how declension begins, and we may well understand the “Take good heed to yourselves” in Josh. xxiii. 11. How easily this snare might be avoided, if the hearts of God’s children were upright before Him. But instead of dispossessing the Canaanites, Israel is afraid of them, tolerates them, and dwells with them. So, also, the Church, looked at as a whole, is allied with the world. Later on we shall see the disastrous results of this alliance. Suffice it for the present that God’s

Word establishes the fact, that Israel did not keep separate from the Canaanitish nations.

Another principle comes out in this passage : declension is *gradual*. Step by step Israel's course is downward, until the solemn moment when the angel of the Lord definitively quits Gilgal for Bochim. This is true both of the Church (Rev. ii, iii), and the individual. A Christian who has walked in the power of the Holy Spirit, if he allows the world even a little room in his heart, instead of treating it as an enemy, will by degrees get under its thralldom, and will perhaps close his career in the sore humiliation of a defeat.

Chapters xix-xxi of our book are a narrative of events which historically precede Chap. i. We shall consider them more particularly by-and-bye, but I mention it here to bring out a third principle apparently contradictory to the second—namely, that, *from the first*, before God had delivered them over to their enemies, the people, as to their moral state, were *totally lost*. It was the same with the Church. Scarcely had the last apostle passed off the scene, when a tremendous gap was visible between the principles of the primitive church and those of the times immediately following. Christians suddenly lost even the elementary views of salvation by grace, the work of the cross, justification by faith.*

These two principles, gradual declension and

* See, on this subject, a valuable tract, "Christianity, not Christendom," by J. N. D. (To be found in his Collected Writings, vol. 18.)

sudden downfall, are of immense practical importance for us, setting us on our guard against the least worldly tendency, on the one hand ; and, on the other, teaching us not to put any confidence in the flesh, but to depend solely on God and His grace.

Let us now consider in detail, the portion of scripture before us. “And Judah went with Simeon, his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah,” which signifies “utter destruction.” This is a remarkable fact, and recalls the book of Joshua. Judah refused all link with the Canaanite. The strong cities of the Philistines were conquered—“and the Lord was with Judah.” But why did he only possess the mountain, and not drive out the inhabitants of the valley? Alas! he feared their “chariots of iron.”

Mistrusting, to all appearance, his own strength, Judah had, nevertheless, allied himself with Simeon, and this was, as we have seen, in measure to mistrust God. To tremble before the power of the world is a consequence of not confiding in the power of God. Had they not on a former occasion of victory burned Jabin's chariots with fire? (Joshua xi. 4-9.) Had not God promised the house of Joseph that “they should drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots and though they be strong”? (Joshua xvii. 17, 18.) What then were iron chariots to Jehovah? When

our confidence in Him and in His promises is shaken, we say like the spies sent by Moses to view the land: "And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak . . . and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." (Numbers xiii. 33.)

How different to Caleb! (v. 20.) He expelled the enemy, even the three sons of Anak, from his inheritance. In days of declension, individual faith can act, where collectively it is impossible. In v. 21, "the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem." Judah, in days of prosperity (v. 8), had smitten this city with the edge of the sword, and set it on fire. But the forces of the vanquished enemy are skilful in reforming, and never consider themselves beaten. Israel's low estate gave them a favourable opportunity, and so "the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day."

The history of the house of Joseph (v. 22-26) recalls that of Rahab in Joshua ii, with this main difference, the *work of faith* is absent. The act of the man of Luz, delivering up his city to the children of Israel, is that of a traitor, not that of a believer. Joseph decoys him by a promise of his life, and instead of, like Rahab, associating himself with God's people after his deliverance, he returns to the world and rebuilds in the country of the Hittites, the very Luz which Jehovah had destroyed.

Many, alas ! were the cities which Manassah did not dispossess (v. 27, 28). Observe the word : “ The Canaanites *would* dwell in that land.” The world has more power over a Christian in a low state than the Word and promises of God. It is true that “ when Israel was strong, they put the Canaanites to tribute ; ” but that was ruling, not driving out. Christendom, grown rich and powerful, did the same with regard to paganism. It may have been permitted by God in His providential ways, that it should be so, but it was not faith.

Ephraim and Zebulon allowed the Canaanites to dwell *among them* (v. 29, 30). Henceforth, the world formed part of the people of God. Asher and Naphthali (v. 31-33) went a step farther : they *dwelt among the Canaanites*. Israel is engulfed by them.

One more trait, and the picture is complete. “ And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain ; for *they would not suffer them* to come down to the valley ” (v. 34). The world, at length, obtains what is sought, and spoils the children of God of their inheritance. Satan’s aim always is to rob us of those things which constitute our joy and strength ; and he succeeds only too well.

Do not let us forget how gradual declension is.

Ere long, we shall see poor Israel abandoning the God who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, bowing down to false gods, and, as a consequence of their idolatry, oppressed and plundered by their enemies.

Beloved brethren, we *all* belong to a period of declension. It is too late for the Church, collectively, to return ; but let us, at least, individually, avoid this slippery path. Let us watch against the world, and mistrust even its fairest baits, seeking, in these closing days, to be amongst the faithful ones to whom the Lord can say, "I will come in to *him*, and will sup with *him*, and *he* with Me." (Rev. iii. 20.) God grant that holy separation from the world, and increasing communion with the Lord, may characterize us until the close of our course.

(To be continued, D.V.)



FRAGMENT.—Worldiness and earthly-mindedness have blinded the minds and hardened the hearts of Christians, now-a-days, to an extent very few have any idea of. There are, I am persuaded, very few cases touching upon the safety, and well-being, of the Church of God, which can be left to be judged by the mass of believers. On whom can one cast one's burden of responsibility as to the spirituality of the saint's walk and conduct? In cases innumerable which have occurred, I have found that the affections to the person of Christ have not been lively enough to make Christians indignant at open insults put upon Him—and they have had neither the heart nor the mind to stand apart from that which was the expression of indifferentism to Him.

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To this world of sin and woe,
Came the Saviour long ago ;
The eternal Word, the Father's only Son,
He became a child of days,
Unto God's eternal praise ;
He has suffer'd and His mighty work is done.
He was number'd with the dead—
On the cross His blood was shed.
O ! adore ye, Him in glory,
Set on high o'er all things Head.

Jesus evermore the same—
There is not another name
Under heaven, that is given among men,
None whereby you must be saved,
You, by sin and death enslaved,
Jesus only who is coming soon again,
The ascended living one.
Hear Him ! God's beloved Son ;
O ! adore ye, Him in glory,
Praise Him, heaven is begun.

All the way is open now,
Glory, honour, crown His brow,
He is seated with His Father on His throne ;
O ! extol His worthy name,
Jesus evermore the same.
He is coming from that glory for His own,
Sing, His precious blood was shed,
And He liveth who was dead.
O ! adore ye, Him in glory,
Christ, the Lord, o'er all things Head.

There is yet a brief delay,
And who e'er will come—he may
Come to Jesus and forevermore be blest.
O ! He saith, " Come unto me,"
Saved for ever thou shalt be.
" Come to me ye may, I will give you rest ;
'Tis His voice awakes the dead,
Where His precious blood was shed.
O ! adore ye, Him in glory,
Jesus, Saviour, Lord and Head.

"NO MORE CONSCIENCE OF SINS."

HEBREWS X.

The object of redemption is to bring us nigh to God, as it is written, "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." But what is our state before God when thus brought nigh? The right understanding of this is most important. It is impossible that we could be happy even in the presence of God, if there still existed a thought of His being against us. I need the perfect settled assurance that there is no sin upon me before Him. The sense of responsibility ever makes a person unhappy where there is any question as to sin standing against him: see the case of a servant and his master, or that of a child and its parent—the conscience is miserable if there be upon it the sense of that which will be judged. So God's presence must be indeed terrible, unless the conscience be perfectly good. If there be happiness for me there, it can only be in the sense of His favour, and of the completeness with which we have been brought to Him—the perfect assurance of "the worshipper once purged" having "no more conscience of sins."

God speaks to us according to His estimate of our standing: it may not be our heart's experience. There is a distinctness between the operation of the Spirit of God in bringing me unto Jesus, bearing witness to me of God's love, and of the

efficacy of what Christ has done, and His operation in my soul in producing in me the love of God. That which is the subject of experience is what is produced in my own soul, whereas that which gives me peace is His testimony to the work of Jesus. A Christian who doubts the Father's love to him, and who looks for peace to that which passes in his own heart, is doubting God's truth.

The gospel is the revelation God has given of Himself; it displays the love of God towards us, and what is in His heart. I can trust the declaration of what is in God's heart, and not what I think of myself.

The apostle speaks of a due time: "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans v. 6.) It is almost always true that there is in us a terrible process of breaking the heart, in order that we may be brought to the ascertainment that we are lost and ruined sinners; but the gospel begins at the close of God's experience of man's heart, and calls us from that in order that we should have joy and peace from the experience of what is in His heart.

Man left alone before the flood, put under the law, in Canaan, indeed under all and every trial of his nature and tendency, up to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, was just God's putting him to the test.

One would have thought, after Adam had been turned out of paradise for transgression, that would have been a sufficient warning; but his first-

born became a murderer. We should have supposed that the flood which swept off the workers of iniquity would have repressed, for a time at least, by the terror of judgment, the outbreak of sin ; but we find immediately afterwards, Noah getting drunk, and Ham dishonouring his father. The devouring fire of Sinai, which made even Moses fear and quake, seemed sufficient to subdue the rebel heart and make it bow beneath God's hand ; but the golden calf was the awful evidence that the heart of man was "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jer. xvii. 9.) Again in Canaan, a part of the world was tried to the utmost to be cultivated, but it would not do. A bad tree producing bad fruit was the only type by which God could set Israel forth. (See Isa. v.) He might dig about it and dung it, but after all these efforts it could only bring forth more bad fruit. At last He said, I have yet one son, perhaps "they will reverence my son," (Matt. xxi. 37), but man preferred having the world for himself, and so crucified Jesus. Looking to His cross, Christ said, "Now is the judgment of this world." (John xii. 31.)

At the crucifixion of Jesus, the veil was rent, and the holiest opened ; what God was within the veil, then shone out in all its fulness. When grace reveals this to me, I get confidence. I see God holy and expecting holiness—true ; but peace with God is in knowing what He is to us, and not what we are to Him. He knows all the evil of

our hearts. Nothing can be worse than the rejection of Jesus—man's hatred is shown out there, and God's love, to the full. The wretched soldier (who, in the cowardly impotence of the consciousness that he could with impunity insult the meek and lowly Jesus, pierced His side with a spear), let out, in that disgraceful act, the water and the blood, which was able to cleanse even such as he. Here God's heart was revealed, what He is to the sinner ; and this is our salvation.

Death and judgment teach me redemption. God judged sin indeed in sacrificing His well-beloved Son to put it away. It must be punished : Jesus bore the blow—this rent the veil, and showed out what God really is. The very blow that let out the holiness of God, put away the sin which His holiness judged.

The perfect certainty of God's love and the perfect cleansing of the conscience is that which the defiled and trembling sinner needs.

“By the grace of God,” Jesus Christ has “tasted death.” Death, the wages of sin, is seen in the cross of Jesus, as the consequence of “the grace of God.” “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness.” Were anyone to demand of me a proof of God's love, I could not give more than God has done in that “He spared not His own Son :” none other could be so great. But then, it might be asked, may not my sin affect it? No, God knew all your sin, and He has provided for it all : “the blood of

Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin." (1 John i. 7.)

In real communion the conscience must be purged ; there can be no communion if the soul be not at peace. We read here, " By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." There is very frequently the confounding of what faith produces with what faith rests upon. Faith always rests upon God's estimate of the blood of Jesus as He has revealed it in His word : faith rests on no experience. Jesus said, " Lo, I come to do thy will, O God !"—" by the which will we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." " We *are* sanctified," it is not that which is proposed for our attainment ; it was the good will of God to do it, and the work is done, to bring our souls unto Himself. Jesus has said " it is finished." But then there must be the knowledge of this also, in order for us to begin to act. You might have a person willing to pay your debts ; nay, you might even have them paid ; but if you did not know it, you would be just as miserable as before. We are not called upon to believe in a promise that Jesus should come to die and rise again. The work is *done* : He " sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high " " when He had by Himself purged our sins." But then this is not sufficient for me : I must *know* that the work is done ; and therefore He sent down the Holy Ghost to be the witness that God is satisfied.

Knowing perfectly their guilt and amount, God

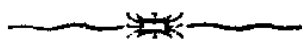
has declared, "your sins and iniquities I will remember no more." Faith rests on this, "God is true:" "he that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." The Lord said to Israel in Egypt concerning the blood of the paschal lamb, "When I see the blood, I will pass over." Could there be hesitation if we were in a house marked with the blood on the door-post? Should we not know that He would pass over? Faith is always divine certainty. God has said, "I will remember no more." This is the ground on which we enter into the holiest. "The worshipper once purged" has "no more conscience of sins."

God has found His rest in Jesus: our peace and joy depends upon knowing this. Were anything more necessary, it could not be His rest: God is not seeking for something else when at rest. None else could have afforded this. "God looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God; they were all gone out of the way; there was none righteous; no, not one." But God bore witness unto Jesus, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God is well pleased in Christ; God rests in His Son, not merely in His life, though that was holy and acceptable unto Him, but in His work on the cross. Jesus said, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit," and that meets our need. When He shows

His glory to the angels, He points to what has been done by man. In man was God glorified ; as in man, the first Adam, He had been dishonoured. Christ reversed all this—"Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him ;" which God recognizes in straightway glorifying Him. Righteousness cannot be looked for from the creature, but the fruit of righteousness will—the thing itself is only in Christ.

God is not a grudging giver. Did Satan, tempting Eve, question this in the forbidden fruit ? He has given His Son ; He rests in Him ; the believer likewise rests there. What can man do for me ? Nothing. If I were to come to him to deliver me from death, could he help me ? No. He might fill my hand with those perishing things which could only swell the triumph of death and decorate the tomb, but there his power ends.

In Jesus God has found His rest—this is mine also ; I know it from the testimony of God's truth. Have you found rest in God's rest ? If you say, I have not, will you say that God has not found His rest there ? will you look to your own heart ? In that you can never find it—it is only in Jesus : who has said, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Would that all knew the perfect rest to be found there !



My fellowship with the Father is my taste of the delight He has in the Only-Begotten.

WOMAN'S PLACE IN SERVICE.

MATT. XXVII. 55, 56, ETC.

The part that women take in all this history is very instructive, especially to them. The activity of public service, that which may be called "work," belongs naturally to men (all that appertains to what is generally termed ministry), although women share a very precious activity in private. But there is another side of Christian life which is particularly theirs, and that is personal and loving devotedness to Christ. It is a woman, who anointed the Lord while the disciples murmured; women, who were at the cross when all except John had forsaken Him; women, who came to the sepulchre, and who were sent to announce the truth to the apostles, who had gone after all to their *own home*; women, who ministered to the Lord's need. And indeed this goes farther. Devotedness in service is perhaps the part of man; but the instinct of affection, that which enters more intimately into Christ's position, and in this more immediately in connection with His sentiments, in closer communion with the sufferings of His heart—this is the part of woman; assuredly a happy part. The activity of service for Christ puts man a little out of this position, at least if the Christian is not watchful. Everything has, however, its place. I speak of that which is characteristic; for there are women who have served much, and men who have felt much. Note also here, what I be-

lieve I have remarked, that this clinging of heart to Jesus is the position where the communications of true knowledge are received. The first full gospel is announced to the poor woman that was a sinner, who washed His feet ; the embalming for His death to Mary ; our highest position to Mary Magdalene ; the communion Peter desired to John who was in His bosom. And here the women have a large share.



MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 60.)

The origin and consequences of declension.

(Ch. ii 1-5.)

Israel's declension was characterized by the fact that they had not remained in separation from the world, and this in itself denoted that they no longer had strength to drive out the enemy. Their lack of power was due to what we have just read. "And the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim." (ii. 1.) The book of Joshua, the record of Israel's victories, was characterized by Gilgal, the blessed spot wherein lay the secret of their strength. It was the place of circumcision, that is to say, typically, of the putting off of the flesh—"In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh *by the circumcision of*

Christ." (Col. ii. 11.) At the cross of Christ, in His death, the flesh was absolutely condemned and made an end of for the believer. At Gilgal, Jehovah had rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off the people.

Delivered (in type) from the dominion of the flesh which was connected with the world, i.e., Egypt, they now belonged only to God. The great fact of circumcision at Gilgal, the cutting off of the flesh, is a Christian responsibility. But continual *returning* to Gilgal was a necessity. There must be for the believer the constant realization before God, what the cross of Christ teaches, that "the flesh profiteth nothing." True self-judgment must be maintained if we would know wherein lies the secret of spiritual power by which we mortify our members which are upon the earth. (Col. iii. 5.) We may learn this from the victories in the book of Joshua. The Israelites always returned to Gilgal, except in one case (Joshua vii. 2) where they were defeated.

But Gilgal had been neglected, nay, even forgotten since the days of Joshua. It is thus that hearts become worldly through the absence of daily self-judgment. The angel of Jehovah, the representative of Divine power in the midst of the people, had remained there alone, so to speak, with nothing to do, waiting for Israel to return to him ; he had waited long, Israel did not return. There was nothing for it, but that the angel should quit this blessed spot and go up to Bochim, *the*

place of tears. Those days of strength and joy, when Jericho fell at the sound of God's trumpet, were over ; the days, too, of Gibeon and Hazor were for ever gone. Israel could not recover the blessings dependent on Gilgal ; Jehovah's power was no longer at the disposal of the people, looked at as a whole. Those days were past, when Israel went up willingly to Gilgal, judging, in type, the flesh ; so that, sin not being there, they might conquer. Achor, too, was past with its lesson of humiliation and blessing, when the people judged their sin to put it away and were restored. At Bochim Israel wept, obliged to bear their chastisement and its irremediable consequences ; present restoration was not possible ; *God does not re-establish what man has ruined.* The church has trodden the same path. Its ruin as a testimony and looked at on the side of human responsibility will be continuous to the end of its history. It has become unfaithful, till at last it has become established in the midst of the world, mixed up with iniquity of every kind which goes on to the close. God compares it to a great house with vessels to honour and dishonour. (2 Tim. ii.) And yet the moment will come, when the history of man's responsibility being over, the Lord will present to Himself His church, glorious, having neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing. (Eph. v.) At that time it shall be said of her, as of Jacob, not "what hath man wrought," but "what hath God wrought!" (Numbers xxiii. 23.)

It was not a sense of humiliation which filled the hearts of the poor people at Bochim : they were there, shedding tears at the sentence of judgment, and seeing no issue, for there was none. In the course of the book, we meet with times of partial deliverance, and even a beginning of real humiliation (x. 15, 16). But Israel's restoration is reserved for a future day. There is a sort of foretaste of it under Samuel, type of Christ, the true Judge and Prophet. In the scene at Mizpeh (1 Sam. vii), we have a picture of the day when Israel humbled, will be restored to their place of blessing as the people of God. Samuel convenes the people at Mizpeh, which is not merely the place of tears, but of humiliation. It was there that "they drew water and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, 'we have sinned against the Lord.'" It was there that they put away their strange gods, and it was the dawn of an era of blessing which shone in all its splendour under the reigns of David and Solomon.

Bochim characterizes the book of Judges, as Gilgal does that of Joshua. Likewise the place of tears characterizes the present period of the church's history. It is no longer a question of retracing the pathway ; the edifice is in ruins : to replaster it, would be but to adorn its decay, which would be worse than the ruin itself.

The angel of the Lord has come up from Gilgal to Bochim, and forfeited strength cannot be recovered. The Lord abhors pretension to power

in a day such as the present. The display of human, fleshly power which we see on all sides, is utterly different to the power of the Spirit. Those who talk loudly about the power of God being with them, savour somewhat of the crowds who followed Simon Magus, saying: "This man is the great power of God" (Acts viii. 10); and of Laodicea, who says, "I am rich," not knowing that she is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. iii. 17). However, we must never forget that if the church as a corporate witness has failed, God has preserved a testimony to Christ in the midst of the ruin, and those who seek to maintain it, acknowledge and weep over their common failure in the presence of God. We find something similar in Ezek. ix. 4. The men of Jerusalem who sigh and cry are marked on their foreheads by the angel of the Lord; they are a humbled people, as in Mal. iii. 13-18. There are two classes in this chapter; those who say: "What profit is it that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?" (ver. 14), and the faithful ones, a feeble and afflicted remnant who speak one to another, acknowledging the ruin, but waiting for the Messiah who alone can give them deliverance. These latter do not say: "What profit is it?" Their humbling is for their profit, turning their eyes to Him who "raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes." (1 Sam. ii. 8.)

God grant that this may also be our attitude, and that we may not be indifferent to the state of the church of God in this world, but rather weep at having contributed towards it. Let us, like Philadelphia, be content to have a little strength, and we shall hear the Lord say for our consolation: I have the key of David, power is mine, fear not, I place it entirely at your disposal.

In verses 1-3, the angel of the Lord speaks to the people. Had God broken His covenant? Had He not accomplished all that His mouth had spoken? It was Israel who had broken the covenant. "Why have ye done this?" How this question reaches and probes the conscience. Why? Because I preferred the world and its lusts to the power of the Spirit of God, idols to the ineffable favour of Jehovah's countenance. What then was the natural heart of this people? What is ours? Israel weeps and sacrifices (ver. 5). How touching the grace which provides for worship in the midst of the ruin. *The place of tears is one of sacrifice*, and God accepts the offerings made at Bochim.

Israel's ruin looked at in reference to God.

(Ch. ii. 6—iii. 4.)

Chap. ii. 6-9 is a repetition of Josh. xxiv. 26-31, closely connecting this history of declension with that of the people before their fall. There were elders, that outlived Joshua, to help and encourage

the people, just as there were apostles for the church, but in the days of the apostles as in those of the elders, principles, destructive of the assembly, were already at work. Judaism, worldliness, corruption, all these things Paul set his face against by the power of the Spirit of God, but with the certainty that after his departure, grievous wolves should enter in, not sparing the flock. The close of Chap. I. gave us Israel's declension, in their connection with the world; the verses we have just read, shew it to us in reference to God. We have a summary of the whole book of Judges in this passage. Worldliness and idolatry succeed each other. In whatever measure our hearts go after the world, they turn away from God; and between that and forsaking Jehovah to follow after idols, there is but a step. We see the same things in the life of Christians individually. It is not without purpose that the Spirit of God warns us so solemnly: "Little children keep yourselves from idols," 1 John v. 21. If we associate with the world, its cherished objects gain possession of our hearts, robbing Christ of His place.

Two things describe the low estate of the generation that arose after Joshua. "They knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel" (ii. 10). Where a personal knowledge of Christ and of the value of His work are lacking, the floodgates are open to an overflowing tide of evil. This was the case with Israel: "They forsook the Lord and served Baal and

Ashtaroth " (ii. 13). Then the anger of the Lord was hot against the people, and He sold them into the hands of enemies *round about*, who spoiled them (ii. 14); and left the enemy *within* to be a thorn in their sides (iii. 3). *The enemy within the house of God* is the distinctive feature of the last days. The nations whose terrible moral condition is described in Rom. i., are now-a-days established with all their corrupt principles in the very midst of this building, so beautiful of yore, when it came forth from the hands of the Divine Architect; but entrusted by Him to human hands, it contained thenceforth, amidst material only fit to be burned up, the sad mixture of vessels to honour and to dishonour.

The judgment of God on His house consists in this, that He allows these things to exist in it. How little account Christians take of this. But the God who judges is also the God who has compassion (ii. 18). Israel groans under the oppressor; then the Lord looks on this people for whom He had done such great things, and raises up deliverers for them. Such is the history which we shall see unfolded in the book of Judges, and of which we have here the summary. There are *awakenings* and then a short space of rest and blessing. The chains broken, the enemy silenced, God leaves the people to themselves, and they fall as before into idolatry. "They ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way" (ii. 19).

There was only one resource, and it was worthy

of God. In His grace He makes use of the very unfaithfulness and its consequences to bless the people. In suffering these nations to remain, God had not merely chastisement in view ; He also wished “ to prove Israel by them whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein as their fathers did keep it ” (ii. 22) ; in short, would they separate from evil ? Thus in 2 Timothy God uses the mixture of vessels to honour and dishonour to test and bless the hearts of those that are faithful. “ If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work ” (2 Tim. ii. 21). What a blessed description of faithfulness in perilous times ! God would shew us a path which glorifies Him as much in the darkest day of ruin as in the brightest days of the church.

But the Lord had yet another object in leaving these nations to prove Israel (iii. 4), “ to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the Lord, which He commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.” The blessing which God had in view, was to cause Israel to return to that *Word* which had been given at the first, and which was their only safeguard. Similarly now, the apostle says to Timothy, in an Epistle which dwells on the ruin : “ But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them ; and that from a child thou hast

known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus " (2 Tim. iii. 14, 15). Has the condition of Christendom compelled us to take a place of separation to God down here, adhering closely to His Word? Unless we can be thus characterized, we cannot be a testimony for God in a day of ruin. Those in Philadelphia bore this stamp, for He who addresses them is Himself the *holy* and the *true*; and they, walking in communion with Him, had *kept His word*, and *not denied His name*. These will also be the marks of the future children of the kingdom. In Ps. i., they separate themselves from the way of sinners, and their delight is in the law of the Lord, meditating in it day and night.

There was a third object which the Lord had in view, in permitting these enemies to continue in the midst of Israel: "That the generations of the children of Israel *might know, to teach them war*" (iii. 2). When we allow ourselves to be cast down by the state of the church and its prevailing evil, we are apt to think that it is no longer any use to fight, and that our part should be exclusively that of the 7000 hidden ones who had not bowed the knee to Baal. (1 Kings xix.) This is a serious mistake. There are Elijahs in days of ruin, and conflict is more than ever needed. Christian warfare is not, it is true, waged against flesh and blood, as with Israel, but against wicked spirits in the heavenly places (Eph. vi. 12, margin). This

satanic power is always at work to hinder our taking possession of heavenly things, and to bring the people of God into bondage. We fight then either to conquer or to deliver. In Joshua and Ephesians the conflict is to put us in possession of our privileges ; in Judges and 2 Timothy the warfare is more especially for the deliverance of the people of God. "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," says the apostle to his faithful disciple (2 Tim. ii. 3). "Endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist," he says further on, adding, "I have fought the good fight" (2 Tim. iv. 5, 7).

What goodness it is on God's part, in a day of universal weakness, to have allowed the enemy to continue, that we might learn what warfare is. Christian conflict will never cease on earth, but the Lord says : Put your trust in Me, I have set before you an open door, and I will recompense the overcomer. May God give us to take to heart the deliverance of His people, in seeking to reach souls by the gospel, and in setting them free from their chains of bondage by the two edged sword of the Spirit.

(To be continued, D.V.)



"Prayer is prayer, let it come from the weak or from the strong. It is not the heart or the lip from which it comes, as the Ear that it goes to, which is the great thing."

**“WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN BUT THEE?
AND THERE IS NONE UPON EARTH I DE-
SIRE BESIDE THEE.”—Psalm lxxiii. 25.**

JESUS! 'tis Thou Thyself I need,
At every time, at every hour;
Oh! wilt Thou guide my feet, and lead
And keep me by Thy Spirit's power,
That from Thee I may never stray,
But still press on the narrow way.

Close to Thy side I fain would cling,
And learn the mysteries of Thy love,
Into Thy presence entering
With boldness through the precious blood;
Oh! Jesu's love is vaster far
Than all our poor conceptions are.

It is this love my soul would know,
Would learn it in its heights and depths,
Would mark it in that hour of woe,
When on the cross He tasted death—
Would ponder all His wondrous ways,
And never cease His name to praise.

That *precious* name, it cheers the heart
When burden'd, or with care oppress,
Then to that blessed One I turn,
And always find a place of rest,
There on His bosom calmly stay,
And then—all else may pass away.

Yes—every thing may pass away;
In Him my all in all I've found,
And having Him, sure I can say
Now I have all things and abound;
My precious Lord—to Thee I bow,
And own no other Lord but Thou.

It was the power of Jesu's cross,
 That turn'd my darkness into light,
 Now for His sake I'd count but loss,
 All that might dim this precious sight ;
 Full well He knows the flesh how frail,
 Yet in His strength I shall prevail.

Still 'tis Thyself, O Lord, I need
 A sense of Jesus always near ;
 His love, the joy on which I feed,
 His presence, all I need to cheer.
 With this I'll sweetly journey on,
 And wait till He, my Lord, shall come.



PRIESTHOOD.

EXODUS XXIX.

There is a desire at all times in the people of God, whether in Jewish ignorance or Christian life, that they should always have God dwelling with them. Thus, in Exodus xv., as soon as Moses had come out of Egypt, he said, "He is my God ; I will prepare Him a habitation." So we are "builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit." (Eph. ii. 22.)

We do look to God's dwelling amongst us ; yet we have much more thought of dwelling with Him. This was not the case with Israel. *We* have boldness to enter into the holiest, Christ having passed through the heavens for us, as Aaron passed through the tabernacle for them. Israel could not enter within the veil ; but Christ has rent it, and

opened a new and living way which He has consecrated for us. God having, in the cross of Christ, put sin away, we can stand in the light of His presence. Here we find the presence of God among them. This is not redemption, the object of which is that we should be with God. We could not meet God without redemption. Christ suffered, "the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God." (1 Peter iii. 18.)

We learn in this chapter how we can thus be in the presence of God constantly and abidingly. We are really, in title, made "kings and priests to God and His Father;" our provision and character being this, provision is made in Christ for us, so that we can be continually in the presence of God. There was to be the burnt-offering continually at the door of the tabernacle, the place where the Lord met with the people. We are consecrated to God to be priests. Christ has not yet taken upon Him His office as King, but He has taken the priesthood, and therefore we have got, even now, our priesthood. He exercises in heaven continually a perpetual priesthood, filling up in this respect the figure of Aaron, though the *order* be of Melchisedec.

We see here how we are put in the place of priests, and yet Christ is personally distinguished. Aaron goes first (ver. 5-7) alone, to represent Christ; then the sons (ver. 8) to represent the whole church, the priests. In referring to the cleansing of the leper, we have the way a sinner is

cleansed from the evil that is in him. It is the same ordinance as regards the leper and the priest; but the leper wants to get *cleansed* as a sinner, the priest that he may be *consecrated* to God. If not cleansed in every respect, we could not stand before God at all. There was sprinkling of blood on the leper, on the right ear, the right hand, the right toe : his thoughts, his acts, his walk, must be all cleansed, by being brought under the "blood of sprinkling." So in this chapter we are consecrated in the same way. In verse 4, "Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle," etc. You do not find Aaron washed by himself, because Christ did not want it. They are washed together as a figure of the Christian body. Christ as a man identifies Himself with the Church. (1 Cor. xii. 12.) Aaron was anointed. (Ver. 7.) The Holy Ghost descended upon Christ when He had been baptized.

But before unction *we* need to be cleansed. The word of God applied to the heart and conscience with power by the Spirit is called washing with the word. "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." This is not habitation, but washing. Christ came not by water only, but by water and blood. The blood was for expiation, the water for washing, in order to meet God. In anything of Christ's work, it is not a question merely of atonement, but of meeting God. If I think of meeting God, it is what God requires. There must be perfect cleansing. It turns the eye

on God Himself. I shall always know evil in myself ; but if God is satisfied, so may I be. It is wholesome to look within and judge myself ; but I shall not get the blessed peace that flows from faith, if I am looking for it into my own heart. When we see God is satisfied with Christ, then comes in peace ; it gives the highest standard of right and wrong, but peace, because God is satisfied with Christ. Washing by water is repeated, not by blood.

Moses clothes him with the priest's robe, and there is no sacrifice here, because Christ required none. He was a perfect man in obedience and love. As man, Christ identifies Himself with His people. He comes into the same place as regards the walk of holiness. He was anointed with the Spirit and with power. All He did was in the power of the Spirit. (Ver. 7, 20, 21 ; Acts x. 38.) Christ was anointed as man. When He ascended on high, there He received the promise of the Father, and sent down the Spirit to the saints, so constituting them the Church.

Next, we come to the sons of Aaron. (Ver. 8, 9.) We are going to get them introduced into the priesthood, and now comes the sacrifice. Aaron needed none. (Ver. 10-13, 14.) There is no sweet savour in the sin-offering or trespass-offering. It must be burnt without the camp. Here it is a sin-offering—sin must be totally put away before our consecration. It is the nature judged before God. Christ is made sin for us, that we may be

made priests. We have these two aspects of the value of Christ's work. First, the sin is charged upon Him. In the Hebrew there is no difference between "sin" and "sin-offering." Here He is the sin-offering ; He who "knew no sin, made sin for us," etc. Secondly, the other character was offering Himself up to God, all the devotedness of a life of obedience offered up ; this was a sweet savour to God. "Therefore hath my Father loved me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again." (John x.)

In verses 15-18 we find Aaron and his sons not merely having sin taken away, but accepted of God in all the perfection of Christ. If I am looked at as a sinner in myself, the sin is put away, but this is not all. Aaron and his sons put their hands upon the sin-offering ; they also identified themselves with the burnt offering. All the savour of everything that Christ has done, we are ; in everything consumed and put to the test. Nothing failed ; it is all gone up, and we are in it before God. Here we get our blessed position, previous to consecration as priests. For this, it is not a question of what I think of myself ; but the measure of my acceptance is what Christ is in God's presence and estimate. We cannot measure grace by anything that is fitted for us, but by what is fitted for God.

Verses 19-21. We come now to the proper character of those persons that are cleansed and accepted. Now it is to consecrate, and, as in

cleansing the leper, the blood is put on the right ear, right hand, and right foot—the thoughts, acts and walk. We are now consecrated to God in all these. We have to render unto the Lord our bodies as well as our spirits ; for we are not our own, but bought with a price. Every act that Christ did was as perfect as His sacrifice, but every step made it increasingly difficult. So we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Christ's conduct and Christ's devotedness are the measure of our walk before God. There is not so much as to set one's foot on left for self-will. Christ did not come to do His own will. Even to death He went, the death of the cross. So with us, if the eye is single, the whole body is full of light. If the heart is right it makes the aim right. The apostle says, " Not that I have already attained . . . but this *one* thing I do," etc. He exercised himself day and night " to have a conscience void of offence." Then it is real liberty. If the heart be right, it will be joy ; if not, it will be terrible, because there is not the smallest liberty given to self-will. In many things we fail ; but if we feel what sin is and the claim God has on us, it will be our privilege to do His will. It is not a pretence that we are set up as something wonderful. No, it is faith in the blood of Christ that has cleansed us as to purpose and thought according to the perfectness of Christ ; and now we are consecrated to serve God. It is simple Christianity.

Verse 21 shews them consecrated by the blood

put upon their persons ; but not only so, for there is the anointing with the Spirit of God to give power and energy for action. It was put on the "sons' garments with him." I have got the power of Christ in heaven, and the power of the Spirit that comes down from Christ for garments (that is, for all that I appear in before the world). It is "*with Him*," a thorough, complete association by the power of the Spirit with a crucified Christ who is now in heaven. Thus we get real thorough joy and gladness of heart. The first fruits are with God, the results are in what we shew to men. If peace and joy are in my heart, let me go in that, and it produces joy and gladness in my ways. The beginning of all practical fruits is from what we have with God, and then there is a testimony to men. What we really are with God shews itself out. It is, or should be, the effect of the consciousness of union with Christ.

This anointing of the Spirit can be put on us, because the blood is on us. Aaron had no blood put on him. The Spirit is the seal. The least relic of sin would prevent Him from sealing ; but when the blood has cleansed from sin, then the seal is applied. The presence of the Spirit is the witness of the blood-shedding ; the fruits are the witness of the Spirit. We thus get a wonderful power, stamp and measure of holiness. If we believe in Christ, we are so cleansed that the Spirit can come and dwell in us. The Spirit is the seal to the value of Christ's work, not to what He is

going to produce. (Ver. 23, 24.) Now He can fill Aaron's hands. What is produced by the Spirit is Christ's after all. I can come with an object now that I know God delights in it. Suppose I praise Christ's name, I know God's delight rests on it ; it may be imperfectly done, but I know what the thing is to God, not the manner of my presenting it. It is the sweet savour of Christ to God. (Ver 31, 32.)

We feed on Christ, now that He has given us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink. We gather strength and grace, and comfort, the perfectness of Christ Himself, as our souls' food. "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." We come so to think of Christ, so to realize in our hearts and spirits what He is, that we live Christ. What a man thinks is what he is, more than what he does. A man may think of sin, and love it, and desire to do it, but will not because of his character ; he may be a hypocrite. If I realize Christ in my heart, I am a Christian.

Verse 42 shews a continual burnt-offering at the place where God meets the people. Christ is before God day by day continually, a sweet savour. I cannot go to God without finding the savour of Christ there, in the perfect sweetness of His offering.

The reason (we hear in Genesis viii.) God gave for not cursing is that He looks to Noah's sacrifice, not to the sin. God deals with us in virtue of what the Mediator is, instead of what we are. It

ought to be always in our hearts, but it is always before God. When the daily sacrifice was taken away, the Jew could not go to God ; there was no savour. (See Dan. viii.)

In verses 42, 43, it is, “ I will meet you to speak there to thee.” It is through Christ we gain everything. Finally, God says (ver. 45, 46), “ I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.” It is by the Spirit He does so now. The whole Church is His dwelling-place. He is not merely a Redeemer, but a constant Dweller with the people ; as verse 46 shews, it was not to do an act and then leave them. So it is with the Church in a still more blessed way.

But let us never forget that sin is put away first ; then there is the continual savour where God meets us ; and we are consecrated to His service. It supposes that the heart is right ; for I cannot wish to be consecrated to God and have my own will. The death of Christ will never find its intelligent value in our hearts, if we want to escape the consequences of consecration. If we are consecrated, the motive of every action should be that Christ may be glorified. You cannot be happy unless Christ be everything. We may have to condemn ourselves daily ; but when we think what a savour is before God, we go on with confidence.



JESUS CHRIST, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. (Heb. xiii. 8.)

THOUGHTS ON JOY AND WORSHIP.

(*Extracts from a Letter. A Translation.*)

In the Epistle to the Philippians there are, for the apostle, several causes for joy. In chap. i. 18, he rejoices that Christ is preached, even though some did so "in pretence." In chap. ii. 17, 18, he rejoices at the prospect of being offered upon the sacrifice and service of their faith, and desires that the Philippians rejoice with him, although to human sight there was nothing to rejoice in. Verses 28, 29 give us further cause for joy; but chap. iii. begins with these words: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice *in the Lord*," as much as to say that whatever may be a cause for joy in our surroundings, is only momentary, but that "in the Lord," is "always." It occurs to me, in speaking of this, that the apostle had shown them at the beginning (Acts xvi.), when in prison and covered with bruises, he could sing praises to God at midnight, rejoicing notwithstanding the opposing circumstances, but it was "in the Lord;" and he could say to them—not only as to that, but as to many other things—what "ye have both learned and received, and heard *and seen in me*." (Chap. iv. 9.)

I have, of late, been much occupied with a subject, the importance of which I see more and more as I go on, and that is worship.

In Levit. xiv. 10, 11 we are told that the one

who had been a leper was "on the eighth day to take two he lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three-tenths deal of fine flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil. And the priest that maketh him clean shall present the man that is to be made clean, and those things *before the Lord*, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation."

We know from the New Testament for what purpose we are brought there. It is indeed that we may be worshippers, worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth. I fear it is a subject but little comprehended, or at least but little realized.

Numbers xxviii. presents us especially with the side less understood, for there we find the part that *God* has in worship, and not a single word is said of *our* part, or in the following chapter either.

"Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, *My* offering, *My* bread for *My* sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto *Me*, shall ye observe to offer unto *Me* in their due season."

Worship—that which, in worship, is going on in our hearts—does not belong to us, it is for the Lord. True, the Lord has put it in our hearts for our joy, in order that we may be partakers of the sacrifice of Christ, even the joy of God in Christ; but if we appropriate anything to ourselves it is profanation. Let us remember that all our worship belongs to God, that it is in us the expression of the excellency of Christ. Moreover, when He takes His place in our midst, He says: "I will

declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee." (Heb. ii. 12.) He surely has joy; may we be found in accord with our heavenly Guide! He will conduct our praises well, and in a way pleasing to the Father. The ear of the Father will be attentive when He hears the voice that directs us. How, then, will that voice direct us? Certainly never to self-occupation, but unquestionably to that which God Himself has found in Christ. So in all the succeeding verses in our chapter in Numbers Christ is prefigured—if as a lamb—then we are occupied rather with His death; and how perfect and profound the experience of what is suitable to God must His be who leads our praises! He who in the work of redemption has answered in every way to the mind of God. But with the lamb there was the offering of flour mingled with oil, which represents the humanity of Christ—His grace and His perfection as a living man; all His life and His nature were perfect and acceptable to God, a sacrifice of sweet savour. How much we have to say to God our Father when we contemplate Christ as man in this world, whose will was to do that of His Father, and whose devotedness to the glory of His Father spread a sweet savour on all that He did. All His acts were fragrant with this perfume. There was, in addition to all this, the wine, which we know to be the figure of joy. The Father seeketh worshippers who worship Him in spirit and in

truth, and nothing so rejoices His heart as to see those whom He has sought speaking to Him of The One in whom He has found His delight—this is worship. These are a few imperfect thoughts on this precious subject, and we may well say: “Who is sufficient for these things?” “But our sufficiency is of God,” for we have received the Spirit who is in us a fountain springing up into everlasting life.

I add a word as to “fountain,” as scripture is exact in the use of terms. We know that water in a fountain will rise to the height of its source, and it is precisely so with worship; its source is in God and it rises to God: “All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee.” (1 Chron. xxix. 14.) But when the Lord speaks of ministry He uses the word “river,” for the source is always in God, but in order that it may be a blessing everywhere in its course, and that is what we should be wherever we go.



If I get hold of the path, the spirit, the mind of Jesus, nothing would be more hateful to me than anything of self. You never find an act of self in Christ. Not merely was there no selfishness, but there was no self in Him. He has given us the immense privilege of always going down to serve others as He did.

OCCUPATION WITH SELF.

If I am occupied with myself, it must be either with my badness or my goodness. The more conscientious I am, the more I am occupied with my badness, and in a peculiar and fatal way ; it is more engrossing than occupation with my goodness. There is at all times very little in this, but in my badness there are the windings, the twistings, the accountings for this thing, the vexation at the other, the way I was tempted, how I yielded, the shame, the contrition, the purpose to amend ; each doing its part like a professed company of *dramatis personæ*, and thus I am engrossed with self, and my conscience cannot reprove me for it, for it is avowedly to condemn myself. But it being an engrossment of the most exhausting nature to both heart and mind, warns us sedulously to avoid it. One looks at and pores over one's prostrate self, horror-stricken, and yet provoked the more to look by that which deepens the pain. What is the good, what is the gain, from this engagement ? None whatever. It engrosses and occupies the mind exclusively with visions of what *de facto* constitute self, an absorbing object by which the heart is corroded, and the mind wasted.

It is simply evil which is before you, it is yourself placed before your own tribunal, and there is prosecution and defence, and though always the verdict is against you, you still like to linger there, as I have said.

If I see myself as Christ sees me, I am made to feel that whatever is seen is necessarily excluded if not of Him, because *He is light*, not law, which exacts from me ; the good of light is to expose things as they are, and hence a very different action goes on when I see my self in the light ; I am then sensible of the high and blessed deliverance vouchsafed to me ; Christ is made more precious than ever to me ; my heart turns to Him, rests in Him, dwells on Him more fixedly than ever, because I see what I am, and it is by Him who exposes me that I know that I am set *free* from everything exposed. As I feel the smallest atom in my eye, so do I feel my least evils before Him, but He shows me where it is, and seeing it—it is gone—it is refused, and condemned, and I am liberated, and I rejoice in Him ; I know better than ever the righteousness of God to forgive and cleanse me.

In the other case, it was seeing, exploring, and deepening one's mind in all the tortuous workings of oneself, seeking exculpation, but only partially or occasionally finding any, in order to keep up the detention with self.

When I see with the Lord I see without any questioning, and am at the same time relieved by Him, and He, therefore, engages my heart more deeply than ever. My own badness even fades in the distance, and I delight to dwell on, and abide with Him, whom, as I follow, is to me the Light of Life.

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 80.)

(Chapters iii., xii.)

Revivals.

Othniel.

(Ch. iii. 5-11.)

It is most important to understand, as we have seen, that the church having been unfaithful to the call of God, restoration collectively is no longer possible. Christians are sometimes misled, as their thoughts by these very revivals effected by God, especially if they are themselves identified with one of these partial restorations wrought by the Spirit of God. Limited views, perhaps a narrow heart accustomed only to think of and love that portion of the church which more immediately concerns ourselves—a sectarian spirit which leads us to designate as church, the systems which man has substituted for the building of God—such are some of the causes which hinder us from forming a correct estimate of the true state of the assembly in this world. Now it is an indisputable fact for every Christian, in the habit of depending on the Word of God, that the present days are evil, that the mystery of iniquity already works, for there are already many antichrists, and everything ripening for the final apostasy. But another fact quite as positive is, that God is faithful and will never leave Himself without testimony.

He can even make use of the evil as in Ch. ii. to dispense fresh blessings to His people.

In the same way in Judges the deserved oppression of the enemy is used by God to bring about revivals in Israel. "They cried unto the Lord" is invariably the word that ushers them in. Christendom in the present day discusses what means should be used to inaugurate revivals. "*There is but one ;*" such a sense of the low condition of the world, of the sinner or of the church, as shall lead the exercised soul to turn to God. "They cried unto the Lord." Then He sent deliverers to them. We shall see these revivals in their various phases from Chap. iii. to Chap. xvi. of this book.

Let us begin by a general observation. When things are morally in a low state, God uses instruments which in themselves are imperfect and bear the stamp of weakness,—Othniel sprang from a younger branch of the family ; he was "the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother." Ehud was weak through his infirmity, Shamgar through his weapon, Deborah from her sex, Barak by his natural character, Gideon on account of his relations, Jephthah by his birth. Other judges are mentioned who are rich, influential, or prosperous (x. 1-4 ; xii. 8-15), and God uses them no doubt, but more to maintain results already obtained than as deliverers. We are no longer in the days of Joshua, or of the Apostles, when a power was developed in man, which hindered the weakness of the vessel from appearing, and yet the very infir-

mity of these witnesses (characteristic of the period we are in) glorified the power of Him who could use them.

We have already spoken of Othniel in his private, domestic life (Ch. i.). God had thus fitted him to be the first judge in Israel. Having fought to win a wife, he became the possessor of his own personal inheritance and of springs to water it. God now uses him to fight for others, and it is ever thus. Before the Christian can be publicly used of God, he must individually have made progress in the knowledge of the Lord, and in the power of his privileges. Before taking up public service, the Christian should have made progress in his own soul in the knowledge of the Lord and of the character of the calling ; the absence of these generally accounts for our service being so contracted, our hearts are so little occupied with heavenly things. The moral wealth which Othniel had acquired for himself was soon evident in his walk. In the short compass of verses 10 and 11, six things are mentioned of him : first, " the Spirit of the Lord," the power of God to deliver Israel " came upon him ;" secondly, " he judged Israel," he was entrusted with government ; thirdly, he " went out to war," here we have conflict ; fourthly, " the Lord delivered Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, into his hand," this is victory ; fifthly, " his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim," the enemy is finally subjugated ; sixthly, " the land had rest forty

years." Israel quietly enjoys the fruits of Othniel's victory,—God's end is achieved ; this man who belonged only indirectly to the lineage of the noble Caleb, was fitted beforehand for this service, and when put to the proof, showed himself to be suitable material in the hands of the divine workman.

Let us ask God to raise up Othniels in the present day ; yea, rather let us be Othniels ourselves by true consecration of heart to the Lord, by an increasing desire to appropriate and realize these heavenly things, and we shall be instruments well-fitted for the Master and *prepared* unto every good work.

(*To be continued, D.V.*)



THE NAIL.

There is one Nail fastened in a sure place, and there the flagons hang, and the cups too. " Oh," says one of the little cups, " I am so little and so black, suppose I should drop." The flagon says, " I am so heavy, so weighty, suppose I should drop." One cup says, " Oh, if I felt like that golden cup, I should never fear falling." And the gold cup answers, " It is not my being a gold cup keeps me, but it is *all by the Nail!* If the Nail comes down, we all go ! gold cup or pewter cup ; but so long as the Nail remains the cups all hang safely." (See Isaiah xxii. 23, 24.)

“THE GLORY OF THAT LIGHT.”

ACTS XXII. 11.

I was journeying in the noontide,
When His light shone o'er my road—
And I saw Him in that glory—
Saw Him—Jesus, Son of God.
All around, in noonday splendour,
Earthly scenes lay fair and bright—
But my eyes no longer see them
For the glory of that light.

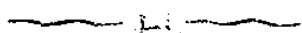
Others, in the summer sunshine,
Wearily may journey on—
I have seen a light from heaven,
Past the brightness of the sun ;
Light that knows no cloud, no waning,
Light wherein I see His face—
All His love's unclouded treasures,
All the riches of His grace,

All the wonders of His glory,
Deeper wonders of His love ;
How for me, He won, He keepeth,
That high place in heaven above,
Not a glimpse—the veil uplifted—
But within the veil to dwell,
Gazing on His face for ever,
Hearing words unspeakable.

Marvel not that Christ in glory
All my inmost heart hath won ;
Not a star to cheer my darkness,
But a light beyond the sun.
All below lies dark and shadow'd,
Nothing there to claim my heart,
Save the lonely track of sorrow,
Where of old He walk'd apart,

I have seen the face of Jesus—
 Tell me not of aught beside ;
 I have heard the voice of Jesus —
 All my soul is satisfied.
 In the radiance of the glory,
 First I saw His blessed face,
 And for ever shall that glory
 Be my home, my dwelling-place.

Sinners, it was not to angels
 All his wondrous love was given,
 But to one who scorn'd, despis'd Him,
 Scorn'd and hated Christ in heaven.
 From the lowest depths of evil,
 To the throne in heaven above,
 Thus in me He told the measure
 Of His free, unbounded love.



BRIEF THOUGHTS ON 2nd CORINTHIANS, III.

This chapter brings out the way in which the power of the truth works on our souls, to bring us into the presence of the Lord. It begins with the effect of this in testimony to others ; and then lets us know *how* the effect is produced — what a Christian, and so what the Church, really is.

The Corinthians had been calling in question the apostolic authority of Paul. How does he meet this ? He appeals to themselves, to their own calling of God, when they were turned to Him from idols, “as the *seal* of his apostleship.” It is as though he said, “If Christ has not spoken by me, how is it that you are Christians ?”

So chapter xiii. 3-5 is not at all a precept to doubt, to examine and call in question their own Christianity. The apostle is shewing the absurdity of their doubt of him. "If you want to examine me, examine yourselves: you commend my ministry, because you commend Christ."

Then he goes on to tell us what a Christian is. He is a representative of Christ, just as much as the tables of stone were the representation of the law. Only in that case the writing being with the Spirit of the living God, not with ink, Christ is engraven on the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, and they—known and read of all men. The world ought to see Christ engraved on the heart of a Christian, just as much as Israel could see the letter of the law on the tables.

It is written on the "tables of the heart," by the "Spirit of the living God." Thus merely outward conduct (though there must be that for the world to see) will not do, but Christ *within*, as the motive and end of all we do.

There is a certain external respect for right and wrong as the result of the Bible and professed Christianity in these countries, which we do not find among the heathen. But a man may be following lawful pursuits, and be all that is correct outwardly and moral, yet if Christ is not the motive, it is all good for nothing. God did not send His Son into the world to bring in a negative Christianity. There must be that result which is worthy of the work. It must be evident through

the power of the Holy Ghost. There will be failure, for we are poor, feeble creatures ; but the world will see where we are going, by the road we are taking. A man may get on slowly or stumble, but it is evident what road he is going.

We have to look to ourselves and see how far we are devotedly following Christ, with full purpose of heart—how far we can say, “This one thing I do ;” but we must take care at the same time not to get into legal bondage by this standard. If I say, “Here is a rule of conduct : follow it,” this cannot reach the heart, the affections. The ministration of the letter brings only failure, condemnation and death ; for it prescribes a rule which man, being a sinner, can never follow. It does not *change* man, but it puts him under death ; it proves him “ungodly and without strength.”

We may turn even Christ into that letter of condemnation ; we may take His life, for instance, and make it our law. Nay, we may turn even the love of Christ into our law, we may say, “He has loved me, and done all this for me—I ought to love Him, and do so much for Him, in return for this love, etc., and thus turning His love into a rule of life, it becomes the ministration of death—for the only thing a rule can do is to condemn. With the children of Israel, Moses put a veil upon his face, for they could not bear the sight of the glory—it condemned them. Man tries either to hide his condemnation from God, or his conscience

from His condemnation. He excludes himself from God—from the glory of His holiness and from His glory as seen in Jesus; and when His glory shall be revealed in the end, it will only bring out condemnation more fully.

In contrast with this ministration of death and condemnation, we see the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness. Now, have we this? It is not Christ down here. The Holy Ghost here supposes Christ to be gone; and now it is the power of the Spirit of God revealing the glory of Christ to the soul. What has the Holy Ghost to tell us of Christ? He reveals Him not only as the pattern of godliness, but as always manifesting grace. The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of vile, miserable sinners; and Christ says, "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

The whole life of Jesus was a manifestation of grace: He laid Himself aside for others. He gave Himself to all who came to Him. He "had no time so much as to eat;" in the midst of a world of wickedness, He was the perfect manifestation of the goodness of God. And this was not all. He died for sin, put Himself under the whole power of God's wrath for sin—He was laid in the grave—He ascended into heaven; and sent down the Holy Ghost as a witness to His glory, and as the minister of righteousness. So it is now God ministering, not requiring.

If I am brought to look to Jesus, I can say, He bore my sins—I did them, but he bore them—He gave His soul an offering for my sins; He has taken the whole charge of my sin. I trace my sins up to the cross, and there I have done with them. They are all gone,

Where, then, do I see the glory? Is it on Sinai; or in the face of Jesus Christ who has put away all those sins which were revealed and condemned at Sinai? He has entered into heaven, because they are put away. In Philippians ii. we see Christ in heaven, not only in virtue of the glory of His person, but because of the work He has accomplished. “Wherefore also God hath highly exalted Him,” etc.

We are thus able not only to bear the sight of that glory of God, but to rejoice in it. Our souls rest in it. We do not ask to have it veiled, but that we may see every ray of it. Our hearts can satiate themselves there, because it is the testimony to the love of God, and the perfect putting away of sin.

There is also the ministration of righteousness. “Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech.” It is not a little hope here and a little despair there, but it is a message of perfect righteousness to the vilest. “By the obedience of One many made righteous.” Now, it is God putting in fruit, and not requiring righteousness.

What is the practical effect of this work of Christ received in the heart? Not to make a man

careless about sin. Not to give him liberty to sin because Christ has borne the wrath due to it. The last verse shews how we are made this living epistle. Contemplating Christ we become like Him. If the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shews them to me, I can say, "What a Christ I have!" and there is the spirit of holiness at once. I long for Christ, and look at Christ, and thus I get like Him. The very thing which brings an accomplished righteousness to my conscience makes me like Him. Then, mark, there is no veil on the heart or on the glory. The Holy Ghost dwelling in us has taken it away. And it is said of Israel, "When they shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." When Moses went into the Lord, he always took off the veil; but the children of Israel could not bear the sight of the glory: so he put it on when he appeared to them.

For believers, there is no veil anywhere. They can look at the glory because it tells of salvation, not of judgment—accomplished salvation and effectual righteousness. What perfect liberty to be in the presence of God and enjoy Christ in all His fulness! (Ver. 17.) "The Lord is that spirit" (i. e., the mind of the Spirit in all these Old Testament things).

Then what is the consequence of this ministration of the Spirit? What follows my knowing that I am the righteousness of God in Christ? That God delights in me? I have a constraint

upon my heart to serve Him and follow Him. If I think of His love, have I any fear? I fail constantly: has God any afterthought about me, or about my sins? There is no uncertainty: nothing is between me and God but the love which has placed me there; without spot and in perfect freedom, for He has given Christ for me. It is now, not God requiring anything from me, but God giving things to me; and this that His Son may be glorified in me: not that *man* may be glorified, but His Son Jesus glorified. God is making a marriage for His Son. We have to be the epistle of Christ. We have this privilege—to glorify and manifest Christ. We should be delighted to be this epistle, cost what it may. Christ died for me, and I have to represent Him. Of course I shall fail, often and again; but the heart at liberty before God will run in the way of His commandments; and this because the affections are set upon God and the glory of Christ. My life, my daily path, must be an answer to the love of God. I am a debtor to Christ, for He loved me and gave Himself for me. What an amazing privilege to be permitted to glorify Him in any little way in our path down here!



There is no blindness like that which results from resisting the light, and, in presence of the light, not renouncing one's own will.

THE TIMES OF JEREMIAH.

The ministration of the prophets, in the varied exigencies of Israel, unfolds the grace and forbearance of the living God. The periods at which God raised them up, and the consequent character of their service, make the history of each very interesting ; but of all the times during which the prophets prophesied, none are more painfully so than those of Jeremiah. It is not in the amount of good done that Jeremiah stands before us as pre-eminent ; on the contrary, results of labour are nowhere found so small, perhaps, as from the labours of that prophet. The ministry of Moses was one that told wonderfully on the condition of God's people. He found them under the galling yoke of Pharaoh—he left them within sight of the promised land. Joshua left them in possession. The history of the varied deliverers before the days of Samuel, gives us an account of victories obtained. Each one left some footmarks in the track, to say that he had passed that way. So, afterwards, with the prophets. Elijah's and Elisha's days were marked times of God's goodness to an unfaithful people ; but if we ask what were the results of Jeremiah's prophecies, we see nothing but desolation and ruin, and, by and bye, lose him himself in the great confusion. At the same time, we see incessant service, unwearied faithfulness, so long as there remained a part of the wreck to be faithful to. Others who had gone

before, had foretold what the disobedient and rebellious ways of Israel would lead them to, but it was the lot of Jeremiah to be on the ship when it went to pieces. He warned and warned again of the rocks that were ahead; but Israel heeded not. Up to the last moment, he was used of God to press home on their consciences their sad condition—but without avail; and even after the captivity, he remained to guide the wayward remnant of those left in the land, but only to experience the same obstinacy and determination to be ruined on their part.

The word of the Lord came to him in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign. Now this was a period of blessing—of revival. It was in the eighteenth year that the Passover was kept, of which it was said: "And there was no Passover like to that kept in Israel, from the days of Samuel the prophet." Jeremiah would have his share in that joy. I have often thought how much depends on the start of a Christian; how easily the heart sympathizes with what is around, whether baneful or healthful. To have the lot in early life cast among the fresh provisions of God's house, and mid the energies of His own Spirit, will give advantages to such a soul which are not the common lot of the church of God. Such were Jeremiah's first days, the days of Josiah—he was cradled in blessing—such, too, as had not been tasted in Israel, since the days of Samuel. He lamented the death of Josiah. These joys so fresh

III

were of short duration. But there is an intimate connection between the joys of communion and faithful warfare. There will be little of the one without the other. Jeremiah had drunk of the sweet draughts of blessing which had been so richly provided, and he was therefore able to feel the bitterness of the cup which Israel had to drink. The last chapter of 2nd Chronicles, shews how prominent as a prophet he was. His words were despised, and the result, the casting off for a season of God's people. One of the services of Jeremiah during this period, was to break the fall (if I may so express my thoughts) of Israel. Careful reading will show how tenderly the prophet applied himself to the then existing wants of the people ; and it is wonderful to see the compassion of God, as exhibited by him. Jonah regretted that God's judgment did not fall upon Nineveh—but the solitudes of Jeremiah were those of the tender parent, who would fain prevent the calamity befalling a disobedient child, but failing there, carries still the parent's heart, parent's tears, to soften the rebellious woes of that child. How often do we, in our intercourse with our brethren, act otherwise. If I see willfulness and disobedience, I warn ; I tell the consequences it may be ; I press home with diligence those warnings ; all are unheeded, the calamity comes, bad or worse, than I foretold ; how ready is the heart then to triumph in its own faithfulness, and the poor victim of his own rashness is left to himself, while in a kind of

triumph, I tell him, "'tis all deserved." The heart of Jeremiah could say: "But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." Such hearts, such ministry are needed now.

It is in the book of this prophet, that we have the history of that part of Israel which was not removed out of the land. Jeremiah's service did not close even when the city was taken, and the wall broken down. The heart that—like this prophet's—is true to God and His people, will always have something to do. The special place he held was to seek to draw the people into repentance, to warn; he was unheeded, and the judgments of God reached home. No sooner had the captives been borne away, than quite another field of duty arose before him; and one would have supposed that what had just happened would have made him a welcome guest in the house of the poor deserted Israelites. In chapter xlii. we see this new labour that Jeremiah found. The destroying flood had swept away all he had formerly been among, the kings, the priests, the princes, the temple, the vessels; the glory of Israel had departed. How often have we seen, that when services have been apparently disowned, the servant retires. When we have been labouring for an object, we find suddenly all dashed from our hands, like a goodly vessel, before the world

and to ourselves ; our labour is in vain, and the heart faints and grows weary. Never was a more complete failure than that that was before the eye of the prophet. His heart alone remained whole amidst it all ; he was ready for fresh service. The remnant muster to him ; their confession seems honest, their hearts seem true. " Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the Lord thy God, even for all this remnant (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us) ; that the Lord thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do." (Chap. xlii. 2, 3.) Jeremiah had had experience of the human heart ; ready to act as aforetime, he says, " Whatsoever thing the Lord will answer you, I will declare it unto you." After ten days the answer was given to the same company (verse 9, to the end of the chapter). The leaning of the hearts of the people was towards Egypt. There is something in Egypt, with all its bondage, that the heart naturally clings to. The remnant, wearied with the struggles they had passed through, sought for rest to the flesh. " Would God we had died in Egypt ! " every now and then oozes from the hearts of Israel. There is something in Egypt to attract all our hearts, something that flesh values ; and no wonder, when we can say, " No ; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread."

This repose of death the Lord keep us from ! The disappointed heart is in danger of turning back here. When the people came to Jeremiah, their words were, " That the Lord thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing we may do." God had provision for this time of need. There never was a time when the Lord would not bless them that trust in Him—there was never a place, however desolate or forlorn, where God could not meet His afflicted ones. His word was, " If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up ; for I repent me of the evil I have done unto you. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon," etc. " And I will shew mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land."

The prophet's words are despised ; and notwithstanding the threats if they returned to Egypt, they are soon gone, once more to contend against the judgments of God. Once more Jeremiah finds himself despised. Unable to keep them by promises of blessing, or to deter them from going into Egypt by threats of judgment, the power of unbelief has set in so strongly, that spite of the warnings, Johanan, the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, swept the land, and along with the rest Jeremiah himself, into the land of Egypt. But even here we find him with a word from God. The people, once back in Egypt, were

soon burning incense unto other gods. When once we get into a current, it will carry us far beyond our intentions. This remnant hoped to reach Egypt, that they might no more see war, or hear the sound of the trumpet, or suffer hunger ; but they went into all the idolatry of that people. How often have we seen the same in principle. In all the periods of Israel we shall not find a more hardened state than that into which the remnant sunk ; see their reply to Jeremiah, chap. xlv. 15-19. Here we appear to lose the prophet ; and might he not say, " Surely I have laboured in vain ; I have spent my strength for nought."

I think we may lose blessing, if we do not follow on in the track of God's grace to His people ; and if we do, we must keep side by side with Jeremiah. Others had their service away in Babylon. God remembered His own there ; but in following with this prophet, we learn the inexhaustible grace there is in God, where there is a heart to trust in Him, while we see, at the same time, the evils of the human heart becoming greater and greater as that goodness is put forth.

What varied scenes did this man of God pass through, from the time when with joy he partook of the passover in the days of Josiah, till he saw the utter desolation, which he so pathetically describes in his Lamentations—Oh, for hearts like his ! " Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water, for the destruction of the daughter of my people."

As we have before observed, those who before-time had served their generation by the will of God, saw around them the fruits of their labours. In none of them, however, do we see the same measure of tenderness of heart. God had reserved Jeremiah for his day, and had given him the heart for his work—a heart sorely tried, but one that could weep for Israel's woes. This prophet was the expression of God's heart towards Israel too. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" (Hos. xi. 8) was Jehovah's language; and His prophet was there as the proof of God's grace. On looking back on the history of the Church of God, we see a constant raising up of one after another to step into meet the Church's wants. The Spirit of God acts according to His knowledge of present needs. Sometimes instruments (not marked either for correctness of knowledge, or even purity of walk, I mean when judged by the Word as to their associations) have been much used of God. In the latter days of Christendom, I doubt not, but that however lavish the hand of God may be in giving hearts like those of Jeremiah, to meet the wants of His saints, the apostasy will be so dark, that labour therein, even of the most devoted character, will scarce leave a trace of itself. The nearer we draw to the end, will, on the one hand, be the arduousness of service; and on the other, the profitlessness of it, too, to human eye.

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 100.)

Ehud.

(iii. 12-30.)

Othniel dies; the children of Israel return to their evil ways, and forget the Lord. The same God who had strengthened Othniel against the enemy, now, in judgment, strengthens Eglon, king of Moab, against Israel. Eglon and his allies take possession of the city of palm trees (Comp. i. 16, Deut. xxxiv. 3), of Jericho, not in its character of the accursed city, but in that of blessing for Israel. And now Israel, in their fallen state, make use of the *very one*, whom God was about to employ for their deliverance, to carry a present to Eglon, ratifying thus their subjection to the world, whose favour they seek. How many *gifts* there are in the present day which become but willing instruments for keeping God's children under the dominion of the world. But Ehud is faithful—he makes himself a two-edged sword: his first act—his only resource. The Christian in the day of ruin has also his two-edged sword, the Word of God being his chief and only offensive weapon. (Heb. iv. 12; Rev. i. 16; xix. 15; Eph. vi. 17.) True, this sword was only a cubit in length; Ehud's weapon was short, but well suited to its work. It was a tried sword, capable of piercing

to the inward parts of God's enemy and of giving him his death blow.

Before using his weapon, Ehud "girt it under his raiment upon his right thigh," carrying it about him, ready for use; not displaying it, conscious that it was there. The Bible is often displayed, and much quoted, without being used. But the Word of God has a *purpose*. Ehud, left-handed, adapts his sword to his infirmity, girding it on his right thigh. Had he worn it in the usual way it would have been useless. The manner in which the weapon is used invariably corresponds to the personal state of the one using it. To imitate others is of no avail, as we learn from the case of David, who was unable to handle Saul's sword, being accustomed, as a shepherd, to a sling and a stone.

Having brought the present to Eglon, Ehud turned again from the graven images (ch. iii. 19, margin) that were by Gilgal; having, as he said, a "secret message" unto the king. It was not, as with many others, a public victory, but a secret, single-handed encounter between the deliverer and the enemy, the public results of which were soon to appear. It was so with Christ when He was tempted of Satan in the desert. Here all takes place silently, with no apparent struggle, no cry; the enemy was found dead by the servants, who thought their Master was resting. The power by which Israel had been enthralled is destroyed by the short sword of a left-handed man.

There was no fame or glory attending such a victory. It was a secret message, but a "message from God" unto Eglon (v. 20). Our weapon is divine, and therein lies all its power. With Ehud, as with Gideon, it was the "sword of the Lord." The king was dead, but the weapon was not drawn out of his belly. Ehud was gone, but the servants had before their eyes the instrument of victory; God proved to their confusion, that it was this short sword which had abased the proud man, whose eyes stood out with fatness.

It remained for Ehud to reap the fruits of his victory. "He blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim" to assemble the people of God, and they "took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over." The people recovered these usurped possessions; and, through the vigilance of the children of Israel, the way of approach for the enemy was cut off. The usurper was expelled and destroyed, Moab could no longer maintain himself on the two banks of the Jordan. Such should be the practical result of conflict at the present time. If the actual effect is not to make us openly break with the world, it is fruitless and does not answer to the purpose of God. The more complete the separation, the more lasting is the peace. "The land," we are told, "had rest fourscore years."

Shamgar.

(iii. 31.)

Shamgar, the son of Anath, who followed Ehud, gained a signal victory over the Philistines : he also delivered Israel. Ehud's sword was mighty, though short. Shamgar wrought deliverance by the means of a weapon which seemed wholly unsuited to such a work ; a contemptible instrument, to all appearance only suitable for goading brute creatures. Without wishing to press unduly here a typical meaning—a tendency to do which in teaching is dangerous in more ways than one—I would like to compare the ox-goad of Shamgar with the short sword of Ehud. We have one weapon, the Word of God ; it may be presented in different aspects, but it is the only one that the man of faith makes use of in the warfare. To the intellectual and unbelieving world it is like an ox-goad, fit, at the best, only for women, children and uneducated persons ; full of fiction and contradictions ; yet it is this instrument, despised by men, that God uses to gain the victory. In making use of it, faith finds a weapon where the world only sees folly, for the weakness of God is stronger than men. Doubtless, it is written for the unlearned and suited to their needs and to their walk ; but this very ox-goad can kill six hundred Philistines.

Let us, then, make use of the Word with which God has entrusted us, always remembering that faith only can make it effectual, and that, too, when the soul has found therein for itself communion with God, the knowledge of Christ, and, therewith blessing, joy and strength.

THE ATONEMENT.

There is, in John iii., a two-fold aspect of Christ presented to us, as the object of faith ; through which we do not perish, but have everlasting life. As Son of man, He *must* be lifted up (verses 14, 15) ; as only-begotten Son of God, He is given by the *infinite love* of God (ver. 16). .

Many souls stop at the first, the Son of man's meeting the necessity in which men stood as sinners before God, and do not look on to that infinite love of God which gave His only-begotten Son—the love which provided the needed Lamb, the true source of all this work of grace, which stamps on it its true character and effect, and without which it could not be.

Hence such souls have not true peace and liberty with God. Practically for them the love is only in Christ, and God remains a just and unbending Judge. They do not really know Him, the God of love, our Saviour.

Others, alas ! will make of it fatal error ; false as to their own state and God's holiness ; with no true or adequate sense of sin, they reject all true propitiation. The "must be lifted up" has no moral place for them, nothing that the conscience, with a true sense of sin, needs.

The former was one great defect of the Reformation, the other comes of modern infidelity, for such it really is. Alas ! that defect of the Refor-

mation, as a system of doctrine, is the habitual state of many sincere souls now. But it is sad. Righteousness may reign for them with hope ; but it is not grace reigning through righteousness. I repeat, God is not known in His nature of love, nor indeed the present completeness of redemption.

The statement of John iii. begins with the need of man in view of what God is, as indeed it must ; but it gives as the source and result of it for the soul, its measure too in grace, that which was in the heart of God towards a ruined world. As in Hebrews x., to give us boldness to enter into the holiest, the origin is, “ Lo ! I come, to do thy will ; ” “ by the which will we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.” The offering was the means, but He was accomplishing the will of God in grace, and by the exercise of the same grace in which He came to do it ; for “ hereby know we love, that He laid down His life for us.” So in Romans v., “ God commends His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” It is summed up in the full saying : “ grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord ” (Rom. v. 21).

We cannot present too simply the value of Christ's blood, and redemption and forgiveness through it, to the awakened sinner whom that love may have drawn to feel his need ; for by need, and because of need, the sinner must come—it is his only just place before God. The love of God,

and even His love announced in forgiveness through the work of Christ, may, through the power of the Holy Ghost, awaken the sense of need ; still, having the forgiveness is another thing. That love, brought home to the soul through grace, produces confidence, not peace ; but it does produce confidence. Hence we come into the light. God is light and God is love. Christ in the world was the light of the world, and He was there in divine love. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. When God reveals *Himself*, He *must* be both light and love. The love draws and produces confidence ; as with the woman in the city who was a sinner, the prodigal, Peter in the boat. The light shews us our sinfulness. We are before God according to the truth of what He is, and the truth of what we are. But the atonement does more than shew this ; it meets, and is the answer to, our case when known. It is the ground through faith, of forgiveness and peace. (See Luke vii. 47-50.) Christ could anticipate His work, and the child of wisdom go in peace. The law may by grace reach the conscience and make us feel our guilt, but it does not reveal God in love. But that love has done what was needed for our sinful state—"Hereby perceive we love, because He laid down His life for us ;" "Who was delivered for our offences ;" "died for our sins according to the scriptures ;" is "the propitiation for our sins ;" "set forth as a mercy-seat through faith in His blood," which

“cleanses us from all sin ;” “with His stripes we are healed.” I might multiply passages ; I only now cite these, that the simple basis of the gospel in divine love on the one side, and on the other the work that love has brought to purge our sins, and withal our consciences, so that we may be in peace before a holy God, who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity,” may be simply and fully before us.

We must come as sinners to God, because we are sinners ; and we can only come in virtue of that which, while it is the fruit of God's love, meets according to His holy nature the sins we are guilty of. But then, while it is true that our sins are removed far from us who believe through grace, as they were carried into a land not inhabited by the scapegoat in Israel, yet we have only an incomplete view of the matter in seeing our sins put away. On the great day of atonement (Lev. xvi.) the blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat and before it, just as (Ex. xii.) it was sprinkled on the lintel and two door-posts to meet God's eye ; “When I see the blood,” He says, “I will pass over.” It was in view of the sin of Israel, but presented to God. The goat whose blood was shed on the great day of atonement, was called “Jehovah's lot.” The blood was carried within ; so it was with the bullock, and with the bullock it was exclusively this. The testimony was there, blessed be God, that as dwellers on the earth our sins have been carried

off where none shall find them ; but what characterized the day, was putting the blood on the mercy-seat—presenting it to God. On this day only, too, it was done. In the case of the sin of the congregation, or of the high priest (Lev. iv.), it was sprinkled on the altar outside the veil ; but on the great day of atonement alone on the mercy-seat within.

Now, though the sinner must come as guilty, and because of his need, and can come rightly in no other way, as the poor prodigal, and so many other actual cases, yet this does not reach to the full character of propitiation, or atonement, though in fact involving it. The divine glory and nature are in question. In coming, we come by our need and wants ; but if we have passed in through the veil, we can contemplate the work of Christ in peace, as viewed in connection with God's nature, though on our part referring to sin. The sins, then, were carried away on the scape-goat, but what God is, was specially in view in the blood carried within the veil. The sins were totally and for ever taken off the believers, and never found ; but there was much more in that which did it, and much more even for us. God's character and nature were met in the atonement, and through this we have boldness to enter into the holiest. This distinction appears in the ordinary sacrifices. They were offered on the brazen altar, and the blood sprinkled there. Man's responsibility was the measure of what was

required. His case was met as to guilt ; but if he was to come to God—into His presence—he must be fit for the holiness of that presence.

Not only has Christ borne our sins, but He has perfectly glorified God on the Cross, and the veil is rent, and we have boldness to enter into the holiest. The blood, therefore, of the bullock, and of the goat which was Jehovah's lot, was brought into the holiest. The other goat was the people's lot, this Jehovah's : He was dishonoured by sin ; and Christ the Holy One was made sin for us, was before God according to what God was in His holy and righteous nature.

“Now,” says the Lord, “is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him ;” and man entered into the holiest, into heaven itself. Having glorified God in the very place of sin, as made it before God, He enters into that glory on high. Love to God His Father, and absolute obedience at all costs were perfected, when He stood as sin before God. All that God is was glorified here, and here only : His Majesty ;—it became Him to maintain His glory in the moral universe, and thus in bringing many sons to glory, that He should make the Captain of our salvation, perfect through suffering ; His truth was made good ; perfect righteous judgment against sin, yet perfect love to the sinner. Had God cut off man for sin, there was no love ; had He simply for-

given and passed over all sins, there would have been no righteousness. People might have sinned on without its being any matter. There would have been no moral government. Man must have stayed away from God, and misery and allowed sin have had their fling ; or he must have been admitted into God's presence in sin, and sin been allowed there ; man incapable withal of enjoying God, and, as sensible of good and evil, more miserable than ever.

But in the cross perfect righteousness against sin is displayed and exercised, and infinite love to the sinner. God is glorified in His nature, and salvation to the vilest, and access to God, according to the holiness of that nature, provided for and made good, and this in the knowledge, in the conscious object of it, of the love that had brought it there ; a perfect and cleansing work in which that love was known. This, while the sins were put away, could only be by the cross : God revealed in love, God holy and righteous against sin, while the sins of the sinner were put away, his conscience purged, and, by grace, his heart renewed, in the knowledge of a love beyond all his thoughts ; himself reconciled to God, and God glorified in all that He is, as He could not else be ; perfect access to God in the holiest, where that blood, the testimony to all this, has been presented to God, and the sins gone for ever, according to God's righteousness ; while the sinner has the consciousness of being accepted according to the value of that sacrifice, in which

God has been perfectly glorified, so that the glory of God and the sinner's presence there were identified. Angels would learn, and principalities, and powers, what they could learn nowhere else.

And this marks the two parts of propitiation—man's responsibility, and access to God given according to His glory and nature ; in the sins borne, and put away, the scapegoat, God judging evil according to what man ought to be ; and access to God according to what He is. The last specifically *characterises* the Christian ; but the former was necessary, and accomplished for every one that believes ; both by the same work of the cross, but each distinct—judicial dealing, according to man's responsibility, access to God, according to His nature and holiness. The law in itself was the *measure* of the former, the child of Adam's duty ; the nature of God, of the latter, so that we have the infinite blessedness of being with God according to His nature and perfection, partaking of the divine nature, so as to be able to enjoy it, holy, and without blame before Him in love. Of this Christ as man, and we must add, as Son withal, is the measure and perfection ; and let it not be said that, if we partake of this nature, we need not this propitiation and substitution. This can only be said, or supposed, by those who have not got it ; because, if we partake of the divine nature, we judge of sin, in principle, as God does ; we have His mind as to it, and, as upright, of ourselves as in it, and so come, as I have said, first in lowliness

in our need to the cross ; and then, purged in conscience, comprehend the glory of God in it.

These two points, in their general aspect, are clearly presented in Hebrew ix. 26-28 : " Christ appeared once, in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself ; and as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." It is carried out in application in chapter x., where we have no more conscience of sins, and boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

But this leads us to a still wider bearing of the work of the cross. The whole question of good and evil was brought to an issue there : man in absolute wickedness and hatred against God manifested in goodness and love ; Satan's whole power as prince of this world, and having the power of death ; man in perfect goodness in Christ, obedience and love to His Father, and this in the place of sin as made it, for it was there the need was for God's glory and eternal redemption ; God in perfect righteousness and majesty, and in perfect love. So that all was perfectly settled morally and for ever. The fruits will be only complete in the new heavens and new earth, though the value of that work be now known to faith ; but what is eternal is settled for ever by it, for its value is such, and cannot change.

Propitiation, then, meets our sins through grace, according to God's holy nature, to which it is pre-

sented, and which has been fully glorified in it: It meets the requirements of that nature. Yet is it perfect love to us; love, indeed, only thus known as wrought between Christ and God alone, the only part we had in it being our sins, and the hatred to God which killed Christ.

But it does more, being according to God's nature, and all that this nature is in every respect. It not only judicially meets what is required by reason of our sins, man's failure in duty, and his guilt, but it opens access into the presence of God Himself, known in that nature which has been glorified in it. Love, God in love working unsought, has, through grace, made us love, and we are reconciled to God Himself, according to all that He is, our conscience having been purged according to His glory, so that love may be in unhindered confidence.

Man sits at the right hand of God in virtue of it, and our souls can delight in all that God is, our conscience being made perfect by that which has been wrought. No enfeebling or lowering the holiness of God in His judicial estimate of, and dealing with, sin: on the contrary, all that He is thus glorified; no pleading goodness to make sin light, but God, in the will and love of salvation, met in that judgment and holiness, and the soul brought to walk in the light, as He is in the light, and in the love which is His being and nature, without blame before Him; a perfect conscience, so as to be free before Him, but a purged one,

which has judged of sin as He does, but learned what sin is in the putting of it away. Without the atonement or propitiation of Christ, this is impossible. God is not brought in ; it is but human goodness, which drops holiness and overlooks sin, or estimates it according to mere natural conscience. Christ has died, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to *God*.

It is not *innocence*, for the knowledge of good and evil is there, nor the slighting of God, and an unpurged conscience, nor even the return to the former state of Adam (not knowing good and evil, innocent), but God fully revealed and known in majesty and light and love, and we brought to Him, according to that revelation in perfect peace and joy, by a work done for us which has met and glorified His majesty and light and love in the place of sin, as made it, by Him who knew no sin.

The full result will only be in the new heavens and new earth, the eternal state of blessedness, a condition of happiness not dependent on fulfilling the responsibility in which he who enjoyed it was placed, and in which he failed ; but based on a finished work, accomplished to the glory of God, in the very place of ruin, the value of which can never in the nature of things change ; it is according to the nature and character of God, it is done and is always what it is, and all is eternally stable. Righteousness, not innocence, dwells in the new heavens and the new earth, not feeble man responsible, but God glorified for evermore. The

result is not all there yet, but we know that the work is done, through the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; and, as believers, accepted in the Beloved, we wait for our portion in the rest when all shall be accomplished.

Judgment is according to man's responsibility, shut out, then, judicially into that exclusion from God into which man has cast himself. Blessing is according to the thoughts and purpose and nature of God, in the exceeding riches of His grace, displayed in our salvation through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, come to bring us into His presence as sons.

Sin and sins were before God in the cross, and propitiation wrought. There sin and sins met God, but in the work of love, according to holiness and righteousness, which brings to God, according to His nature, those who come to Him by it, cleared from them all for ever.



A SOLEMN LESSON AS TO THE PRINCIPLE OF METROPOLITANISM.

JOSHUA XI. (Read vs. 1-13, especially vs. 10-13).

In the beginning of the chapter we find that Israel's victories bring fresh war upon them; but the confederation of their enemies only serves to deliver them all together into their hands. If God will not have peace, it is because He will have victory.

In verses 10-13 a new principle is set before us. God will in nowise allow the world's seat of power to become that of His people; for His people depend exclusively on Him. The natural consequence of taking Hazor would have been to make it the seat of government, and a centre of influence in the government of God; so that this city should be that for God which it had before been for the world: "for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms." But it was just the contrary. Hazor is totally destroyed. God will not leave a vestige of former power; He will make all things new. The centre and the source of power must be His, entirely and exclusively His; a very important lesson for His children, if they would preserve their integrity.



Our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body (body of humiliation), that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body (body of glory), according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself. (Phil. iii. 20, 21.)

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. (John xvii. 16.)

"Every mark of the world is a reproach to him who is heavenly."

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 120.)

Deborah and Barak.

(chap. iv.)

Up to this time, God had, in judgment, delivered the unfaithful Israelites into the hands of outside enemies.* A further proof of unfaithfulness on their part, is followed by more serious consequences. Jabin, king of Canaan, reigning in Hazor, with nine hundred chariots of iron, a terrible adversary, conquered Israel and oppressed them. In Joshua xi. we find an ancestor of this very Jabin, with chariots of war and the same capital. In those days Israel understood, under the mighty energy of the Spirit of God, that there could be nothing in common between them and Jabin. They smote him with the edge of the sword, after having burnt his chariots with fire, and they destroyed his capital. Whatever connection could there be between the people of God and the political and military world, whose dominion was to be erased from the map of Canaan? Alas, all is now changed, and Israel, unfaithful, falls under the government of the world. Hazor, their ancient enemy, arises from its ashes, is resuscitated; it is rebuilt within the limits of Canaan, and the people's

*N. B.—I except the Philistines under Shamgar, the short narrative given in ch. iii. 31 being only an episode, as is proved by ch. iv. 1, where the general history is resumed, not at the death of Shamgar but at that of Ehud.

inheritance becomes the kingdom of Jabin ! This has its parallel in the history of the church, whose position at the beginning was one of entire separation from the world, consequently there was no thought of the latter being suffered to take any part in the affairs of the assembly. But the carnal state of the assembly at Corinth led one in its midst, who had a matter against another, to go to law before the unjust and not before the saints. (1 Cor. vi.) “Do you not know,” said the apostle, “that the saints shall judge the world ?” And rebuking them he adds : “I speak to your shame.” But what road has the church travelled since then ? In reality it is the world that governs the church : “I know,” says the Lord to Pergamos, “where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is.” (Rev. ii. 13.) Even in the great revival at the Reformation, saints had recourse to the governments of the world, and leant upon them. In the present day there are Christians who, when persecuted, instead of rejoicing to suffer for Christ’s sake, claim protection from the powers that be. The judgment on the Hazor of Joshua is no longer anything but a remembrance. Israel served the gods of the Canaanites, having taken their daughters to be their wives and given their daughters to their sons. (iii. 5, 6.) This union bore fruit, and Jabin oppresses the people who, whether they would or not, were forced to endure his rule.

Moreover, this was not the only symptom of Israel’s low condition in these inauspicious days.

For if outwardly they were ruled over by their enemy, what was the state of government within? Committed to the hands of a woman! At the outset, as the Word of God teaches us, the oversight of the church locally was committed to elders, appointed for this purpose by the apostles or their delegates, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The order of the assembly, in that which pertained to it locally, fell to their charge. Dropping for a moment man's imitation of this divine institution, would there be any exaggeration in saying that the tendency to entrust government, wholly or partially, into the hands of women is becoming increasingly marked amongst the sects of Christendom in the present day? It is even boasted of, and Christians go so far as to state and seek to prove that such a condition of things is of God, and shews the flourishing state of the church. They quote Deborah in favour of their opinion, but let us see what she was like.

Deborah was a remarkable woman, a woman of faith, one deeply impressed with the humiliating condition of the people of God. She sees that it would be to the *shame* of the leaders in Israel, that God should entrust a post of public activity to a woman in their midst. She says to Barak: "I will surely go with thee; notwithstanding the journey that thou takest *shall not be for thine honour, for* Jehovah shall sell Sisera into the hand of a *woman*." (v. 9.) But, in all her exercise of authority for God, to the confusion of this people

rendered effeminate by sin, Deborah maintains, in circumstances which might have proved a great snare to her, the place assigned by God in His Word to woman. She would not, otherwise, have been a woman of faith. This chapter gives us the history of two women of faith, Deborah and Jael. Each maintains the character in keeping with the position assigned by God to woman. Where does Deborah exercise her authority? Is she seen, as other judges, going in circuit over the land of Israel, or placing herself at the head of the armies? Nothing of the kind; and it is not without reason, it seems to me, that the Word says: "She *dwelt* under the palm tree of Deborah . . . and the children of Israel *came up to her* for judgment." (v. 5.) Prophetess and judge though she was in Israel, she did not step out of the sphere God had assigned to her. Instead of going to Barak, she sent and called him to her where she dwelt.

Barak was a man of God, and accounted by the Word a judge in Israel. "The time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Sampson, and of Jephthae." (Heb. xi. 32.) But Barak was a man lacking in character, moral energy and confidence in God. We must not expect in a day of ruin to see all the divine resources displayed in the instruments employed of God.

The labourers are few, but not only so, what little distinctiveness there is on the part of those who have the gifts of the Spirit, how little is their absence felt by Christians. Lack of character

in Barak, made him wish to be the woman's helper, whereas Gen. ii. 18 makes her the helper of the man. He degraded the office in which God had set him, and what was worse, he sought to take Deborah out of her place of dependence as a woman: "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go." (v. 8.) "I will surely go with thee," she replied. This she could do consistently with her place according to scripture. We read in later times of holy women who accompanied the Lord, becoming His servants in order to minister to His needs. Deborah's act was right, but Barak's motive was wrong, and Deborah rebukes him severely. (v. 9.) What was Barak's motive at bottom? He was willing to depend on God, but not without a human and tangible prop as well. There are many such souls in Christendom. There is, on their part, so little sense of the presence of God, so slight a knowledge of His will, so little decision as to their walk, that, in order to go on in the path of God, they prefer leaning on another to direct dependence on Him only. The counsel of "spiritual directors" is followed, rather than that of the Lord, His Spirit and His Word. What if the leader they follow be mistaken? But God, the Lord, His Spirit, His Word, are infallible! Faithful Deborah does not encourage Barak in this wrong course, and Barak suffers the consequences of his want of faith.

He goes up with his army, and Deborah with

him. . Heber, one of the Kenites, of whom we have already spoken in Chap. I., had, in these troublous times, seen fit to sever himself from his tribe, and pitch his tent elsewhere (v. 11). Now "there was peace between Jabin, the king of Hazor, and the house of Heber, the Kenite." (v. 17.)

Heber's act does not seem to have been one of faith. He separated himself from the people in their low estate so as to relieve himself of the responsibility of Israel's sorrowful condition.* Moreover, he was at peace with the avowed enemy of his people ; and he had so managed as not to be disquieted by Jabin. But a weak woman dwelt under Heber's tent, who refused safety at such a price, and did not acknowledge an alliance with the enemy of her nation. Israel had undivided possession of her heart. Barak gains the victory, and Deborah, this woman of faith, and mother in Israel, plays no part in it. Sisera's army is defeated ; and he himself, forced to flee away on foot, comes to the tent of Jael, where he counts on finding a hospitable shelter. Jael hides him ; he asks for a drink of water, and she gives him what was better, milk. She does not treat him at first as an enemy, but with pity ; yet in presence of the enemy of her people she becomes pitiless. The instrument she used for Israel's deliverance was even more worthless than Shamgar's, for the only weapons she had were the tools of a woman who keeps the tent ; it is with them that she deals the fatal blow

*N. B.—This is more or less the history of all the sects in Christendom.

to the head of the enemy. Jael, like Deborah and every woman of faith, does not go at all beyond her sphere. She carries out her work of vengeance inside her dwelling, with the arms with which the tent supplied her, and gains the victory there ; for women are also called to face the enemy, though it be in the place and with the special weapons assigned to them by God. The faith of these women shines out in this chapter—Jael does not, like Barak, seek a helper ; she depends entirely on the Lord. The secret of her action lies between herself and God. She handles the weapons belonging to her contracted sphere, as skilfully as a man could have done ; for had her hand trembled in the very least, all would have been compromised. Alone (her husband, her natural protector, being absent), but with the Lord, she—one in heart with all the arrayed armies of Israel—fights under her tent. And Deborah in her song can say of her : “ Blessed *above women* shall Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite, be ; blessed shall she be above women *in the tent.*” (v. 24.)

With what feelings of humiliation Barak must have gazed on Jael’s victory, seeing a woman thus honoured of God, in a path in which he, though leader and judge, had not wished to walk.

All honour to these women ! God made use of them to *arouse* the children of His people to a sense of their responsibility, for once awakened : “ they destroyed Jabin, king of Canaan.” (v. 24.)

(*To be continued, D.V.*)

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 140.)

Deborah's Song.

(chap. v.)

Jehovah had wrought a wonderful deliverance through the instrumentality of two weak women, and a man lacking in character; the very feebleness of His instruments serving to magnify His grace and power. The victory, as we have said, is the signal for the awakening of the people, and the Spirit of God gives expression to it by the mouth of the prophetess. Deborah and Barak relate and celebrate the blessings recovered through Israel's deliverance.

(v. 1.) "Then sang Deborah and Barak, the son of Ahinoam, on that day, saying : "

The first thing that follows the deliverance is praise; very different, doubtless, in a day of ruin, from what it was at the beginning, when they went forth out of Egypt: "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord." (Exod. xv. 1.) The whole nation joined their leader in the song of deliverance; not a voice was silent. Imagine the harmony of those 600,000 voices, blended in one celebrating, on the sea shore, the victory achieved by the Lord! "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." All the women, with Miriam at their head, joining in these praises, repeated the same words, "Sing

ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." (Exod. xv. 20, 21.) What a contrast to Judges v. ! "Then sang Deborah and Barak." One woman and one man—two by themselves—two witnesses of a time of ruin ; but the Lord is present, the Spirit of God is there ; and if these two are the witnesses of the ruin, they can, nevertheless, rejoice and celebrate the greatness of the work of the Lord. Renewal of praise is the mark of a true revival, and the children of God when restored in soul feel this their first need. Deborah and Barak do not isolate themselves, even though all the people are not with them ; they acknowledge the unity of the nation, and their praise is the expression of what all Israel should have rendered.

(v. 2.) "For that the leaders took the lead in Israel, for that the people offered themselves willingly, bless ye the Lord." (Revised Version.) The motive for praise is what the grace of God has produced in the leaders, and among the people. God recognizes that, and thus encourages His own, so vacillating and weak.

(v. 3.) "Hear, O ye kings ; give ear, O ye princes ; I, even I, will sing unto the Lord ; I will sing unto the Lord ; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel."

Praise belongs exclusively to the saints. "I, even I," they say. Kings and princes are invited to listen ; but they have no part in the song, for the deliverance of Israel is their ruin.

(vs. 4, 5.) "Lord, when thou wentest out of

Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel."

These words recall the commencement of Moses' song in Deut. xxxiii., to which Ps. lxxviii. 7, 8 also refers. In these we find another important principle of the revival. Souls are led back to the first blessings, seeking again what God gave at the beginning. Instead of being guided by what passed before their eyes, they ask themselves, "What hath God wrought?" This is our safeguard in a day of ruin. Let us not say, like unfaithful Christians, we should adapt ourselves to the time in which we live. At a time of which the Apostle John said, "It is the last hour" (1 John ii. 18. Revised Version), the saints had as a resource: "That which was from the beginning." (1 John i. 1.)

(vs. 6, 8.) "In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied," etc.

Here we have a new principle. The faithful acknowledge the ruin in Israel. They neither attempt to palliate nor excuse the evil, but judge it according to God. Four things characterize the ruin: 1st, "The highways were unoccupied and the travellers walked through by-ways." This is the result of the enemy's yoke. The people could no longer walk safely along the highways, those

roads on which all had walked together, for it was there that they met the enemy, and the travellers chose the by-paths, each one according to the choice of his own heart. Is it not this also which characterizes the church of God in our day?

Secondly, "The inhabitants of the villages ceased." The places where the people were wont to dwell in peace, surrounded by their families, were deserted. This visible unity of the people had disappeared until the day that Deborah was raised up for the partial restoration of Israel. Is the unity of the family of God more apparent at the present day? Alas! although a faithful few may act upon it, it exists no longer in its entirety, except to faith and in the counsels of God.

Thirdly, "They chose new gods; then was war in the gates." Yes, idolatry had become the religion of the people who had forsaken God, the eternal God. Israel, having offended the Lord, was chastised by war, and by a relentless enemy.

Fourthly, "Was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?" No longer were there weapons to combat evil. Where now are the weapons? What has been done with the sword of the Spirit? Where is the power of the Word to resist the false doctrines swarming in the very midst of Christendom, eating as they do like a canker, and trampling in the dust the wondrous name of Christ? "How long," says the Psalmist, (iv. 2), "will ye turn my glory into shame?" Even the shield of faith has been cast down to the ground,

evil is in the ascendancy, and the people of God powerless to withstand it.

In the confusion which exists, the part of the faithful is to apprehend the magnitude of the evil, and bow their heads in humiliation. It is not enough to realize our heavenly blessings, God would have us, who are His people, fully know how greatly, in the existing state of things, we have dishonoured Him, in order that we may separate from it. If we are in the testimony of God, we withdraw from evil. The most terrible characteristic of the last days is not open immorality, although the state of things is deeply corrupt, but more particularly false doctrines. ² Timothy exhorts us especially in regard to the latter, to depart from iniquity, and to purge ourselves from vessels to dishonour. But this is not enough ; the prophetess adds :

(v. 9.) " My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people." This is another principle. The soul sees what the Spirit of God has wrought, and associates itself with it. The heart of Deborah is with the faithful in Israel. She takes her place openly with those who offered themselves willingly; and, recognizing what God has wrought amidst the ruin, she says : " Bless ye the Lord ! " happy to see here below this little testimony among the governors. May all our hearts appreciate it, and may we be able to say with her : " Bless ye the Lord."

(vs. 10, 11.) Then, turning to those who were

in the peaceful enjoyment of recovered blessings, the prophetess says : " Meditate, ye that ride on white asses " (margin), an indication of wealth and prosperity ; the sons of noble families and of the judges possessed this privilege. (c. f. x. 4 ; xii. 14.) It is like an appeal to those who enjoy, without fighting, the fruit of the victory. " Ye that sit on rich carpets " (Revised Version), those who have the advantage of the rest and quiet with their attendant blessings. " Ye that walk by the way," those who enjoy the security that has been gained. Deborah, I say, addresses herself to these, and invites them to " meditate." They have done nothing in this victory but taste its fruits, for some only had fought, and their voices were heard in the division of the spoil, in the places of drawing water. It must not be forgotten, that however blessed these times were, they were not the restoration of Israel, any more than the revivals of our days are the re-establishment of the church. If the conquerors could rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord towards the unprotected cities of Israel, if the people had arisen to go down to the gates and confront the enemy, it was none the less a time of ruin and of but partial restoration. Ah ! how needful it is for the people of God in our days to remember these things !

But there are still greater blessings for us. The spirit of the song becomes more and more filled with fervour, in rapidity of utterance do the words flow forth from the mouth of Deborah.

(v. 12.) “Awake, awake, Deborah : awake, awake, utter a song : arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Ahinoam.” The 68th Psalm, that magnificent song, passages of which re-call that of Deborah (c. f. verses 8, 9, 13, 18), celebrates the full millennial restoration of Israel, consequent on the exaltation of the Lord. It is there said that the Lord will dwell in the midst of his people : “The Lord will dwell in it forever.” . . . “The Lord is among them.” Whence can this blessing come? The prophet replies, “Thou hast ascended on high, thou has led captivity captive : thou has received gifts in the man (margin) ; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” Now the words of this Psalm, which celebrates the fulness of future blessings, we hear proceeding from the lips of a weak woman in a day of ruin, when the Lord has marked Israel’s forehead with the sign of lost blessings ! “Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Ahinoam.” What encouragement for us ! The highest truths of all are the special portion of faith, in the low state of the Judges, as they are now for us in the perilous times through which we are passing. The song of Moses, overflowing with the joy of a redeemed people, after the passage of the Red Sea, celebrated *deliverance by death*, to bring the people to the dwelling place of God ; and later on, to the sanctuary which His hands had established. Marvellous song, the song of a soul just delivered,

as it contemplates the victory of which the cross is the antitype ; hymn where the heart, like ointment poured forth, ascends in the praises of deliverance—a deliverance which no hymn can fully express.

It is a woman who, in a day of obscurity and ruin, sounds forth a song which rises above death, the hymn of *deliverance by resurrection*. Of whom, in “Arise, Barak,” is she speaking here? Is it merely of the son of Ahinoam? For our part we do not doubt that Barak is a type, somewhat obscure it may be, of Christ ascended to God’s right hand, having led captivity captive. (Eph. iv. 8.)

A dark and sorrowful state of things had supervened since the song in Exodus, but here the prophetic intelligence of a woman directs us heavenward, in the type of a risen Christ. She awakes ; her eyes are opened to contemplate a glorious scene, Barak rising up to lead the vanquished captivity, faint image of that liberty into which a victorious Christ introduces us to enjoy eternally with Himself. If the things spoken of at the beginning of this chapter characterize the awakening of the present time, one at least of them should especially predominate, and that is, the knowledge of a glorified Man ascended to the right hand of God, One whom our eyes and our hearts follow in that heavenly scene, into which He, as victor, has entered, after having delivered us by His death and resurrection. Once more, beloved, far from

- being discouraged, have we not cause to repeat with Deborah, "Praise ye the Lord"?

(v. 13.) "Then came down a remnant of the nobles and the people; the Lord came down for me against the mighty." (Revised Version.)

Now Israel is called to come down to the place she was in at the beginning, to fight and to bear testimony in the midst of a scene where God is still leaving her. We cannot expect, even in a time of religious awakening, to see all the people come down. It will never be but "a remnant of the nobles," but how great the privilege, for God reckons this remnant "as His people," for it is in His eyes the blessed representation of them. What joy of heart should it not be to the faithful to see even one witness separated to God from the mass, which, like Reuben, "abode among the sheepfolds." However much we may desire it, we must not expect more, for otherwise it would not be a day of ruin. And, moreover, what a portion is ours! "The Lord came down for me against the mighty." Brethren, should not that suffice us? He who has ascended on high, is the same who comes down with us to give us the victory in every fresh conflict.

(vs. 14-18.) God notes those who have been for Him, and those who, for one motive or another, have remained behind. Ephraim, Benjamin, Zebulun, and Issachar came down, with undivided hearts, in the Lord's path. But, lo! Reuben hesitates at the frontier to consider.

Wherefore this indecision? "Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleating of the flocks?" The trumpet calling the people together had no voice for the heart of Reuben. His prosperity was such, that he preferred remaining in the peaceful enjoyment of his acquired wealth, resting among the sheepfolds, stopping at the water-courses (Revised Version), which formed his boundary. Fellow Christians of the present day, is that our position? Have we followed the nobles who have shown us the way? Have we been content with "great searchings of heart?" Are we lacking in decision in testimony for Christ?

"Gilead abode beyond Jordan." Those days were past when Gilead, equipped for war, accompanied his brethren in their conquests of Canaan. Now, satisfied with his worldly position—shall I say, worldly religion?—outside the limits of the land strictly speaking, beyond Jordan, he is unconscious of any further need, and remains where he is. "Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches." When it was a question of fighting, where was Asher to be found? Occupied with his own concerns, his business. He had not made the least sacrifice in these in order to take part in the Lord's battle. However, Deborah does not linger in the recital of evil. Full of joy, she delights in relating every instance of devotedness to the Lord. (v. 18.) "Zebulun and Naphthali were a people that

jeopardied their lives unto the death in the high places of the field."

Then in verses 19-22, we have another characteristic of faithfulness. They do not glory in, nor think of, themselves; but the victory was attributed to God only, in the proclamation of its heavenly character.

"They *fought from heaven*; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." This part of the song closes with an unqualified malediction on Meroz. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Those who in these troublous times do not take sides with Christ; those who identify themselves with His name and that of God's people, and whose hearts are at the same time indifferent to Himself, let them be cursed. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." (1 Cor. xvi. 22.)

Now (verses 24-27) Jael is honoured, that which has a little strength is blessed. "He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish." When the enemy of the people of God comes to her, this woman shows grace. Bringing forth the best thing she has in her tent in recognition of Sisera's rank, she hands him the refreshment in a lordly dish. Is not this the very opposite of contempt? Is it not thus that we should act towards the enemies of God,

giving them for their thirst and their nourishment even more than they ask? God's witnesses go on with grace beyond the worst enemies of Christ.

Jael is celebrated because she acted thus ; but let us read what follows : " She put her hand to the nail and her right hand to the workman's hammer ; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples." Ah ! the heart of Jael was unreservedly with the God of Israel, with the Israel of God : when it became a question of the truth, and of treating the enemy as such, she displayed the greatest energy. This woman is, at this juncture, in the contracted sphere of the house, the real leader of the armies of Jehovah. She is in the foremost rank, honoured of God to gain the victory, for she has an undivided heart for His people. Curse ye, Meroz ; but blessed be Jael.

(Verses 28, 30.) Another scene is taking place in the palace of Sisera's mother, whose pride is humbled to the very dust.*

The song of Deborah closes with these words : " So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord ; but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth

*N. B.—It may be observed in passing, that in spite of the eminent position given her of God, Deborah maintains her character of a mother in Israel, and manifests remarkable intelligence as to what comes within the province of her sex, celebrating that which honours Jael, the woman of faith, and proclaiming what draws down judgment on the haughty woman. Later on, another woman, the Queen of Sheba, welcomed by Solomon, did not review the armies of that king, but gave her attention to " the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord." (1 Kings x. 4, 5.) Showing an intelligent appreciation of what belonged to that sphere.

forth in his might. (v. 31.) Here we have one more recovered blessing which characterizes the awakening : Deborah proclaims her hope. She looks on to that glorious day, when the Lord having executed judgment, the saints in Israel shall shine forth as the sun itself, like Him whose countenance was, in the eyes of the prophet, “as the sun shineth in his strength.” (Rev. i. 16, c. f. Matt. xiii. 43.)

Amid the darkness of this world’s night we have too, beloved brethren, but far better than Deborah, this hope very near. Already the morning star has arisen in our hearts, already the eye of faith, piercing the veil, rejoices in the wondrous scene that is still concealed, but which is summed up in the ineffable words, “So shall we ever be with the Lord.”

“For ever with the Lord !”

Amen ! so let it be :

Life from the dead is in that word,
’Tis immortality.

Here in the body pent,

Absent from Him we roam,

Yet nightly pitch our moving tent
A day’s march nearer home.

Our Father’s house on high,

Home to our souls how dear,

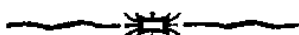
E’en now, to faith’s transpiercing eye
Thy golden gates appear !

Our thirsty spirits faint
To reach the home we love ;
The bright inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above.

And though there intervene
Rough seas and stormy skies ;
Though by no mortal vision seen,
Thy glory fills our eyes.

There shall all clouds depart,
The wilderness shall cease ;
And sweetly shall each gladden'd heart
Enjoy eternal peace.

(To be continued, D.V.)



WHO HAS CHARGE OF YOUR MONEY-BOX ?

“ There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ;
and there is that withholdeth more than is meet,
but it tendeth to poverty.”—PROV. xi. 24.

I fancy I hear the reader exclaim, “ What a funny title ! Whatever can it mean ? ”

Just listen to me while I relate an incident that happened in England some years ago. A Christian father had in his keeping the money-boxes of his two little children. They were kept locked, and the children didn't know how much was in them. One of them came to his father one day and said that he would like to get a present for his mother on her birthday, which was drawing near. His father explained to him that it would not be a present from him unless he paid for it out of his

own money. The child was quite willing to do so. Soon after, the father took the boy into a shop to buy the present. They looked around, and at last the little fellow selected an article. On hearing the price, the father told him that he had not enough money to pay for it, and that he must choose something else. In a short time he did so. When the price was known, the father told the child that he would be able to pay for that, but that it would take the most of his money. The dear little fellow didn't mind that in the least, but said he would like to get that for mama. It was bought, paid for out of the boy's money, and given to the mother on her birthday.

The father was so much pleased with the unselfishness shown in the matter and at the affection manifested by the boy for his mother, that he determined that the child should not be a loser. From time to time the father slipped into his money-box a penny, sometimes a sixpence, and so on, till, without the child's knowing it, the amount was more than replaced.

Dear fellow-believer, is there no lesson in the foregoing for you and for me?

If the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and (through grace) *our* God and *our* Father (John xx. 17) sees us spending on ourselves and our own interests, the most of what He has entrusted us with (1 Cor. iv. 2), will He not very likely do what He did as recorded in Haggai i. 3-11; ii. 15-17? Now Haggai i. 12-14 and ii. 18, 19 show us

the result of the word of the Lord having taken effect in the hearts and consciences of the people.

If our God and Father sees you and me diligent in caring for the interests of His beloved Son—JESUS—our Lord, will it not delight His heart more than that of the father in the incident referred to above? and do you think we shall be losers by it? Read 2 Cor. ix. 6-8; but also 2 Cor. viii. 9 and 12, and weigh the matter over before the Lord; but be careful that you do not do something to get something. Let it be: “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that 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 Cor. v. 14, 15.)

O what a debt I owe
To Him who shed His blood,
And cleans'd my soul and gave me power
To stand before His God.

Saviour and Lord, I own
The riches of Thy grace;
For I can call Thy God, my God—
Can bow before His face.

Thy Father, too, above,
I worship as my own;
Who gave with Thee the Spirit's cry,
To me a son foreknown.

Again, just ponder over this magnificent verse:
“My God shall abundantly supply all your need

according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. iv. 19. New Translation.) What an inexhaustible amount, in such safe keeping and in such a money-box !



SAMUEL'S REPLY TO SAUL.

Read 1 Samuel xv.

There is immense power in Samuel's brief but pointed reply to Saul, “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” (1 Sam. xv. 22.) Saul's word was “*Sacrifice.*” Samuel's word was “*Obedience.*” No doubt, the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen were most exciting. They would be looked upon as substantial proofs that something was being done; while on the other hand, the path of obedience seemed narrow, silent, lonely, and fruitless. But oh! those pungent words of Samuel! “*To obey is better than sacrifice.*” What a triumphant answer to the most eloquent advocates of expediency! They are most conclusive—most commanding words. They teach us that it is better, if it must be so, to stand, like a marble statue, on the pathway of obedience, than to reach the most desirable ends by transgressing a plain precept of the word of God.

But let none suppose that one must be like a statue on the path of obedience. Far from it. There are rare and precious services to be rendered by the obedient one—services which can only be rendered by such, and which owe all their preciousness to their being the fruit of simple obedience. True, they may not find a place in the public records of man's bustling activity ; but they are recorded on high, and they will be published at the right time. As a dear friend has often said to us, " Heaven will be the safest and happiest place to hear all about our work down here." May we remember this, and pursue our way, in all simplicity, looking to Christ for guidance, power, and blessing. May His smile be enough for us. May we not be found looking askance to catch the approving look of a poor mortal whose breath is in his nostrils, nor sigh to find our names amid the glittering record of the great men of the age. The servant of Christ should look far beyond all such things. The grand business of the servant is to obey. His object should not be to do a great deal, but simply to do what he is told. This makes all plain ; and, moreover, it will make the Bible precious as the depository of the Master's will to which he must continually betake himself to know what he is to do, and how he is to do it. Neither tradition, nor expediency will do for the servant of Christ. The all-important inquiry is, " What saith the scriptures ? " This settles everything. From

the decision of the word of God there must be no appeal. When God speaks, man must bow. It is not by any means a question of obstinate adherence to a man's own notions. Quite the opposite. It is a reverent adherence to the word of God. Let the reader distinctly mark this. It often happens that, when one is determined, through grace, to abide by scripture, he will be pronounced dogmatic, intolerant and imperious; and, no doubt, one has to watch over his temper, spirit, and style, even when seeking to abide by the word of God. But, be it well remembered that obedience to Christ's commandments is the opposite of imperiousness, dogmatism, and intolerance. It is not a little strange that when a man tamely consents to place his conscience in the keeping of his fellow, and to bow down his understanding to the opinions of men, he is considered meek, modest, and liberal; but let him reverently bow to the authority of holy scripture, and he will be looked upon as self-confident, dogmatic, and narrow-minded. Be it so. The time is rapidly approaching when obedience shall be called by its right name, and meet its recognition and reward. For that moment the faithful must be content to wait, and, while waiting for it, be quite satisfied to let men call them whatever they please. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." (Psalms xciv. 11.)

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."—
2 Tim. ii. 15.

JOHN I, AND PROVERBS VIII.

Open the veil into eternity, and the mysterious existence of God is revealed. In John, the majesty of the two Persons ; in Prov., the delights, and joys of the two Persons of the Godhead—self-sufficiency. From all eternity the Father and the Son co-existed, and the corresponding relationship existed and was enjoyed by both. But, in time, the Son entered into that relationship as man (see Luke i. 35), into the divine and eternal relationship of Son with the Father. But He was the only-begotten Son in eternity. God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.



“Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father : for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father : and 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. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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.”—MATT. XI. 25-30.

HIS BEAUTY.

“ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*”—
1 John v. 21.

“ *The love of Christ constraineth us.*”—*2 Cor. v. 14.*

Dost thou know the love of JESUS ?

Then is thine a raptur'd heart ;

“ Chief among ten thousand ” own HIM,
Joyful choose the better part.

What has stripp'd the seeming beauty,

From the idols of the earth ?

Not the sense of right or duty,
But the sight of *peerless worth.*

Not the crushing of those idols,

With its bitter void and smart,

But the *beaming* of His *beauty*,
The *unveiling* of His *heart.*

'Tis that look that melted Peter,

'Tis that face that Stephen saw,

'Tis that heart that wept with Mary,
Can alone from idols draw.

Draw, and win, and *fill completely*,

Till the cup o'erflow the brim ;

What have we to do with idols,
Who have companied with HIM ?



“ One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will
I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the
Lord all the days of my life, *to behold the beauty of
the Lord*, and to enquire in His temple.”—Ps.
xxvii. 4.

THE FULL IMPORT OF CONVERSION.

I THESSALONIANS I. 9, 10.

It should ever be borne in mind that the Lord Himself must be the centre in testimony, however blessed it is to put forth the gospel of God's grace. Here, in Thessalonica, these souls were brought out to serve the living and true God. The whole man turned to God—a totally new state from beginning to end ; not merely getting relief to conscience, but God Himself in Christ become the object before the soul. This is the full import of conversion, as we get it in 1 Thessalonians i. 9, 10—a man being turned round to God ; there is repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

When you believe, you get an entirely new life and you judge the past—you repent because you believe ; it all comes together, like the prodigal when he turned to his father's house, there is a totally new life, state, and object. "They who are after the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit," etc. (Rom. viii. 5) ; and "Our conversation is in heaven," etc. (Phil. iii. 20), is the doctrinal statement of this. You must get such a knowledge of self as to get rid of it. If you faithfully said, "I am dead," Satan could not tempt you. You may not always be able to do this, but it is yours to say, as one "born of water and of the Spirit." The water cleanses, but being born of the Spirit gives a new position and a new life.

We know we are born of God—that eternal life that was with the Father is my life, and that is Christ; He has become my life. The Lord breathing on the disciples was not the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. When Christ ascended to heaven, He received the Holy Ghost afresh for us. He had it before, but He received it for us when He went up on high. It is through the second Man, gone into glory, after having put away our sins, that we get the Spirit. God comes down to us in our sins as Man, and as Man He goes up, and receives the Holy Ghost for us. Man in Christ takes a new place in resurrection. The work of Christ on the cross clears the conscience; then Christ Himself becomes our life. This is a totally new state—a new creation.

The first thing needed, is to have the question of sin settled, and to know that all our sins were borne by Christ, and put away. If you charge me with my sins, God declares that the blood that cleansed me is always under His eye; He *cannot* impute my sins to me, their imputation was to Christ. It is what God sees that clears me, not that I have accepted Christ, but that God has. What gives *peace* is, that the work of Christ has perfectly settled the question of sin.

Practically, if I sin, not only am I miserably failing, but I am doing the thing that caused Christ's agony, but if it did that, it cannot be imputed to me. We have the teaching connected with our practical state in the type of the red

heifer (Num. xix.) The ashes—sin consumed on the cross—with the running water, were sprinkled on the unclean person. The ashes are applied to the soul in testimony of the whole thing having been consumed—sin put away. If I indulge a foolish thought even, the Holy Spirit is grieved, and I am uncomfortable ; but I cannot judge myself for sin, unless I am certain that it is not imputed. The answer to everything is the work done on the cross. That work sets us in the presence of God, in the light, without a stain, our sin having been laid on Christ, according to God's knowledge of it.

Nothing tests the heart so much as realizing that "the worshipper once purged, has no more conscience of sins" (Heb. x. 2.) There can be no real or right sanctification till a man is clear about sin. Until I know my perfect acceptance, and am perfectly assured of salvation, through all sin being gone, I am mingling up my state with my standing. The holy nature is there, but there can be no proper sanctification till I see that Christ has not borne my sins up to such a day, but that *all* my sins are gone ; and, besides that, I have a perfect acceptance in Christ.

There are three things : peace as to sins ; present grace ; and glory to come (Rom. v. 1, 2). Not merely no condemnation as in Christ Jesus, all sin having been cleared away, but a position—a new place in Christ Himself—is ours. All, as to the first Adam, was settled on the cross, and I have a new place

in Christ, and I am called to walk now as Christ walked (1 John ii. 6), but, also, I am to be conformed to God's Son in glory (Rom. viii. 29; see also 1 Cor. xv. 49). I am to walk as Christ walked, not to be as Christ was. He was without sin in Him, we have sin *in* us, but sin in our *walk* is never to be allowed. (1 John ii. 1.)

“We all, with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Cor. iii. 18). Not only are my sins cleared away, but I see a Man gone into glory, and now, not only I would not sin, but I want to be like that Christ in glory—I press on towards the mark. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself even as He is pure” (1 John iii. 2, 3). I see Christ in glory, by faith, now; I know I am to be like Him by-and-by, and I want to be as like Him as ever I can be, even now. It is like a light at the end of a tunnel, the nearer I get, the brighter the light. I see the flesh in me never changes, only appears worse and worse; but if my eye is fixed on Christ, and my mind is occupied with, and full of, Him, I shall get more like Him at every step—“changed into the same image from glory to glory.”

There must be nothing in the heart or walk not like Christ—all must be given up to Him; and, as

to walk, I am to walk as Christ did. The account we get of the flesh is lawlessness, before the flood ; then, under law it makes a golden calf ; then, Christ, come in grace, is rejected and crucified ; then, the Holy Ghost is rejected through Stephen ; and lastly, if a man goes into the third heaven, as soon as he comes down, the flesh must have a thorn (2 Cor. xii). There is no changing it, but that is no reason why we should let it act ; there is no present consciousness that the flesh is acting at all, if the soul is full of Christ. I am not thinking of it if I am thinking of Christ, I reckon the flesh dead. If a man is dead, you cannot charge him with a wicked will and lusts. Not only Christ was crucified, but I have been crucified with Him. (Rom. vi. 6 ; Gal. ii. 20.) I have always that death of the cross to bring in, and I have Christ as my life—"If we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with Him." I get the power of Christ acting in me with this new life. The sin I find in my flesh was put to death in Christ, and I have done with it. But another point, I get Christ as the object of my life—"The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

You find many who know their sins are forgiven, yet who do not know what it is to have been crucified with Christ. You can never get rid of self till you know this. In Romans vii. the soul is quickened, but not delivered ; it is under the first husband, renewed, because of knowing the spiritu-

ality of the law, but it is learning that it has no strength. It is harder to learn that you have no strength, than that you are ungodly. The last stage is, "I thank my God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." This is deliverance. The moment Christ comes in there is power, but I must learn my weakness; not a balance between flesh and Spirit. God, having condemned sin in the flesh, on the cross (Rom. viii. 3), I am dead to it. If I am told of a fine concert, or anything else, I say, "I am dead to it." A gardener has no idea of pruning a crab-apple tree; he cuts it down, and grafts with a new thing altogether.

People do not recognize the fact of their having died with Christ (Rom. vi. 8; Col. ii. 20), as well as of Christ having died for them. Many a quickened soul does not know the full value of the work of Christ, and that "as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17). When the blood was on the lintels and door-posts the Israelites were safe, but when they came to the Red Sea, and were told to stand still, and see "the salvation of God" (Ex. xiv. 13; read also vs. 30, 31), there was positive deliverance—they were taken out of one place and put into another.

My standing is, that I am not in the flesh, but in the Spirit: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom viii. 9)—is not in a right standing at all. "Ye in me, and I in you" (John xiv. 20), that is where I get my standing in Christ before God.

The way the Thessalonians lived, as to testimony, was most blessed. One can never present it by *trying* to do it. If my heart be full of Christ, I shall not merely be avoiding evil, but, as Paul prays in connection with the Philippians, desiring to be filled with the fruits of righteousness ; and, having got God's mind, I shall yield my body as a living sacrifice to Him. Paul did but one thing ; he ran after Christ in glory. This is what conversion really is—Christ *everything* to the soul.



FRAGMENT ON SERVICE.—“ Those who fight the Lord's battles must be contented to be in no respect accounted of ; they must expect to be in no respect encouraged by the prospect of *human* praise. And if you make an exception, ‘ that the children of God will praise you, whatever the world may say,’ beware of this, for you may turn them into a world, and find in them a world, and may sow to the flesh in sowing to their approbation ; and you neither will be benefited by them nor they by you, so long as respect for them is your motive. All such motives are a poison and a taking away from you the strength in which you are to give glory to God. It is not the fact, that all that see the face of the Lord do see each other. It is not the fact, that the misapprehension of the world is the only misapprehension the Christian must be contented to labour under. He must expect even his brethren to see him

through a mist, and to be disappointed of their sympathy and their cheers of approbation ; *the man of God must walk alone with God, he must be contented that the Lord knoweth.* And it is such a relief, yea, it is such a relief to the natural man with us, to fall back upon human countenances, and human thoughts and sympathy, that we often deceive ourselves, and think it ‘brotherly love,’ when we are just resting in the early sympathy of some fellow-worm. You are to be followers of Him who was left alone, and you are, like Him, to rejoice you are not alone, *because the Father is with you*, that you may give glory to God. Oh ! I cannot but speak of it. It is such a glory to God to see a soul that has been accessible to the praise of men, surrounded by hundreds and thousands of his fellow-creatures, every one of whom he knows how to please, and yet that he should be contented, yea, pleased and happy, in doing, with a single reference to God, that which he knows they will all misunderstand. Here was the victory of Jesus—there was not a single heart that beat in sympathy with His heart, or entered into His bitter sorrow, or bore His grief in the hour of His bitter grief ; but His way was with the Lord—His judgment was with His God—His Father—who said, ‘There is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ This was the perfect glory given to the Father by the Son, that *in flesh and blood* such a trust in God was manifested ; and that is what you are called to, and you are

not called to it as He was, but you are called to see God in Him. God has come near to you in Christ, and here you have a human heart—a perfect sympathy—the heart of God in your nature, and to this you are ever carried. And if there be any other sympathy with you in the wide universe, whether on the sea of glass, or still on this earth, it is only as the *pulsation of the blood that flows from Christ—to His members—that it is to you of any account*. Feed upon it, and remember you are thus to walk in the world not hanging one upon another.”



“No direction to leave any of the Seven Churches,” says some one. There is no individual direction to do anything in them but to “listen,” I reply. What we get in them is what *Christ* will do, not what *I* am to do ; that I get elsewhere. I don’t want to be spued out of Christ’s mouth. Do you?



MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 154.)

Gideon.

(Chap. vi-viii.)

The word of God reaching the conscience.

(vi. 1-10.)

In spite of all the blessings enumerated in chap. v, Israel very soon relapsed into evil ways and for-

sook Jehovah. By way of chastisement for this unfaithfulness, God delivered them into the hands of the Midianites. The people passed through all the phases of misery (material for them—moral for the church) which invariably follow going after the world and forsaking God. Under Jabin, Israel was without arms (chap. v. 8) ; under the yoke of Midian he was famished—the consequence of our unfaithfulness, from which we always suffer when we seek our portion with the world. It drags us down and takes away our arms, our strength leaves us, and we lose every means of withstanding ; not only so, but the very sources of existence are also lacking, for the world never affords nourishment to any one, and we perceive it by the barrenness which invades the soul, when, in our folly, we leave the marrow and fatness of the house of God for the harvests which are merely a mirage of the desert. This was the experience of Israel ; Midian “ left no sustenance ” for him (ver. 4).

Then in his misery Israel cried unto Jehovah. He responded, and wrought a fresh revival, in which He sought to probe, more deeply than in the past, the conscience of this poor people. It is interesting to see the way the Lord took to bring about this result. “ Jehovah sent a prophet unto the children of Israel.” His name is not given, nor does it matter, for this man was simply the bearer of the word of God, in order to bring the people into His presence. God has a means by

which to bless us : His word, which meets every requirement and ought to be quite sufficient for us. Ps. 119 shows us the marvellous part the word plays in the life of the faithful. This psalm exceeds all the others in length. The word of God ought to occupy a corresponding place in our lives. Do we appreciate its value ? Does it fill up our days and nights—our thoughts, more or less, when we have not time to sit down and meditate upon it ?

God applied, in a way full of grace (vs. 8-10), this word to the conscience of the Israelites, telling them all that He had done for them ; how He had led them out, given them deliverance and victory, and brought them in ; and, having unfolded before them all His goodness, He adds one word : “ But ye have not obeyed My voice.” Not a word as to *how* they might be delivered ; He did not yet open the way for their return to Him. The prophet disappeared, leaving them under the weight of their responsibility in the presence of grace. God had borne them in His arms and upon His heart ; He had been to them a cloud of fire and of darkness (Ex. xiii. 21, 22 ; xiv. 20) ; He had fought for them. Have I failed, said He, in any respect towards you ; but what have you done ? This silence was calculated to touch their conscience far more than any reproaches. They were impressed, if not convicted ; but the word of grace did not yet give to the unfaithful people what they needed. Israel continued powerless before the enemy.

Gideon prepared for service.

(vi. 11-40.)

The remainder of this chapter shows us how God wrought in order to raise up a servant in those times of ruin, and to fit a powerful instrument for carrying out His work of deliverance.

Before entering upon our subject, we would press a truth of general application. When the people of God, as such, have lost all power, it can still be found by the soul individually in quite as great and marvellous a measure as in the times of Israel's greatest prosperity. If this is true, how ardently should our hearts desire to possess this power! Are we among those who, settled down in their weakness, put themselves on a level with their surroundings, and accept the worldliness of the family of God as an inevitable or necessary state of things? Or, have we rather the ears of Gideon when God says to us: There is unlimited power at thy disposal.

We will now go on to the history of this man of God. Personally, he was even weaker than his people; without confidence before the enemy, for he "threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites" (ver. 11); without resources among his relations, for his family was the poorest in Manasseh; without power in himself, for he was the least in his father's house (ver. 15). Such was the man that God visited and chose as servant—a man who realized his utter weakness, and who said: "O, my Lord, where-

with shall *I* save Israel? ” When it is a question of the work of God in this world, we then find a first great principle, it is, that God does not ask in any case what man can offer Him. The instruments He takes up to glorify Himself by, are those that are weak, and who are conscious of their weakness (1 Cor. i. 27-29; 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10).

But there is another principle of the greatest importance : this work requires that all be of God. Gideon was already a believer, before the angel of Jehovah sat under the oak. Whatever he had yet to learn, he believed the word of God, which had been transmitted to him by his forefathers (ver. 13). Moreover, he identified himself with the people of God : “ If Jehovah be with *us* ” — “ Jehovah hath forsaken *us*,” he says. He did not follow the course of Heber, he endured with the Israelites the consequences of their wrong-doing. Respect for His word and affection for His people are two signs of divine life at all times, and appertain to all the faithful. Gideon had, however, much to learn. His faith was very feeble, for he did not count on the goodness of God. Humble, doubtless, but looking at himself, he formed a conclusion what God ought to be to him, from what he was. “ Now,” said he, “ Jehovah has forsaken us.” The situation is hopeless, for it is the consequence of our unfaithfulness. Thus reasoned Gideon, but did God reason thus? “ Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.” Ah ! how little did he know what was in the heart of God, and

how many there are that reason like Gideon. Moreover, notwithstanding his humility, there had not yet been true judgment of self. He wished to offer something, to "bring forth his present" to Jehovah (ver. 18). It was, doubtless, not with the intention of doing some great thing for God, but with the thought that all would be well if God accepted his present. We will see the answer of Jehovah, but first let us go back to the principle enunciated above; that, in the work of the deliverance of His people, God is alone upon the scene (see Ex. xiv. 13, 14; 2 Chron. xx. 12-18). In the first place, "the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him." Like Saul on the way to Damascus—it is God who commences by revealing Himself to the soul of every one of His servants, in the person of Jesus. Secondly, Jehovah revealed Himself to Gideon as associated with him: "Jehovah is with thee." Thirdly, it was He who gave Gideon a character—"thou mighty man of valour"—a character which Gideon himself, in his weakness, would never have dreamed of obtaining. Fourthly, "Jehovah looked upon him" in grace, in order to reveal Himself, not only *to Him* but *in Him*, as the God of power. If Gideon had no strength, Jehovah had it for him; it is the secret which He made known to him, for He said: "this *thy* might." Fifthly, it was He who sent him: "*Go* in this *thy* might." So was Paul, the servant of God, sent: "not of men, neither by man" (Gal. i. 1).

Finally, God gave him the proof of the interest

He had in him. We have already seen that Gideon wished to offer something to Jehovah, but He can accept nothing from man *as such*. "Take," said he, "the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth" (ver. 20). The only offering which God can accept, is Christ. If He did not receive what Gideon offered Him, He accepted that which represented Christ in it. This man of God had a very imperfect understanding of the value of the sacrifices, which Jehovah had commanded to the children of Israel; "the broth in the pot" was a witness of his ignorance. But God discerned what was real, underlying this feeble faith, and accepted the offering when Gideon laid it "upon the rock." The fire of judgment rose up out of the rock, consuming the flesh and the unleavened cakes. The proof of the interest which God had for him was, in figure, the judgment fallen upon Christ.

It was still necessary that the servant should learn the value of this work for himself. At first he was filled with fear. "Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of Jehovah face to face." But "Jehovah said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not; thou shalt not die." The consequence of the fire of judgment having consumed the offering, was *peace* for Gideon. To be a servant of God, one must have received for oneself the knowledge of the work of Christ, and the peace which flows therefrom; the assurance of peace having been made, by virtue of what has passed

between God and Christ; the assurance of what God and not Gideon thought of the sacrifice. Such is the foundation of all Christian service (alas! how much it has been forgotten), for, if we have not peace ourselves, how can we proclaim it to others?

The first result of what Gideon had just learned was not to press him into service (another fact completely lost sight of by Christians of our day), but to make him a worshipper. "Then Gideon built an altar there unto Jehovah, and called it Jehovah-shalom" (the God of Peace). The believer should enter the presence of God as a worshipper, before engaging in service. The word illustrates this fact in a multitude of cases—that of Abraham, and the man born blind, among others. Gideon praised the God of peace, and could thenceforth offer upon the altar of worship a sacrifice which Jehovah accepted.

It was only *after the altar of worship* was set up that God called Gideon as a servant to bear public testimony, and this began in his father's house. It consisted in destroying "the altar of Baal, and the grove that is by it," and substituting for these the *altar of testimony*—the altar of the God whom Gideon knew. The positive duty of one who would be a testimony for God is, before all else, to cast down his idols. Why is it that there are so few true servants among Christians, walking in the power of a testimony for Christ? It is because they have not the *two* altars. And why have

they not the second? Because they have not provided themselves wood for the sacrifice. *The idols are the wood* (ver. 26). Let us overthrow them, let nothing of them remain. Let us begin in the innermost circle of the family. If we do not do this, where will our testimony be? The overthrowing of the idols is the secret of power; the Spirit of Jehovah only came upon Gideon when he had accomplished this act. We have not now, as he, Baals of stone, and groves of wood, but we have many other idols; and, little like him, we often prefer them to the power of a faithful walk with God. Gideon obeyed unhesitatingly, without compromise or reservation. For him the idols were nothing compared with the God he knew. This "mighty man of valour" had been wanting in courage. Fear of the enemy (ver. 11), afraid of God (ver. 23), fear of his father's house (ver. 27), were some of his characteristics. He did his work at night, fearing to do it by day; he did it, nevertheless, for God had so commanded him. It was only in the morning that the people of the city saw what had been done. He who knew the character of Gideon had not said to him: Do this work by day. Let us, too, feeble as we are, destroy our idols in silence, when no eye observes us. Let us not speak too loudly of the matter; let us accomplish this difficult work with fear and trembling, looking to God only, in the silence of the night. The world will soon perceive that we have a new altar which it knows

not, and that the grove has no value for us except as wood to be burned. Then the world, which has hitherto sustained us, will hate us. It was the altar of testimony which drew upon Gideon the animosity of all. Hated, but what did it matter, for he received the name of Jerubbaal (let Baal plead), and became in presence of all, the personal witness of the worthlessness of the things he had formerly worshipped.

The effect of Gideon's testimony was to convince his father of the nothingness of Baal. The faith of the father was less than that of the son. Gideon destroyed Baal because he knew God; Joash received God because he no longer acknowledged Baal. It was very little, but it was something.

Brethren, are we witnesses before the world of the folly of all that it finds its interest in? If we have not maintained the altar of Baal, possibly we have not destroyed "the grove that is by it." Unqualified obedience to the word of God, is the path of power. At certain periods of our lives power has characterized our service, at others it has been lacking. Let us then ask ourselves if we have not rebuilt some idol that we had destroyed. All public service for the Christian must begin by faithfulness in the little circle in which he is called to move.

Gideon proved at first the hostility of those who bore the name of people of God, a hostility which was restrained for the time by the sincerity of his

testimony. Midian and Amalek (ver. 33), however, were not thus restrained. If, in their folly, the people of the city sought to hinder their own deliverance, the world made a determined effort to suppress the revival which was to release Israel from bondage.

Up to this time Gideon had only performed an act of obedience ; now the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him. His first act of power was to sound the trumpet, assembling the tribes together after him. The strength of Israel was in their gathering together, it was that which Satan and the world most feared.

Gideon, notwithstanding his strength, did not manifest much confidence in God. He asked for signs to know if Jehovah would save the people by his hand. All God's orders to Gideon were clear and simple, but when Gideon asked for signs of God, all became obscure and complicated. We can hardly understand what his thought was. It may be that the fleece represented Israel, blessed of God, when dryness rested upon the nations, and *vice versa*, for having proved God, Gideon put Him to a counterproof. What poor faith ! What feeble confidence in Him ! But the God of grace patiently did what His servant required. He wished to deliver His people. He wished, by all means, to sustain the feeble heart of His witness, in order to enlist him in His service and to make him an instrument for His glory.

(To be continued, D.V.)

**“IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS : FOR THIS
IS THE WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST
JESUS CONCERNING YOU.”**

(1 THESS. v. 18.)

“ In everything give thanks,”
My God, is this Thy will ?
Give thanks for disappointments given,
For prayers unanswer'd still !

Give thanks ! in vain I've pray'd
That I might useful be,
And by Thy Spirit's helpful aid,
Bring many souls to Thee.

Give thanks ! when in the place
Of health and usefulness,
Through sickness Thou hast paled my face
With pain and weariness.

Give thanks ! if 'twere Thy will
Submission to demand,
I then might bid myself be still,
And bow to Thy command.

But hush, beneath my eye,
I see in words of blood,
“ Will He who gave His *Son* to die,
Refuse thee *any good* ? ”

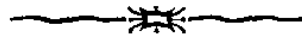
Give thanks ! Yea, Lord, I *do*,
And by Thy help I *will*,
Give thanks ! for blessings not receiv'd,
Although expected still.

Give thanks ! for mercies given,
Unnotic'd oft by me ;
Give thanks ! for sins forgiven,
Known only, Lord, to Thee.

Give thanks ! in word and deed,
For Thy surpassing love,
That sent Thy Son on earth to save,
And now to plead above.

Give thanks ! for tender love,
That our Redeemer show'd,
Who, in the absence of *Himself*,
A *Comforter* bestow'd.

Oh ! grant me by Thy grace
To walk by *faith* alone,
Until before my Father's face,
I know as I am known.



FRAGMENT.—“ In everything give thanks.” Is there a lust or a single thing in me that I would try to hide from God? No : I would like His knife to cut, to root up every evil, so that I may bear more fruit.

How apt are we to limit thanksgiving to things that we can understand to be good, but we have to give thanks for *all* things. If we are within the veil and living there, we shall know what it is to give thanks for all that is most contrary to what we should naturally choose. Are there any who have one thing they cannot give thanks for? Whatever that particular thing may be, they have not got into the light of God's presence. If they had, they would know what cause they had to thank God for that very thing, as for all else.

JOHN XVII.

(*Notes of a Lecture.*)

I notice first in this chapter that there is responsibility, but of an entirely new order ; a responsibility which is connected with Christ, and which He has discharged ; “ I have glorified Thee on the earth,” “ I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world.” A responsibility which, in righteousness towards God, and in grace to us, has put us into the same place as Himself. The Word has come down to us ; and words have been brought, and we have believed them, and have known surely, as Jesus said, “ that I came out from God.”

If we think of what was previously given by Moses—the law—it was but the measure of man, come down to the earth, and which claimed from man what he ought to be. A perfect rule for man as a child of Adam. It was connected necessarily with responsibility, but the responsibility of the creature, and in which he failed ; God was hidden behind it—He not coming to man, nor man to Him. But under it man fails. Then because of this breakdown, “ Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” but came in when this need was thus made plain. Man failed in Paradise, and failed out of Paradise. He failed upon the question of righteousness by law ; and rejected Christ come in grace. If we look at Jew or Gentile, we see Christ taking up *this* responsibility too before

God, and putting away sin for us, by the sacrifice of Himself. He dies and closes up the whole scene in which *that* responsibility was. All is summed up in the words of Jesus, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

Another thing is stated in this chapter, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." He came into the world not only as a Man, but as the Heir of promises ; and they rejected Him in whom these promises were, as the promised Seed. But He has secured the *promises* by the cross ; and also laid the foundation for all the purposes of God in His death and resurrection. He who came, with all the promises of God in His hand, was rejected and killed. Salvation on God's part is the answer to this wickedness on man's. It was not merely that man was a sinner, but all that God would do for a sinner was refused—"Last of all He sent His Son." My soul and conscience are cleared by the very blood which was the proof of my sin and guilt. The purpose which was before the world can now be brought out, for righteousness has come in, and Christ as *man* has got a place in the glory of God, because He deserves it ! This is the righteous foundation of the purposes of God ; and He is there too in a work done for us.

In this ascended Lord we see the power of a life which has triumphed over death, and all the testimony that now comes to us, comes from thence. The Son is there, and there as a *Man* in righteousness, according to God's own nature. But God is

not merely glorified in righteousness ; but the Father, in love ! “ Now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self.” The Father’s name is the spring of eternal life to us in the Son ; and the Son as man has brought it in, and we have received it. It is not what Jehovah had given to the Messiah, but what the Father has given to the Son. “ These things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.” He has given the words to us that the Father gave to Him. These are the privileges that belong to us as believers.

The first three gospels present Christ to be received by man ; but in John’s the people are called out by grace ; it begins with His rejection—and they are separated from the world, and brought into this place of possession also. “ All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them,” this is the full grace of Christ. The Father’s words communicated to Christ are to bring us into every place which belongs to Christ. This is the revelation of God’s heavenly thoughts through His son, where there can be nothing of responsibility as to man, as when under law—though man is treated by the gospel as a sinner, and needing grace. Christ is the revelation of what a perfect Man is, and what every thing in the world is to God. We are not of it.

When we look at Christ’s person, what do we see ? The Father in His Son ! For it was the revelation of the Father in Christ. The disciple

said, "*Show* us the Father." The expression of the Father was the living Christ. It was a revelation in the way suited to man as he was down here ; for it was seen in the Man who tabernacled with us, that we might associate our hearts with the Father as His was.

"The glory thou has given me I have given them ;" again, "The love wherewith thou lovest me." Every thing which He is and has in Himself He brings us into ; except, of course, what is essential to His eternal Sonship. The words, the life, the glory, the love, with all the blessedness He has ; and, what is not so pleasant to us, separation from the world. But it is a portion with Himself now and hereafter. Moreover, He puts us in His own place of testimony to the world. He was of God in the midst of the world, and this is what a Christian is likewise.

"Sanctify them through thy truth." The word of God comes down (not like the law) and brings *to my heart* the measure and character of what Christ *is*. The truth, His word, which tells what God is ; tells me what I ought to be as a child of the Father. Till *God* is revealed, how can I tell what I ought to be ?—but grace and truth tell *me* what the Father is—what the world is : this is Cain's city. What is the telegraph to a man when he is going out of the world by death ? But there is something more—"for their sakes I sanctify myself." Not simply a word come down, but a *Man* gone up ! Now I get where righteous-

ness takes us, entirely separated from sinners, and gone into the place where my affections are fixed on Him. He is the model Man in glory, and I must purify myself by the hope of being with Him, as He is pure. The work is perfectly accomplished which makes me meet for the same place. The Holy Ghost takes these things and shows them to us. God hath revealed them to us by the Spirit, according to the purpose of God up there. The truth comes down through the rent veil to us, but I get the glory of the Man gone up, and who for our sakes has sanctified Himself.

Another thing is, we should think of His glory and happiness. He expects us to be interested in Him ; " If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I go unto the Father." So entirely are we one with Him, and He one with us. He brings the love of God, wherewith He is loved, into the heart. The Christian is made up from this Christ. The eye that is upon Him sees God's path even through this world. The responsible man has failed, but the Man of purpose was in love and grace below, and is now in righteousness and glory above.

The difficulty is to get a path through the world when all is wrong, and I have got it--got it in Christ. He has met and cleared the sins, and we have put off the old man, and got into the place of the second Man, in perfect acceptance with God.

Our responsibility now is to manifest Him in

our mortal body. "Holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," was His character, and this is ours. We shall find our short-comings, no doubt ; but perfect grace has given us a place with Christ every where, and this must be held in spite of all failure. In truth, it is the recovering power of grace. The Lord gives us to believe in His love—that He has "sanctified Himself for our sakes ;" and He expects our hearts to meet and answer His own—blessed place and portion ! He sees in us morally, even now, the fruit of the travail of His soul.

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?



FRAGMENT.—“Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” Take your heart full of cares, and get into the presence of the God of peace in heaven, what will be the effect? Will they remain in you there? What are they? Only *outside things* connected with self. Can you find one sorrow of one individual believer from Abel downwards, of which you could say, that sorrow was not in connection with the God of peace? Not that He is the sender of sorrow, but the God of peace, sitting in heaven and causing everything to work together for good to us, taking flesh into the account, sweeping the very ground of the heart, taking strength from the strong, causing pulsation to cease. But is anything terrifying

when we get into His presence? No! All is peace in the presence of the God who counts the hairs of our head.

FRAGMENT.—That one thought, asking in everything, “What will be for Christ’s glory?” is impossible to us if the question of our salvation be not settled. How can I be thinking what is for Christ’s glory if I am pondering as to whether He has perfectly saved me? Job’s heart was not happy in God, and all that came upon him tore his heart to pieces. Paul was happy in Him, and let all outward things go on as they might, the inward joy in God was not disturbed; nothing took him by surprise.



MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 180.)

What Characterizes God’s Witnesses in the Day of Ruin.

(Chap. vii. 1-14.)

In chap. vi., we have seen the servant prepared for the work for which God destined him; the verses which we have just read show us the characteristics of God’s witnesses in a day of ruin.

In the days of the nation’s moral prosperity under Joshua, when it was a question of going to

war, all Israel went up to battle, and the unity of the people was thereby strikingly manifested. The first conflict at Ai (Josh. vii. 1-5), the only exception to this rule, resulted in the defeat of those who took part in it. In a time of declension, it is otherwise. When all the people went up with Gideon, Jehovah said to him : “ the people that are with thee are *too many* for me to give the Midianites into their hands,” for the danger was that Israel would *vaunt themselves* against Jehovah, saying : “ Mine own hand hath saved me.” At such a period God takes special care to repress the pride that would attach credit to man in a work which belongs exclusively to Himself. Christendom in the present day boasts of the number of its adherents, under the impression that it sees therein a factor in the work of God. If any work is wrought of Him, she attributes it to herself ; and, like Laodicea, prides herself in her resources : “ I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.”

This then is the first characteristic of God's testimony in the midst of ruin : fewness of numbers and absence of display.

In verse 3, we find the second characteristic : “ Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead.” Moses had formerly given this command to the children of Israel : “ What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted ? let him go and return unto his house, *lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart* ”

(Deut. xx. 8). The same passage (vs. 5-7) teaches us that those who were fearful and afraid, were those who had *something to lose*. A servant of God is full of courage for his work, when he has nothing to lose here, because the excellency of Christ has made him despise what the world values. Alas ! what numbers of fearful there are in our days, even as formerly, when : “ there returned of the people twenty and two thousand, and there remained ten thousand.” God wants undivided hearts for the accomplishment of His work ; hearts that have nothing to lose, that are afraid of nothing, and who cannot exert a baneful influence over those who have gone out to the war unentangled with the affairs of this life. The twenty-two thousand came in for the spoil, but were unequal to the effort required to get it. Those that are fearful will profit by the testimony, but have not the qualification necessary to maintain it.

We come now to a third characteristic of the witnesses. God tested them in order to bring out if they realized that *all is loss* for those who would win the battle. “ He brought down the people unto the water.” Will they bow down upon their knees to drink, or lap of the water with their tongues, as a dog lappeth ? Some seek their ease, and enjoy to the full those blessings which Providence has placed in their path ; others, having as their sole aim to gain the victory, do not allow themselves to be diverted from their object, but, tasting the water by the way, only find therein what in-

vigorates them for their service. It is said of the Lord, "He shall drink of the brook in the way" (Ps. cx. 7). When He thus drank, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," the scene of His agony and death (Luke ix. 51). There is nothing that so trammels the action of the Christian in his testimony, as taking his ease, and settling down in the enjoyment of the earthly blessings which the providence of God bestows upon him, instead of simply tasting them by the way. The Christianity of the present day, boweth down upon the knees to drink; it gives thanks, it may be, to God, but sees, in the earthly blessings, the object and end of its piety; whereas, the witnesses for God, just take as much as will enable them to continue on their journey. These three hundred, who lapped the water as a dog lappeth, drinking what the hand carried to the mouth, were not only the devoted, but the humble ones. They remind one of the poor Syrophenician woman, who, when compared to a dog, replied, "Yes Lord," happy to be dependent only on His grace (Mark vii. 28). God wants devoted yet humble witnesses.

These men took in their hands their trumpets, symbols of testimony, but they also took their victuals (ver. 8). We cannot overcome without being fed, of which Israel was a proof under the terrible yoke of Midian who left them without sustenance.

Before the engagement, Gideon himself was called to undergo two personal experiences which

strengthened him for the victory (vs. 9-14). In the first place, that, in himself, he was no better than the twenty two thousand fearful ones. "If thou fear to go down," said Jehovah to him. Did he reply: I am brave, I have already sounded the trumpet in every direction to assemble Israel to battle? No, he accepted the humbling truth. Then God placed him before the enemy, which lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude, and traced his portrait by the mouth of one of them. This mighty man of valour was compared to a cake of barley bread, coarse and homely food, and this was "the sword of Gideon!" Fine sort of a sword wherewith to smite this multitude! But, in reality, the sword of Gideon was "the sword of Jehovah" (ver. 20), and it was therein the power lay.

Gideon learned to know himself, but God also revealed to him the moral state of the enemy that he was called to encounter. It was *a vanquished foe*. "For into his hand," said the Midianite to his fellow, "hath God delivered Midian and all the host" (ver. 14). May we have a better understanding of this truth in connection with our three enemies, the flesh, the world and Satan. The flesh is crucified, the world is overcome, Satan is judged. This fills us with courage before them. Gideon realized all these things and worshipped.

What testimony consists in.

(chap. vii. 15-25.)

The passage we have read is a reply to the question : In what does the testimony of God consist, and what does it do in a day of ruin? Full of joy and confidence, Gideon returned to the camp of Israel. "Arise," said he, "for Jehovah hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian." Then, dividing the three hundred men into three companies, "he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers." These three things represent the principles of God's testimony in the struggle with Satan and the world.

We find the use of the trumpets detailed in Numbers x. 1-10. They were the voice of God to communicate His mind to the people on four important occasions : they gave the signal for gathering the people together ; for the journeying of the camps ; for battle ; and also for the solemn feasts or worship. That which the sound of the trumpets formerly represented for Israel, we find in the present day, in another and very precious way, in the word of God. By it God speaks to us ; it is that which regulates and directs the gathering together, the walk, the warfare, and the worship, of the children of God. How much these things are forgotten in our day ! It seems to the majority of God's children that Christianity consists only in taking the gospel to the unconverted. It was

otherwise that Gideon understood the testimony of faith. He began where God begins (Numb. x). "He blew the trumpet, and Abi-ezer was gathered after him" (chap. vi. 34). He was the bearer of the divine voice for the gathering together again of Israel, who had been scattered by their own failure. Brethren, have we at heart in this day, the gathering together of the children of God? Let us then take the word of God, let us make its voice heard in the ears of the saints who have been unaccustomed to hear it. Let us show Christians that their being gathered together is the purpose of God, the purpose of the cross of Christ, as well as of the energy of the Spirit in the world. Let us show them that it is the enemy who has scattered us, and that the great opposition to his power is the gathering together of the children of God apart from the world, and we will have the joy of having laboured for that which the word calls "good and pleasant !" (Ps. cxxxiii. 1).

The trumpet also sounded for *the march*, for which there can be no other directions than the word of God affords us. The relinquishment of this standard has been the sole cause of the divergences of the walk of the children of God. Why should we not walk in the same path if our hearts were all equally subject to that word which furnishes us with unerring guidance for each step?

The trumpet called to *battle* ; and here we arrive at the circumstances of our chapter. The testimony of God is inseparable from conflict, for it

not only consists in gathering together, and the march, but in an attitude openly taken in opposition to the world, the enemy of God. We have to proclaim boldly that we are—without any possible compromise—in a struggle with the world. The conflict has two purposes: to put us in possession of our privileges (which is the subject of the book of Joshua), and to deliver the people of God who have been brought into subjection to the enemy through their own unfaithfulness, which is the way it is looked at in the book of Judges. In Joshua all Israel were to go up to the conquest of Canaan; here, the struggle is reserved to a certain number of witnesses, champions of Jehovah, for the deliverance of His captive people.

The trumpets sounded for their *solemn feasts*. The word of God alone, defines and regulates worship. We merely allude to this subject, as this is not the place to go into it.

The empty pitchers are a second factor in testimony. They were, doubtless, some of the utensils which had contained the victuals of the people (ver. 8); and though now empty and worthless, Gideon, taught of God, knew how to utilize them for His glory. 2 Cor. iv. 1-10 makes obvious allusion to this scene. The apostle Paul speaking there of the position he was placed in as a witness before the world, says, he was “for the manifestation of the truth,” and to bear “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (Rev. vers.) before men. He then adds: “But we have this treasure in

earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (ver. 7). An earthen vessel, such was the "mortal flesh" of the great apostle of the Gentiles. Empty pitchers represented what Gideon and his warriors were *in themselves*. The lesson which their leader had just learned in the camp of Midian, the three hundred had also individually to realize. Like Paul's earthen vessel, these empty pitchers were only fit to be broken. When God raises up a testimony, He only glorifies Himself in instruments which He has broken. He carried His gospel to the nations by a Saul whom He had previously cast down in the dust on his way to Damascus, and glorified the excellence of His power in a Paul whom He continued to discipline to the end. "Troubled on every side," said the apostle, "yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."

Of what use were these empty pitchers? To hold the *lamps*, the third and most important element in testimony for God; to carry within them this treasure, the divine light, in order that, as the apostle says, "the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. iv. 10). If, in testimony, the trumpets represent the word of God, and the pitchers ourselves, what are the lamps but the life of Jesus, the light of Christ. The first two elements only serve to make the

third manifest amidst the surrounding darkness. Gideon's men blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers (vii. 19), and the light shone out all about them. It is the same with real witnesses : " For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake ; " it is God Himself who takes care to break the vessels, " that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh " (2 Cor. iv. 11). It does not say : the life of *Christ*, but that of *Jesus*, the life of that Man whose path through this world was one of holiness. We are called to represent down here *the Man Jesus, walking as He walked* (1 John ii. 6), and it is in that that our testimony consists.

There is not a single Christian in the world who cannot be the bearer of these three elements of testimony for God. How is it then that so few are found ? It is because these three principles that God requires are lacking. The trumpet must be sounded, the pitchers must be broken, the lamp must not be put under a bushel. Are we taking our ease down here, having all we need in the world, loved and respected of men ; have we never had any of the apostle's experiences, tribulations, perplexities, persecution, cast down ? Ah ! if not, we are wretched for we have nothing. God has not accounted us worthy to bear a single ray of the light of Christ before the world. Happy those who are broken ! " Blessed . . . blessed," as the Lord said in Matt. v., adding : " Rejoice and be exceeding glad ; for great is your reward in heaven."

The three hundred, standing every man in his place round about the camp, cried : “ The sword of Jehovah, and of Gideon ! ” The world is put to rout by this simple cry ! Bear testimony to Christ, live Christ, taking no account of self ; let the two-edged sword of the Lord be your weapon : all the power of Satan and of the world will be unable to resist you. Occupied with their glorious task, neither Gideon nor his companions were in danger of sitting down under the tents of Midian, which the judgment of God was about to overthrow ; for they found their security and strength, notwithstanding the broken pitchers, in the trumpets of Israel whose notes were so penetrating, and in the lamps of God whose light was so bright.

It is an encouraging fact that testimony begets testimony. The three hundred were employed to reunite the people. The men of Israel were gathered together and pursued Midian (ver. 23), and all the men of Ephraim came together and joined in the pursuit and shared in the spoil. We shall see this result if we are faithful. Let us be witnesses for Christ, and we shall awaken zeal in those who are His. May that time soon arrive in which, when Jesus comes, He shall find, not only some hundreds, but, a people who are all witnesses, who have fought, held fast, and overcome for Him !

(To be continued, D.V.)

HYMN OF PRAISE.

Nearer, my God, to Thee,—
I cannot be ;
Christ's blood hath made me nigh,
Praise, praise to Thee !
Now blest in Christ Thy Son,
Thy love to Him my own,
This shall be still my song,
Praises to Thee !

Pilgrim and stranger here,
I journey on ;
Upward my heart now turns,
Heaven is my home ;
Thy love constraining still,
Henceforth to do Thy will ;
Praises my spirit fill,
All praise to Thee !

Now, let my walk and ways,
More Christ-like be ;
Ever delighting in
His love to me :—
Till I shall see His face,
Owning Thy sovereign grace,
That brought me to this place—
Nearness to Thee.

Lessons, on desert sands,
Now taught by Thee ;
Causes my heart to sing,
More praise to Thee !
Trials thus sent do bless,
Partaking Thy holiness,
Peaceful fruits of righteousness,
Bring praise to Thee.

Sweet is the blessed hope
 Given us by Thee ;
 Glory with Him who died,
 On Calv'ry's tree !
 Oh ! what a song we'll raise,
 Singing His worthy praise,
 When on Himself we gaze—
 And like Him be !



“AT THAT TIME JESUS ANSWERED.”

There is one, and only one, life that ever gave forth its unvarying answer to God.

If we think of a David, Jehovah's anointed king over the hosts of Israel, we have in sorrow to read : “It came to pass . . . at the time when kings go forth to battle, . . . David tarried still at Jerusalem.” That is to say, he gave up conflict ; and, having so done, we have the record of the sad sequel.

Later on, in the checkered history of that favoured people, we read of another of their kings, Josiah by name, who, in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, began to seek after the God of David his father ; in the twelfth, to purge Judah and Jerusalem from idolatry ; and in the eighteenth, to repair the house of Jehovah his God, displaying great energy as to the keeping of the passover. But, turning to the next page of his history, what meets the eye ? “ *After all this* (2 Chron. xxxv. 20), the one who, at eight years of age, declined neither to the right hand nor to

the left, who from that tender age was characterized as one that sought after the God of David his father, consequently setting his face against idolatry even to the purging of the land and the house ; until, in the eighteenth year of his reign, having cared for the house of Jehovah his God, the passover is kept on the fourteenth day of the first month, and there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the day of Samuel the prophet ; neither did all the Kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem ;—"after all this," of such an one it has to be recorded, that he goes out in a conflict unwarranted by Jehovah his God ; and (as with David, so with Josiah) down he falls. David failing to maintain conflict at the time of conflict, "at the time when kings go forth to battle ;" and Josiah becoming involved in a conflict that brought him into variance with God Himself. (2 Chron. xxxv. 21, 22.) And such is the blotted, besmeared history of the first man, look at it where we may.

Beloved ! what volumes do those three words, "after all this," speak to one's heart ! If perchance, through grace, a measure of steadiness may have marked our pathway hitherto, while many leaders have fallen, what sorrow, if after so much grace shewn us, the Spirit of God should have to write an "after all this" in our history, to chronicle our declension of *heart* (for surely that

is where declension has its start) as exhibited in our ways. Assuredly it is a time of "going forth to battle," "earnestly to contend," "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." And the conflict has to be maintained, until with a Paul we are given to say: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth"—not conflict, but—"the crown." But if on the other hand we are found meddling with the world in one way or another, even it may be with the view of setting it to rights (as Josiah got involved, as we have seen, with Egypt's King); just as Josiah was brought down under the forces of Egypt, so will we succumb to the forces of the world, and its prince.

"After all this," what a relief to the sorrowful heart to turn to the record of that *one* life which in all its minute details met the eye of God, and was well pleasing to Him.

A King truly, yea, the King of Israel (and never had such an one been presented to Israel before); but what glories come before our eyes in the perusal of the pages of *His* sojourn. And, look at His pathway where we may, it is only to discover the unvarying answer to God, not from His lips only, but, in every look of His eye, in His every footstep, yea, in every movement of His heart and hand.

View Him for a moment in Matt. xi.—a King truly, as we have said, but without a kingdom—despised and rejected of His subjects, His testimony

and His mighty works unheeded. What then? "*At that time, Jesus answered* and said : I thank Thee, O Father." "Answered" to what, beloved, or rather to whom, seeing there was no *audible* voice at the moment? Ah! but here as elsewhere, He recognizes, in circumstances in themselves most untoward, His Father's voice and answers to God in all.

Or if, with adoring reverence, we view Him hanging on the tree, what is it to find? That, while in all the bitterness of that moment, He owns Himself the forsaken One, forsaken of God; yet, in unswerving fidelity, He owns the One who had forsaken Him: "*My God, my God.*" And the very question He raises in the hour of the travail of His soul, He waits not for His God to give the answer to—but, *in all that sorrow*, He Himself answers it, and in answering it, answers to God, and (blessed be His glorious name for ever!) answers to God *for us*. (Psalm xxii. 3.)

Beloved saints of God, what a voice has all this for us! We each, in our individual pathway, have been encountering untoward circumstances, sorrows and trials; but has there been in all, from our hearts and lips, the answering to God?

The Blessed One, who in revealing the Father to us has given us rest, has also graciously made known to us how these—in themselves—common-place, every day, lives of ours, can yield to the Father the answer our hearts would delight to render; even by taking His yoke upon us and

learning of Him, the One meek and lowly in heart, and thus finding rest unto our souls day by day under His easy yoke.

Ah ! Beloved, have we thought of what it is to be under the yoke of Christ ?

In 2 Cor. vi. 14-16, we will find a yoke of a very different character described, upon which we will not at present dwell, but simply learn from these verses that a yoke involves : fellowship, communion, concord, part and agreement. So that if I am under the yoke of Christ, I actually enjoy

Fellowship, Communion, Concord, Part, Agreement,	}	with Christ ;—
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and if so, will not a life, filled with what that gracious yoke brings with it, give forth its answer to God, be the surroundings of that life what they may ? Mark ! no sooner are we under His yoke than He turns the eye to Himself—"learn of *Me*."

Soon, beloved, we shall have done with the conflict and shall have received the crown ; but, in that scene of glory, what is it that will cause us to fall down before the Lamb ? Oh ! not because *we* have answered to God throughout the pathway here, but listen. A strong angel doing God's commandment raises a question to which *no one in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth*, can give answer. Ah ! but while a

strong angel proclaims the question, a ransomed sinner ("one of the elders") it is that points to the only One who can answer it. And who is this only worthy One? Oh! who but the meek and lowly King of Matthew xi.—who "at that time" answered, and who now in all that blaze of glory alone can come forward—"the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David," "a Lamb as it had been slain," He it is who alone—even in heaven, as on earth—can ever give answer to God. He alone—who, as the slain Lamb, sustained the judgments of God—can take the book and execute those judgments.

Oh! "weep not" (Rev. v. 5) then, over what God has to write upon man, whether on earth, or in heaven; but, in the life, the death, the resurrection, the ascension, the present place and offices, and the coming glories of that Blessed One—trace with adoring heart the One, and one only unvarying answer to God.

View it yet again when millennial glories are filling the earth—God's King swaying the sceptre, and—forever, in the eternity that lies beyond, when all things shall have been brought into subjection to Him, and the Son also Himself subject unto Him that put all things under Him, thus giving His eternal answer to the Father, having as its eternal fruit: "God," "all in all."



"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

(Read John x. 1-18 ; 25-30.)

How sweet and precious to the heart, and profitable to the soul, of the believer, to search out and meditate upon any of the characters in which the Lord Jesus comes before us, as recorded by the Holy Spirit, in the word of God. Perhaps there is none more so than that of "The Shepherd."

First, let us see what the significance of that title is, apart from any qualifying word as "good," "great," "chief," which we find used in connection with shepherd, and applied to our Lord, and which we will consider farther on ; for in ver. 10, He speaks of Himself as "The Shepherd of the sheep." In Genesis xlii. 34, we read : "Every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians." Does this not furnish us with the clue ? Egypt is the type of the world in its natural state, from which the people of God are delivered. A shepherd then is a position despised by the world. Is not that a suitable description of the place that the blessed Lord Jesus took on coming into this world ? "He is despised and rejected of men . . . we hid as it were our faces from Him ; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not" (Is. liii. 3. See also Is. xlix. 7 ; Ps. xxii. 6 ; lxix. 7, 12 ; Matt. ii. 23 ; Phil. ii. 7, 8, etc.). How all the incidents connected with His birth into this world

were in keeping with this. Born in a manger because there was no room for Him in the great Inn of this world. Was it not also in perfect harmony with this, that, when heaven would announce His birth, those who were selected to hear the "good tidings of great joy" were, not the great people of the world in that day, but 'shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night'? The despised ones of the world, in the simple discharge of their duties. No soul taught of God, but will exclaim, 'How suitable!' It is worthy of notice that the Lord Jesus does not speak of Himself as shepherd till he was cast out by the religious world as we see in chap. viii. 59.

If we desire to understand the Lord's teaching on the subject before us, and in any measure to appreciate the beauty of what He brings out, we must divest ourselves of our western notions of a shepherd's life and of everything not in accordance with the Scriptures and the habits of those eastern countries where the events recorded took place.

A sheepfold was a roofless enclosure with a high wall into which the shepherd took the sheep at night to protect them from the attacks of robbers and wild beasts. Judaism was, in one of its aspects, a fold,* being an earthly system of religion

*It is well known to nearly every careful reader of Scripture that the second occurrence of the word "fold," in verse 16, should be "flock," being a different word in the original.

adapted to man in the flesh. The door is the appointed means of entrance to a place. So Jesus entered the Jewish fold by the appointed way. All that Scripture had foretold of the Messiah, He fulfilled. He entered by the door. Now they did not, as is customary in these parts, drive the sheep nor use dogs. Genesis xxxi. 38-40 and Luke ii. 8, give us some idea of a shepherd's life ; showing us that they were with their flocks night and day. What an exquisite picture we have in Isaiah xl. 11 of a shepherd's care. Every little lamb that was born had a name given to it, and when the shepherd wanted any one he simply called it by its name, and it came to him. What vividness and force all this gives to our Lord's words in these verses in John x. How the shepherd being night and day with the sheep, etc., brings before us the unremitting care of Him who, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end, knowing each one from its birth, calling it by its name (read Rev. ii. 17), tending, feeding, yea, all that *such* a Shepherd can and does do for His sheep. Oh ! dear reader, how far are your heart and mine enjoying this, and giving Him credit for it all ; and in the confidence which all His love and care should give, and which delights His heart, " casting *all* our care upon Him for *He careth for us*" (1 Pet. v. 7). How many thoughts suggest themselves to the soul as one ponders over such a subject, and how we realize in some measure the truth of those words, " My

meditation of Him shall be sweet ; I will be glad in the Lord " (Ps. civ. 34).

I pass on, however, to the first of the three qualifying words which are used in Scripture in connection with the title "Shepherd," as applied to the Lord, viz ; "*Good*." Not a heart that knows His love but echoes, Amen ; and when we find it is used in connection with the cross and giving His life for the sheep (vs. 11, 14, 15), the soul is prostrate before Him in adoration and worship.

" Our sins were laid on His sacred head,
The curse by our Lord was borne ;
For us a victim our Saviour bled,
And endured the death of scorn ;
HIMSELF He gave our poor hearts to win—
(Was ever love, Lord, like Thine ?)
From the paths of folly, and shame, and sin,
And fill them with joys divine."

In Heb. xiii. 20, 21, we find the Lord Jesus, when "brought again from the dead" (resurrection power), spoken of as the "*Great Shepherd of the sheep*." There seems to be an allusion to Ezek. xxxvii. 24. In both passages, it seems to me, the connection is with leading into the path of obedience those once characterized by self-will, see Isaiah liii. 6.

Lastly, when ascended to the glory, He is spoken of as the "*Chief Shepherd*" (1 Pet. v. 4). From that position, He not only watches over His own night and day, but also appoints under-

shepherds, as we see in Ephes. iv. 8-11, where the word translated "pastors" is that usually rendered "shepherd." In 1 Pet. v. 1-4, Peter (or rather the Holy Spirit by him) gives both instruction and warning to those whom the Chief Shepherd has called to act as under-shepherds. In ver. 2, he says to them, "Feed (or rather "shepherd" or "tend," for a shepherd has other things to do as well as feed) *the flock of God*." In these words we are reminded that there is only one flock (see John x. 16, and note on page 209) and that the flock is God's and not man's. He goes on, "taking the oversight, not by constraint, but willingly." Constraint from man is not allowed, and yet there is a constraint that is according to the mind of God. Read 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, and John xxi. 15-17. A similar line of thought is in both passages. In the former, "The love of Christ *constraineth* us." In the latter, when Peter, in answer to the Lord's question, "Lovest thou Me, etc." says, "Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee," he is enjoined by the Lord, "Feed my lambs" (ver. 15), "Shepherd My sheep" (ver. 16), "Feed My sheep" (ver. 17). When the sense of the Lord's love is in power in the heart, it makes that one "willing." Peter then goes on to say, "not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." How this recalls what the Lord said in John x. 12, 13, where He speaks of one that looks after the sheep for stipulated wages ("the hireling").

In ver. 3, Peter continues: "Neither as lords

over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." Now this takes us back to a scene where Peter was present, recorded Mark x. 34-45. The sons of Zebedee had sought the best places in the kingdom for themselves, and the ten were displeased at them. The Lord uses the occasion to warn them against the spirit that obtains in the world; "Ye knew that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them but so shall it not be among you and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all." He then brings Himself, and His own path before them, as the great "Ensample of the flock," "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

What a contrast the "Good Shepherd" presents to the other, that "will come in his own name" (John v. 43), the anti-christ spoken of in Zech. xi. 17 as the "idol (worthless) shepherd"! And through what is said of him in the previous verse (16) we get by contrast valuable instruction as to the proper duties of a true shepherd. I append a literal translation of the verse, as it brings out the meaning with greater distinctness :

"For lo, I am raising up a shepherd in the land,
The cut-off he doth not inspect,—
The wanderer (or 'strayed one') he doth not
seek,
And the broken he doth not heal,

The standing he doth not sustain (or 'complete'),

And the flesh of the fat he doth eat,

And their hoofs he doth break off."

Fellow believer, let us ponder over all this and take it to heart, and seek grace from the Lord to be faithful amid the surrounding unfaithfulness.

Let us also keep before us what Peter says in ver. 4 to encourage faithfulness to *such* a Master; "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive the (not "a" but "the") crown of glory that fadeth not away."

"Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."



MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 200.)



Difficulties and snares in service.

(Chap. viii. 1-23.)

The moment that we set out to walk with God, and to bear testimony for Him, we may be sure of finding all sorts of difficulties in our path. In the preceding chapter, Gideon and his three hundred companions encountered some. Their conflict was not without suffering, for they had to forego their pleasures and comforts, only taking so much refreshment by the way as would enable

them to attain their object. Chapter viii. shows us other ways in which they had to suffer.

The men of Ephraim contended with Gideon. In the time of Deborah they had been in the post of honour (chap. v. 14), but since then there had been declension, and Gideon, taught of God, had not summoned them; they were fallen to the second rank. This distinction made them jealous of what Jehovah had entrusted to their companions, jealous of the energy of faith and of its results to the others. "Why hast thou served *us* thus?" (ver. 1.) Ephraim, preoccupied with his own importance, thinks of himself instead of thinking of God. This is a frequent source of strife between brethren, and such contentions are far more painful and trying than conflict with the world. It is precious to see the man of God pass through this difficulty in the power of the Spirit. The book of Judges gives us three examples of similar contentions: the case of Gideon, that of Jephthah, and that of the eleven tribes against Benjamin. Here trouble was avoided, and a breach prevented. Later on, it was not so. When altercations arise among Christians, deep humility is their only resource. Gideon had learned this in the school of God, as the preceding chapters relate, so that it was not difficult for him to realize on this occasion how to act. God had made him understand that the courage and strength which he had, did not emanate from himself; and that, in itself, the sword of Gideon was worth as little as a cake of barley

bread. And so, in the presence of Ephraim, the servant that Jehovah had used for this great deliverance, took care not to speak of himself. He devoted his attention to what God had done by the hands of his brethren. "What have I done now," said he, "in comparison of you? Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?" He took the lowest place and acknowledged the zeal for God which, after all, they had shown to their honour; and the humility of this servant of God is thus the means of removing a great difficulty. Let us act in a similar way, and, when we speak of our brethren, let us enumerate, not their failures, but what God has wrought in them. Can I not admire Christ in my brother when I see how God is dealing with him, breaking him down so that, at all costs, what characterized the Lord may be manifested in Him? *Nothing so appeases contention as seeing Christ in others*; it is the result of a normal Christian condition in the children of God.

Gideon and his companions encountered a second difficulty far more trying than the previous one. They were "faint yet pursuing," experiencing, as to the outward man, that daily perishing, which is the portion of believers in their testimony, at the same time pressing forward so as to reach the goal, cost what it may (2 Cor. iv. 16; Phil. iii. 12).

They reached Succoth, a city of Israel which belonged to the tribe of Gad. Succoth rejected

them, refusing even to give them bread. There was thus, in the midst of the people of God, an entire city, bearing the name of Israel, which had renounced all corporate responsibility with those who bore testimony for Jehovah. They said, "Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?" They had confidence in the enemy, and would not compromise themselves by taking part with Israel. There are many in the present day who bear the name of Christ, and yet seek the friendship of and alliance with the world; who, through fear of compromising themselves, make common cause with our enemies, increasing the difficulties of the way for believers, and hindering them from being overcomers. It need not surprise us that a righteous indignation does not stop us in the way to chastise this spirit. Our hearts, like *Gideon's*, should be wholly in the conflict. The man of God kept on his way; the infamous conduct of Penuel no more arrests him than that of Succoth. Everything in its time for God's witness. Satan seeks to bring in confusion as to this, so as to make obstacles for us. Zebah and Zalmunna must not be allowed to escape; the judgment of the rebellious cities will be executed later. On his return, the man of God exercised discipline in the assembly of Israel, and "cut off the wicked," for God would be dishonoured were evil tolerated in the assembly.

I am not sure that I have sufficiently noticed, in

all this history, the way in which the two characteristics, humility and energy of faith, were united in Gideon. Energy, to gather and purify the people for battle and for pursuit of the enemy; humility, which delivered from all self-confidence and led to implicit reliance on Jehovah. And yet it was on the side which seemed to have the least need of watchfulness, that the enemy was about to lay a snare for him, finally bringing about the moral ruin of this eminent leader in Israel.

The vanquished kings were not sparing in their praise of Gideon (ver. 18-21), which was all the more dangerous because there was apparently no interested motive. He asked them, "What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, "As thou art, so were they; each one *resembled the children of a king.*"

Let us distrust the flattery of the world. A moment's reflection before the Lord would tell us, that the world flatters to enfeeble us, and to deprive us of the weapons with which we fight against it.

It does not appear as if Gideon was turned aside from God's path by this speech, but he seems to have lost a true sense of the power of the enemy, and to have despised rather than feared it. This was not the case with Joshua when he made prisoners of the five kings (Josh. x. 22-27). Far from underrating the strength of the enemy in the eyes of the men of Israel, he said to them: "Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings;"

then he added : “ Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage ; ” so much did he realize at the same time the power of the world and the strength of Jehovah. Two things become us when we are fighting with the enemy—fear and trembling as to ourselves ; and full assurance as to God, excluding all alarm, for we know that Satan and the world are vanquished foes. Gideon realized these things imperfectly. He entrusted to his son Jether, the task of killing these two kings. “ But the youth drew not his sword, for he *feared*.” In chap. vii., Jehovah had separated those who were afraid and withdrawn them from the conflict. Here Gideon, committing to a child the destruction of an enemy he despised, did not act in keeping with the ways of God, who does not call those that are but children in the faith to perform publicly brilliant actions ; a child goes to school and not to war.

Then those kings said : “ Rise thou, and fall upon us ; for *as the man is, so is his strength*.” A fresh flattery, against which Gideon ought to have protested, for he had learned a totally different lesson in the school of God. In reality, his strength was exactly the opposite to that which was of man. Did he not know it when the angel of Jehovah said to him (the least of his father’s house), “ Go in this thy might ? ” Had he not realized it on that solemn night when God had revealed to him, that a cake of barley bread was about to overthrow all the tents of Midian?

In his better days, Gideon would not have accepted this flattery, nor have allowed the adversary to plant a germ of self-confidence in his heart.

But we see him exposed to a fresh snare (ver. 22-23). It is no longer the flattery of the world, but that of the people of God. The men of Israel said unto Gideon : “ Rule thou over us, both thou and thy son and thy son’s son also, for *thou* hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.” They put their leader in the place of Jehovah and offer him the sceptre. “ Rule thou over us.” None are more prone to clericalism than the people of God. It is not only the bane of Christendom, it is also the innate tendency of the natural heart of believers. The fact of ministry being blessed is apt to lead us to make of the servant a “ minister” in the human sense, thus losing sight of God. By the grace of God, the faith of Gideon escaped this danger. He said resolutely, “ I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you ; *Jehovah shall rule over you.*” The object of his ministry was that God should have the pre-eminence and lose nothing of His authority over His people.

(*To be continued, D.V.*)



“ God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” —I Pet. v. 5, 6.

“YET A LITTLE WHILE.”

“Yet a little while”—and the months and years
Shall soon be number'd with the things that
were ;

And joy give place to sorrow ; smiles to tears ;
And rest divine, where once was strife and care.

“Yet a little while”—and the One we love
(Whose love for us has been so true and tried)
Will call His own unto Himself above,
To be for ever with Him, as His bride.

“Yet a little while”—and the robes of white
We shall be clothed in, and defilement cease ;
No shade of darkness sully His pure light ;
No harrowing care intrude upon our peace.

“Yet a little while”—and the night is spent,
And we shall enter on His endless day,
And His blest home, with hearts, oh, how content,
A scene which human words can ne'er pourtray !

“Yet a little while”—and the tear-dimm'd eye
Shall on the glories of our Jesus gaze ;
And hearts oft sadden'd, beat with holy joy :
And tongues oft murm'ring celebrate His praise.



THE CROSS.

“God forbid that I should glory, *save* in THE
CROSS of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the
world is crucified unto me, and I unto the
world.”—Gal. vi. 14.

I would say a few words on the entire *end of*
self in THE CROSS—the *nothingness* to which it re-
duces us. How little do we know practically of

this. Let us look at Jesus, and then learn how very little our souls have realized its power in thus *setting ourselves aside*.

We see in Him one who had all human righteousness, and one too in whom “dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;” yet what path did He take? What was THE CROSS to Him? To what did it reduce Him? The *entire setting aside* of all this human righteousness, of all this divine power. The perfect strength of His love was proved, not only in that He “did not please Himself”—though “in the form of God,” and thinking it “not robbery to be equal with God,” that He emptied Himself, and “being found in fashion as a man,” humbled Himself to take the place of our disobedience—but that in *this* place of *love* He was content to be *utterly rejected!* to be reduced to nothing, that love might shine out!

The flesh in us is subtil, very subtil: if we show love, we expect that it will be felt; but if otherwise—if, when we have rendered a kindness, we get no return, not even a kind word—our hearts grow faint and cold in the exercise of love. Do we know what it is when our hearts have gone forth in love to meet with that which we read of in Corinthians, “Though the more I love you, the less I be loved;” to find that the only consequence of humiliation is to become thereby less respected, more humbled still? Thus it was with Jesus; full of patience and tenderness, He exposed Himself to the power and malice of Satan. But what

did He find in us when doing this work of love? *Man* took occasion, by His very lowliness, to treat Him with the utmost scorn. He was "the reproach of men, the despised of the people." They kept Him in on every side: "Dogs have compassed Me about: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed Me: they pierced My hands and My feet." "Many bulls have compassed Me about: strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round. They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion." He looked for comforters; but found none. One of those with whom He had "taken sweet counsel" lifted up his heel against Him; and even that disciple who had been most forward to declare his adhesion, "Though all men should forsake Thee, *yet will not I*," denied Him with oaths and curses.

There was no outlet to His grief, no comfort from man; and here we see the meaning of that, "Be not *Thou* far from me, *O my God!*" Cast out by the scorn of those whom He came to in love, pressed upon, closed in by those whom He came to save, His soul turned to God: "My God, be not Thou far from me!" But God had hid His face from Him: "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" He now found the darkness and wrath that came upon Him to the uttermost; there was no response on any side: the deep hatred of man around, and from above darkness also; everything was set aside but the power of *love*. "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing:

I come into *deep waters*, where the *floods* overflow me." The *waves* and the *billows* went over Him; *all* was lost in the waves *but* love: it was that which sustained Him; love was greater than all; and it was set *on us*.

When we see what He, as emptied, was, we come to the depth of *love*. If He emptied Himself of every thing else, there was still the fulness of love, for He is God, and "*God is love*." We, dear brethren, have found the *fulness of love* in Jesus, and that shall be our everlasting portion—we shall know, shall taste this *love* for ever.

When Jesus was "going about" here, it was as "doing good;" He could not restrain His *power*, though ever so lowly and humbled, when good was to be done; He was obliged to show it. Thus in the life of Jesus, in His actings here, there was something which the natural heart must own, must approve: we like to have our diseases cured; and when they saw the dead raised, they could rejoice in having their deceased friends brought to life again: but in THE CROSS there was no putting forth of this *power*, there was no *miracle*—nothing but *weakness* and *degradation*—He was "*crucified through weakness*." Trial from man, temptation from Satan, forsaking from God—there was nothing to be seen but *love*—the depth, the fulness, the riches of that love which will be our happy, blessed portion for ever.

The natural heart in every one of us hates the power of THE CROSS. We want something for the

eye to rest upon, we seek a little honour here; THE CROSS stains all the pride of human glory, and therefore we like it not. Let us test ourselves, beloved. Are we really content to take THE CROSS in this its power, and to say, "I want nothing else"? "God forbid that I should glory, *save* in THE CROSS of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is *crucified* unto me, and I unto the world!" May our souls rest in this blessed confidence—Jesus is our everlasting portion; to dwell in Him is to dwell in God, and "God is *love*." Many Christians are cherishing those things which keep them from knowing the full power of this *love* in their hearts. We cannot enjoy love and pride together. Whatever nourishes *self*, no matter what—honour, talents, learning, wealth, friends, respectability—any thing, every thing which the natural man delights in, *nourishes pride in us, renders Christ less precious, and the enjoyment of His love less full.*

The Lord give us to know what it is to be "*crucified* to the world." Let us, beloved brethren, bless God for everything that *puts down self*.

THE SWALLOWS ARE GONE.

"Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord. How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he

it ; the pen of the scribes is in vain. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken ; lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord ; and what wisdom is in them ? ” (Jer. viii. 7-9.)

The end of the year is near. The swallows are gone ; the cold blasts of winter are come : but not one swallow is left behind. We saw them gathered together, and they were seen to fly higher, as the time to depart grew nearer. No one saw them go. But they are gone to sunny lands of the south. The frost and the snow, the sleet and piercing winds of winter never reach them there. Very remarkable is this instinct of the birds. “ Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times ; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming ; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.”

Is there not a lesson for us in this instinct of the birds ? It was pleasing to watch the swallows as the winter drew near ; how they would gather in companies ; how they seemed to wait for the wanderers. Then they would fly high, as wanting to be gone. We thought, is not the Holy Spirit now gathering Christians together in little companies to Christ ? Now here, now there, a wanderer coming in. Should we not fly higher ? we, like the swallows, are about to leave this scene below. Already signs of this world’s judgment begin to flit across its autumn sky. And now every swallow soared ready to depart, moved by one common instinct. Oh that every Christian

was seen manifestly ready to depart, moved by the Spirit of God.

But will it be with the whole church of God as with the swallows? Yes, the Holy Ghost is already gathering them in little companies to Christ. He has revealed to them afresh, after many centuries, the heavenly Bridegroom, and the heavenly calling of the church. He is leading their thoughts and hearts, higher and higher yet. And soon, very soon, though the world will not see them go, yet every one shall be gone, not one left behind. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thes. iv. 16, 17). Are not these the sober words of inspired reality? Yes, brethren, we shall all be gone, not one be left behind: for ever with the Lord. If the swallows are gone to more sunny shores, oh, what will it be to be caught up away from the scenes of this world's wintry woes, and judgments, and in peaceful rest enter the glory of our Lord!

And if God never fails to take by instinct at the appointed time, the stork, the crane, and the swallow, can He possibly fail at the appointed time to take the saints to meet their Lord? Is it not sad and humbling that the Lord should have to complain, that though the swallow should

know her appointed time, "my people know not the judgment of the Lord?" Is not this as true now of Christendom, as it was of Israel then? What profound ignorance there is on this important subject. "My people know not." Men go on dreaming of a continual summer, yea, of increasing sunshine, peace, temperance, prosperity—just at the very time when the saints are about to be gone like the swallows of autumn, and the storms of this world's wintry blasts are about to take them all by surprise. (1 Thess. v. 1-9.)

It is incredible how utterly unaware the learned of this world are of the wintry judgments about to be poured out on the nations of the earth. "How do ye say we are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us?"

Never was there a day of more boasting, "we are wise." It is quite true the word of God is in men's hands; but who believes it? The rapture of the church *before* "the day of the Lord" is clearly revealed. God has said it. He has made it perfectly clear, both the departure of His saints to meet the Lord in the air, and the terrible judgments that shall follow. Has he made it clear? Yes, but, "Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain." Yes, in vain hath God spoken in His word; men will not believe Him. "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition" (Mark vii).

Let us now pass on to the December of this world, before the new era of the millennial king-

dom begins. (Ver. 9.) "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken : lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord ; and what wisdom is in them ? "

Let us listen to these learned men, these rejecters of the word of God. "How strange this is : those Christians we despised are all gone, like the swallows of autumn. Not one of them can be found on earth. How we laughed and hated their gathering together ! What fools we thought them because they would fly higher ; as they said, their Lord was coming to take them. They spoke of their heavenly calling ; and would have nothing to say to our earthly societies and politics. We scorned them because they would not join our various schemes for the improvement of man. We hated the thought that we were not to glory save in the cross of Christ. They gathered together—poor little despised companies—and told of the coming Saviour to the wanderers all around. No one saw them go, but they are gone. And now the world's wild, fierce, wintry blasts are blowing. Where is all our boasted wisdom ? Peace is taken from the earth. All that we hear on every side is, that men are killing one another. Famine and pestilence, sword, hunger and death all around. Woe, woe to us, the winter of this world is come.

"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains . . . hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the

mountains ; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." (Rev. vi.) Ah, we rejected the word of the Lord, but now the Christians are gone, and the great day of His wrath is come. Storm after storm has come : we seek death and do not find it. (Rev. ix. 6.) Where is now our boasted wisdom ? We are worshipping devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood. (Rev ix. 20.) And what is the end of all our politics ? What strange events since the winter set in, and the saints are gone ! It is not forty-two months yet, since the new last head of the Roman Empire appeared. But oh, what months ! The dragon has given him his power. Ten kingdoms have sprung up and given their power to this Satanic head. When he opens his mouth it is in blasphemy. And all that dwell on earth worship him. And all that refuse are boycotted and put to death. It is true all this was distinctly foretold in scripture, but we were far too wise then to believe what God said to his servants in Revelation vi., ix., xiii., xvii. Certainly there never was such a winter as this since the beginning of the world, no, nor ever shall be, Jesus said it would be so : but we did not believe Him." (Matt. xxiv. 21.)

Yes, "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken : lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord ; and what wisdom is in them ?"

And now, beloved reader, as the last days of another year are fast coming to a close, where are you, and what is the condition of your soul? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb, and ready to be gone like the swallows in autumn? Are you following the wise men of this world, who will so soon be ashamed and confounded? Is Christ the centre of attraction? Are you separated to Him, and waiting for Him from heaven? Great is the last effort to draw Christians from Christ to join the confederacies of men. Oh, let us seek to get higher and higher. The word of God is utterly disregarded. On no account will men allow it to be Christ alone. Christ and circumcision, Christ and teetotalism, Christ and the world's various confederacies, or even Christ and profanity. All these things hide the coming of the Lord to take His saints. Every doctrine of human improvement denies the utter ruin of man through sin, and the fast approaching winter of divine judgment on the rejecters and despisers of the word of God. It is solemnly true of the great men and the wise of this world, "They have rejected the word of the Lord." The mark of a Christian is, "Thou hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name." Which is true of you, beloved reader? Whatever name you may bear, if you have not kept His word you are not a Christian, and will surely be left behind when the Christians depart like the swallows that are gone.

Can you for a moment admit that the instinct of a bird is more sure than the words of the Saviour? As this world's winter approaches, let us then dwell on the words of Jesus. He cannot fail to fulfil His promise. We may not know where the swallows go; but Jesus says to us, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John xiv. 2, 3) Do we hear you saying, "Yes: Jesus says so, but our learned, wise teachers do not say so"? Remember the word, "They have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?"

It is a solemn fact that God by His Spirit has sent forth the midnight cry, "Behold the Bridegroom, go ye out to meet Him;" and they have rejected the word of the Lord. God grant we may cease from man; for what wisdom is in him?

May the saints of God be now gathered together like the swallows in autumn. May we love to dwell on His sweet words of promise. Has He not gone to prepare the place? Oh, those scenes of radiant glory, far away from earth's cold wintry blasts! And will He not come to take us to Himself? With Himself! How soon, like Moses and Elias, shall we be talking with Him! Glorious reality. Soon we shall be gone; not one be left behind. And poor deceived apostate Christendom left to "become the habitation of devils, and

the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Rev. xviii. 2). Blessed comfort; the Lord knoweth them that are His, and none shall be left behind.

"Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephes. v. 14).



THE JOYS OF CHRIST:

We ought to think of the joys of Christ as well as His sorrows. Nothing shows where a man's heart is, and what it is, more than when oppressed, distressed, and full of sorrow, where his heart finds its joy, and if it does find a joy unreached by it.

We see these joys in Christ—a secret comfort in the midst of His sorrow. He had meat to eat which man knew not of. Besides His communion with His Father, there was this working of love to us. Paradise shone in upon His heart in comforting the poor thief. "Go in peace" refreshed His spirit in the house of the Pharisee. "She hath done it for my burial" justified Mary against the reproach of selfish man. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes" was His joy in the sense of the heartless rejection to which the wickedness of man subjected Him. How blessed to the heart, besides learning where His joy was, to think that He found it in the working of His love to us!

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 220.)

Gideon's ephod.

(viii. 24-35.)

Hitherto Gideon had been marvellously preserved amidst dangers and snares. His heart was still full of good intentions; but a subtil poison had been doing its work in his heart, and we are about to witness the ruin of the career of the judge, as formerly we have seen the ruin of the people.

“And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey;” a request with which the people willingly complied. Gideon did not covet these things as Achan did, when he brought judgment upon Israel. He was noble-hearted and disinterested, and wished to make a good use of the gold. Aaron, of old, had asked for their ornaments to make therewith the calf of gold. Jerubbaal, who had cast down the idols, in no wise sought to set them up again; but, impressed with the sense of his own importance, he wished to erect a memorial of his victory at Ophrah, his native town. This memorial was to be *an ephod*, an article of divine appointment. It formed part of the vestments which the sacrificing priest wore when representing the people before God. It was

indeed a beautiful object, yet in Jehovah's eyes it was worthless, apart from the high priest who wore it. Alas ! *all Israel* looked upon this ephod as a means of approach to God, and went and prostrated themselves before it. Even Gideon and his house fell into the snare.

Christendom is no stranger to ephods. Many are the things of divine appointment which it has apart from Christ and by which it imagines that it can approach God. The church, ministry, baptism, the Lord's supper, and even prayer, separated from their source, become ephods before which people prostrate themselves. Form takes the place of God, and souls thereby fall again into idolatry. Ah ! do they not even make an idol of Christ on the cross ! The brasen serpent had been kept and the people had made a false god of it. Like the faithful Hezekiah, the true witness of the present day cannot put up with that. The king brake in pieces this idol, and called it Nehushtau, *i. e.*, *a piece of brass* (2 Kings xviii. 4).

What a humbling fact, that the leaders of the people should be the instruments to lead them back into idolatry ! Frequently, after an auspicious beginning, the heart, allowing itself to be acted upon by the flattery of the world, is influenced thereby, and the desire gradually gains ground to be of some importance in, as well as recognized by, it. A monument is thus erected which can only add material to the increase of the ruin ; thus

their Ophrah became a gathering centre, and the ephod became a centre of Ophrah, to the displacement of the divine sanctuary at Shiloh, the true centre of gathering for Israel. Gideon was not a proud man, but, his heart being deceived, he was no longer upright before God. He dwelt in his own house (v. 29), and rested from his glorious labours. He was surrounded by a numerous family, but he had set up a "serpent" which was eventually to accomplish the destruction of his race. No sooner had he closed his eyes in death, than Israel returned to unmingled idolatry, and made Baal-berith their god (v. 33), thus making a demon their chief and "Lord of the covenant."

But there is one consolation in the midst of all the ruin which will be seen in chap. ix.: God never leaves Himself without a testimony in this scene. Let us then be His witnesses, holding fast this word of Gideon to the people: "Jehovah shall rule over you."

(To be continued, D.V.)



" BUT THE END
OF ALL THINGS IS AT HAND : BE YE
THEREFORE SOBER, AND WATCH UNTO PRAYER."
" BLESSED ARE THOSE SERVANTS, WHOM THE
LORD WHEN HE COMETH SHALL FIND
WATCHING."