

WORDS OF HELP

FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH

Volume XX.

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WORDS OF HELP

from the

SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH

A Soldier's Conversion.

I AM an Army scripture reader, working amongst the troops in a garrison town, telling out "the old, old story of Jesus and His love." I took my stand for Him many years ago in India. It came about in this way :—

I had been a wild young soldier, given to gambling and drinking. But at the time of the South African War God spoke to me, and the line of the hymn used often to come to my mind when I was in the fighting line at the front, "Thou art in the midst of foes, Watch and pray."

And yet I used to put it off, thinking something like this, "Oh, it will be all right ; if I get killed I shall go to heaven."

However, after the war, in which God in His mercy spared me to get through, my regiment was sent to India. I began gambling and drinking again ; then a sad thing happened—a comrade with whom I was associated in my bad ways took his own life.

It so happened that I was appointed as one of the firing party at the funeral next morning, and at the graveside God spoke to me again and showed me the awfulness of sin. As I stood there these words came to my mind, "The wages of sin is death ; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I said to myself, "Cooper, which are you going to choose? Is it sin and death, or the gift of God which is eternal life?" There and then I accepted the Lord Jesus as my own personal Saviour.

I have never regretted the step I took then, and I can say all the way along the road, "It is well, it is

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well with my soul." Yes, praise His Name, truly the Lord Jesus has lifted me out of a horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and has set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings, and put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.

Time is short and eternity is long; and oh, to die unsaved is an awful thing! "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark viii. 36.).

The same Saviour that saved me can save every reader of this magazine if only they will turn to Him in repentance and faith. Think of His love, think of how Jesus appeals to you and says, so to speak, "Look at My wounded hands and feet, look at those nail-prints, see how that soldier thrust the spear into My side, behold that stream of cleansing blood and water which flowed out at Calvary, and remember, that was for thee."

Can you, dare you, refuse such love? If you do, what will you say when you stand before the judgment throne?

I can assure you that I could find no real satisfaction when I was enjoying the "pleasures of sin for a season." Like the prodigal son in Luke xv., I was then feeding on the husks of the far country, vainly trying to satisfy the cravings of my heart with the follies and sins of this world.

But I can commend to you my Lord Jesus; I can tell you that the one who believes on Him gets forgiveness of sins and eternal life. And not only so, but he finds One Who can give him a joy and satisfaction that this world never can give.

Fellow-soldier or civilian, whoever you may be, let me remind you that NOW is the time for decision. The soldier on the field of battle does not know the moment the rifle or machine-gun bullet or the fatal shell splinter may do its deadly work; he is facing realities and he knows it.

The civilian, sitting comfortably at his fireside, may not realise his danger in the same way, but who can tell when the arrow of death may strike the mark?

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We are told of a man who succeeded well in this world—apparently a farmer. So well did he prosper that he found himself in a difficulty as to what was the best thing to do. He said to himself one day, “What shall I do, because I have no room to bestow my fruits?”

Then, like an astute business man, he said, “I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.”

And, so sure of a long life was he, that he said to his own soul, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.” But who told him that he was going to live for many years? Like thousands of our astute business men of to-day, the wish was father to the thought, and he persuaded himself that a long life was assured to him.

But, oh, what a fatal mistake he made in not bringing God into his calculations! For God said, “Fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee.” The “many years” on which he counted were all a delusion, a vain dream of the imagination, a shadow that vanished away in a moment. (Luke xii. 16—20.)

Contrast with this the blessed portion of the true believer. He may be a poor man, living as best he can on the old-age pension or some small income just sufficient to support himself. His life is not guaranteed in this world, it is true; but he has life eternal.

He has a Saviour Who never fails, a treasure in the heavens which death cannot take from him; a rich portion where neither moth nor rust can corrupt or thieves break through and steal. Is this less real because he does not *see* it with his natural eyes in the same way as he might see well-filled barns and piles of goods? Certainly not.

“The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Cor. iv. 18.) The word “temporal” may be written over all the best things of this world; they pass away like the morning cloud or the early dew. But the things which are for faith, the unseen, are eternal.

To possess Christ is to possess the best treasure heaven has to offer. And this possession is held out to everyone that believes, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John iii. 36.) A.C.

He Shall Be Great.

WE need to be occupied more and more with the person of the Lord Jesus and His glories. It was said of Him by the angel Gabriel, when he announced His birth to the Virgin Mary, "*He shall be great*" (Luke i. 32). It is with this greatness that I desire that we should be occupied, such as we find it in this Gospel of Luke, and as it has shone forth from His lowly birth. It is said of John the Baptist that he should be great (Luke i. 15), but great on account of the greatness of Another; Him Whom he was to precede, and be His herald. He Who was to be born of the Virgin would be great in Himself and in virtue of His own perfection. He was great in the manger at Bethlehem when the heavenly hosts came to acclaim His birth (Luke ii. 13). In this world's palaces great lords come to render honour to the sons of kings at their birth, but never angels. Oh, what greatness was His! A multitude of the heavenly host came to celebrate the coming into the world of Him Who was esteemed only to be the son of a carpenter (Matt. xiii. 55); a little child lying in a manger, yet how great He was!

Let us look on further in this wondrous Gospel of Luke, and we shall soon find again the greatness of this One then born. As a child of twelve years of age, in the temple, He was both hearing and asking questions of the great doctors of the law of the God of Israel; what questions He put to them, and what replies He gave them; all they that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. Then He went down with His mother and Joseph to Nazareth and was

subject unto them, after having declared that He must be about His Father's business (Luke ii. 49). Oh, what greatness !

Later on, He comes and takes His place in the midst of poor sinners who went to be baptised in Jordan, confessing their sins. Jesus also came among them in their first step of repentance toward God, even He, and was baptised ; but the heaven was opened upon Him, and the Father's voice was heard : "Thou art My beloved Son ; in Thee I am well pleased" (Luke iii. 22). God had looked down from heaven upon the children of men, and had declared : "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Ps. xiv. 2, 3). Now from heaven He looks down upon earth in His delight. Oh, how great was He !

In the wilderness, after having fasted forty days, and hungered, He was tempted of the devil, alone and without any weapon but the word of God, and by it He triumphed over that redoubtable foe (ch. iv.). All great men, all strong men had succumbed before Satan, but now a greater than he had bound him and spoiled his goods. At such a moment Jesus was great !

He was great also when in a fisherman's boat He commands the fish of the sea to come into the net in a great multitude (ch. v. 6), and fear filled those who were with Him in the presence of such greatness.

While being a dependent man passing His nights in prayer, He was, however, great in all His acts. When He stilled the wind and the sea ; when He satisfied five thousand with five loaves and two fishes ; when He healed all sorts of maladies and sickness among the people. Behold His greatness when approaching the city of Nain, He meets the funeral procession of a young man ; at His word the dead sat up and began to speak (ch vii.). What a subject for glorifying God that a great prophet was risen up ! Indeed, He was truly more than a prophet, since it was He Himself Who had sent the prophets, even the greatest of them. He manifests His greatness, too, when He gives power and

authority to poor ignorant fishermen over all demons and to cure diseases (ch. ix.).

One day while praying on a mountain He was transfigured before the eyes of three of His disciples : His raiment became white and glistening. He was so great that even Moses and Elijah, men who certainly had been great on the earth, after appearing in glory with Him, had to disappear before Him and to give place to Him of Whom the Father's voice says : "This is My beloved Son, hear Him" (ch ix. 35). What were these two great men of God before Jesus?

He was great when He made His entry into Jerusalem seated on an ass, and the whole multitude rejoiced and proclaimed His glory, glory so great that, if His disciples had held their peace, the very stones would have immediately cried out (ch. xix. 29-40).

Great was He also when He announced beforehand what would follow His rejection : wars, earthquakes, famines, pestilences and fearful sights and great signs from heaven (ch. xxi.)—things which were fulfilled to the letter after His death.

His greatness did not shine the less when in the garden of Gethsemane, in perfect obedience, He took from the hands of His Father the cup which, upon the cross, He was so soon to drink (ch. xxii. 42). This greatness is shown again on the cross, when He prays for those who nailed Him between two malefactors, and when He says to one of these : "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (ch. xxiii. 43).

How can I speak adequately of His greatness when, triumphing over Satan and over death, He rises from the sepulchre by His own power ! Men put Him on the cross, and He died, and was buried, but He arose and went up to heaven before the eyes of His disciples (ch. xxiv. 51).

I forbear, feeling that only the fringe of such a wonderful subject has been touched. May our hearts meditate upon it, and let us magnify the infinite greatness of Him Who for us has sacrificed His life.

ALF. G.

Growth in the Knowledge of Christ.

HOW do we grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ? There is nothing so grateful to a being as to grow in its own proper existence. The first thing of all importance for a Christian to be assured of is that he has a new existence. Christ is his life; he is not only a pardoned sinner, delivered from all the consequences of sin, etc., but he has a new life, and the life is Christ. Hence the more he increases in the knowledge of Christ, the more he advances in that life which is really his.

We are at first solely occupied with what Christ did for us: it could not be otherwise with lost sinners, but when I get on a little, and find what the grace of God has been to me in quickening me together with Christ, I begin to discover another interest and value in Christ. I do not lose my interest and value in Him as my Saviour, as I learn and know that He is my life. On the contrary, when I get to know that He, my Saviour, Who saved me from my lost estate, is my life, it imparts an inconceivable, unspeakable interest in Him: for then I know that I no longer live, but that Christ liveth in me. The knowledge of life, and *such* a life, is a wonderful thing. I am not only saved from death *through* Him, but I live by Him. He is my life, and *what* a life! the eternal life that was with the Father. I repeat, it invests Christ with the deepest, most intense interest to me, when I advance to this truth. "Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life." When I know that God's Son is revealed in me, and that, because He lives, I live also; then everything about Him must have an unparalleled interest to me. I lose my old personality, and it is not only that His life is mine, but it is not I, but Christ liveth in me. *My very life!* Oh, how little we know of

it ! But however little it may be, there is a way given us in the word, whereby we may grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In 2 Pet. i. we are told, "Add to your faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." In a word, the activities of the divine life must be kept up, or there will be no growth in Him in Whom we live. Just inasmuch as the natural life is invigorated by exercise, so is the new life. The activities absorb and command our being ; they carry us in the true divine line, and away and apart from all that is not in keeping with it. No one was ever overcome who was walking in the activities of life. When we are overcome, it is beyond all doubt that we have lacked these activities *first*, and then have become muddy and short-sighted. Was not Samson tampering with the world before he was overcome ? Was not Barnabas temporizing with Peter before he lost that clearness of vision that characterised Paul, and which *he* too would have had if the activities of life had not been lacking in him ? There is no way to escape the evil in and around us but by maintaining the activities of the new life. If you sleep in frost you are lost. Support animation, and you are preserved ; and not only this, but you will be "neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." You will have the glow and animation of His wondrous life ; you will be invigorated and delighted by your enlarged acquisition ; your calling and election made sure, and "an entrance ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The activities (seven in number, to be added to faith) *must* be all kept up, or the true strength of Christ will not be maintained. If you are walking in

these activities, you are prepared for any exigence : you are ready for action at any moment. It is because we are not in them that we so often find ourselves unprepared, and surprised by the most trivial matters of life. The flesh creeps in when there is any stoppage to the activities which the Spirit of God would promote in us. ***

Thoughts on Ephesians i. and ii.

THE Epistle to the Ephesians places us on high ground ; how high, few of us realise. This ground is meant to be occupied by the humblest and feeblest of God's people, because it as truly belongs to them as to the most mature Christians. What has led to the consideration of this subject is some exercise as to the meaning of that remarkable expression "in Christ" found here repeatedly, as also elsewhere : — in the Epistle to the Romans for the first time ; in the Epistle to the Corinthians in connection with sanctification ; and here in Ephesians in connection with God's infinite love.

This Epistle furnishes us with the remarkable character of the Christian's blessing, which is found in connection with Christ, not on earth, but in heaven, and it is linked with the significant term "in heavenly places." We cannot now investigate the origin of the expression, "heavenly places" or "the heavenlies," but no doubt it is found as far back as Daniel, where we read of "the saints of the high places" (Dan. vii. 18).

Ephesians and Romans differ in this, that whereas Romans is strongly individual and personal, Ephesians is more collective and therefore shews us as sitting together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

In Ephesians we behold Christ, the Christ of God "in the heavenlies." According to the Gospel and Epistle of John, eternal life is presented in Him and

communicated to us individually on the earth so that it becomes a personal and present possession; "he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." In Ephesians ii. we (Jews and Gentiles) are quickened together with Christ, and are seated together in heavenly places in Christ—that is collectively.

In the Epistle to the Romans the truth is approached from the point of view that God is angry with ungodliness, and that man is opposed to Him, yet that notwithstanding God has in His infinite love and grace sent him a gospel—glad tidings for his acceptance, which is "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." (Rom. xvi. 26).

Faith figures in all of the Epistles, as indeed in all the word of God. Without it no one can please God. By faith all that Christ is, and all that Christ has done, is at the service of every believer.

But in the Epistle to the Ephesians the truth is presented from a very different standpoint. We have said it is high ground; and so it is,—ground that only God is entitled to take. For here we see Him expressing His own sovereign will and acting accordingly. Compare especially verses 4-6 of the first chapter, where we read of "the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will," that we should be to the praise of His glory.

We repeatedly read of glory in this first chapter; "the glory of His grace;" "that we should be to the praise of His glory"; and "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory." What a striking expression—God, the Father of glory! It is God in His own nature and character. To say He is a glorious God would fall far short of the truth. He is the God of glory and the Father of glory.

We recall too, how that theme appears in the Gospel of John. On one occasion the Lord Jesus says, "Father, glorify Thy name." The answer came in a voice from heaven, "I have both glorified it, and will

I I

glorify it again" (John xii. 28). The Lord Jesus, in that unique prayer in John xvii., asks to be glorified: "Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." And again, He prays "That they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." What a wondrous theme, beloved friends, and it concerns ourselves!

As I read the first chapter of Ephesians, I see how you and I may take comfort from the fact that here we are viewed as even essential to the revelation of the glory of God. So he says (verse 6) that we should be "to the praise of the glory of His grace," and at the end of the first chapter, speaking of us collectively, as the church, that we are the fulness or complement of Him that filleth all in all. In relation to God, we are to be to the praise of the glory of His grace; in relation to Christ, we are to be His complement.

But, most solemn truth, this blessedness could only be made ours through death—the death of Christ. We become united to Him, not by His incarnation, but through His death and resurrection. The blood of Christ has made the once distant Gentile, who believes, to be nigh, and now both Jewish and Gentile believers are reconciled unto God *in one body by the cross* and through Christ we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. ii. 12-22).

In 2 Cor. v. 17, N. Tr., we read: If any one be in Christ [there is] a new creation; the old things have passed away." The Lord Jesus by His death brought to an end the old creation, as before God, and closed our first Adam standing by that one act of righteousness. In Rom. v., we see that the Christian is not under the headship of Adam, with its sentence of death—for in Adam all die—but is now under the headship of Christ Himself. His one act of laying down His life has constituted the Christian righteous and has given him a new and risen life of which He Himself is the spring and pattern.

E. B. D.

As Beloved Children.

(Eph. v. 1.)

“THE babes cry ‘Abba, Father,’ and mark this, that if we have not got the consciousness of the relationship, we cannot have the affections that belong to it. The consciousness of it is that upon which all holy affections are grounded. I might say, if only such an one were my father, what affection I should have for him, for he is such a good kind father. But if conscious of the relationship, the feelings come out at once. We must know the Father as such, and that is not great growth. It is the babes that know that—the fathers are characterised by being well acquainted with Christ—Christ in us, we cry ‘Abba, Father’; ‘Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry ‘Abba, Father.’ I insist upon it, not as a special growth, but as the place of the Christian. *My responsibility as a Christian is the consequence of my being a child.* I am to be a follower of God—‘followers of God as dear children’—peaceful, blessed, I am now to manifest the life of Jesus in everything—my life showing out the reality of the work, the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in me.

“Now God has wrought us for the glory. This is the very thing that proves we never can be perfect here. A Christian is a man who is walking with God now in the full consciousness of his relationship, and who is wrought to be like Christ when He shall appear. Well, can I be like Christ in glory when I am down here? Impossible! But whilst we cannot be like Him here, there is only one object before the Christian, and that is to win Christ, and to be raised in glory—changed into it, if he be alive—but there is no other—*none*! Christ is the object. The only thing that is set before us to attain is a thing that is unattainable in this world, and that is, to be like Christ in glory. We cannot have

what is set before us until we are there. I am going to be like Him in glory, and I long to be like Him, and I am trying to be as like Him as ever I can.

“My relationship with God and the Father is all settled, and settled for ever. I am a child, and my relations with God flow from that. It is important for us all to get hold of this, that we are not in the flesh at all. Then where are we? *In Christ!* Put into this totally new place, where Adam innocent was not, as to our life and course here. ‘The calling above,’ that is the one thing; the pressing forward, the pursuing, the other; but the very pursuit gives a consciousness that it is not attained. I am a son with Christ, but I am not yet glorified with Christ, that is clear; but I am wrought for it, and I ‘look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.’ I try to be more like Him every day; we are chastened for it, if need be, in our course; but we *are* wrought for it (2 Cor. v. 5), and we shall be in it when He appears. The moment my mind descends below what Christ in glory is now, that moment my mind descends below what is my proper object as a Christian. If you look for perfection down here you have lowered your standard.

“You say : But am I not to be like Christ? Yes, but not down here. He was a perfectly sinless being—so born into the world, as it is said, ‘That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.’ But we are born sinful—‘By nature children of wrath.’ And if I say : How can I have a ground for such a wondrous hope as that I should be made like to Christ, my answer is at once—I know the blessed Son of God has been made sin for me : ‘He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.’ The moment I really believe *that*, I can believe *anything* as the result; nothing

is too great for Him to do for me. He is to receive the fruit of the travail of His soul: what is the fruit? That He shall have sons with Him in glory. If I am 'made the righteousness of God in Him,' why I may expect *anything*! We have got these two great parts of the intervention of God for us: God in Christ in this world in grace to reconcile it, and our being made the righteousness of God.

"I will say one word here on 'the righteousness of God,' as many find great difficulty in understanding what it is. The question is: how can a righteous God justify sinners? Well, the proof and testimony of God's righteousness is that He has set Christ at His own right hand in heaven, and there only do I see righteousness. But this work, though perfectly to God's glory, was done for us, so that it is God's righteousness to give us a place with Him. In Christ we are thus made God's righteousness. So it is said, 'He is faithful and just to forgive.' But Christ is gone there as Man, and I am united to Him, and I get, with this righteousness, Christ my life, in which I am capable of enjoying all the blessedness of that which I am brought into. I have power to enjoy it, because Christ is my life."

J.N.D.

"God and Man One Christ."

"**I**N Him (Christ) dwells all the fulness of the God-head bodily; and ye are filled full in Him." (Col ii. 9). It was as though the apostle had turned to the Colossian believers and said to them, "You need not go down to the schools of philosophy, or follow the teachings and traditions of men, you have *all* in Christ."

It is well to note that the word translated "God-head" here is the strongest of the three words used in the New Testament, and means absolute Deity, not merely that which is divine *in character*. As to the adverb translated "bodily," Parkhurst says that it

means, "substantially or personally, by the strictest union, as the soul dwells in the body, so that 'God and man is one Christ.' "

It points to the mysterious *union* of the divine and human natures in Him Who is God and man in one Person. He was truly God, co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit; truly man, spirit and soul and body; God and man, one Christ. We dare not speculate as to the manner of the union of the two natures, the divine and the human, in Him of Whom it is written, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father" (Mat. xi. 27). And again, "The Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh" (John i. 1 and 14). We believe, we worship, we adore in presence of such glory and such grace.

"No one knoweth Him (the Son) but the Father. Who among the proud could fathom what He was? He Who from all eternity was one with the Father, become man, surpassed, in the deep mystery of His being, all knowledge save that of the Father Himself. The impossibility of knowing Him Who had emptied Himself to become man, maintained the certainty, the reality, of His divinity, which this self-renunciation might have hidden from the eyes of unbelief. The incomprehensibility of a being in a finite form revealed the infinite which was therein. His divinity was guaranteed to faith, against the effect of His humanity on the mind of man" (*Synopsis on Matt. xi. by J.N.D.*).

Eternal Life.

Bible Treasury, July, 1904.

1 John v. 20. The article before "eternal life" in this verse is said not to have authority sufficient to retain it in the Greek. What difference does the presence or absence of the article make for this passage? In the controversy during recent years on "life eternal" I have seen it stated that the absence of the article

here renders this passage to mean that "life eternal" is characteristic of Christ, not that He is personally "the life eternal."

Answer by Mr. W. Kelly.

In 1 John v. 20, the oldest and best authority excludes the article before "life eternal." But, it is only a novice in zeal for his notion, that would thence infer that the phrase is characteristic and not objective. For the article before "the true God" is passed on by the connective particle to "life eternal" also, according to a well-known principle of its usage. "The true God and life eternal" are thus bound up with our Lord Jesus Christ in the *striking way peculiar* to this Epistle, which combines God with Him, or, as here, with "life eternal."

The case, therefore, is not only not an oversight, but a cogent proof against those who *would* separate them. Had the article been repeated before "life" it would have made them distinct objects, the very thing which the apostle avoided. The opening chapter (i. 2) is most emphatic in predicating *objective reality* of "the life eternal" with the Father, before He became flesh, and when He was thus manifested. "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing," especially for such as hastily seize a superficial appearance in questions so grave and momentous, where truth and safety are found only in entire subjection to the written word.

Notes from a Bible Reading on Genesis iv.-viii.

THESE chapters record the history of mankind from Adam's expulsion from Eden to the Flood, the period of about 1650 years referred to by Peter as "the world that then was" (2 Pet. iii. 6). Their contents include:—

- i. An account of the development of evil in the world.

- ii. The characters and testimonies of God's witnesses—the line of faith.
- iii. Foreshadowings of Christ.

I. DEVELOPMENT OF EVIL.

Unlike Adam and Eve, who were originally in a state of innocence, Cain and Abel were born sinners.

In offering to God the fruit of the ground, Cain sets aside the word of God (Gen. iii. 17), and is rejected (iv. 5). Told by God that the way is still open for him to follow Abel's example (ver. 7), he despises grace; then hates and murders his brother who has been the object of it (ver. 8). When punished (vers. 11, 12), he despairs of forgiveness (ver. 13), turns his back defiantly upon God (ver. 16), establishes himself in self-will (ver. 17), and finds comfort in worldliness (ver. 21).

Man's wickedness proceeds from bad to worse, for Lamech seems to boast of his sin (probably manslaughter), and to assume God's protection from the consequences of it (vers. 23, 24) on the ground that Cain's wickedness was unprovoked and his own due to provocation.

In chapter vi. 1-4, there are the unholy marriages between the sons of God (i.e., angels), and the daughters of men — the mixing up of spiritual and carnal. Corruption and violence fill the earth (vers. 5, 11, 12). Evil reaches its height and God decides to purge the earth with a flood (vers. 13, 17).

II. GOD'S WITNESSES—THE LINE OF FAITH.

Abel. By the intelligence of faith (Heb. xi. 4) and remembering perhaps that God had clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of slain animals (Gen. iii. 21), Abel approaches God with the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof (iv. 4). No mention is made of bloodshedding, but death must have taken place for the fat to be separated. His sacrifice was "burnt-offering" in character. Under the Levitical economy the fat of the offerings was reserved for God (Lev. iii. 14-17). Thus Abel came to God and received testimony that he was righteous (Gen. iv. 4; Heb. xi. 4).

Enoch—after the birth of his firstborn son—walks with God (v. 22). His whole soul's desire is toward God. For two to walk together they must be agreed (Amos iii. 3). God's thoughts are sovereign, but He chooses to share them with Enoch and makes him a prophet. Knowing God's thoughts as to the world around him, he learns the truth of coming judgment, but is himself taken away before it is sent (v. 24). In this respect he typifies the church. The testimony concerning Enoch was that he walked with God (Gen. v. 22; Heb. xi. 5).

Noah. The testimonies of Abel and Enoch are combined in Noah—He became heir of the righteousness which is by faith (Gen. vii. 1; Heb. xi. 7). He walked with God (Gen. v. 9).

Warned of coming judgment (chap. vi. 13) and moved with fear because he believed, he obeys God's command to build an ark, a thing never heard of before (vers. 14-22); enters the ark when God tells him to (vii. 13); is shut in by God (v. 16); and does not leave it until he has God's command to go forth (viii. 15-16). On entering upon the new scene he builds an altar (first mention of an "altar" in scripture); offers burnt offerings of every clean beast and fowl, apprehending by faith the purpose of God in providing an unpaired seventh of each clean beast and fowl (viii. 20); receives God's pledge as to the future (vers. 21-22); and is blessed of God (ix. 1).

III. FORESHADOWINGS OF CHRIST.

Abel. The one who was hated, rejected and slain typifies Christ in His life and death (1 Pet. ii. 21-24).

Abel's Sacrifice. An offering acceptable to God (Heb. ix. 14). "Firstlings of his flock" speaks of Christ's pre-eminence (Col. i. 18). "Fat" speaks of His excellence and inward perfection. As Abel was accepted because of the excellence of his offering, so God receives us because of His delight in the sacrifice of Christ which never loses its value in His sight. In Rom. v. 12-21, where man's sinful nature is dealt with,

there is no mention of blood, but only of the excellence of Christ's Person in obedience.

Seth. The man of God's appointment. Typifies Christ in resurrection, the One Who carries on God's purpose.

Eve had made a mistake—she thought Cain was to be the seed of Gen. iii. 15. When Seth was born, she had submitted to the will of God and so recognised that he was the one appointed of God in fulfilment of His promise. Seth could not be "the seed" himself because he was born in Adam's likeness (v. 3) and died (v. 8).

The Ark. Typical of Christ passing through death; the One Who saves from judgment (1 Pet. iii. 20-21).

Noah's Sacrifice. Fulness, its characteristic; typifies the death of Christ and provides the basis of God's covenant of mercy (compare Heb. ix., x.).

E. A. P.



God is Faithful. If you have been getting away from Him, and other things have come in, and formed a crust, as it were, over your hearts, you will not at once get back the joy. God will have you deal with this crust, and get rid of it. Remember Christ bought you with His own blood, that you should be His, not the world's. Do not let Satan get between you and God's grace. However careless you may have been, however far you may have got away from Him, count on His love. It is His joy to see you back again. Look at the sin with horror, but never wrong Him by distrusting His love. He has loved you and will love you to the end.

Talk much with Jesus. Never be content without being able to walk and talk with Christ as with a dear friend. Be not satisfied with anything short of close intercourse of soul with Him Who has loved you and washed you from your sins in His own blood.

J. N. D.

The Woman of Samaria.

“Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans v.

SWEETER, O Lord, than rest to Thee,
While seated by the well,
Was the blest work that led Thee there
Of grace and peace to tell.

One thoughtless heart, that never knew
The pulse of life before,
There learn'd to love—was taught to sigh
For earthly joys no more.

Friend of the lost, O Lord, in Thee
Samaria's daughter there
Found One Whom love had drawn to earth
Her weight of guilt to bear.

Fair witness of Thy saving grace,
In her, O Lord, we see;
The wandering soul by love subdued,
The sinner drawn to Thee.

Through all that sweet and blessed scene,
Dear Saviour, by the well,
More than enough the trembler finds
His guilty fears to quell.

There, in the blest repose of faith,
The soul delights to see
Not only One Who *fully loves*,
But *Love itself* in Thee.

Not One alone Who feels for all,
But knows the wondrous art
Of meeting all the sympathies
Of every loving heart.

SIR EDWARD DENNY

The Paralytic Healed—I.

(Luke v. 16-26.)

"He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed."

THE Lord Jesus ever felt the need of prayer in His dependence upon His Father Whose will He had come to do. Indeed, His life was a beautiful exhibition of grace and obedience; and with the cross before Him, the perfection of His dependence is fully expressed when He says, "Preserve Me, O God; for in Thee do I put My trust." If it were not so, how could He have gone to the cross of Calvary, and there as the Lamb of God carry through the great work of atonement?

The secret of His power was in prayer, and by grace He was strengthened in the garden of Gethsemane to face all that was involved in going to the cross of Calvary and to say, "Not My will, but Thine be done." And being in agony He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Surely this was a scene for the eye of God alone, not even His dearest disciples could take part in what the Lord passed through in anticipation of the cross.

Forsaken by man, wounded in the house of His friends, He turns to God; soon at Golgotha to be forsaken even of Him. Yet love which was stronger than death enabled Him to look forward to the joy set before Him of being glorified by the Father and having the church as His bride in the Father's house; and this heavenly glory to be followed by His receiving the heathen for His inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth as His possession, and Israel as His glory, here below. Thus strengthened He endured the cross, counting the shame but small in comparison. In the day that is coming He will look back on the travail of His soul and will be satisfied.

"The power of the Lord was present to heal."

The healing of the paralytic is one of the many incidents recorded in the life of the Lord Jesus on earth that we might believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, we might have life through His name.

Here were gathered unto Him the highest in the land, representing the cultured classes of the people, and the power of the Lord was present to heal even Pharisees and doctors of the law.

The healing of the body is doubtless a great blessing, but how much greater is the healing of the soul, even the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of eternal life! And, dear friend, remember, remission of sins through Jesus Christ is still preached, and He Himself did say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word and believeth Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and comes not into judgment; but hath passed out of death into life" (John v. 24, R.V.).

The man with the palsy had lost power to control his limbs. His disease was manifest, for he shook all over; and he was an object of pity to all around. The state of this paralytic is a picture of man in his helplessness; for sin reigns within him, he is led captive by Satan at his will, and he is utterly unable to better himself.

There are three classes of men mentioned in Psalm 1:

(a) Those who walk in the counsel of the ungodly.

(b) Those who stand in the way of sinners.

(c) Those who sit in the seat of the scornful.

(a) *To walk* in the counsel of the ungodly is to walk after the course of this world, and to leave God out of our thoughts, doing that which is right in our own eyes, with complete indifference to the claims of God. Those who do so walk are themselves ungodly.

(b) *To stand* in the way of sinners is to take an active part in open identification with the world, which crucified the Lord of glory.

(c) *To sit* in the seat of the scornful is a stage

further; for then, though we hear the word of God, we express the enmity of our heart against God's Christ, and rejecting God's offer of mercy, join with others in saying, "We will not have this Man to reign over us."

If you have not yet believed on Christ, you belong to one or more of these three classes; and to you, once more in this day of grace, is the word of this salvation sent, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 9, 10).

The fact that Jesus had only just before healed a man suffering from the terrible disease of leprosy in its worst form, made these men, who were carrying the paralytic, determined to bring him, bed and all, into His presence; for they were persuaded, if they could only attract His attention, the man with the palsy would be healed.

Did you believe His willingness to save you, and believe God as to the terrible condition you are in—"condemned already," because you "have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"—you would be in earnest to claim Christ as your Saviour. For God has "appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained" (Acts xvii. 31). H.K.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Even So, Come, Lord Jesus.

(Rev. xxi. 20.)

AN honoured servant of the Lord, who has now joined the ranks of those "dead in Christ," who will "rise first" when the Lord comes, according to 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, has often related in the course of

his preaching the story of an old Scotch woman who used to wash clothes on the banks of the River Clyde in Scotland.

One day when the river was running very swiftly with the volume of its water increased by floods, the poor washerwoman slipped on the edge of the bank where she was working and, falling into the current, was being rapidly borne away to meet with a watery grave, unless a timely rescuer appeared.

A strong swimmer was at hand, who, without hesitating, divested himself of his coat and plunged into the torrent, soon to reach the drowning woman and draw her safely ashore.

A number of people gathered round and means were successfully applied to restore her to consciousness, when, opening her eyes, she said: "I want to see the man that saved me."

The rescuer had disappeared into the crowd, but they found him, and brought him to her, when she said, as she took his hand: "I've nothing in the world but yon tub, and I give it to you with all my heart."

The man grasped the situation at a glance and, having passed round with his hat among the folk assembled he made a collection and poured into the old woman's lap more than she had ever had all at once in her life before.

Thus she was not only saved but unexpectedly enriched by her rescuer whose heart had been touched by her present needs.

This story has reached many hearts; and can your heart be touched by it, reader, without its suggesting to you the story of the Good Shepherd, Who gave His life for the sheep, and in resurrection glory lives for those for whom He died? Is it your one desire to see the One Who saved you? And does your heart leap for joy when He says, "Surely, I come quickly"? Should not the continual attitude of believing hearts be, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"? (Rev. xxii. 20).

G. S. P.

Thoughts on Ephesians i. and ii.—2.

IN Ephesians I see God's purpose of gathering together both things in heaven and things upon earth. And in the order of events, heavenly events, things in which you and I have a share, have the first place. Historically we have earthly things first. But when it comes to God instructing the believer, He takes the heavenly things first and shows them to us before the earthly things are fully and finally developed. Oh, that we might lay hold of it!

Christ's home is not on earth but in heaven, in the Father's house, and that is where we are destined to come. In Ephesians He is viewed as in heaven. He is no longer on earth; and all our thoughts and all our affections are to be centred round Him where He is. And God is going to gather in one (verse 10) all things in Christ, all things in heaven and on earth.

In this work of the new creation—for it is God's work—the God that created material things, as we read in Genesis, and Who said, Let light be, and light was, He is the very One Who by His voice quickens dead sinners—what a word that is!—and gives life, spiritual life and being, an entirely new creation. I am dwelling particularly on Ephesians ii., where we read, "You hath He quickened, who were dead." If we go back to chapter i. we find Christ dead, that He became dead.

You and I know that He alone of men had the power to lay down His life, He alone of men had the power to take it again, having received the commandment from His Father. And when He was raised far above all principality and power He was not only raised from the dead Himself and seated in heavenly places, but in God's sight, in God's eternal purpose, in the execution of His will, He viewed you and me and every believer as quickened together with Christ, raised up together, seated together in heavenly places *in Christ*. We are so completely identified with Him, one might

say without any stretch of the truth, that God does not see us at all save as He sees us in Christ.

So in chapter i. 6, we are accepted in the beloved; taken into favour. What a place God has given to you and to me! But how am I to know it is mine, how am I to be assured as a young believer that this gospel of my salvation is placing me in such a position, state, and standing that God views me as He views His beloved Son?

We must hark back to Romans, to the most simple statement of fact in scripture. We come to know by simple faith in the last verse of Romans iv. that Jesus our Lord "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." And "therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." And immediately there flow out from that sense of justification, and of our privileges as believers, feelings and experiences such as the believer needs to know and is privileged to enjoy. The first eleven verses of Romans v. are of the utmost consequence. They are the culmination of the apostle's argument that Christ died for ungodly persons, so that God is righteous in justifying ungodly persons, is righteous in justifying him that believes. That is what is termed God's righteousness.

God, Who is righteous in His character, in all His ways, has provided me, a poor sinner, with a righteousness of His own; not what I have worked for, not what I have attained to, but what He has given as a free gift. This brings us on to chapters v., vi., vii., where our sinful state is considered, not merely our sinful actions, and there the great theme of liberty comes in, liberty from sin, liberty to be a servant of righteousness and not to serve sin.

That liberty is obtained on the same principle of faith by which I obtained justification. I am called upon to do what is looked upon as a ridiculous thing; I, a living person, alas! alive in sin, every thought and action tainted, marred with sin, am bidden to reckon myself dead *with* Christ, to reckon myself dead to sin.

And in so doing I myself immediately become possessed of a power I did not possess before. I am sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (i. 13). I am no more the slave of sin, no longer under the domination of sin, but I am delivered from sin as a master in thought and word and deed. This new and glorious liberty is made good in us by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Everyone who believes ought to have it and enjoy it.

E. B. D.

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

The Lord's Supper.

(1 Corinthians xi.)

THE thought of God in every revelation of His mind is that which pre-eminently gives us a clue to its value, and it is also an unchanging source of strength and blessing to us. Oftentimes His revelations are studied and observed, more with reference to the good which may result to us from them than in order to acquire an idea of His own purpose in giving them.

The thought of our Lord in calling His beloved ones around Him "in the night in which He was betrayed," unfolds to us above all others the true idea of the Lord's supper. *It was the night in which He was betrayed*; when everything here was coming to an end. Then it was, we read, that "He took bread, and when He had given thanks . . ." He owed to God the grace and favour of giving the bread; for He Himself was the bread of God which came down from heaven; and He can give thanks for it—thanks which find an echo in our hearts. But this is not all. The bread for which He gives thanks, and for which thanksgiving fills our souls, He *breaks*. He desires (and this is His purpose) that we, His own, should be kept in remembrance of Him, in the way, and at the moment, in which He, by giving His body, has opened a way for us, into His

life. It is not here (i.e., in this remembrance of Him) that He would teach us the value of His death—the *appropriation* of it—as in John vi. ; but here He would so connect us with Himself, at this moment, that we might feel and know that as He has no longer a link with the world, neither have we. That we, while remaining in the world, may not resume links with it; but, on the contrary, that our chief expression and joy of heart may be, in remembering Him, at the moment when He gave His body for us, and thus opened a way for us, out of death, into His own life. The thought of His heart is to connect us, who are still in the world which is under judgment, with Himself, in that moment, on this earth, when He, by His death, delivered us from it.

“After the same manner also He took the cup when He had supped [or after supper], saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.” The new testament is through His blood, and while we are here, and while He is absent, we drink this cup, in remembrance of Him. It is not that we come to it to derive a benefit from His blood-shedding; but we come to remember Him Who, by His blood-shedding, has blessed us.

The one simple desire of the heart of Christ is that we should remember Him while we are in this scene, at the moment, and in the manner by which He delivered us from it, and its judgment. Hence it is *where* He freed us from it all, that He necessarily attaches us unto Himself; not that I should be occupied with the deliverance, but with the *Deliverer*; and as I am occupied with Him, I am in heart and spirit rejoicing to be in Him outside of it all. No one can be truly in this remembrance but as He is apart and outside of all that from which the death of Christ separates him. It is not His resurrection that He brings before me, it is His own *death*; to remember Him in His *death*; in the scene where it took place, and where I still am,

and where He is not. It is *here* and in this state that I remember Him. If it were resurrection it would be rising out of it; it would be passing from the death to the fruits of it; but it is in His *death* (in the scene and circumstances which required it) that He calls me to remember Him; and as I do, I know, and feel, and place myself outside of all here; I dissociate myself from everything here which required His death, and my heart is occupied in remembering Him, at the moment, when He gave His body to be slain, and His blood to be shed, in order to free me from all that is around me. Like the stones erected in the midst of Jordan (see Joshua iv. 9), it speaks to the heart—Oh, how deeply and touchingly!—of the only one thing on earth which interests me if I be true to Christ; of that one singular event which separates me from all here, but which connects me with Him, when He broke all natural links with the earth, in order to open out for me “a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.” It is impossible for anyone truly to remember Him in His death, and to minister to self, that for which He died. If I “discern the Lord’s body,” if I am eating “worthily,” I am remembering Him in His given body and shed blood; and, necessarily, I am not occupied with that which has been judged in His death. I discern His body; I judge myself. If I see Him dying for me, I cannot obtrude myself. The two cannot exist together, the death and the thing judged in death. If I see Him in His death, I must judge, ignore myself. I have not remembered Him in His death, I have not discerned the Lord’s body, if I have myself before me as my object. With the symbol of Christ’s death before me I must judge that self of mine for which He died. I must allow it no place whatever; and be occupied with Him apart from, and outside of it.

“The Ships Were Broken.”

(2 Chron. xx. 37.)

JEHOSHAPHAT, the king of Judah, feared Jehovah and walked in the ways of his father David, whose lineal descendant he was. He sat upon David's throne when that throne,—set up amidst God's people,—was still honoured of God.

Jehoshaphat could therefore fully count upon the help of Jehovah. And this indeed for a time was his happy lot. God preserved him from his enemies and slew a great multitude of them—Ammonites, Edomites and Moabites,—in the valley of blessing. (2 Chron. xx. 27.)

But the king had marked weaknesses in his love of wealth and his readiness to enter into unworthy friendship. This led him to make affinity with the wicked house of Ahab who loved not the Lord nor served Him (2 Chron. xviii. 1).

It might have seemed surprising to him that this was a wrong thing to do, but so it was. Jehoshaphat, like the Christian, should have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather should he have reproved them. But he makes affinity with Ahab the wicked king instead. This leads him into distress. (See Gal. vi. 7.) He is nearly slain in battle because of it, but calling upon the name of the Lord he was delivered according to the faithfulness of God Who, if we believe not, yet remaineth faithful; He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. ii. 13).

Jehoshaphat after his narrow escape went back to Jerusalem a chastened man, and to receive from God's prophet the rebuke he fully deserved. Profiting by the wholesome admonition, he set judges in the land and gave them godly counsel as to their conduct.

Now we come to the act of failure of this worthy king which led up to the catastrophe indicated in the heading of this paper. For after the death of Ahab we see him joined to Ahab's wicked son, Ahaziah, entering into partnership with him (2 Chron. xx. 36) and thus

becoming "unequally yoked with unbelievers." Together they start a shipbuilding enterprise with the object of getting gold from Ophir, but in which there was a subtle snare for the feet of a child of God.

In the book of Kings (1 Kings ix. 26) we see how king Solomon, in the height of Israel's national prosperity, had a navy at Ezion-geber which was partly manned by sailors belonging to Hiram, king of Tyre. This navy went to Tarshish and returned once in three years with all manner of riches (2 Chron. ix. 21). It brought gold also from Ophir; no less a sum than 420 talents. So Jehoshaphat, in company with his wicked co-worker, Ahaziah, will now emulate Solomon's deeds. If Solomon may consort with Hiram, king of Tyre, may not Jehoshaphat do the same with Ahaziah, the king of Israel, Israel being God's people, whereas Hiram and his Phoenicians were not?

But Jehoshaphat overlooked two things. One was, that Hiram, king of Tyre, though a Gentile had ever been a lover of David (God's anointed) while Ahaziah, though an Israelite outwardly, was an apostate. This awful circumstance entirely changed the situation. For what might have been quite proper conduct for king Solomon who allowed the sailors of king Hiram to accompany his own servants in his ships, became quite sinful for Jehoshaphat in undertaking an unholy alliance with a reprobate king of Israel.

It is strange that his painful experiences at Ramoth Gilead and the subsequent rebuke by the mouth of the Lord's prophet should produce such little impression upon Jehoshaphat, but it is an eloquent testimony to the poverty and obstinacy of the human heart when trusting to its own wisdom and counsel. This first consideration then proved Jehoshaphat to be in the wrong in entering into any such agreement with a wicked man.

There was another matter, however, that should have weighed with him before engaging upon this ambitious adventure, and it was this. The day was one of

humbling and rebuke in Israel. God in His government had rent Solomon's kingdom and given ten tribes to Jeroboam; all of whom had straightway fallen into the grossest idolatry. Judah only was left to serve the Lord, and be a solitary testimony to the claims of Jehovah Elohim amidst the ruins of Israel.

Was this the day for emulating the prosperity of king Solomon's reign? If God had given a reviving to Jehoshaphat—and He *had* favoured him indeed, may he wax wanton and seek his own glory, forgetting the standing dishonour that rested upon Jehovah's name through the apostasy of Israel? While Elisha, as God's servant, was seeking to recall Israel to the true God, as he did at this time; could Jehoshaphat in pride of heart be allowed to vie with the past in pursuit of riches and glory?

By no means, for at this point God came in and Jehoshaphat's vessels never left the ship-building yards of Ezion-geber.

The ships were broken.

This should still speak to us, with a clear voice, down all the years that intervene. Have we no Ezion-gebers? No ships a-preparing, that have perchance to be broken so that they shall never again go in quest of the riches and glitter of this present evil world? God broke up the king's works and plans. It was the end of that venture, and He may do the same with our dearest hopes to-day.

Jehoshaphat now disciplined, "hears the rod and who has appointed it" (Micah vi. 9). He is no more disobedient, though later Satan makes one final bid to draw him from God's path, by the offer that the servants of Ahaziah should go with his servants, "but Jehoshaphat would not" (1 Kings xxii. 49). He learnt his lesson though at such cost. (See Job xxxiii. 16-18.)

It is thus that faith gains her victories, and, after many stumblings, those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity learn to trace and to tread the path of true separation to their joy and the glory of God. L.D.F.

“Consider Your Ways.”

Being the substance of an address at the Conference at Alphen in July, 1930, by J. N. Voorhoeve.

HOW great is the blessing when we listen to God's word, but how great also is our responsibility to take heed to it with our whole heart!

In the prophet Haggai we read five times, “Then came the word of the Lord” (chap. i. 1, 3; ii. 1, 10, 20). God gave a message to His servant to pass to His people.

Concerning Haggai himself, very little is said. We read simply: “The word of the Lord came unto Haggai.” And this occurred five times in the second year of King Darius. So in a few months God repeatedly sent His message to the people by the prophet's mouth. In this message are serious words of warning but also one of encouragement. But this encouragement came only when the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and feared before the Lord. “I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts”—“God with us!” This glorious word comes also to us. How much outward show there is in Christendom! So it was in Israel. Outwardly many people are busy with Christian work, but what are they seeking? Their own honour or the kingdom of God? And this is the question that matters. To the world we may appear other than what we really are, but with God we cannot do so.

But this word “consider your ways” comes with great force to believers. You have confessed the name of the Lord, but what have you done and what are you doing? In Ezra v. and vi. we find the record of the zeal of the remnant that had returned out of captivity. They had built the altar and laid the foundations of the temple. They had separated themselves to Jehovah and had faithfully withstood the enemy. Not only had they refused the overtures of the enemy but they had not accepted the offered help of the Samaritans. The be-

ginning was good and fair : it was in accordance with God's thoughts. But then the work ceased. Certainly it was because of the pressure of circumstances, but they acquiesced in the circumstances and busied themselves with their own affairs.

So Haggai comes to them with this sharp word : "This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." But Jehovah says : "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" It was here a pretext used by the people to cover their worldliness and love of ease. They had begun well but had not continued. But there were strong reasons for ceasing the work : they had been forced to stop the building by the king's commandment.

But may the Lord's servants to-day allow themselves to be influenced by such things? May we place our own thoughts above the Lord's commands? Never must we cease to build the house of the Lord and to work the work of the Lord. Paul has shown us that the work of preaching may be continued just as effectively in prison as in halls and in the open. In spite of all opposition he remained the faithful servant, and out of his years of imprisonment have come to us the great blessing of his prison epistles.

God was displeased with the remnant, for the work had been at a standstill for fourteen years. And now comes Haggai in the name of the Lord to awaken them to a sense of their responsibility : "Consider your ways" he cries once and again. "Plainly has God shown in your lives that His hand is not with you." Five times in this short prophecy we find this word "consider." God was speaking to their hearts. Many had built fine houses for themselves, but the house of the Lord was not built. Haggai called the people to consider their *work* and *themselves*. They sowed but there was no increase; they ate and they drank but were not filled; they clothed themselves but were not warmed; the wages earned were put into bags with

holes. They remained poor, and if any prospered there was no enjoyment in their prosperity. "Ye looked for much and lo ! it came to little ; and when ye brought it home I did blow upon it." If they would but pause and look back over those fourteen years it would be plain that in spite of their cieled houses God's blessing had not been with them.

But God be praised ! they realised it ; they considered their ways, and all listened to Haggai from the greatest to the least.

Although it was at the first through the king's orders that the work had been stopped, they did not now wait for the king's permission to begin again. We read in Ezra that they were stirred up to restart the building through the words of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah ; that is, through the word of the Lord. In faith they began to build, not fearing the enemy. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water." Thus it was here, for as they began to build God turned the king's heart. What a wonderful change ! And how was it brought about ? The people listened to the word of the Lord, and then Jehovah stirred up their hearts. The whole of the people gave ear to the word of the Lord and this was the work of God's Spirit. "And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel and the spirit of Joshua and the spirit of all the remnant of the people, and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts their God."

And then Haggai came with further words of encouragement : "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, and be strong, O Joshua, and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work, for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts, according to the word that I covenanted with you, so My spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not."

From this history of the remnant there is much for us to learn. Through God's grace we are seeking to build His house and have refused the overtures of the enemy. But are we continuing to do so ? Have we

begun well to the Lord's glory in the path of separation and then allowed ourselves to become slack? Have we sought a way out when it was a question of building the Lord's house? Many say that the Lord's work is so difficult they cannot do it, that it must be left to those who feel that they are called to it; but they meanwhile live for themselves and forget the Lord's things. No blessing can rest on this. If outwardly they seem to prosper it is as wages earned to put into a bag with holes. There is no real happiness or joy in it. Let us all consider our ways; judge what is good; show more interest in the Lord's things—in the ministry of the word—in the preaching of the gospel. God cannot show His approval if we pursue our own way. If the path we are following is not the right one, let us turn back so that we may prove the reality of the precious promise: "I am with you"; "be strong." This word was spoken to *all*. *All* must be strong, *all* must work to build His house. Perhaps some one may say that in the prophet Zechariah we read: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zech. iv. 6.) In other words: "We are so weak, we have so little power, we cannot do anything." Surely it may be true, but we must not misuse the Lord's words. In Neh. iv. we read that "the people had a *mind to work*." It is right that we should be conscious of our weakness, and of the need of dependence upon God and upon His Holy Spirit, but it is also His will that we should put our hands to the work and labour diligently.

There is much to do for the Lord to-day. Many souls must be brought into His flock; many to be helped through the ministry of God's great truths. The work must not be left to the few. *All must be strong and work*. Young believers must not think that the work should be left to the older brethren. There is something for every one to do, even for the youngest. The daily occupation, faithfully carried out, may be done to His glory. But we should ask ourselves whether we

cannot help in the Lord's work in some way or other—not criticising others — not waiting until our help is asked. Be strong and work.

No, I have not forgotten the need of prayer. We must ask for God's blessing, but must also work. In our prayer-meetings we often ask that many may be saved. But if we give neither our time nor our money how can God give His blessing? In Haggai ii. 4, we read "and work." Each one personally and the whole company together were to be strong and work. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. xv. 58.) A company of workers should have no time for disputes over trivial personal differences. Let us be faithful messengers. If there is only the willingness to work we can say—

"Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love"

and God's strength will be perfected in our weakness.

Labourers for the Lord! It is God's will that we should be strong and work: praying and working. Not praying and forgetting to work, nor working without praying.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, old and young! God wants us to do something for Him in prayer and dependence, trusting Him to give the increase. We need childlike faith, as the little girl who when going to a meeting for prayer to ask God for rain, took an umbrella with her. Let us diligently sow the seed of the gospel both by the spoken and the written word, not forgetting the children. In Toorop's picture the hands raised in prayer bear the traces of hard work. This is the thought that we need: our hands raised in prayer for the souls of our children, for the Lord's house, but also diligently working.

Let us then consider our ways, let us order them according to God's will, that His name may be glorified and that His house may be built.

Notes of a Bible Reading on Genesis viii. 20 to xi.

THIS passage shows us how, the earth having been cleansed by the Flood, God set up a new dispensation with the first laws, how sin soon manifested itself again, and how nations developed and were dispersed, in spite of their attempt at confederacy.

viii. 21, 22.—“I will not again curse.” There is no further curse, though the curse of iii. 17-19 is not entirely removed. Thorns and thistles, and the necessity to toil, remain. The same reason is given for refraining from further cursing as for sending judgment—“the imagination of man’s heart is evil.” There is also a sacrifice, a type of the Lord Jesus as an offering to God.

ix. 17.—“Be fruitful and multiply.” Judgment by the flood might have made Noah afraid to re-establish mankind without God’s command. (See i. 28.)

2.—Terror is now to govern the relation of beasts with men (cf. i. 26.)

3, 4.—The divine intention was to found spiritual lessons on the provision of flesh as food. Blood was not to be eaten: God’s eye was on the precious blood of His own Son.

5, 6.—Cain was not punished with death (iv. 15); but now magistracy is set up (cf. Eph. i. 10). Fear enters here again (cf. Rom. xiii. 3). The value set on human life is explained in that, notwithstanding the fall, man is distinctly a being made in the image of God.

8-10.—This is one of the “covenants of promise” (Eph. ii. 12): all the obligation is on God, all the blessing on man.

12-16.—The rainbow is not spoken of here as for *our* admiration: God says, “When *I* look.” A rainbow-like brightness in Ezek. i. 28, left Jerusalem exposed to judgment, and again in Rev. iv. 3, and x. 1, at the beginning and end of the judgments on the world, the rainbow is seen, showing that the Lord holds His covenant in remembrance.

20-23.—The heinousness of Ham's crime was in publishing what he saw, perhaps with impious glee, scoffing at his father's religion. Even among the witnesses of the deluge there was ungodliness. The other two sons, however, though by their action protesting against sin, respect Noah's faith. They cover his sin (cf. 1 Peter iv. 8). So God recognises sin with detestation, but puts it away and covers it by atonement.

24-27.—Canaan was not necessarily present; the curse took effect in his branch of Ham's family, just as the blessing of Shem took effect in Eber's line (x. 21).

In chapter x. we are given the descendants of Noah beyond the time of the confusion of tongues at Babel (xi. 8). This accounts for the mention of tongues and nations in vv. 5, 20, 25, 31, 32. Most modern archaeological discoveries tend to reduce the dates previously assigned to prehistoric finds. Moreover, it is discovered that the most highly-cultured periods of Egypt's and Mesopotamia's history were the oldest. At Babylon the stone age occurred after the bronze and iron ages, showing that its inhabitants sank from civilisation to barbarism. Discoveries proving similar relapses have also been made in America.

There is a certain amount of evidence as to chronology in the genealogies in Genesis, and in such passages as Gal. iii. 17, Acts vii. 6, xiii. 20, and elsewhere, but it is not possible to find dates exactly by their means. The Bible is not given to answer all the questions of an antiquarian or of a scientist; it is given to make us wise unto salvation. Yet it is not contrary to *sound* knowledge, though it will not support the wild theories of so-called scientists, the best of whose minds is at work, and the bias of the flesh—always against God. We should therefore test everything and hold fast that which is good.

x. 8-10.—The kingdoms of men were founded by a hunter,—not a shepherd, like the men after God's own heart, David and his greater Son.

25.—“In Peleg's days was the earth divided.” The land of Canaan was similarly divided between the

twelve tribes before they possessed it (Josh. xiii.-xix). Deut. xxxii. 8, tells us that the Most High made this *division to the nations according to the number of the children of Israel*.

xi. 8, 9.—The confusion of tongues was sudden, or they would not have left off building; moreover, a gradual change would not have been confusion. Babylon (Babel) founded by Nimrod (rebel) is, throughout, Satan's means of opposing God's plans. (a) Israel's downfall in Josh. vii. was brought about by the Babylonish garment; (b) Jerusalem was finally subjugated to Babylon; (c) the church is opposed by Babylon the Great. Babel was the earliest expression of the principle of confederacy to achieve the exaltation of man while leaving out God. (See Is. viii. 9, 10). Before Christ comes to reign, the religious and political worlds will be similarly united under the leadership of the Beast and False Prophet to achieve a world of satisfaction without Christ. Man's sin at Babel consisted in the display of a vainglorious spirit and the desire to thwart the Divine design for the diffusion of mankind. The tower of Babel was not intended for idolatrous purposes, or for escape from another flood. "Tongues" are seen in connection with judgment (Gen. xi.); grace (Acts ii.); glory on the earth (Rev. vii). The effect of Babel was reversed at Pentecost.

Chapter xi. gives man's attempt to establish himself in the earth in independence of God, and God's calling a man out of this state of affairs for a heavenly portion.

W.S.H.

Erratum.

We are indebted to a valued correspondent for drawing our attention to a slip of the pen in our December issue, p. 230, l. 5, where for "head" it should read "heel." May we ask our readers to make the correction in their copies as the difference for the truth is important?

The Paralytic Healed—2.

(Luke v. 16-26).

“They let him down . . . into the midst before Jesus.”

THESE men showed their faith by surmounting what looked like an impassable barrier to their approach. They must have been put to considerable trouble to get their helpless friend on to the housetop and to remove a sufficiently large area of the tiles so that they might let down the couch into the covered courtyard where Jesus was.

It was faith which showed itself by works, for the men realised that if this opportunity were missed, there might never be another; for Jesus in His ministry did not confine Himself to one place, but was going about throughout all Galilee. Both they, and the man with the palsy, however, were in earnest to reap the blessing; and the Lord rewards their faith by speaking words to the paralytic of the greatest moment, “Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.”

Healing of the body is for this life, and this blessing is added; but the Lord goes to the root of his trouble; for all infirmities of the flesh are due to sin being in the world, and He prepares him for the life that is to come, where no sin can ever enter, nor anything that defiles.

One sin unforgiven is sufficient to drag a soul down to hell, for God requires that which is past; but the precious blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, for in Christ there is redemption, through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is always ready to reward the faith of those who come to Him; for those who come to Him show that they believe that HE IS, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. But when He blesses, He does so according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ.

These riches in glory have been secured by His Son, Who, as the lowly Nazarene, so glorified Him down here, that, as soon as the work of redemption was accomplished, God glorified Him in Himself by setting Him at His own right hand. Faith now looks up and sees Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour.

The leaders of religion in that day added tradition to the Scriptures, and so confused the word of God, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, that they made the Scriptures of none effect. It was not that they did not search the Scriptures, which testified of Christ; but when He came, Him they refused. "He came unto His own (possessions) and His own (people) received Him not; but as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the children of God."

Here, He was in their midst, and the One able to perform that which was bound up with the law as proclaimed through Moses, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7).

The cross is where the glory of God comes out; for there the righteous basis was laid whereby He could clear the guilty. In the riches of His grace, He gave His Son to die for us when we were yet sinners, and it is His glory now to save all who put their trust in His beloved Son.

David proclaimed the happiness of the man whose sin is covered, and to whom the Lord will not impute iniquity (Ps. xxxii. 1, 2). But only on the ground of redemption can God justify the ungodly. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

The gospel is summed up in 1 Cor. xv., "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, . . . He was buried, and . . . rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures."

The resurrection of Christ is God's assurance that His righteousness has been vindicated, and that by faith in Christ the sins of those who believe are for ever put away.

When the Lord Jesus was born into this world, then only could it be said, "God with us." And here was the Lord Jesus in grace making known that He not only had power to heal, but to forgive sins also. He would have their consciences aroused to the fact, that in spite of their evil, God was present, and acting in grace for their blessing. So He says to the sick of the palsy, *"Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house."*

Unmerited favour always draws out the enmity of the natural heart; for man seeks by some merit of his own to earn the favour of God. It was while we were yet sinners, and without strength, that Christ died for the ungodly; and unless we are content to put our reasonings on one side, and humble ourselves as little children, we can in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The lowly Son of man is the Christ of God, to Whom is committed all power in heaven and on earth. To demonstrate to those who questioned His authority and divine power to forgive sins, He says to the sick of the palsy, "Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house." And the man immediately received healing, and strength to carry out the Lord's command. What a proof that God was in their midst!

The people at such a sight, never seen before, can but be filled with amazement, rightly attributing such an act to the direct power of God; and they glorify God. Doubtless there were some who overlooked that He Who had performed the miracle was Himself God manifest in flesh. God, however, demonstrates His power so forcibly as to reach their consciences, and the question arises in their heart, what about *our* sins, when we shall have to answer for them? For there is impressed upon the mind of man, that there is a here-

after, when all will have to give an account to God; and therefore they were "filled with fear." God will have His word speak equally loudly to us. "How can *we* escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

They were indeed strange things they saw that day; with some of them it was, alas! the amazement of unbelief, which only confirmed the word of the Lord, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." Are you like these last despising the One who brings you grace and truth in His very Person? Then, you also will perish in your sins; you also will be raised in your sins; and you also will be judged for your sins.

Their day is gone, but your day is now. Put your trust therefore, while it is called to-day, in Jesus the only Saviour of sinners. H.K.

Thoughts on Ephesians i. and ii.—3.

THE next thought is presented under the figure of marriage (Rom. vii.). In Romans vii. the woman whose husband is dead is free. So also I, through the death of Christ, find that I am free. The law as my husband has no more to say to me. In Romans vi. I am free from the law of sin; in Romans vii. free from the principle of law, that I may be united to another husband, One risen from the dead; and in Romans viii. the delivered one, since he walks not after the flesh but after the Spirit, has the righteousness of the law fulfilled in him.

Now we find Romans and Ephesians bordering one upon the other, though in one we approach the subject from the distance of man under God's wrath, in the other we approach it from God's point of view: His will and counsel. Both Epistles meet under the term, "In Christ." In Romans we get beyond judgment. We do not get to the glory of Ephesians. We do not get to the unravelling of the mystery, the mystery of God's will, the mystery of Christ and the church, or

the mystery of the gospel. Those are the mysteries, the secret things, that belong not only to the Lord our God, but to us Christians.

In Romans viii. we get "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of Christ," "the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead"; indeed, all through Romans viii. we get the Spirit. The very Spirit that was in Christ, that led Christ, is in the believer, and he knows it, for the Spirit witnesses to his spirit that he is a child of God and a joint heir with Christ. So he finds that Christ is everything to him, Christ dead, Christ risen, Christ all in all.

It is equally and blessedly true of the oldest and the youngest believer that Christ *died* for us; and on that we can build that Christ *lives* for us. Not only that He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, not only that God condemned sin in the flesh in the person of His own Son, in a body fitted for Him, but He is risen again, and because He lives, we shall be saved by His life.

Certainly there was not in Him that carnal principle that there is in us. There was no combination of what is natural and spiritual in the Lord Jesus. He was the Lord from heaven, not a natural man but a spiritual man, yet a real man. No wonder the natural man could not understand Him; the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God.

There are three classes of persons spoken of in the New Testament. 1. The natural man (1 Cor. ii. 14), that is, man as he is by nature, not necessarily a very wicked person; it refers to those represented by Nicodemus. Born of the flesh, he is flesh, and cannot understand things heavenly, God's things. He has not the capacity. Therefore you have that sweeping assertion of the Son of God, "Ye must be born again," an elementary truth but essential to every man born a child of Adam. 2. Then we have that with which Paul upbraids the Corinthians when he says they are carnal (1 Cor. iii. 1). He calls them "babes" — not full grown, but a mixture of earthly and heavenly, of

Christianity and philosophy, or of Christianity and Judaism. So we find them boasting in the gifts of God not for the glory of Christ, but for their own glory. The spirit of Christ did not permeate all their activities, the spirit of Christ Who said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." He never sought His own glory. All that parade of themselves, that self-seeking, that seeking glory for themselves, is what is called carnal. What tends to keep the saints of God in babyhood, retarding their growth, we find in Hebrews, continually going over and over again the beginning of things, before Christ was glorified. They should have been enjoying the truth as in Ephesians, but they were doing what is said in Hebrews vi. not going on to full growth, perfection, but relaying the foundation of repentance, etc. 3. The spiritual man, on the other hand, is neither in his natural state nor in this mixed condition of flesh and spirit, but like Christ, led of the Spirit and walking in the Spirit, he does not fulfil the desires of the flesh or of the mind (Ephes. ii. 3).

I must say here a word on the "little children" spoken of in John's Epistle. All the saints of God are spoken of in endearing terms, all as dear children. They are the whole family of God, and in whatever state of maturity they are all dear to the apostle. It is the epistle of love, the love of God to all His family. One thing characterises both the babe in Christ and the fully matured father, that is the knowledge of God, the full conscious knowledge of God. The fathers distinctively know Him that is from the beginning, that is Christ. But the mature saint, the full grown saint, is not moved away from the most elementary truth that he early learned as a babe, he knows the Father. Even the babes know the Father. The characteristic of the Christian is that he looks up to God, and exclaims "Abba, Father!" As the Lord Jesus said "Father"; so He also said "My Father and your Father," "My God and your God." Could you have it better?

If you ask, when am I to come into possession of all

this truth? The answer is, in God's purpose long ago in eternity; in practice, when you believe. When you believe what? The gospel of your salvation. Having believed the gospel of salvation, you are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of His glory (Eph. i. 13-14.) And the apostle makes it the subject of his prayer; he prays that the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened, that we may have the full knowledge of Him (verse 17), that we may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance.

In the Old Testament the land of Israel is spoken of as the land of their inheritance, but it is equally spoken of as God's inheritance. When the children of Israel were in possession of the inheritance, God, was, so to speak, taking His portion in them. In Ephesians God finds His inheritance in bringing the heavenly saints into the full conscious possession of their inheritance. These are God's thoughts; we cannot bring them down to our level, we must come up to His level.

Again if you and I cannot bring the world up to our level; we must take care not to sink to the world's level, not to think as the world thinks, and not to act as if we formed part and parcel of the world, and belonged not to heaven. If we want to walk superior to this world, we must know that our blessings are not here, they are spiritual and heavenly. We have not Christ here in the flesh; we have Christ in glory. And not only is Christ in glory as in Colossians iii., where we are to set our affections on things above; but according to the ground of Ephesians you and I are together in Him, not only you and I together, but together in Him, union with Him. Yes, a union with Christ, a union that can only be expressed by the great mystery concerning Christ and the church, where we find we are one Spirit with the Lord.

E. B. D.

Assembly Judgments.

THE following valuable article from the pen of the late F. G. Burkitt will be understood and appreciated by those who have believed to the saving of the soul, and who being found gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus, worship by the Spirit of God. (See Phil. iii. 3, N.Tr.) :—

The judgment of an assembly, when arrived at *in accordance with scripture* and in the fear of the Lord, must surely carry weight. It will be accepted by everyone who is governed by the truth that the Lord can and does guide His people when truly gathered to His name in humble dependence on Him. Such a judgment will have the support of scripture and will carry the consciences of godly and spiritually-minded people, as well as other assemblies. A spirit of wilfulness in objecting to the judgment of an assembly, or of fault-finding or prying into the affairs of another meeting, is to be strongly deprecated.

But while all this is true, one cannot help being surprised at the almost superstitious reverence with which some regard everything that claims to be an "assembly judgment." They consider it to be a positive sin to question it in the least, and they seem to think that it must be accepted and acted on even if known to be wrong! Such a course *may* lead us into serious error.

If an assembly judgment runs counter to the truth, and to what other assemblies and godly men judge to be right, it is simply a human thing; so that those who would press these claims have no divine warrant and the Christian cannot own such, for, "we ought to obey God rather than men." Claims to divine authority without God's authority, and without a right moral state on the part of those who make them, is just the principle of the church of Rome. Rome's maxim is, "Hear the church," and "the church," with them, has a kind of magic force behind it which carries immense weight. A blind submission to "the church" is de-

manded and enforced. A good Romanist would not think of going against the decrees of the Vatican, even if he knew them to be wrong.

The most serious feature of this undue assumption of authority is, that the authority of man has taken the place of the authority of God. The *direct reference* of the soul to God about everything is set aside, and the fear of man takes the place of the fear of God. But scripture says, "He that hath an ear let him hear what *the Spirit saith unto the churches.*" That is, hear the word of God. If this is done, in an humble spirit, He will surely guide aright. This is specially important in a day when spiritual decline and departure is so manifest as it is to-day.

The presence of the Lord in the midst of two or three gathered to His name, according to Matt. xviii., is a most blessed privilege—though *discipline* is anything but the leading thought in connection with it. But the assumption to it when there is not a right moral state, but when personal and party feeling comes in, is serious indeed. To attach the authority of His name to what is (consciously or unconsciously) the mere doing of our own will, sooner or later, will bring down judgment on ourselves.

Ecclesiastical pretentiousness is always greatest at the very time when everything is in a bad state, because the heart being away from God, men seek power in ecclesiastical position and church authority; which they deem to be necessary to keep order. The history of the Middle Ages, and even that of Israel, proves this—see Micah iii. 1; Jer. vii. 4, 9, 10; and many other passages.

We have in 1 Cor. v., an instance of an assembly judgment affecting a distinctly local matter; or perhaps we should say, assembly discipline. In this case it was absolutely necessary, and the evil was so manifest that there could be no possible question about it. Though that assembly was not at all exercised about the evil, but on the contrary puffed up, yet when the apostle

pressed their responsibility upon them, they ("the many") at once cleared themselves in the matter and were restored. We do not refer to Acts xv., as this is not quite the same thing as now occupies us.

We have seen in our own times the disastrous results of pressing the claims of assembly judgments which have been the subject of prolonged protests, warnings and entreaties—we have seen it more than once—and the havoc caused by it. Yet in some cases (cases too where there was no question of doctrine whatever) these judgments were carried through against every protest; and everyone who could not conscientiously own them was cut off with much severity. Indeed few things have caused more sorrow amongst the gathered saints, and brought more dishonour upon the Lord's name, than this pressing of assembly claims, forgetful of the grace and forbearance to which scripture exhorts us. Of course where it is a question of fundamental error, there must be the utmost decision in making a stand against it (2 John 10).

But since an assembly, in coming to a judgment on any matter, expects that this judgment will be owned and acted on by all other assemblies, it is evident that they should not issue any decision unless they are assured before God that they have the Lord's mind in the word, and that the case is so evident that it will carry the consciences of their brethren in other meetings, also of godly persons generally. "So then let us pursue the things that tend to peace, and things whereby one shall build up another" (Rom. xiv. 19).

It is well, however, to say that, in avoiding harsh ecclesiastical domination, we need to be careful not to go to an opposite extreme. In spite of all the ruin in which the church of God now is, the truth remains the same as ever, but it can only be realised and acted upon in a spirit of humility and sorrow for the present condition of the whole church. Nothing can be more ruinous than pride, assumption, and self-complacency.

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God will not own such a state; we may be assured of this.

Christ is the Holy and the True One, and therefore holiness and truth becomes the "house of God" for ever. According to scripture, the true principles on which believers are to meet are, as members of the body of Christ—that one body, of which He is the Head. This is not meeting as a kind of federation of assemblies, independent one of another, however godly they may be; nor as a voluntary association of people holding similar views on scripture. It is simply the owning in faith and in practice of that unity which the Holy Ghost has already formed in baptising all the members into one body (Eph. ii. 16; iv. 3, 4; Rom. xii. 4, 5; 1 Cor. xii. 13).

If we thus rightly apprehend the ground on which saints should gather, and the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in its sufficiency and authority is truly owned as our rallying-point, we shall realise that the "unity of the Spirit" is not something of *our* making, but that which God Himself has already made, and which we are responsible to *keep* by walking consistently with it, in the bond of peace; with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, etc.

These truths ought to deliver us from narrow sectarianism on the one side, and indifference to what is due to Christ on the other; and they ought to make us feel an interest in every member of the body. It is also the only principle upon which discipline can be truly carried out, when such has to be exercised. For it is evident—bearing these facts in mind—that what is done, either in stretching out the hand of grace in reception of saints, or in discipline, should be as valid in one place as in another. Hence also the need of much patience in our actings, so that whatever may be done as an assembly, may have the Lord's approval and sanction.

“Consider Him.”

“**F**OR consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your mind” (Heb. xii. 3).

This exhortation found at the end of the well-known summary of the lives of the great exemplars of the power of faith in God under various tests, finishes up appropriately by drawing our attention to the Lord Jesus Himself, the Beginner and Finisher of faith; and the tests endured by Him that crowned all other examples of its power, with the reward by which He was sustained in that path.

Doubtless it has had its effect through all the ages since in sustaining His saints through their path of discipleship in this world, however varied and trying it may have been. But we quote it here to draw attention more especially to the way the Lord Jesus is presented to us in the gospel of Luke, and to consider Him in certain circumstances there. It is familiar to many of our readers no doubt, that in an especial way our Lord is brought before us in this gospel as “The Man Christ Jesus, in contradistinction to Matthew’s special object as the Son of David—King of the Jews; and to Mark’s evident characteristic feature of the servant prophet.”

Now we would apply ourselves briefly to consider him as “The Praying Man.” Reverentially we use the expression, keeping in mind and hearts the Divine Person of whom we thus speak. We find in this Gospel six occasions where the Lord is especially said to pray, that the other Gospels do not mention, and may the contemplation draw out our hearts in adoring worship.

The more we consider it the more shall we be led to wonder why He to Whom we pray, and to Whose Name every knee shall bow, should be found in prayer at all, yet we find Him in this as in all else that becomes a perfect man, pre-eminently the dependent One, living by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

The first instance is in the third chapter, 20th verse, on the occasion of our Lord's baptism by John. The great forerunner had announced to the crowd who surrounded him in wonder whether he were the expected Christ or not, that One was amongst them Who should baptise with the Holy Ghost and with fire; Whose fan was in His hand to winnow; and with power to gather the wheat, and burn up the chaff. Then Jesus Himself appears upon the scene, not with instruments of power but with the perfect demonstration of dependence—"Jesus also being baptised *and praying*, the heaven was opened; and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Whom I am well pleased."

The other Gospels do not mention this fact that He prayed. Let us ponder why it is said here. The next passage is in chapter v., 16 verse, "And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed." We ask in wonder, why? and would humbly seek to learn a lesson from the perfect Servant, Who thus withdraws Himself in the midst of His active service, and retires to pray. What a lesson for us and every servant of God to consider!

The third occasion mentioned is, if possible, more remarkable still—"And it came to pass in those days that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." (Chap. vi. 12.)

Comment is needless. Let us wonder and adore. The fourth instance is given in the 9th chapter, 18th verse, where the Lord is approached by His disciples as He was alone praying, and Jesus puts the question to them, "Whom say the people that I am?" What awe and reverence must this wonderful example have awakened in His disciples who approached Him at one time with the request—"Lord, teach us to pray."

Further on in this same chapter we have the account of the transfiguration, but although both Matthew and Mark speak of the interval of six days previous, neither

of them, tell us what Luke is inspired to add, that "He went up into a mountain *to pray*, and as *He prayed*, He was transfigured before them," etc.

How striking and wonderful is this—what a proof, if proof were needed, of Divine inspiration in the writer of the account! Not an eye-witness, or even one of the twelve. Where blind unbelief sees some omission or mistake, faith sees only further evidence of the hand of God with thankfulness and praise.

Another striking evidence of the purpose of God in this portion of His word (the sixth) is in the 11th chapter, 1st verse, where we find that the request of the disciples—"Lord, teach us to pray," is the effect of His own example; "As He was praying in a certain place."

And so we have briefly traced this marked feature of the Gospel of Luke, not only as an evidence of the hand of God in His word, but with the hope of drawing out the hearts of His people in thankfulness for every additional proof of the inestimable treasures of the Divine Oracles. May we all be led more and more to *consider Him*. T.R.

(Further papers on the distinctive character and teaching of Luke's Gospel to follow, if the Lord will).

"I Will Come Again."

IN John xiv. we find persons who are the opposite of all that is in the world. "Let not your heart be troubled." About what? His leaving them. Their happiness, comfort, and joy was in having Christ with them. But now, He says, I am going, but I am not going to be happy without you. There is plenty of room for you. The thing with which He at once comforts their hearts is this, "I will come again." I cannot stay down here in this vile place, I am going to prepare a place for you, but I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also. The Lord reckons on this satisfying their hearts; and

their consciences did not hinder. "The Father's house!" Oh! they could go there. "I will receive you unto Myself." He knew the chord that rung in their hearts; to be with Himself, the source of all blessing.

Thus we get the character of these disciples; they were persons whom the absence of Jesus distressed, and whom the presence of Jesus would comfort, not here, but with Himself.

These disciples had loved the Lord. Christ had attraction for their hearts. There at once we see the object of their hearts' affections. Christ had fixed their hearts. Take Mary Magdalene, for instance. She was all wrong in her intelligence, yet Christ had attraction for her heart. So with the rest of the disciples. They all ran away for fear; but it was love for Christ that brought them into the place of fear. Thus we see that Christ Himself was the Object of their hearts. They were the companions of Christ—all fear being gone—according to His love and grace. "Ye are they," He said, "who have continued with Me in My temptations." Why? He had continued with them; but He speaks as if indebted to them for this fellowship. And being in companionship with Christ in heart; He brings them into all the joy into which He is going—nothing less than the Father's house. What attracts is found in Christ, and then it gets from Him the certain assurance that He is coming—and coming for me. Now when the heart is on Christ, what a thing it is to know that He is coming! Am I afraid? No, I am looking for Him. And it is to His Father's house He is to bring me. All that makes heaven a home to Christ will make it a home to me. Oh come, Lord Jesus. If I have learnt to love Christ I have learnt to love holiness, to love God. God, in Christ, has brought down to my soul all that God is. What shall I get in heaven? Another Christ? Another God? No, It is the One we have seen and known. "Whither I go ye know." I am going to the Father, and you have seen the Father in Me.

J.N.D.

Notes of a Bible Reading on Genesis xii. and xiii.

AFTER the failure of Adam and his descendants in the old world and of Noah and his in the new, as recorded in chapters i.-xi., God now begins again by calling out Abram *publicly* from the midst of idolatry (Joshua xxiv. 2) and by making an unconditional covenant with him and his seed. He becomes, therefore, the great O.T. instance of God's sovereign election by grace and effectual calling. The sovereignty of the call is emphasised by the fact that Melchizedek was already in the land. There was to be a new root and stock, as Romans xi. teaches. It was on the same principle that Israel later and the church later still were taken up by God for blessing.

Probably the youngest son of Terah, certainly not the oldest (cf. Gen. xi. 32, and xii. 4, with Acts vii. 4), Abram was a man of no mean order. He was marked by great nobility of character, as is witnessed by his truly magnanimous attitude towards his nephew, Lot (chapter xiii.). He was a man of action, too, as we see in his subsequent deliverance of his nephew (chapter xiv.). He was also a man of prayer and intercession (chapter xviii.). But Abram was pre-eminently a man of faith, called many years afterwards the "father of all who believe" (Romans iv. 11) and "faithful Abraham" (Gal. iii. 9).

xii. 1-3.—It must not be understood from verse 1 that there were two calls. Firstly, there is no pluperfect tense in the original (see R.V.) and, secondly, Acts vii. 2-4, shows clearly that the call was made to Abram when he was in Mesopotamia. It is noteworthy that, having spoken, God does not speak again until his obedience is complete and he is in Canaan. It was the God of glory (Acts vii. 2) Who appeared to him. In the apostle Paul's case also it was the glory and the command (Acts ix.).

The separation was a severe one. But God always encourages faith and rewards it bountifully. His

biddings are His enablings. Abram was not only to be blessed, but to be made a blessing. What blessing has flown from the Jews!

4—6. In Haran, where apparently they stayed some years, Terah (“delay”) dies, (chapter xi. 32). Nature, always a hindrance, can never respond to the call of God.

Abram, now free, sets out in dependence upon God with his childless wife to inherit the promises. Hebrews xi. 8-16 shows how faith appropriated from those promises a heavenly hope. Abram apprehended by faith the glory of that city for which he waited, and walked down here a pilgrim with the secret of it in his heart.

Faith, having taken the lead, Canaan, type of our heavenly position and privilege, is reached.

Lot continues the journey with Abram, but never becomes the man of faith his uncle was. He walked with Abram and was, doubtless, influenced by Abram’s faith, but Abram walked with God. He was the Friend of God. (Is. xli. 8; 2 Chron. xx. 7; and James ii. 23).

7, 8.—Jehovah now appears to Abram again and the result is an altar. A further principle is, therefore, brought out, viz :—worship is consequent on, and based on, revelation. How true is this of the saints of God of our day, who, worship the Father in spirit and in truth! It is God known and delighted in, as revealed, that at all times results in grateful praise and worship.

In verse 8 we have the pilgrim. Altar and Tent go together. They sum up the greater part of the experience of the Christian. The more truly we answer to our character as pilgrims, the deeper and sweeter will be our joy as worshippers.

9-13.—God, Who holds nothing back—not even the failure of His beloved servants—that is needful for our admonition, gives here the failure of the man of faith. It is the strong man become weak. Abram, like Moses, failed in his strongest point. And all because he left in heart the path of dependence on, and confidence in, God. The feet follow the heart. Tested by the famine

in the land, the trial becomes too great for him and he turns to Egypt, the granary of the ancient world.

Once there, the boldness, transparency and simplicity of faith give way to fear, disguises and untruthfulness. All moral power seems gone. Poor Abram, he is without the guidance and guard of Divine power, although a faithful hand was all the time working behind the scenes. But Abram had no communion. No mention of altar here.

14-16.—Abram's fears come true. Sarah, separated from Abram, gets into the very arena of evil. Sarah stands for the covenant of grace, and, as such, is linked only with faith. The world has allied itself with the Christians, but it is because of their unfaithfulness. The world *will* not have Christ. The alliance cannot, therefore, last. Pharaoh gets rid of Sarah. She is restored to Abram. Is there not here a foreshadowing of what will be the end as depicted in the book of the Revelation?

Note that Abram prospers materially in Egypt, but at what a cost spiritually!

17-20.—Abram, who, according to God's promises, was to bring blessing to others, brings trouble on Pharaoh by his unfaithfulness, for Pharaoh is plagued. Nevertheless, we can see God working in it all for His servant, with the result that Sarah, preserved from all harm, is restored to Abram. Psalm cv. throws much light on this incident.

How humiliating for Abram, the man of faith, to be reproved by the king of Egypt!

xiii. 1-4.—The opening of chapter xiii. gives us the brighter picture of Abram's restoration to his former character of pilgrim and worshipper. Tent and altar again appear here.

The restoration was brought about by Abram's returning to the point of departure. How important a principle this is! "Unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, . . . Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first."

5-13.—The strife, occasioned apparently by the bare

production of the impoverished land and the over-zealous herdsmen, soon affected Abram and Lot personally. Abram, however, rises most beautifully to the height of his calling. A sure evidence of the reality of his restoration. His action is that of one who had learned to know and to trust God, Whose choice for those who leave the choice to Him, is always best.

Abram was a true peacemaker. (Matt. v.). He had on this occasion the best of reasons for being so, for Lot and he were brethren (v. 8). Then there were on-lookers—the Canaanites and the Perizzites were in the land. How different would have been our testimony, not to speak of that of others, had we caught Abram's spirit and followed his example!

The true character of Lot also comes out here, in measure. His name means "concealed," and he was very largely true to his name all the way through. His true character is never completely disclosed. Outwardly with Abram, he is not with him in heart. Associated with the man of faith, who gives up what he might well lay claim to, Lot remains covetous at heart. In the plain of Jordan, he sees the "garden of the Lord." How well our hearts can find a fair excuse for anything we desire. Verses 10, 11 and 12 give four steps in Lot's decline.

At length Abram and Lot part company. The one to dwell in the land of Canaan, the other to dwell in the cities of the plain, to pitch his tent toward Sodom, type of the world in its open evil, and ultimately to dwell there (xiv. 12).

14-18. — Separated from Lot, God now hastens to show the man who had not chosen for himself His choice for him. God delights to honour faith that honours Him.

Never had there been so large a gift. How sweet for Abraham to receive it from the hands of God! He is bidden to enjoy it. Faith appropriates what love provides. How blessed is the response on Abram's part! He "came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre ("fatness"), which is in Hebron, ("communion") and built there an altar unto the Lord." J.P.B.

“The Voice of My Beloved.”

(Canticles viii. 13, 14.)

MINE own Beloved's voice !
'Tis this I wait to hear !
No earthborn music half so choice,
No other tones so dear.

He soon will come again !
I shall His glory see !
He came long since, in grief and pain,
To seek and ransom me.

He left His royal throne
To free the captive slave ;
He found me—mark'd me for His own ;
Oh, what a price He gave !

The costly price of blood
Deliver'd me from hell ;
And made my title clear and good
With Him on high to dwell.

His love as death is strong,
No floods can drown its tide ;
And loving Him, I pant and long
To shelter at His side.

Far more His heart doth yearn
To call His exile home ;
A few short hours, He will return,
And I no more shall roam.

Within His garden fair,
The milk-white lilies grow ;
“A little while” He tarries where
Yon living waters flow.

Make haste, Beloved, make haste,
Desire my spirit thrills ;
Apart from Thee, the world's a waste ;
Come quickly o'er the hills ! H.K.B.

The Call of Levi.

(Luke v. 27-32.)

IN the previous verses of this chapter we have seen the Lord healing a Jewish leper of his leprosy, for He identifies him with the law by instructing him, when healed, to go and show himself to the priest, and offer for his cleansing according as Moses commanded. And then we see Him healing a Gentile of his palsy, and forgiving him his sins, connecting this with His mission as Son of man, Who had come to seek and to save that which was lost.

The leper is a picture of man in his natural state as a sinner, for sin, like leprosy, is more than skin deep; it permeates the whole system, and man is led captive by Satan at his will. Like the man with the palsy, he is utterly helpless, and incapable of making himself better. In both cases the Lord gives complete deliverance.

These incidents are preserved that you may believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name. Is not this an encouragement, that God should give these two samples of His grace, to show that He is prepared to extend the fullest measure of grace to you, whether you are a Jew or a Gentile? Both are equally guilty before God, for all have sinned, and come short of His glory.

“For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him; for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. x. 12, 13). It requires faith, and faith comes by hearing, or a report, and the report by the word of God. “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater” (1 John v. 9). And this is the witness of God, “He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life” (1 John v. 12, N.Tr.). The possession of Christ is God’s sole qualification for blessing.

Levi was a Jew employed by the Roman civil power to collect the taxes from his own countrymen who were under the Roman yoke. As a class, the publicans were

extortionate in their demands, and therefore they were naturally hated of the Jews, who classed them with well-known sinners of their city. "Why do ye eat with publicans and sinners?"

But Levi was one that feared God, and, here, he was publicly carrying on the farming of the Roman taxes when the Lord comes and calls him to follow Him. God is no respecter of persons, "but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." So here, in due time, the Lord gives Levi the opportunity to be His follower. He is even identified as one of the apostles; for in the other Gospels, in this very incident, he is named Matthew, who was one of the twelve apostles chosen by the Lord.

There were many at this time who were looking for redemption in Israel; for, from the days of Malachi, the last of the prophets, until the coming of Christ, they that feared the Lord spake often one to another. The coming of Christ, according to prophecy, was the topic of their conversation, so that when John the Baptist came, men were musing in their hearts whether he were the Christ or not.

When the Lord did come, what a state of ruin He found! Even His own chosen people estranged from God in their sins! Yet, He found faith upon the earth, for God left not Himself without witness. We have a bright example recorded in Simeon, who was waiting for the consolation of Israel, for, coming into the temple when the young Child was brought there to do for Him after the custom of the law, he takes Him up in his arms, and blesses God, and says, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." And turning to His mother, he utters those never-to-be-forgotten words, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (See Luke ii. 25-35).

When the Lord came into the world, He was the True Light which lit up all the dark recesses of man's heart. "If I had not come and spoken unto them," the Lord says, "they had not had sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin" (John xv. 22, N.Tr.). The truth will out; men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. "For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (John iii. 20).

Because man's heart condemns him, he has hard thoughts of God, and looks upon Him as an unjust God; but the very contrary is proved, for "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved." "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the Only-begotten Son of God"—(John iii. 17, 18)—begotten in time, that He might be for salvation to the ends of the earth.

(To be continued, D.V.)

H.K.

Notes of a Bible Reading on 2 Peter i.

THE First Epistle begins, "Peter, an apostle, etc." here, *Simon Peter*. Why? Is the apostle taking a lowlier place here than in the former? The subject of the Epistles is different though we have the *government* of God in both. But "Simon" comes in appropriately here, because he is referring to the life of our Lord, and so uses his own personal name. In the First Epistle everything is referred to God; here to the Lord Jesus.

"We have obtained like precious faith through the *righteousness* of God" — referring to Jews and His faithfulness to His old promises . . . "Our God" is associated with "Jesus Christ" . . . The "right-

eousness of our Lord and Saviour" is not His *personal* righteousness, nor what we have in Romans, but what is referred to about Abraham—His faithfulness to His own promises, as Romans xv. 8. That is the explanation of it. "Our Saviour Who is our God;" but for Him there would be no obtaining of "like precious faith," not merely as the *ground* of it all but the *effectuation* of it; not alone a righteous basis, but bringing it all about. One Person is before the mind, and through Him the word is confirmed to us and *made good* in our souls. It is He Who is faithful to God and to the word promised to Abraham. *Here* the word "Saviour God" refers to the Lord Jesus.

How fervent Peter is! Paul is content with "grace and peace," but here they are *multiplied*. If difficulties are multiplied as in chap. ii., grace to meet them is, too. . . . It is the *full* knowledge of God, not a smattering. We ought to be growing in it. We know God through the Son. People talk of God's love, but they don't know it till they see it in the cross. You must see, and believe; see God's love, and believe Christ's work.

The perfectness of Christ's work gives me to rejoice in *God's nature*. It is not *the Father*, that is relationship. But through the perfect work of Christ we have *God's nature*. The Old Testament saints knew God; but now we have the work as well as the Person, and cannot separate the two. We glory, boast, joy, in *God*, not in the Father; but in the very One of Whose glory we had come short. Yet it almost makes one blush to read the expressions in the Psalms of joy in God, etc. But their joy was not stable. And more, it is often the expression of the remnant in a future day.

No one can know God now except through the Son.

The "life" in v. 3 is the new life—"really life," as Paul wrote to Timothy. "Godliness"—a word often misapplied. Not a person's merely kind or unworldly life, but their value of Christ. Are they going on with what dishonours Him?

"Virtue" here means "courage." Glory is presented as an object; courage pursues it. It is really

“called by His own glory and excellency.” When you speak of valour, you apply it to man, as in v. 5; but you cannot apply it to God. “Excellency” is better all round. If a man were cowardly there was no excellency in him, before the Greeks. If these things come by the growing knowledge of God, how can we get that knowledge? By feeding on Him. The Living Bread came down from heaven, and we got life by feeding on it, and we must go on feeding.

We are sometimes apt to forget these “exceeding great and precious promises” (v. 4). What are they? If you have £5,000 in the bank, you don’t want to know if it is separate sovereigns or in notes. “All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen” and Christ is ours. The promises belonged to *Israel*, not to Gentiles. We have not to rest on promises as sinners; there are none for us; we rest on the *performance*, as in Rom. iv. Abraham had a promise and believed it, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness; but we believe what Christ *has done*. “Partakers of the divine nature,” a growing thing. It is not by these we *get* it, but partake of it.

“Diligence” is a point much pressed by Peter. How can you expect a person to *grow* who only reads the Bible as a duty, and never expects to get anything from it? The world has its lures, but if any man will be a friend of the world, he is the enemy of God. The great preventative is growing in grace and in knowledge. We have escaped the corruptions, etc. . . .

We don’t believe in purchasing good livings, but a deacon can purchase a good degree and great boldness in the faith, etc.

My experience is that if you try to get out of a trouble the Lord sends you, He will send it after you.

We deceive ourselves if we think because we are in a right path, we shall have a smooth path. We shall have all against us. . . .

He who wrote this was a courageous man naturally, but look how he broke down! A man naturally courageous, when he comes to know himself is very timid, because he knows it must be God’s strength.

"Add *in* your faith," etc. It is not something outside you. It is the natural outcome of what you lay hold of. You lay hold on faith,—confidence in God,—and that involves courage, etc. It is so different to natural addition. . . .

H.C.T.

Consider Him.—2.

WE propose, this month, to further consider the Lord Jesus as presented to us in the Gospel of Luke. Not only to note the very interesting differences between this Gospel and the other three, but some of its characteristic features, with the lessons they teach; and, more especially, the ways and the words of our Lord as this evangelist was inspired to write them.

Already we have drawn attention to the Lord Jesus as a praying Man, that most beautiful and interesting feature of His life, and we would now follow Him as portrayed in the parables Luke gives us.

We shall find there are ten which are not mentioned in either of the other Gospels, and, speaking generally, that they all present to us the grace of God to man, with the responsibilities which flow from that wondrous grace.

It is the voice of God we hear speaking to man as such—Jew or Gentile—by the Son of man representing God acting toward man universally in grace—free grace.

Four times Luke speaks of "a certain rich man," and some twelve or more times of "a certain man," while the phrase occurs once only in each of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, and only twice in John; but let us glance briefly at the parables themselves.

To follow them in their order we first meet with the well-known story of "The Good Samaritan" (chap. x.). Does our reader need to have it pointed out that the certain Samaritan acting in pity and grace to the traveller left stripped and wounded by the wayside, is a homely graphic picture of the Lord Jesus Himself

seeking and finding the needy distressed ones on the earth, for whom the Levite and the priests have neither compassion nor means of help?

The next is the certain rich man with his barns bursting with the plenteous supply of fruits and goods, but who leaves God out of his reckoning, and is taken away from his earthly possessions with the warning—"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." Reader, there is a lesson here for you and for me that we do well to heed (chap. xii. 16-21).

The next (chap. xiii. 6-10) again speaks of "a certain man" who had a fig tree planted in his vineyard that bare no fruit year after year, and he considers whether to cut it down; but listens to remonstrance and agrees to grant it another year's trial. Here we have, no doubt, a warning lesson to the Jews, and we note that it says (verse 10), "He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath day." This parable refers to the three years of the gracious ministry of the Lord Jesus to Israel during His life, and the added period of God's grace and patience with them after His death which ended in the rejection of the final message of Stephen and his martyrdom.

Next we have the parable of the great supper (chap. xiv. 16), and again it is "a certain man" that makes it, and we only pause here to point out the universality of its character and application. Has the reader responded?

Who amongst Bible readers does not know that the parable of "The Prodigal Son" is found only in the Gospel of Luke (chap. xv.)? But here is an evidence of the careless way in which we read and speak of scripture. It is really a threefold parable we have in this chapter, and the first part—the lost sheep—is the only one which is called a parable (ver. 3). The word is not repeated in speaking of the lost piece of money, or of the "certain man" that "had two sons." The three parts taken together present the threefold activity of the grace of God; and the picture of the Shepherd seeking the lost sheep "until He find it," is

only equalled by the well-known words—"When he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." But space allows only the briefest notice, so we pass on.

The sixth parable is in chapter xvi. and is again opened by the phrase "a certain rich man" (verse 1); repeated in verse 19 where we are given the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. In the one is the lesson of using this world's goods in the light of the future; which is still further emphasised by the solemn and better known parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

In chapter xviii. we find two more of the parables only given by Luke; the first that of the unjust judge who feared not God, neither regarded man; yet was moved by the prayers of the importunate widow. By this parable the Lord encourages men always to pray and not to faint, and by the second (verse 9), the comparison between the self-righteous Pharisee and the humbled publican, presses home the grace of humility and self-judgment which is *always* the effect of taking our true place before God.

The tenth parable is found in chapter xix. and is somewhat similar to the one given in Matthew xxv.. known as the parable of the talents. There are, however, several points of difference, sufficient to consider this one in Luke as here presented in its entirety. We read that it is added because Jesus was nigh to Jerusalem. It is the only one of the ten we have been briefly noticing that speaks of the kingdom of the Son of man. Jerusalem is the city of the great King, and the question of His rejection must be settled there; but there is another aspect of truth connected with this, and that is the responsibility of the Lord's servants. We need always to remember that our responsibilities to God correspond with our privileges. "For unto whom much is given, of him much shall be required" (Luke xii. 48).

But, what is especially worthy of our notice is the character of the parables we have been so briefly commenting on, and that what is left out in God's word is

as much a matter of divine inspiration as what is put in. But we hope, if the Lord will, to have a further opportunity of calling the reader's attention to this in the next number of our magazine.

T.R.

Be Sure of God.

THE Christian's greatest privilege as well as His chief joy is to *know God*. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent." At conversion our spirit is awakened from its sleep of death; we look up, and we know God. Whatever else we leave behind at death, we shall take with us the knowledge of God which we gain down here.

"I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory," was the intense longing of Moses. And our Lord's desire, as expressed in His high-priestly prayer (see John xvii.) was that those who belonged to Him should behold His glory. The glory of God is His character, His word, His works; it is His "self-expression."

We discern God's power and intelligence in nature. We learn more of God from history, or "His story." But the word of God satisfies as creation and history never can, for there we have the inspired record of what God told men about Himself. "A glory gilds the sacred page," the glory of the self-revelation of its Author. But we see the glory of God in perfection in Christ, the living "Word," of Whom John wrote, "We beheld His glory . . . full of grace and truth."

We know God by His action upon our souls, at conversion and throughout the Christian life. It is a great joy to see God at work in one's own heart and life. And when He changes circumstances over which we have no control, His power and love are revealed to us, as they were to Israel at the Red Sea, when they were bidden to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord."

To know God is our most precious possession. To know Him better is a continual feast to the soul, and should be our chief ambition. It means a deeper peace, safer and readier guidance, more effectual prayer, stronger and more intelligent faith. He who learns God unlearns sin. "The joy of the Lord is your strength," and the joy of the Lord is the fruit of the knowledge of the Lord. And He reveals Himself to those who trust and obey, who believe and pray, who love and serve and contemplate and adore.

Be sure of God. "Man of God" is the highest title any one can receive. "We joy in God," writes Paul exultingly. God is the Home of the soul; its foundation, its resting-place, its centre, its love, its joy.

Whatever else you are ignorant of, *be sure of God.*

E. A.

Praying Wisely.

THE hymn writer says,
 "What a privilege to carry,
 Everything to God in prayer;"
 and it is indeed a great privilege to speak into the ear of God and know that He does bow down His ear to hear our feeble petitions.

We do well, however, to turn to the word of God in order that we may not only rightly value but rightly use this holy and blessed privilege. The wise man says, speaking by the Spirit: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few" (Eccles v. 1, 2), and this, while allowing for the change in dispensation, should warn us not to unduly prolong our petitions nor be foolish in what we ask or in the way we ask. In Ephes. v. 17, we are told, "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Now as to

praying in public there are many aspects in which we may consider the matter and much instruction we might gather from the Scriptures as to it, but what is a special cause of exercise at the moment is the necessity of being clear in our minds and hearts as to Whom we are addressing when we pray. You will reply "Of course, we pray to God." Indeed it is so, and it is well to remember that when we engage in prayer we speak to God, the blessed God, the thrice holy God, almighty in power. Now God has been pleased to reveal Himself and we address Him in a known relationship. He made Himself known to Abraham as the Almighty God. Israel were privileged to know Him in covenant relationship as Jehovah, while the Christian knows Him in that most blessed and dearest relationship of Father. (In this connection see Gen. xvii. 1; Deut. xviii. 13; and Matthew v. 48.) This we should ever bear in mind. We know also that there are three Persons in the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The last, however, we do not pray to, for there is no address throughout the Scriptures to the Holy Spirit. He teaches us from the word of God, leads us into all truth, helps our infirmities, and groans within us. We are told to pray *in* the Holy Spirit but never *to* Him. We have, however, divine warrant for addressing our prayers to both the Father and the Son; how blessed! We can address the Father as His children; we can speak freely to Him concerning His beloved Son Who has brought us into this place of blessing; we can also speak to the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, speak to Him concerning His Father now known as our Father through faith in Him, the Son. But we need to be careful lest we get confused in our thoughts and as a consequence in our expressions as to Whom we are addressing. That both Father and Son are one in Godhead glory is true and abundantly borne witness to in the Scriptures, yet, as we are well aware, what could be said of the Son could not be said in truth of the Father, and the reverse is also true. Let us then be watchful of our words. We cannot thank the Father for dying for us but we can and do thank the Son for

doing so, blessed be His Name, and we can thank the Father for sending the Son. Again, the Lord Jesus has left us a promise of His sure return, and if we are speaking to Him we can thank Him for His promise to come again and let Him know we are waiting for Him to come, this we could not intelligently say to the Father. Examples of this kind could be multiplied but the above will suffice to show the simplest believer the difference there should be in the character of our address when we are thus speaking in prayer to the Father or to the Son. Further still. Who is it many address when they say, Lord? It is not our desire to be critical, but if we address God the Father we should surely address Him as such yet some appear to do so under the title of Lord. Now is this right? Lord God Almighty are names by which God was known in Old Testament times, but seldom is there a reference to God in this way in the New Testament unless we refer to the book of the Revelation where God re-assumes His titles in relationship to Israel and the earth. When Paul said "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice" (2 Cor. xii.) surely he was addressing the Lord Jesus, for the reply he got was, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness," and Paul concludes, "Most gladly will I therefore rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of *Christ* may rest upon me." A great deal more might be said upon this most interesting subject but the foregoing will suffice to exercise hearts to pray intelligently as it is written in 1 Cor. xiv. 15, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also."

T. W.

A Leper's Thoughts upon Prayer.

A CORRESPONDENT writes: To-day I received a letter from a blind leper as follows:

Ever dear—

I acknowledge the receipt of your letter and was very glad to hear from you, and the more glad to understand that you have been mindful of us in prayer.

A little before I came to write I was thinking of prayer.

I thought of Paul with his thorn in the flesh—how he prayed *three times* over it, and afterwards ceased, having learnt that God's grace was sufficient for him.

And Jabez prayed that God might enlarge his coast, and he blessed him, and heard him it seems at his *first* petition. Maybe we go too often about one thing; indeed I find it so in myself, but from henceforth I think I know how to pray. I shall pray upon the *same principle as I confess my sins*.

I do not continually confess my sins over and over. I have found myself doing so two or three times, but the word says, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

That seems that it but needs faithful confession at once — as for example "I have sinned against the Lord." "The Lord also hath put away thy sin."

J.G.B.

Although the above is deeply interesting and suggestive it surely does not set aside what we are taught by the Lord Jesus in the parable of the importunate widow, Luke xi. Nor ought we to fail to profit by the word of admonition given to Israel "Ye that put Jehovah in remembrance, keep not silence, and GIVE HIM NO REST, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isaiah lxii. 6, 7, N.Tr.).

Ed. W.O.H.

Mary, a Praying Servant.

IT is related that once a number of ministers were assembled for the discussion of difficult questions, and among others it was asked, how the command to "pray without ceasing" could be complied with. Various suppositions were started, and at length one of the number was appointed to write an essay upon it to read at the next monthly meeting; which being overheard by a female servant, she exclaimed, "What! a whole month wanted to tell the meaning of that text! It is one of the easiest and best texts in the Bible." "Well, well," said an old minister, "Mary, what can you say about it? Let us know how you understand it; can you pray all the time?" "Oh yes, sir." "What! when you have so many things to do?" "Why, sir, the more I have to do, the more I can pray." "Indeed; well, Mary, do let us know how it is; for most people think otherwise." "Well, sir," said the girl, "When I first open my eyes in the morning, I pray, Lord, open the eyes of my understanding; and while I am dressing, I give thanks that I am clothed with the robe of righteousness; and when I have washed me, I ask for the washing of regeneration; and as I begin work, I pray that I may have strength equal to my day; when I begin to kindle up the fire, I pray that God's work may revive in my soul; and as I sweep out the house, I pray that my heart may be cleansed from all its impurities; and while preparing and partaking of breakfast, I desire to be fed with the hidden manna, and the sincere milk of the word; and so on all day; everything I do furnishes me with a thought for prayer." "Enough, enough," cried the old divine, "these things are revealed to babes, and often hid from the wise and prudent." "Go on, Mary," said he, "pray without ceasing; and as for us, my brethren, let us bless the Lord for this exposition, and remember that He has said, 'The meek will He guide in judgment.' " The essay, as a matter of course, was not considered necessary after this little event occurred.

“Be careful for nothing ; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. iv. 6, 7).

Notes of a Bible Reading on Genesis xiv.—xvi.

xiv. 1-11.—As an answer to those who deny the historical truth of this chapter it is interesting to know that archaeological research has brought to light each name of the four kings and also the names of their respective kingdoms. In the end scholarship has to pay tribute to the accuracy of the Bible. Faith, however, takes the place of a little child and accepts without question.

Several of the races mentioned in verses 5 and 6 were “giants” who dwelt in territory bordering on Canaan (see Deut. ii.).

12.—Lot, who had pitched his tent *toward* Sodom (xiii. 12), is now dwelling *in* Sodom, and is carried away by the victorious kings. Worldly-minded Christians who choose the world are sure to become involved in its strife sooner or later.

13-16.—Abram, now restored to communion with God, becomes Lot’s deliverer. Spiritually, this shows how faith overcomes the world (1 Jno. v. 4, 5). All the power and forces of the world are subservient to the man of faith. Christ overcame the world (Jno. xvi. 33), and if we follow Him we shall do so too.

Abram’s military victory over the king is, typically, the victory of the remnant over the world prior to the appearing of the Lord Jesus as the King-Priest to set up his millennial kingdom. It is Abram’s first victory. His refusal of the king of Sodom’s offer is his second—a moral triumph (vv. 21-24).

17-20.—The suggestion that Melchizedek was the

Lord Himself cannot be accepted in the light of Heb. vii. 1-3, which declares him to have been "made like unto the Son of God."

"Without father, without mother, without descent, etc." (Heb. vii. 3) means that, so far as the record is concerned, these details are not given. They are inspired omissions so that Melchizedek might stand as a type of the Son of God, and they pay tribute to the unerring precision of the Spirit of God Who guided the writer of the Pentateuch. They were necessarily striking and significant, for according to the Jewish law a priest had to establish his genealogy before he could exercise his priesthood (Neh. vii. 64).

The chief characteristic of the priesthood of Melchizedek is that it is incommunicable, and thus unlike the Aaronic order, which passed from father to son. Christ is a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. cx. 4; Heb. vi. 20).

The woman's Seed who should bruise the serpent's head is presented now as the King of Righteousness and King of Peace.

The Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us to distinguish between the *order* of priesthood and the *exercise* of it (Heb. v. 5, 6; vii. 11.) The Melchizedek *order* is in the power of endless life; its *exercise* was connected with sacrifice, intercession and worship.

The Lord's present priesthood is after Melchizedek's *order*, but *exercised* in the name of Aaron. He offered up Himself once for all and entered into the holiest, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb. ix. 11, 12). Within the veil He leads our worship and intercedes for us *now*. But He Who is within the veil will come again; He will come out of the sanctuary, and then as King and Priest succour and bless His earthly people, the Israelites.

21-24.—How necessary it is to keep free of the world in every respect! Satan often ensnares us just after a great victory. In Eph. vi. we are exhorted to stand (v. 11), to withstand (v. 13) and having done all to stand (v. 13). Ours is a ceaseless warfare.

xv. 1.—How beautiful is the divine response to the

faithfulness of Abram, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." It is entirely suited to his need: "Thy shield," against any vengeance of the defeated kings, or hostility of the king of Sodom after Abram had refused his offer: "Thy exceeding great reward," swift and abundant recompense for renouncing the riches of Sodom.

2-6.—Abram does not doubt God's promise, but seeks a pledge. He is thinking about the earthly blessing, of the one who should come forth of his own bowels. God bids him look toward heaven, and assures him his seed shall be innumerable as the stars of heaven. The reference to stars indicated that Abram was to have a heavenly seed (i.e. the church) as well as an earthly seed (Israel).

In verse 6 we read that Abram believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness. This is justification by faith (see Rom. iv. 1-5, etc.), the great lesson of the chapter. Believing in the Lord, though a simple thing in itself, is the necessary foundation on man's side of all blessing. To believe in the Lord is to repose confidence in the One Who is the source of all knowledge, wisdom, goodness and power.

God made known His will to the fathers, although the giving of the law awaited Moses' day. And God specially said concerning Abram, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment" (xviii. 19).

7-21.—Abram desires a sign that he will inherit the land, and God graciously confirms His covenant with him. As an assurance to Abram, God bids him prepare for a rite of covenant by the slaughter of one each of the clean creatures used in sacrifice. They were cleft, except the birds, and laid in a double row upon the ground, each half one against the other. God will bind Himself to His promises by passing between them (cf. Jer. xxxiv. 18, 19). This He does, in the words of another, "as light to guide, and furnace to try." But it is through what speaks of death He goes; only

death could make all sure, and even then, as we know, only the death of One, the Lord Jesus.

God showed Abram that His blessing could only come through sacrifice. He made him to feel, by causing an horror of great darkness to fall upon him, the solemnity of having to deal with a holy God. Abram was made to feel the terror of the Lord, both as connected with himself, a sinner, though justified by faith, and with his seed to be afflicted in Egypt.

Notice in verse 11 that Abram drives away the fowls that were ready to come down and defile the sacrifice. How carefully we should guard the atoning work of Calvary against all the tamperings of wicked men !

In verse 18 the land is described by its greatest dimensions to emphasize the fulness of God's promise.

xvi. 1-16.—In this chapter we read of nature's misguided attempt to effect the fulfilment of the promises of God other than in God's own time and way. This tendency is exhibited even after a beginning in faith (xv. 6). The result is a bitter one; Sarai and Hagar cannot abide peaceably for long together, and only at all while Hagar submits herself to her mistress. Had Abram and Sarai waited upon the Lord (Psalm xxvii. 14; xxxvii. 3-5; lxxxiv. 11; Rom. viii. 28), this would not have occurred.

The government of God is seen here. They must reap as they have sown (cf. life of Jacob, and foolishness of king Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx. 12-19). Sarai realises her mistake, but, without recognition of the sin and confession before God, endeavours to rectify matters in her own way. God will not allow this, however, and Hagar has to return. The full development awaits the birth of Isaac, the seed of promise, when the bondwoman and her son must be cast out. Their allegorical significance, pointing to the bondage of the law and the liberty of the Spirit, is taught in Galatians iv.

A.E.D.

“Leaven Leavening the Lump.”

By **W. J. Hocking.**

16 pp. crown 8vo. 2d. 12 copies post free 2/- from our publisher.

This is a most valuable booklet on a little understood but weighty theme by a writer well fitted to handle it. There is hardly another subject in Holy Writ about which such diversity of opinion exists among Christians, and, while this booklet is studiously non-controversial, it is a serious effort at presenting to the Christian reader a full yet simple and well-balanced exposition of the various scriptures dealing with this subject. In circles where we should expect to hear better things, there are frequently presented fanciful, if not forced, interpretations of the scriptures concerning *leaven*, in order, we fear, to make them fit in with modern or current tendencies. It is most essential therefore that God's people, old and young, should be fortified by “what saith the scripture” if they are to be kept from drifting with the stream.

For these reasons we thoroughly recommend this able paper to all our beloved readers as something to establish their thoughts, and give true Christian character to their course. The many who are exercised as to their way in the cross currents of our own day, cannot fail to find help in this pamphlet. We wish it were in the hands of every Christian man on both sides of the Atlantic. The way it explains the difference between leaven in the dough and in the baked bread is both interesting and instructive.

W.M.R.

PRAY much and SPEAK little, Oh, let me particularly recommend to you that sacred, gentle and peaceful silence, which God and all His saints love so much! The spirit of loquacity is the bane of all religious society, the extinction of devotion, occasions confusion of mind, is an abuse of time, and a denial of the divine presence.”—*Gerald Tersteegen.*

Our Saviour Changes Not.

THE sweetest flower on earth
 That sheds its fragrance round,
 Ere evening comes has withered,
 And lies upon the ground.
 The dark and dreary desert
 Has only one green spot,
 'Tis found in living pastures—
 Our Saviour changes not.

Clouds soon o'ercast our summer sky,
 So beautiful, so bright,
 And while we still admire it,
 It darkens into night :
 Our sky above is cloudless,
 There darkness enters not,
 'Tis found alone with Jesus—
 Our Saviour changes not.

E'en friendship's smile avails not
 To cheer us here below,
 For smiles are all deceitful,
 They quickly ebb and flow ;
 One smile alone can gladden,
 Whate'er the pilgrim's lot,
 It is the smile of Jesus—
 Our Saviour changes not.

There's naught on earth to rest upon,
 All things are changing here,
 The smiles of joy we gaze upon,
 The friends we count most dear ;
 One Friend alone is changeless,
 The One too oft forgot,
 Whose love has stood for ages past—
 Our Saviour changes not.

F. W.

The Call of Levi.—2.

(Luke v. 27-32.)

THE Lord Jesus has come as the True Light to show us the danger we are in; for sin cannot be tolerated in God's sight. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Therefore, this day of God's longsuffering, when He is waiting to be gracious, is called the "day of grace."

Christ has come and died. The apostle Paul witnessed to small and great that which Moses and the prophets did say should come, that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people and to the Gentiles.

If *you* do not put your trust in the Lord Jesus, while it is called "to-day," and while His precious blood shed on Calvary's cross is available to wash your sins away, you will be left to answer for them before the Great White Throne of judgment; and, make no mistake, all who are arraigned before that tribunal will be consigned to the lake of fire. "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

The call of the Lord is invariably to follow Him; for He is the centre of all God's counsels, and there is no blessing apart from Him. "If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour," said the Lord. And it is only when we have accepted Him as our Saviour, that His voice will come with compelling power, constraining us to leave all, to follow and to serve Him. And what a privilege to be thus identified with Him in this day of His rejection! For, when His glory shall be revealed, we shall be glad with exceeding joy.

Levi, at His call, left all, rose up, and followed Him. He had heard the Shepherd's voice; "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than

all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one" (John x. 27-30).

The Lord testified, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." His call to follow Him will not exalt us; but it will lead us to have high thoughts of Him. It will give us an Object, outside of self, which increases our delight the more we know of Him. With Solomon we shall say, "He is the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely One." Nor can we honour Him more than by seeking that path of humble obedience to the will of God, which He has shown so perfectly. He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

His voice not only has the power to awaken the dead, but it is a "still small voice" which speaks comfort to the heart. Ruth, the Moabitess, heard it in the voice of Boaz, the kinsman, when he said to her, "A full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under Whose wings thou art come to trust," and she replied, "Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord, for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken to the heart of thine handmaid."

The voice of the Lord comes with compelling love that sinners may be blessed to the full. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). "Incline your ear, and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live." "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." How insistent He is, and how good to those who find! He wants us to share all that He has won at such a cost on Calvary's cross.

Who so able to speak words of comfort to *your* heart as He Who says, "I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep"? This is the love that breaks the heart, for it is a love which is stronger than death, and which many waters cannot quench. He, the Holy Son of God, has gone under all the billows of God's wrath on account of sin, in

order to bring sinners to God. Can the reader remain callous, and resist the strivings of God's Spirit?

Levi is so full of the wondrous grace of the Lord in calling Him, that he makes Him a great feast in his own house. Such undeserved and unlooked-for grace finds expression in his seeking others to share the blessing. Is anything too precious to lay at the feet of Him Who loved me and gave Himself for me?

The scribes and Pharisees, who murmur against the Lord's disciples joining in the feast, are just such as those who boast in religion of the flesh, thanking God that they are not as other men are, and priding themselves on their outward observances.

The scribes were the custodians of the law, who used tradition in their interpretation of it. They were organised by king Hezekiah for the purpose of transcribing early records, and they were responsible for keeping up the records of the kingdom. As a body, their self-righteousness shut them out from the kingdom of heaven; but there were individuals amongst them who were instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, and the Lord likens such unto an householder, who brings forth out of his treasures things new and old.

The Pharisees prided themselves on their knowledge and observance of the law of Moses. Their fundamental principle was "Tradition," affirming an oral explanation of the law, which had been handed down from the time of Moses, and called "The law of Tradition." They honoured God with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him.

The Lord in His ministry warned His disciples against following the scribes and Pharisees in their mere outward observance of the law (Matt. xxiii. 1-5). The phylactery consisted of four strips of parchment, on which were written the four passages—Exod. xiii. 2-10; 11-17; Deut. vi. 4-9 and 13-22. These four strips were carried in a large case strapped to the left arm, or worn upon the forehead in a smaller case. It could not fail to attract conspicuous attention.

The Lord denounced them as hypocrites in no

measured terms (Matt. xxiii.), and in eight different "woes" would warn us all against such a deadening spirit. The religious leaders of the day boasted in being able to see; and therefore, the Lord said, their sin remained. They knew not that they were poor, and blind, and naked. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

But what a joy to know Christ came to call sinners to repentance! Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ! It is the goodness of God which leadeth to repentance; not the looking within to see whether we have repented enough, but taking God at His word, owning our lost and wretched condition, and accepting Christ as our Saviour.

Did not the woman of Bethany show her loving regard in the house of Simon the leper, when, with an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious, she brake the box and poured it on the head of the Lord Jesus? Did not her heart go out to God's Anointed, Who was so soon to go to Calvary's cross, and there accomplish that great work of redemption, without which no invitation could be given to any poor sinner? (Matt. xxvi. 6-13.)

But though He came, according to prophecy, as Governor to rule God's people Israel, yet God's purposes of grace went far beyond Israel. His love could not be bounded, for, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And therefore the Lord Jesus had every authority for saying, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

H. K.

"Remember it is almost invariably the best man who steps out of the dispute first."

"LORD, I confess this morning I remembered my breakfast, but forgot my prayers."

The Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit in Relation to the Church.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.

(Read Matt. xvi. 13-21 ; Acts ii. 1-4, 41-47)

THE scriptures read refer to the beginning of the church of God, and they bring before us two of its features, both of which are helpful if borne in mind. From the Gospel of Matthew we learn that the church is inseparably connected with the Lord Jesus Himself. Its formation was the Lord's purpose; a definite statement of what He would do, "I will build My church." So that the church is essentially the work of the Lord Jesus.

In Acts ii. we have the second important feature; there we find the historical fact of the descent of the Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father, came down, and He Himself formed that new organisation upon earth, which was the church of God. So that in Matthew we have the fact of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, being the builder of the church of God; and in Acts we have the further fact that God's Holy Spirit is the One Who is here upon earth to bring together those who are to form the church of God. Thus we see that two Persons of the Trinity are, according to the teaching of scripture, concerned with the existence of the church of God upon earth.

This truth takes away the thought that the existence of the church depends upon man. Man has his special responsibility in connection with it, but it is very comforting to look behind the scenes and see that which is invisible to the natural mind. God's Son is the Builder of the church; and, as the Acts tells us, the Holy Spirit, come down from above, now that the Lord Jesus is glorified, is the One Who baptises into one body those who are Christ's upon earth. And the two Persons work together; there is no disagreement. The Lord Jesus is the One Who exercises authority over the church, while the Holy Spirit is the One Who acts in

the midst of the church, and works there for mutual edification and blessing.

This is rather a large subject for a short address; but a great purpose will be served if we all carry away these two central facts about the church of God. They help us in this way. Every devout and pious person who thinks about the church of God is confused, perplexed, and discouraged; because the condition of things as we look around us is sufficient to break down any person's spirit. There are numbers of persons, all bearing the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who are striving bitterly one against another. So that a pious person is apt to become discouraged by this warfare of creeds, and is inclined to say, "What is the use of troubling about these things? Ecclesiastical matters can never be mended. If I have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is enough for me. I'll let things go."

But if I realise that the Lord Jesus Christ never lets anything go to which He puts His hand; that if the Holy Spirit begins a work, He will not leave any part of it undone; and if He came down at Pentecost to work for the glory of God in the church, He is working still; if I realise this divine activity, how can I let things go? I must necessarily bring myself into subjection to Him Who is the Lord of the church, and also to the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus never departs from His word. The Holy Spirit never works apart from the Scriptures He wrote. Therefore, in this two-fold way we have everything that is needful to encourage us and lead us on, although the condition of things around us is confused and confusing.

Now in Matthew xvi. it is easily seen that a new thing is spoken of by our Lord. In the Old Testament we read of a company of God's people, but always from an earthly point of view. The natural descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were those upon whom God put His name, giving them the law and their manner of worship, and separating them from the nations. To them, and them only, God sent His Son. He came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; He

came to save His people from their sins. "Unto you is born a Saviour." He came especially to the Jews, but the Jews rejected Him; and this rejection the First Gospel particularly sets out. He came as their King and Saviour; but they would not have Him.

What was to be done? The Lord unfolded to His disciples, who were special witnesses whom He would leave in the world to carry on the testimony of the truth, what His firm purpose was. He cross-examined His disciples as to what the people said about Him. The disciples had gone out and preached the gospel of the kingdom and there were the signs following their word; but what did the people say of their Master? There were varying opinions; some said that He was John the Baptist, others that He was Elias or Jeremias; others again that He was at least one of the prophets, though they were not unanimous as to which prophet. Not one realised the truth of His Person. What, then, was the use of their opinions? They only clouded the mind and deceived the heart.

The Lord turned to His disciples, and said, "Whom say ye that I am?" He did not ask whether they believed on Him for forgiveness of sins. That was settled previously. The question now was, what they thought about the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The Lord puts this important question to them as a preface to teaching them about His church. Before the Lord makes known to you the truth of the church, He puts to you that question. There is a great organisation which puts the church before the Lord, and says, "Hear the church!" This is absolutely wrong. The Lord's word is "What do you think of Me?" It is no use studying the truth of the church unless you are clear as to the supreme position the Lord Jesus Christ holds.

One apostle speaks for the rest, and what he says is not out of his own mind; for God the Father had revealed to Peter the truth concerning His Son. It is the same to-day; the Father delights to see those whose hearts are clear as to the Lord Jesus Christ. If there is one thing pleasing to God the Father, it is the desire

to know the Lord Jesus Christ. He is everything to the Father; and if your heart is filled with the desire to be enlarged in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, the Father will make Him known to you. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father," and He reveals Him to the simple and true-hearted, to babes.

Peter, speaking by revelation, said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." He owned Him as the Anointed One in His official glory, and as the Son in His personal glory. The Spirit of God, descending in bodily shape like a dove upon Him at His baptism in Jordan, had already borne witness to the fact that He was the Son of God; and the Father Himself had then declared from heaven, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." It was this personal glory of Christ that Peter confessed that day, and, moreover, confessed it to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is important to grasp the necessity of this. The first essential to attain a right knowledge of the church of God is to go to the One Who is building it, and confess to Him that we believe in Him as the Son of God from heaven. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It is easy for you to say it to me, or to others but it is our responsibility to say it in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because Peter faithfully confessed Him when others were so far from the truth, the Lord told him something more. The Father had revealed one thing. "Now," said the Lord, "I will reveal something more." "I also say unto thee" (for so the verse should read) "that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." Peter was a stone, a living stone, and he had come into the presence of the Builder, Who was going to build His church of living stones. He Himself is the Rock, the great foundation upon which it is built. As far as man is concerned, the confession of Christ as the Son of the living God is essential in order to be in that building. No person who does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh has any part in this build-

ing. There are some who call themselves Christians, who deny the Lord Jesus come in flesh; the Lord excludes those. They are not stones, as Peter was.

“I will build My church.” It shall be My assembly, something for Myself. The nation said, “We will not have this Man to reign over us,” and again, “We have no king but Cæsar.” They would not let the Lord have His inheritance, and so He said, “I will have My church. The people of Israel will not confess Me; but I will form a new company of those who will own Me.” “I will build My church.” Does not this revealed purpose of the Lord give a new character to the church of God? The church is the Lord’s own, His own peculiar treasure, something which belongs to Him exclusively, because it owns Him in the time of His rejection. His name is cast out, and He is still despised in this world; but here and there, there are those who believe in Him; and the Lord gathers them out to be His own. Is not this worth knowing? It is absolutely unique; there is nothing like it.

The Lord is now in the glory, and looking down upon the church He says, “That is Mine,” not only individually, but “the whole company is Mine.” “I see them as one. I do not see them in their scattered and divided state, but as those who are united inasmuch as they have with heart and lip confessed Me as the Son of God.” And the Lord preserves them. All the powers of death shall not prevail against His church. It looked as if the powers of hades would prevail against the Lord Himself, for He went on to tell them that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised. But in Acts ii. 27, Peter showed clearly that according to the Psalmist, His soul was not left to hades, and His body saw no corruption. The powers of death and hades were defeated in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ; and because He is the Conqueror over them, the church will rise victorious too.

In the early days of Christianity, the world made every effort to exterminate the church, to put to death

all who confessed Jesus as the Son of God. Were they victorious? The Lord had said, "The gates of hades shall not prevail against it." In spite of the difficulties, in spite of its enfeebled condition, we have the Lord's own promise. The Lord has pledged Himself to see the church safely through, and to present it to Himself in glory, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

It is very comforting to feel that we have the Lord on our side. The weakest believer can go back to Matthew xvi., and he knows from that, he is on the winning side. And he has this confidence, not because of the poor company he is amongst, and he the most weak and insignificant (for so ought he to regard himself, and it is better for him if he does), but because Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, and will present it to Himself in a day that is coming. Thus, from the very commencement, when the church was founded and begun, omnipotence has been on the side of the church.

(To be continued, D.V.)

W.J.H.

Scripture Testimony to the Second Coming of the Lord;

with Special Reference to the Bearing of this Hope upon Christian Conduct.

THE disciple whom Jesus loved links in his writings the first coming of our Lord with His coming again. I use the latter word in its broad comprehensive sense which includes His manifestation. Chapter I of his Gospel presents the Word become flesh, and the last chapter, symbolically, His future display. After Peter's ministry and manner of death are set forth, the ministry of the apostle John is signified as continuing "till I come." This in fact, it does, its scope including His future manifestation to the world—in connection with

the earth — to the end of God's ways — and to the eternal state (see Rev. xxi. 1 to 9).

Let us, however, take a less wide scope, namely the Lord's resurrection and ascension, and also connected with this, His coming again.

1 Thess. iv. 14. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." (Here His death is also referred to.) Acts i. 11. "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." 1 Cor. xv. 23. "Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."

Between His ascension and His coming again, the results of His ascension and His present service are recorded—for instance, the last chapter of Mark records that He was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God, and there worked with the disciples who went forth and preached everywhere. Romans viii. 34 presents Him as at the right hand of God, and making intercession for us. In the First Epistle of John (iii. 3, and iv. 17) we have "as He is"; also that He is Advocate with the Father; and He is the propitiation. See also John xiii. In Acts ii. 33, the Holy Ghost is testimony and assurance to Israel that Christ has been accepted by God. On the day of atonement the people awaited the "coming out" of the high priest for the assurance that he had been accepted. In Acts, Christ "being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath *shed forth* this which ye now see and hear." They saw and heard that which testified to Christ's acceptance on high. In Luke ix. 51, we read "when the time was come that He should be received up He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." (He "set His face as a flint" is not written in the Gospels, but occurs in Isa. 1. 7, where Jehovah's dependent Servant challenges "Who will contend with Me?" and this is put into the mouths of the elect in Romans viii. 33 and 34.) Luke xxiv. 51, tells us that while He

blessed them He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. In chap. xii. He girds Himself, makes to sit down, and comes forth and serves. We have thus His present service after ascension; and the happiness He will Himself presently minister for the joy of those who watch for Him.

Coming back now to John's Gospel—chap. vi. 62, speaks of the Son of man ascending up where He was before. Chap. xvii. The Son of the Father glorified. Chap. vii. 37 to 39. The Spirit as rivers of living water consequent upon Jesus being glorified. In chap. xiv. 28, His going to the Father should have been a cause of rejoicing to His disciples had they, so to speak, thought more of His gain and not only of their apparent loss. In chap. xv. 26 and 27 is the Spirit of truth testifying to the present exaltation of Christ in glory; and enabling the disciples to bear witness to His life down here—thus connecting His humiliation and His glory.

Chap. xiv. gives the Christians' own particular hope—also connecting His "going" with His coming again—If I go I come again. Here we have the first stage in the coming again of the Lord, when He comes to receive His own to Himself for the Father's house—"that where I am, there ye may be also." In Rev. xxii. 17, the Spirit and the bride addressing Him, say, Come; and in verse 20 is His joyous response and the bride's reply to it—"I come quickly." "Come, Lord Jesus." The hope then of the Christian is Christ Himself (our Hope). His coming for His own is not only an "event," but the coming of the Person—Himself!

I would now call attention to some aspects of His coming (firstly *for* His saints) the effects of this, and what should result from its consideration — drawing attention to the words "wherefore" and "therefore" where they occur.

In John xi. the Lord reveals to Martha not only that Lazarus should rise in the resurrection at the last day, but tells her what is recorded in verses 25 and 26. Thus the believer in Him who may have died ere the

Lord comes, shall live. And the believer in Him who is alive when He comes shall never die. 1 Thess. iv. 15 to 17. The above truth, as regards the first part, the Thessalonian saints had not learned, and consequently were grieving at the thought that their loved ones who had fallen asleep ere the Lord came, would lose their portion. So they are taught that God will bring again with Jesus those fallen asleep through Him (verses 15 to 17 show how this is to be), that the first thing the Lord will do in assembling the saints will be to raise the dead saints, and then the living saints who "remain" shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we always be with the Lord. Who of us can fathom these words? We feebly enter into their fulness; but indeed they are ineffably sweet and precious. "The Lord *Himself* shall descend" (with the assembling shout) "the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God" telling of much; but that it is *Himself* Who descends is what so appeals to the hearts. And to meet *Him*—to be always with *Him*! What a meeting! What companionship! May we much more enjoy the prospect; and even here, along the homeward journey learn to walk very near to Him, our hearts finding much joy in His company.

And now for the effect of the truth in these verses—the "wherefore." "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." How our God enters into the sorrowing of His children, and loves to minister that which will encourage, that which will comfort! He Who said to His people of old, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem"; and He of whom this 40th of Isaiah speaks in verse 3 spake wondrously gracious words when He walked this earth—ever comforting and encouraging His own in their need. The Thessalonian saints were given the sweet employ of similarly acting; comforting—encouraging—"one another with these words." And, used in a wider sense, how much better it is to encourage them than to discourage and grieve one another! The apostle Paul felt it when He wrote "These only,

fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God" (so few of the circumcision, and yet surely he loved those of the circumcision). He valued their comfort, whilst feeling how few there were of them. Wherefore, brethren, let us seek, and that not only in a particular respect as in the words to the Thessalonian saints, but in all ways possible to encourage one another according to love and truth. Even also as Heb. x. 23 to 25, enjoins; "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but encouraging one another; and so much more as ye see the day approaching." "*Wherefore* comfort one another with these words."

A. J. L.

Consider Him.—3.

TURNING now to consider briefly the miracles which are recorded only by Luke, we find the same marks of grace conspicuously shine out as in the parables.

The first is the "draught of fishes," chapter five, resulting in what is often spoken of as the conversion of the apostle Peter. Comparing this account with the earlier incidents recorded in John's first chapter, we learn that Peter had resumed his calling after the invitation of his brother Andrew with the remarkable word, "We have found the Messiah"; but here something happens that brings from Peter a confession of sinfulness and unworthiness to be in the presence of such an One.

At the risk of their reputation among their fellows, he and his partners let down their nets by the Lord's command into the waters of a lake that was never fished in daylight, and the result is such a catch that the nets break. Whether it was the miracle, or the Person of Christ which did the work in his soul we know not, but Peter's conscience was evidently reached, and that is the essential point in us all. Peter, James, and John are now called by an irresistible voice, and boats, nets,

and all else are left that they might become "fishers of men." "They forsook all and followed Him" (v. 11).

The next miracle is the raising of the widow's son (chapter vii.); about which little is said as to its effect on the widow herself, or her son, but note the effects on the people around—"they glorified God, and said, God hath visited His people" (vii. 16).

In chapter xiii. 11-17, we find the only mention of the miraculous healing of "the bowed woman" who had for eighteen years been a sufferer from infirmity. No appeal is heard from the poor sufferer; she could in no wise lift up herself, but Jesus saw her, and calling her to Him, laid His hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight and glorified God. What a contrast to this lovely act of mercy is found in the rulers of the synagogue, who indignantly object to this exhibition of divine goodness on the ground of the profanation of the Sabbath! Such is the effect of law upon the natural heart of man, nevertheless, the gracious act draws a happy confession from the common people; they rejoiced "for all the glorious things that were done by Him."

A similar spirit of questioning and doubt is aroused, and the antipathy of our natural hearts to grace manifested, in the healing of the "certain man with dropsy" (chap. xiv. 2).

This is recorded immediately after the Lord Jesus had eaten bread in the house of one of the chief Pharisees on the Sabbath day. He Himself here proposes the question to the "watching" company, only too ready to object to the manifestation of grace, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" But the test of the "ass or the ox fallen into a pit" is too much for them, and they could find no answer. How we rejoice in the triumph of "mercy that rejoiceth against judgment" (James ii. 13).

In chapter xvii. 11-19, we find the only record of the "cleansing of ten lepers" who stood afar off. Probably not an uncommon sight in the environs of the towns and villages of Palestine at that time. Could

He Who was the perfect expression of the grace and mercy of God pay no heed to their plaintive cry? Nay! He sends them to show themselves to the priest, and as they went they were cleansed. Only one turned back to give glory to God for his healing, and a similar question might well be heard to-day—"Where are the nine?"—when we think of the healing streams so long flowing from the God of grace, and so little heeded.

There only remains one more miracle to name, that is the healing of the servant of the high priest whose ear was cut off by a hasty blow from one of the followers of Jesus. Both Matthew and Mark relate the incident, and Matthew gives more of what our Lord said about it, but Luke alone says, "He touched his ear, and healed him." Precious evidence of mercy that works even in in the hour of the power of darkness! He Who could have prayed to His Father and had the immediate aid of twelve legions of angels, submits to the will of poor blinded men, and bows to all the suffering, and to death, that the scriptures might be fulfilled!

So much then for the proofs that the miracles recorded here afford us that the writer of this Gospel was led of the Holy Spirit to present the Lord Jesus from a distinct point of view, confirmed as this is not less by what is omitted than by what is given.

To turn back briefly to some of the earlier chapters, we see that in the account of our Lord giving His disciples their commission, Luke omits the words recorded by Matthew (chap. x. 5) "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not," etc.; while he alone records the commission of the seventy disciples (chap. x. 1); and there only do we find the words "and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Now turning to the closing scenes of the life of the Lord, there are some striking differences in the accounts of these events and of the crucifixion itself. In Matthew and Mark scarcely a streak of light penetrates the gloom of the solemn scene, while in Luke there are some gleams at the beginning, the middle, and the end.

In Matthew no utterance is heard until "the cry with a loud voice"; while in Luke we read that Jesus speaks to His Father, and to the dying thief. So we may see Him in all this as Emmanuel, in Matthew, rejected by Israel; and in Luke the Son of man suffering as a man for men. Here also we hear Him praying to the Father as "the Son," and yet He answers the thief's prayer as God. This Gospel also tells us of His gracious words to the weeping women on the way to Calvary, and He Who answered prayer in His last hour yet committed Himself to God as His Father.

Our one desire in pointing out these differences is that our confidence and faith in the word of God as the God-breathed communications of the Holy Spirit may be increased. How lamentable it is to think of some even that we hope may be amongst His children, and who profess to be His servants, who regard these evident marks of Divine wisdom as errors, and even teach that we have in our Bibles the communications from God, subject to "the limitations of human wisdom and reasoning."

Nay! we rejoice to believe that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 21); and that the scriptures survive all criticism and doubts, as in the familiar story of the blacksmith's shop, one anvil outlasts many hammers.

"Thy word, Thyself revealing,
Doth sanctify by truth,
Still leading on Thy children
With gentle heavenly growth;
Thus still the work proceedeth,
The work begun by grace,
For such is meet and training,
Father, to see Thy face."

T.R.

Letter on Baptism.

The Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

1879.

DEAR Brother,—I am told on good authority that some, in baptising confessors of the Lord Jesus, withhold the revealed Name of the Trinity. Since the Lord enjoined it at the close of Matt. xxviii., when He charged His servants to disciple all nations, it is a daring licence to set aside His unmistakable will and authority.

No doubt these Christians, who take upon them to ignore the given formula and to substitute what they have culled from the Acts of the Apostles, imagine themselves warranted by scripture, and of course wiser than their brethren. I understand they are under the idea that Matt. xxviii. 19 contemplates only the future Jewish remnant and their action among the Gentiles before the age terminates; and that in the Acts of the Apostles we have this commission virtually abrogated for us as well as the connected formula for baptism.

But it is certain that our Lord in His charge spoke after His death and resurrection, and that what He here laid down is distinctively Christian. His aim is as precise as in chapter xvi. 18, to indicate what was to take the place of the Jewish system, now guilty of His rejection and cross. As He was going to build His assembly "upon the rock" (His own revealed name, the Son of the living God), so He directs His servants to baptise the disciples of all the nations unto the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This is unequivocally Christian baptism for the individual, as His assembly shows the church or joint relationship. Nor should there be a question that so acted the apostles and other servants of the Lord; for on them lay the responsibility to obey the Lord's commission. *They were to see it carried out.*

It in no way fell within the design of the Book of the Acts to repeat the formula, though we have every reason to be assured that the Lord's will was done, not only among the nations but with Jewish disciples. That Book constantly sets before us the Lordship of Him Who had been crucified of men. And the words employed on each or any occasion of baptising it never professes to give, as it is strange for believers to expect. It incidentally or historically mentions baptism (of course, with water) *in* or *on* (*e**pi*) the name of Jesus Christ (ii. 38), *unto* (*eis*) the name of the Lord Jesus (viii. 16; xix. 5), *in* (*e**n*) the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (x. 48). Probably they may have also expressed the authority of the Lord's name for their own act of baptising or of the confession of those baptised; but to infer that they did not baptise them to the holy name of the Trinity is not only unintelligent and egregious but irreverent. I am so satisfied that a baptism which omits the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is null and void, that I think such persons ought to be baptised duly according to the word of the Lord. The previous act was a wrong to Him, though ignorantly done in His honour, and moreover slights the Christian acknowledgment of the Trinity from the very start.

Believe me,

Yours faithfully,

W. KELLY.

ACTS ix. 16.—“How great things he must *suffer* for My name's sake.” This was said of the apostle who *did* more than any other. But what he *suffered* was of greater consequence than what he *did* in the eyes of the All-loving and All-wise. It is needless to point out the exceeding beauty of this striking fact. But how it reveals the finger of the Holy Spirit. Surely an uninspired writer would have rather revealed his great deeds.

R.B.Jn.

Satisfied.

TEN thousand times ten thousand, and thousands,
thousands more !
With voices never tiring, are singing o'er and o'er
One blessed never-ceasing strain :
"Worthy the Lamb that once was slain."

Their sorrows all are over, their tears are wiped away,
No night, with all its darkness, but cloudless, endless
day ;
The former things are passed and gone,
They stand in heaven's eternal morn.

List ! list ! what are they singing—those multitudes up
there ?
The marriage song of heaven is ravishing the air !
The church, for whom the Saviour died,
Is now with Him, His spotless Bride.

On earth He wooed and won her with words of love
divine,
He cleansed her from all sin-stains, and whispered,
"Thou art Mine" ;
Now, clothed in bridal garments fair,
She dwells with Him for ever there.

His bitter pain and sorrow are things of other days ;
The heart which bled on Calvary is healed and full of
praise ;
Rejoiced to have His Bride up there,
And all His glory bid her share.

Strike, strike the harps of heaven, roll out the seraph
song,
In one grand voice of triumph, the Bridegroom's nuptial
song !
He greets at last His blood-bought Bride,
He rests in her—*is satisfied.* w.s.w.

“I Know He Died for Me.”

“**H**ERBERT L—— has fallen off the scaffolding, and broken his back,” was the sad news scattered quickly amongst those who knew the subject of our narrative. How sad for those praying parents who loved their child so tenderly! Yet they received this news with “Thy will be done” upon their lips; for God had allowed it, as the following will disclose, and the parents felt it was so, owning that God’s merciful hand was in it all.

At the time of the accident Herbert L—— was twenty-three years of age—a fine, strong young man; and, to look in his face, one would say that he had many years of life before him.

When a boy he attended Sunday School, listened to solemn appeals to flee to Christ for salvation, but seemed to resist the striving of the Spirit of God. Earnestly and prayerfully has the writer of this little narrative pleaded with him. All seemed dark and useless as far as man could perceive; but God had purposes of grace otherwise. His love would eventually find a lodgment in his poor heart.

Herbert L—— was not so happy as years passed on. He could find no rest for his soul in the passing pleasures of this world, so he joined the army. Being a soldier, he thought, would smother his “religious sentiments,” as he called them; but they were beyond his or any other power to eradicate. No, he could not erase the impressions of eternal things; and the incorruptible seed, the word of God, had taken root. His parents yearned over him still, and cries and tears went up to God on his behalf. He became restless and unhappy in the army, and eventually was “bought out.”

He came home to his native place, and still followed the ways of sin. But God’s eye was upon him; and as Herbert (being a carpenter) was working on the top of a house in Stoke Newington, London, he unwarily put his foot on the end of a plank with no stay under it, and fell to the ground. He was picked up and

taken to the hospital insensible, when it was discovered that his back was broken.

He lingered some eight or nine months, and, by the grace of God, finally "fell asleep in Jesus." "What!" you say, "fell asleep in Jesus, after resisting the truth as he did?" Yes, "fell asleep in Jesus," so calmly, so peacefully; for he knew what a great sinner he had been, and was conscious of the mighty love that saved him.

God revealed Himself to him in a very wonderful way during the accident. As Herbert was falling from the scaffolding he had vivid thoughts of his past sinful life. In a moment he thought of his sins, of eternity, of God, of judgment, and of the Saviour. Like a panorama, all seemed to pass before his mind; so much so, that when his relatives and friends visited him they found him calm and resigned, believing that God had arrested him in His mercy.

The writer visited him a short time after. On approaching his bed he noticed a heavenly smile upon the sick man's countenance. Asking him if he was right for eternity, and if he knew the Saviour's love, he replied, "Yes; and I know He died for me."

Let not the reader, if unsaved, trifle with God's strivings; for He may not meet you as He did Herbert L———. This was indeed a brand plucked from the fire. God says, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

Reader, can you meet a holy God? Unless your sins are put away, He must deal with you in judgment. God can only save a sinner upon the basis of absolute righteousness. "The wages of sin is death." Christ came into this world and died; He was a sacrifice equal to all God's righteous demands. And oh, wondrous, matchless grace, He saves, yea, accepts and justifies, every poor sinner who believes in Jesus!

Reader, are you saved? Are you resting upon the finished work of Christ? When Jesus trod this earth He was the embodiment, the expression, of all that God is in love towards sinful man. Men grope about this poor world, seeking after lasting pleasures, but cannot find them. Remember, death may overtake you suddenly, and is it worth your while to trifle with eternal things and with the salvation of your soul? There is no foundation for souls to rest upon outside Christ, Who was God manifest in flesh.

C.M.H.

Nain.

(Luke vii. 11-16)

FORTH from the city gate,
 Much people make their way;
 A burden slowly borne along;
 To-day is sorrow's day.

A dead man carried out,
 A widow's only son;
 For death the certain wage of sin,
 Its grievous work has done.

When lo! the Lord appears
 In lowly human guise;
 He came the broken heart to heal,
 To dry the mourner's eyes.

Compassion moves His heart,
 He feels the widow's grief;
 "Weep not!" sweet words of grace He speaks,
 And then He gives relief.

He came and touched the bier,
 He stays the funeral train;
 He says "Young man, I say, arise,"
 He gives him life again.

And oh ! what gracious ways
 In Jesus ever shone ;
 He to his mother then restores
 Her lost and only son.

There came a fear on all,
 And God they glorified !
 For Who but He can raise to life
 Poor sinful man who died ?

The words they spoke are true,
 For God did visit them ;
 And, blessed news, He came to save,
 He came not to condemn !

And this is now the hour,
 The Son of God will give
 The dead to hear His voice of power,
 And they that hear shall live. T.W.

The Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit in relation to the Church.—2.

(Read Matt. xvi. 13-21; Acts ii. 1-4, 41-47)

WHEN we come to the Acts, we find this great fact : that the birthday of the church coincides with the exaltation of Christ in glory. The Lord led His disciples out as far as to Bethany, and there was parted from them, and went on high. Soon, as He said, He would send the promise of the Father. He was going away, their Comforter, their all in all. But He had said in effect, "I will send you another Comforter, equal in power and Godhead glory, and He will be with you for ever." Here was the promise of a permanent Paraclete on earth.

So the disciples, who saw the Lord leave their sight, returned to Jerusalem. And there they remained together, and there they prayed, day after day, till

Pentecost was fully come. In Acts ii., they were together in the attitude of prayer, waiting for the fulfilment of the promise of the Lord Jesus, that the Holy Spirit would come. They could do nothing until then; they were powerless and an abject company. The One Whom they had followed had been crucified, had risen, and was gone. They were orphans in this world, waiting the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Now at last He was outpoured; He came down upon them, and there were visible evidences. Eye saw, and ear heard, tokens of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of power was there. But though that company was endued with power from on high, the point most evident was that they were united into a new company; they were made one, and made one in living connection with the One Who had left them. Peter points out that what had happened at Jerusalem was in consequence of the ascension of the Lord Jesus to the right hand of God. Israel had crucified Him, but God had exalted Him, and He had shed forth "this which ye now see and hear." The Holy Spirit connected those upon earth with the glorified Son on high. So the dignity and peculiarity of the church lie in this: the blessed Person of the Lord Jesus Christ is on high, the Holy Spirit is on earth, and He connects the church on earth with the Lord on high.

The church of Christ has a living bond with Christ. The apostle Paul expresses the union by the figure of a body. Christ is the Head, the body is here upon earth, and the Holy Spirit baptises all believers into one body, of which Christ is the Head in heaven. So there is always a link between those who form the church on earth and Christ in heaven. When the disciples followed the Lord in the days of His ministry on earth, they went to Him for everything, and without Him they could do nothing. When He asked them, "Lacked ye anything?" they replied, "Nothing, Lord." No, because He is Lord of all, and the whole world is His purse. So now, though He has gone on high, there is the same link with poverty-

stricken members on earth. Competency does not depend on ourselves, because the presence of the Holy Spirit in this world is to make good to our souls the glory of the Person of the Lord Jesus.

Let us take an illustration. We come together on the Lord's Day for the remembrance of the Lord Jesus in His death, and we have His own promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." And if we come with humble hearts and cleansed feet, and are assured that the Lord is faithful to His promise, we feel the presence of the Lord Jesus in our midst. We have known it to be so, for we have felt that the Lord was there. Why was it? Was it because we were clever in ourselves, or because we were in an emotional frame of mind, or was it because of our piety or good deeds? No, it was because the Holy Spirit made the presence of the Lord Jesus real to our souls.

You have the same experience perhaps when you are bowed down under some great sorrow. The Lord hears you in your distress, and you know He does. How? God's Holy Spirit makes the Lord Jesus real to your heart. It is as true now as it was on the day of Pentecost. The One Who came down at Pentecost is here now. There is no need to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. If you do not feel His working, that is your fault, not His. His service is to make Christ known; it is His delight to take of the things of Christ, and make them good and real to you. Have you not felt in reading the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He was actually speaking to you? His words come to you just as clear and definite as when they were first uttered. All that is the work of the Holy Spirit. And it comes out to-day that if two or three are gathered together in real dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and with the intention of honouring the presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst, they will infallibly know that they are in the presence of the Lord Jesus.

In the latter part of Acts ii. we find that Peter had

spoken that day in Jerusalem; and the result of his testimony to the risen Christ was that three thousand stiff-necked and hard-hearted Jews were converted. Those who had cried, "Away with Him," those very men now believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and were baptised. They owned their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; they said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." What became of those three thousand? They were brought together into that new company, which the Holy Spirit had formed out of those gathered together in Jerusalem. They were no longer Jews, they were certainly not Gentiles. What were they then? The church of God, which was formed in consequence of the ascent of Christ to the glory on high, and of the descent of the Holy Spirit to make good the absence of the Lord Jesus.

These in the new assembly continued stedfastly, not in the commandments of Moses, not in the observances of the Temple, but in something entirely new, the apostles' doctrine and fellowship. They were one now with the apostles of Christ. There was one doctrine and one fellowship; they had one common faith and testimony. Further, there was the breaking of bread, the observance of the Lord's supper, and there were prayers, united prayers. They continued stedfastly, praying together as one. This is something we ought not to forget. It is a good thing to see a goodly number at the assembly prayer meeting, all praying as one, one petition going up, and all saying, Amen, to the one petition going up to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You may individually or privately pray at home, or in the street, but there is nothing like the prayers at the prayer meeting; for assembly prayer besieges the throne of God, and brings down special blessing, because it is the assembly's prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All that believed were together. There were no chief priests, nor scribes, nor Pharisees any longer, but they, the followers of Christ, continued daily together with one accord. There we have unity again. It is

instructive always to get back to the beginning of things. God is not like man. How often men start, and then have to go back, and change their plans because they have made a mistake! But God knew what He was about, and the Holy Spirit wrought as He meant things to continue. So we must go back to that point to learn the truth.

If one thing more striking than others is recorded, it is that they were of one accord, and of one mind. Nothing can keep the saints of God of one mind like the eye fixed on Christ, and the heart filled with Him. There is no power in a confession of a creed, nor in a doctrine, to give unity. But the Lord Jesus Christ is the object for the practical unity of the church and the Holy Spirit is the power.

“And they continuing daily in the temple with one accord . . . the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” The word “church” is best left out, though understood, for the great point is that the Lord added together daily such as were to be saved. And so we can connect Acts ii. with Matthew xvi. In Matthew the Lord Jesus says, “I will build My church,” and in the Acts we find that He has gone on high and has begun His work. He is building a habitation of God here on earth, and it is growing into a holy temple. It is the Lord Who forms it, and the Holy Spirit dwells in it. His abiding presence makes it what it is. We read of the disciples, that after the Lord’s ascension, they went everywhere preaching the word, the Lord working with them (Mk. xvi. 20). We cannot separate this work of the Lord Jesus from the work of the Holy Spirit. They work together, these two great Personages, on Whom rest the existence, the permanence, and the blessing of the church.

So in dependence on the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit, there is abundant ground for comfort, and guidance of the church, as we find it in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus is coming, and when He comes, it will be because He has added the last one to the assembly of God. Do you not think that it will be pleasing to

Him to recognise the testimony of those who in a day of ruin have owned this truth? He knows whether we love the church because it belongs to Christ, or because of those that are in it. It is one thing to love a brother, but the Lord Jesus Christ has another relationship for the believer, that of His church.

If we belong to Him, we are bone of His bone; and if this matter is of concern to our hearts, the Lord will appreciate our faithfulness to Him in these days of declension and departure from the truth. Many value their own soul's salvation, and yet are not faithful to the truth. The Lord give us to have a real interest in the church, and in all that concerns the church, for the sake of the Lord Himself.

W.J.H.

Help for Bad Memories.

THERE was one Patrick Mackelwoth in the west part of Scotland, who had his heart touched in a most remarkable way by the Lord.

After his conversion (as he told many of his Christian friends) he was so affected with the new world into which he had entered, together with the discoveries of God, and of a life to come, that for some months together he could scarce ever sleep, but was continually taken up in admiration.

His life was very remarkable for tenderness and near converse with God in his daily walk. One day, after a sharp trial (having his only son suddenly taken away by death), he retired into private for several hours. When he came forth he looked so cheerful that many asked him the reason of it, wondering at it in such a time.

He told them he had got that in his retirement with the Lord, that to have it again renewed, he would be content to lose a son every day.

It had been long his burden that he had such a bad memory, that he could retain almost nothing of what he heard; he bitterly complained thereof to a worthy

minister (Mr. James English) of Dalby, who advised him that, when he heard any truth that he desired to remember, he should commend it to the Lord and entreat Him to keep it for him, and to give it to him back again when he should stand in most need of it.

Accordingly, this holy man did put the same into practice most seriously; and when he came to lie on his death-bed, unto his ministers and divers other Christians who were present, he did solemnly declare how wonderfully the Lord did answer his prayers; for whereas want of memory had been his great burden, now the Lord had given him back all those truths that he had put into His keeping; so that what he had heard many years before was now most clearly brought into his remembrance; which he showed by repeating many particular truths, and notes of sermons, which at such and such times he had heard.

EXTRACTED.

Elisha's Ministry and the Double Portion.

(1 Kings xix. 19-21; 2 Kings ii. 1-15)

THERE may well be profit in considering in the light of the New Testament the bearing of the above Scriptures. In the first passage the transferring of the mantle of Elijah to Elisha was the recognised sign of his appointment to the prophetic office, and in the second passage Elisha receives the mantle of Elijah and with it a double portion of Elijah's spirit, which Elijah declared would be a hard thing for him to receive; but nevertheless if he should see his master when taken from him he would do so.

The name of Elijah (my God is Jehovah) suggests the majesty and supremacy of Israel's God over every other God whatever; and it was manifestly the object of Elijah's ministry to recall the nation to God and the keeping of His holy law (much marked by that severity against the transgressors which the law demanded);

III

though we see mercy where obedience was found. The feeding of the widow of Zarephath and her son and the raising of the son afterwards witness this. The widow convicted of sin owned God and His servant. A striking picture to us of the repentance of a sinner and life obtained through grace—and she a Gentile, too, outside the covenanted mercies of God. Truly He is long-suffering and of great mercy as we see so often in the Psalms and elsewhere in the Old Testament. On the one hand we see Elijah bringing rain from heaven in answer to prayer after the nation's acknowledgment of Jehovah at Carmel, and the same Elijah bringing down fire from heaven on the soldiers of king Ahaziah who, in his sickness, had sent to consult Beelzebub instead of the God of Israel. We see God ruling His people, blessing them when obedient, through His servant, and through the same servant executing judgment on their king's departure from Himself.

The miracles of Elisha, more numerous than those of Elijah (as recorded in Scripture) were works of mercy, the cursing and death of the forty-two children on the way to Bethel and the smiting with leprosy of Gehazi excepted; but these were manifestly in judgment of transgressors in God's government of His people Israel. Hence we are able to see in Elisha's ministry a foreshadowing of the present day of grace in which we live, which is indeed grace reigning through righteousness, propitiation having been so perfectly made by the Lord Jesus at the cross that believers can be made the righteousness of God in Christ. Because Elisha's ministry so spoke of grace, it had a connection with heaven in its beginning as the reception of the double portion on Elisha was dependent on his beholding the carrying up of Elijah into heaven, and this indeed was becoming to such a ministry of grace.

Furthermore, Elijah said of Elisha's request, "Thou hast asked a hard thing." Was it not Calvary's bitter cross which brought about the change from the dis-

pensation of law to that of grace, so well might Elisha speak of that request as "a hard thing." The double portion speaks of the superior excellence of grace over law, grace much more abounding where sin abounds, according to the gospel of grace. Power was given even through the dead bones of Elisha, life coming from death, as it has come to us through the cross.

Again in the double call of Elisha, first when Elijah cast his mantle upon him and afterwards when Elisha took up Elijah's mantle, and received a double portion of his spirit, may we not see in the New Testament what would answer to those events—the Spirit of life, given when our Saviour breathed upon the ten disciples bestowing the Holy Ghost upon them (John xx. 22) and life given more abundantly when the Holy Ghost came in mighty power upon the one hundred and twenty disciples in the upper room? That was a double portion indeed! And we can see what would correspond with this in individual cases when there has been the working of God's Spirit in a soul to bring that one to the Saviour, afterwards, and sometimes long afterwards, the Spirit's power becoming manifest before all, as it were a double portion.

Thus does the New Testament blessing transcend that of the old dispensation, for blessings of grace must exceed blessings under law, as grace must superabound, thus proving what a God of all grace man has had to do with, and most of all since the cross of Christ.

J.C.B.

Search the Scriptures.

READ; mark; learn;
 Its pages turn and turn;
 And for reward you'll find the Lord,
 And your heart within will burn.
 Dig; search; explore;
 With labour more and more;
 And for your toil in this rich soil,
 You'll find the golden ore.

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House of treasures ! Here I find
Food and medicine for the mind ;
Sword to wield
Against the foe ;
Helm and shield
To ward his blow ;
Garments for the heavenly-born ;
Gems, the spirit to adorn ;
Songs of praise in sunny hours ;
Dirges when the tempest lowers.

But I need not thus go on
Naming treasures one by one ;
Why should I the rest recall ?
Christ is here,—and Christ is all.

ANON.

Believing in Vain.

“SOMETIMES I am troubled for fear that I am believing in vain. I do not exactly know what it means, but I am sure that there is such a thing as ‘believing in vain’ mentioned in the Bible ; and also I have read of ‘falling from grace,’ so that I do not feel at all happy.”

So said a doubting, trembling soul, who knew very little of the Bible, not having read it carefully. Mistakes are often made by detaching a few words from the verse in which they are found, and weaving a net of human thoughts and reasoning around them. It would neither be fair nor wise to extract a few words from a letter written by a human correspondent, and give to those words a meaning quite different from that which the entire sentence was intended to convey.

As to the timid woman’s anxiety, lest she should believe *in vain*, careful reading of 1 Cor. xv. should have been sufficient to dispel her fears.

What then is meant by believing in vain ? Belief in anything unreal is not worthy of belief. Belief is

useless, or *in vain*, if it rests in anyone or anything that cannot be depended upon. But the scriptural point of believing in vain is connected absolutely with the resurrection, or *non-resurrection*, of the Lord Jesus. The fact is established that He died on the cross for our sins, but it is also certain that He rose again for our justification. He did not remain in the grave, but He rose from it. If He had *not* been raised from the dead, our faith in Him would certainly have been in vain, since we should then have never been justified.

In that case also the preaching of the apostle Paul and others would have been in vain; for it is the resurrection of Christ which is the proof that God is satisfied, and that all His righteous claims were met by the shedding of that precious blood.

Thus, if a person says, "Can I be sure that I have not believed in vain?" we may ask in reply, "Has Christ risen from the dead?" If He *has* risen from the dead, the believer is no longer in his sins, for his faith rests in One Who has done a complete and thorough work, to which God has set His seal, "in that He raised Him from the dead."

Therefore, in this sense, it is impossible for one who believes in Christ (in Him Who was crucified and rose again) to believe in vain. There is no disappointment to the believer; no cause to fear that he may have believed in vain, for as surely as the Lord Jesus rose again, everyone who trusts in Him is connected with Him, the living Christ, the Head over all the members of His body; and eternal life is secured to all who have faith in Him.

No! the believer has every reason to be happy, joyful, and confident. Christ by His own blood purchased every blessing for him, and not one of those who trust Him *can* believe in vain.

H.L.R.

Notes of a Bible Reading on Genesis xvii. to xx.

xvii. 1-5. This chapter shows how God often has some fresh surprise of grace and blessing for us, and marks a great advance in Abraham's experience and his knowledge of God. Thirteen years had elapsed since the end of chap. xvi., and his faith may have become a little weak. It seems from verse 18 that he was becoming more or less satisfied with Ishmael. God appears to Abraham at the critical moment, and shows him that He has not changed in His attitude towards him, in spite of the events of chap. xvi. The promise of a son would yet be fulfilled.

Abraham is commanded, "Walk before Me (the Almighty God), and be thou perfect." The word "perfect" means wholehearted, or sincere.

God then repeats His promises to Abraham with greater wealth of detail than hitherto. Abraham is re-named. The name "Abram" means "high father," whereas "Abraham" means "father of a multitude." He is given a name which will serve as a continual reminder to him of God's promises to him.

9-14. Circumcision was already well known among the heathen. Now God gives it a special meaning, and deep sacredness. All who are born in the house, or bought with money, are to be circumcised (verses 12, 13). Christians to-day are both born in the house and also bought (redeemed) (1 Cor. vi. 20; 1 Pet. i. 23). The significance of the eight days is that we need to be occupied with heavenly things from the time we are converted. The eighth day speaks of new creation, the first week of the old having run out. Ver. 12 contains the first indication of God's attitude towards children, which is one of grace.

The coming of Jesus Christ was the fulfilment of the promises (Rom. xv. 8). We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh (Phil. iii. 3). The Israelites claimed to be

in covenant relationship with God, and to show in their flesh that they were God's people. We learn here that relationship with God does not stand in the flesh at all, but in faith in Jesus Christ. The old order of things has ceased, and we have now the new order.

Circumcision denoted covenant relationship with God. It was not a condition of God's covenant, but only a token, as the rainbow was in chap. ix. Refusal to be circumcised involved the breaking of the covenant (ver. 14), and forfeiture of the blessing. In a similar way, we stand by grace, but that does not relieve us of our responsibility (Rom. vi. 1, 3). Circumcision was a seal of Abraham's faith (Rom. iv. 11).

15, 16. The promise is now deposited with Sarah. She is to be the mother of the promised seed. In the past, reference to it had been couched in general terms. Her name is changed from Sarai, meaning "my princess," to Sarah, meaning "princess of the multitude."

19. This verse contains the wonderful promise of Isaac. The name Isaac means "laughter." Both Abraham and Sarah laughed in connection with him (xvii. 17; xviii. 12), but while Abraham laughed outright, a laugh of faith, Sarah laughed within herself, a laugh of unbelief. Faith, however, no doubt followed later in Sarah's case, on account of the rebuke.

This chapter shows the wonderful grace of God, in stimulating Abraham's faith when it was most necessary. It was grace that persisted with him in spite of every check and drawback, and it was grace that perfected everything concerning him.

xviii. 1-8. The themes of this chapter are communion and intercession. God appears (ver. 1, 2) in the person of the Lord Himself and two angels. Abraham shows the courtesy that is customary in the East. He is very particular as to the meal, etc., and gives Sarah full directions as to its preparation. Christianity does not mean that we must not be courteous: on the contrary, it enhances courtesy (1 Pet. iii. 8).

Ver. 6, 7. While the three measures of fine meal speak of the Lord's humanity, we are nevertheless

reminded that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him (Col. ii. 9). The calf indicates the Lord's work upon the cross (Luke xv. 23); thus are His work and His Person kept together.

19-22. It was wonderful for God to condescend to be the Guest of Abraham in his tent. Abraham here enjoys communion with God. This reminds one of Revelation iii. 20: "I will sup with him, and he with Me."

God then reveals to Abraham His plans regarding Sodom and Gomorrah, as it was important that Abraham, who was to be the means of blessing to all nations, should know God's plans with regard to them. In Deut. xxix. 23, we are told the names of the four cities which were destroyed. They were Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim. There would have been five cities destroyed but for Lot's pleading to go to Zoar. These cities were the same as those whose kings were involved in the battle in chapter xiv. They also appear in Genesis x. 19, as the border of Palestine. Ezekiel xvi. 53-55, speaks of God's bringing again the captivity of Sodom in a day to come. In Matthew x. 15, and xi. 23, 24, God tells us that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for the cities of Galilee.

23-33. Abraham's intercession flowed out of intimate communion with the Lord. We can only intercede for others effectually when we know the mind of God, and when we are in a happy spiritual state ourselves, having no burden of sin upon our consciences. In John xv. 7, the Lord says, "If ye abide in Me . . . it shall be done unto you." The amount of light we have as to the destiny of the world should make all the difference in the intensity of our intercession.

It is worth noting that Abraham did not intercede for the wicked in Sodom, but for the righteous. We are to pray for all men, men of every kind, rank, condition, etc., but not for the world, as such. The Lord's prayer in John xvii. was not for the world, but for His own. Abraham ceased his intercession after he had

prayed God to save the cities for the sake of ten souls. God goes much further, and saves four souls. Abraham interceded six times, one short of perfection.

Sometimes we are perplexed in our intercessions, but we can always take refuge in the word, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

There is a big gap of thirteen years between the end of chap. xvi. and the beginning of chap. xvii. There is no gap between the end of chap. xvii. and the beginning of chap. xviii. This is because Abraham was walking in obedience to God here, whereas before he was not. Chapters xvii. to xx. cover a period of about one year. Sometimes in Scripture we find a chapter or two covering a period of four to five hundred years, and then several chapters covering only one year. There is a divine reason for this in that the Scriptures are designed to teach us moral lessons.

xix. 1-38. This chapter gives us the doom of the world, and the irretrievable loss of the worldly-minded Christian. Had it not been for the comment of God in 2 Pet. ii. 8, we should hardly have regarded Lot as a righteous man at all. Lot was affected in every way by the appalling state and moral condition of these cities. As Christians in the world, we are in our proper state, but if the world is in the Christian there is always loss and trouble.

The angels hastened Lot (ver. 15, 16). We are not often told in Scripture to hurry. Christians often act too quickly, without sufficient prayer and waiting upon the Lord, but the people of the world are far too slow. We as the Lord's people should hasten them that they might escape, and find refuge in our Lord Jesus Christ. Lot, however, was very loth to leave Sodom (ver. 16), and had to be dragged out.

The fact that God remembered Abraham (ver. 29) is a blessed tribute to his faith.

We are not told of the death of Lot. Is not this because he died long ago as to all spiritual usefulness and testimony? This chapter finishes his history, not

with the record of a glorious and honourable death-bed, but with shocking disgrace, involving the shame of his two daughters.

xx. 1-18. This is a serious and solemn chapter, describing, as it does, the revival of the same sin which tripped Abraham up when in Egypt (xii. 11-20).

The Philistines, to whom Abimelech belonged, were descended from Ham-Mizraim (x. 6). They were an Egyptian people with a small territory in Palestine. They typify the world in the church, the natural man dabbling with heavenly things. The word "Philistine" is practically synonymous with "Palestine," both words meaning migration, or emigration.

In this chapter Moses, the narrator, uses the word Adonai for God when referring to Abimelech, but Jehovah when referring to Abraham. Abraham uses Jehovah in chap. xviii. 32, though, according to Exodus vi. 3, the patriarchs did not know God in that character, i.e., they did not appreciate the significance of the name.

God is very gracious, and restores Abraham again (ver. 7). He humbled him, but not before the world. He makes Abimelech a debtor to Abraham's prayers, and honours Abraham in the eyes of Abimelech. This is a very serious incident. Abraham is again rebuked by a man of the world. From ver. 11 we see that Abraham thought that the fear of God was not in the place. In this he was mistaken, for Abimelech did fear God.

From ver. 13 we learn that Abraham was tripped up by this sin, which had its origin in the compact with Sarah, in the beginning when he left Mesopotamia. This sinful compact had never been broken. We must beware lest some besetting sin be allowed to go on in us unjudged. This verse, however, seems to be a final confession and judgment of the sin on Abraham's part, for we never read of his sinning in this way again. Behind it all there was no doubt a definite attempt of Satan to frustrate the promises of God as to the seed.

A.E.D.

“The Son of God Who Loved Me and Gave Himself for Me.”

(Gal. ii. 20.)

HE could not love me better
(A sinner dark as night);
For me He left the glory,
That glory fair and bright.
From heights of cloudless sunshine,
To depths of deepest woe;
Oh! love that passeth knowledge,
To think He loved me so!

He could not love me better;
He gave His life for me,
A willing, spotless victim,
Upon Mount Calvary!
And there alone He suffered;
He bore the curse, the guilt;
The Just One for the unjust,
His precious blood was spilt.

He could not love me better;
As Victor o'er the tomb
He took the sting of death away,
Dispelling all the gloom.
Captive, He led captivity,
And set the prisoner free,
Brought joy, and peace, and gladness,
In place of misery.

He could not love me better;
For me He does prepare,
Among His many mansions,
A special place up there;
And I, with many another,
Am called to be His bride,
His own especial treasure,
His church for whom He died.

W.S.W.

Some Special Features of the Gospel of John.

THAT the Gospel of John has a marked distinctive character of its own every attentive reader will confirm, but many are quite conscious of it without knowing the reason why; or perhaps some text or portion in it has been blessed to them in a definite way.

From the very beginning it differs greatly from either Matthew, Mark, or Luke, commonly called the Synoptic Gospels because of their giving a general survey of the life and work of the Lord Jesus, which John evidently does not. If we had this Gospel only, for example, we should know nothing of the birth, human parentage or childhood of the Lord Jesus, and might wonder who is spoken of when the second chapter says, "and the mother of Jesus was there." In every way it differs from the others, and we have only to compare the opening verses of each to see how great the difference is.

John gives the title and object of his Gospel in the last verse of the 20th chapter, which properly speaking ends the general section of the book. "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." We shall see how perfectly this describes the purpose, and stamps its character upon the whole book. The last chapter is a sort of post-script to which no reference is found in the Synoptists, although a very precious addendum.

First, perhaps we ought to note that this Gospel was written some years after Jerusalem was destroyed, when the Jewish people were scattered, and the apostle dwelling among the Gentiles. (A.D. 90 is generally given.) Hence we hear of the manner of the purifying of the Jews (chap. ii. 6); and that "the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans" (chap. iv.); and of the manner in which the Jews buried their dead (chap. xix.); with several references to "the feasts of the Jews"

which would be quite out of place in Matthew or Mark, but also omitted in Luke.

But before we commence with the details let us briefly glance at the first chapter of John and its opening verses. What sublime utterances are found here! "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." We might quote the whole of the first five verses, but lest we should be led beyond the intention of this paper we content ourselves with adding the fourth verse; "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Is not this one of the great secrets of the vast circulation and universal appeal of John's Gospel? The manifestation of the Lord Jesus as life, light, and love. This is not the order in which these great themes are presented by John, for we have to get to the third chapter before "love" is mentioned, although "the only begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father" is announced at the beginning as the One Who is entrusted with the blessed work of making God known.

Herein lies no doubt one secret of the great circulation of John's Gospel, and the reason of its translation into so many languages and dialects. It is addressed to man universally, and it meets our need individually. Light, life, love, to follow the order in which they are presented, form the great need of man wherever found, and here they are unfolded in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are presented in Him for man.

During the late great war for example, many millions of copies of the four Gospels were circulated among our soldiers and others; and the number of John's Gospel, we are told, far exceeded the aggregate of the other three, and the same may be said as to the numbers translated into various languages and dialects.

Now let us turn to look at some of the details—the Greek word, *zoé*, which means *life* in its absolute sense, is used in John thirty-six times, in Matthew only seven, in Mark four, and in Luke six; so that in

the other three taken together it is found less than half as many times as in John.

Then as to "love," the Greek word *agapao* is found about fifty-six times, and in the three Synoptic Gospels only about thirty-two altogether. These are of special interest, but more marked still is the distinction found in the use of the word "world," *kosmos* in the Greek.

Not only is it the only book or Gospel in which the great gospel text is found, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"; but the word "world" itself is found in John about seventy-nine times, and in the other three Gospels only about twelve times altogether. This in itself is a marked feature, but more striking still is the fact that the Greek word *pisteuo*, to *believe*, is found about one hundred times in John, while in Matthew, Mark and Luke it occurs only about thirty-four times taken together.

These points are worth considering for they doubtless form the main reasons for the attraction of our hearts to this portion of God's word. We hear John iii. 16, often spoken of as "the gospel in a nutshell," but it is too frequently used without the former parts of the great sentence, and it should be noted that verse sixteen commences with "for." The fourteenth verse is an essential feature of the great pronouncement. It begins with "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up"; and although that great event in Israel's history only occupies six verses of the chapter in Numbers in which it is narrated (xxi. 4-9); it was an epoch in their history, and a great type of God's dealings with the world at large, when the Son of man to Whose Person and work these types pointed comes upon the scene to accomplish the work of redemption, and open wide the gates of salvation to "Whosoever will."

It will be found also that several out of the eleven times in Matthew that believing is spoken of, it is in

connection with miracles, as in the case of the two blind men in chapter nine (ver. 28), and not in relation to faith for salvation of the soul unto life eternal. How surprised should we be to find in the Gospel of John such words as the Lord addressed to His disciples in sending them to their work—"Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." No mention of this special commission is found in John.

Two more noticeable features as to words we might remark—the verb (*eideo*) to know, occurs more times in John than in the other three Gospels together, and the word (*aletheia*) "truth," quite three times as often also.

What could we know of God apart from Him of Whom it is written, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?" (John i. 14.)

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

T.R.

The Lord's Supper.

(NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.)

(Read 1 Cor. x. 14-17 ; xi. 20-34.)

THE scriptures read speak of the great institution in connection with the church of God. Both scriptures refer to the same ordinance, but in different ways. Chapter x. refers to the drinking of the cup, and the eating of the bread, especially as a remembrance undertaken by the assembly as a whole, the one body, the one church formed here in this world.

The eating of the Lord's supper is a memorial of His death ; but the cup and the loaf have also a meaning of their own in connection with the church itself. Eating the Lord's supper is not an individual act. It is not like coming to the Saviour for forgiveness of sins ; nor is it like service, for therein we serve the Lord Christ in our personal relationship to Him. But in eating the

Lord's supper it is not what we do individually, but what we all do collectively. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" The breaking of bread is what we all do as members of the one body.

This does not mean that all in the same room make up the one body; but the one loaf as a figure takes in every believer on the face of the earth; in that loaf every member of the body of Christ is represented.

Communion is a marvellous expression. The early Christians continued in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship (communion), in the breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts ii. 42). Let us remember that if we number two or three when we gather together to break the bread, we do so as part of *that organisation formed* by the Lord Jesus Christ on high and the Holy Ghost on earth.

Chapter x. speaks of the breaking of bread in relation to idolatry. Some at Corinth thought that they could also take part in idolatrous feasts; this could not be consistently with the truth. There is but one company that God recognises on earth; Satan has also his organisation. We cannot be associated with the two; if we are in God's circle, how can we be attached to Satan's?

In this scripture the cup is mentioned first, before the bread (see ver. 16). In observing the Lord's supper we follow the Lord's own practice. The apostle is not speaking here of the actual historical order of the observance, but of what ought to tell on our spirits. When one brother gives thanks for the cup on behalf of all, his act brings us into close touch with the solemn meaning of the blood of Christ. We are reminded that Christ rendered up His life to God for us. If this does not touch our hearts nothing can. We are brought so close to the Lord Jesus Christ in that solemn hour that we are by that very act shut out from every other organisation. Ours is the privilege of putting our lips to the cup of blessing because of the bloodshedding. The apostle puts it in this order to get to our hearts

quickly, causing us to feel that we must in consequence stand aloof from all else.

“The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” The loaf speaks of Christ’s own body, in which He offered Himself without spot to God; of His holy body in which He served God; of the body which went through this world marked by perfect obedience even unto death. In partaking of the loaf we are brought into communion with, and closely linked up and associated with, the body of Christ.

“For we being many are one bread [loaf], and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread [loaf]” (ver. 17). Now the apostle speaks of the spiritual body; the loaf is a figure of the church of God on earth; there is unity set out in the loaf. As the unbroken loaf is one, so we are one. Remember the words of the glorified Head of the body to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” Saul had to learn that in laying hands on believers in Christ, the members of His body, he was persecuting the Lord Himself, so closely were the members linked up with the Head.

It is useful to remember this inspired view of the truth, because people may draw their own conclusions from what they see when they come together. They may see just a few assembled, and think only of those; but in the loaf they ought to see every member of the body of Christ. They should say, There were not very many present this morning, but every one was represented. It ought to be a reason for thankfulness to God that in a day of weakness like the present, the unity of the body is continually expressed in the bread that we break.

Thus there are two distinct truths referred to in this scripture. Verse 16 speaks of Christ’s own body, in which He suffered and died; and verse 17 speaks of that spiritual body which He formed, the church of God on earth.

Chapter xi. is of a practical nature. It deals with

our proper behaviour at the Lord's supper. It is called the Lord's supper, a term being used which shows it is peculiarly and exclusively the Lord's own. Similarly, the Lord's day is the Lord's own special and peculiar day: the day He has set apart for Himself. Let us always remember that the Lord's supper is described as the Lord's own; that it is something absolutely unique; that there is nothing to touch it among all the spiritual privileges in which we take part in this world. It is the Lord's supper; the Lord Himself is there; the Lord instituted this way of remembrance, and He is always present. The saints at Corinth had forgotten this character of it; they were acting very disorderly; they mingled it with a common meal of fellowship—a love feast with the Lord's supper. Hence, the apostle is very serious in his language when referring to their conduct. They were thinking of themselves, and not of the Lord, and so degrading the solemn observance.

The apostle's warning words are still needed. You may come to the Lord's supper, and possibly pass the time of the meeting with a very devotional appearance outwardly, and yet your heart be far away. It may be as if you were sitting in your own room with your Bible before you, but your thoughts wandering to other matters. The solemnity of the Lord's presence is unfelt by you. Who knew this? Did those sitting next to you? No; but the Lord knew, for He is never absent from His own supper; yet you had forgotten it was the Lord's supper. You were present; but to be there, to eat and drink, is not to partake of the Lord's supper, as the apostle says of the Corinthians (ver. 20).

Then in verse 23 the apostle says, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." Paul was not one of those in the upper room when the Lord instituted His supper. But he had it first-hand. The Lord could and did speak of it from the glory, as well as to the eleven. The Lord Jesus wanted all His own in the world to learn that the supper was His own. Why did the Lord take the trouble to reveal to Paul

what was His mind about these things? Because it is of such practical importance to His church.

There was a man at the Passover feast, Judas Iscariot, who went out to betray the Lord that very night. When he went out, leaving the eleven faithful men behind, the Lord instituted His own memorial. The awful example of Judas teaches us amongst other things that Satan never enters into the heart of one who is truly engaged with the Lord. Are we thinking all the time when we are together of the clock, or of the noises in the street? Let the example of Judas warn us against all levity. Take away the Lord from His own supper, and what is it?

Notice the words, "This do in remembrance of Me." We have to do it. We can think of the Lord at any time, even, for example, in the lonely and silent night watches. But the Lord wanted us to do something, that is, to eat bread in remembrance of Him. The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ was thorough and complete, and this is expressed by His giving His body. The body is significant of everything appertaining to the person; it is the whole organism; so that the Lord Jesus, in giving His body, held nothing back; everything was wholly surrendered to God. What a depth of meaning, then, there is in the words, "This is My body, which [is] for you" (New Tr.).

"After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood." The blood is the life; so that the cup speaks of His death; He died for us. The death of the cross is the source of all our blessing.

Observe how the Lord's death is brought in here (ver. 26); it is the solemn side of the Lord's supper. We are to think of the Lord in His death: so the question comes to us as we think that the Lord Jesus Christ died, Why did He die? He died for our sins. This being so, why did we commit those sins? If He died for our sins, then I can say He died for my sins. Therefore, I myself, by my own folly and guilt, added to the burden He bore; I added sharpness to His pain

and sorrows; He suffered and died for me. How can we think of His death without being solemnised by this thought! Death is the common lot of men, because the wages of sin is death; but in the Lord Jesus there was no sin; yet He Who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

The closing verses of our chapter are not intended to frighten us away from the Lord's table. The apostle says in verse 27, "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." The apostle was correcting the careless practices at Corinth. If we found ourselves in the presence of His Majesty the King, should we be at all flippant? Would not the very fact that we were in his presence sober us? The Lord Jesus is present at His supper. This was the very thing that the people at Corinth forgot.

You may say, I am not worthy to be there. No, nor is any of us. The soldiers and others who so cruelly mocked and taunted our Lord, did they know in Whose presence they were? No; but we ought to know, and to behave ourselves accordingly.

Every one should examine himself (ver. 28) and judge anything that is contrary to the holiness of the Lord, and unsuitable for His presence. Our own personal behaviour is known to the Lord Jesus. If our hearts are astray, the Lord knows. We are therefore to examine ourselves before we come; we are to put ourselves right; and this should come to us just as habitually as putting on our Sunday clothes.

This preparation should not be done hurriedly and thoughtlessly; it is a serious matter. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." We are first to examine ourselves and then to eat; not stay away. You should say to yourself, I am going into the Lord's presence; is there anything in me that needs clearing up? If so, ask the Lord to remove that uncleanness from you, lest you eat unworthily.

The Lord had brought physical sickness upon some at Corinth (ver. 30). Why was this? Because they had misbehaved themselves at the table of the Lord; they were now no longer able to be there; their testimony had come to an end.

In the concluding verses (31-34) the apostle is warning those who are thoughtless. He says, There is no need for you to come under the Lord's judgment, but you must see that your soul is in order before you come to the breaking of bread. The Lord is there; and if you go, you ought to be there consciously before the Lord. The scripture says of our Lord at the passover, "When the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him." If we are late in coming into His presence, we thereby dishonour the Lord. Of course, if circumstances hinder us, we shall not find the Lord a hard Master. But let us try to be there punctually, with hearts tuned to praise and worship.

When the woman came with her alabaster box of ointment to anoint the Lord Jesus, the Lord declared that her act should be proclaimed to the whole world. Why? Because He prized it so much; and because He prized it, He would have all the world to prize it, too (Mark xiv. 3-9). And the Lord also prizes our memorial of Him in His supper.

W.J.H.

Stewardship not only embraces money, but time, talents, influences and life. Money is the easiest to give. The question about money is not how much of my money shall I give to the Lord, but how much of the Lord's money, temporarily in my possession, should I keep for myself? I am the custodian, *not the owner*. Likewise as a steward of time or talents or life, how much should I use in pleasure or recreation, or business, or self-seeking? It is all His.

Gospel Vignettes.

THERE is a parallel between that portion of the Gospel of John which ends with "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory" (ii. 11), and the portion ending with "This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after that He was risen from the dead" (xxi. 14). An easy clue to the framework of both portions is the noting in both that the closing incident each time gives a third view of Jesus. In the after-resurrection portion this is in the verse just quoted. At the opening of the Gospel it is in the first verse of chapter ii., "The third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee." The first and second incidents preceding these third ones are blessedly and beautifully arranged to give views of our Lord in ordered sequence in each case. In i. 35-42, speaking of the next day after, that is, after a day of which we may speak on another occasion, we have the story of what is really the first of these three, that is, of the day but one before the marriage in Cana. The simplicity and sweetness of this portion endear these verses to every believer. John the Baptist points out Jesus to two of his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God," and they hearing it become followers of Jesus, Who asks them the searching question, "What seek ye?" The two new beginners on a road they know not ask, "Where dwellest Thou?" Surely they did not wish to lose sight of Him, or to be lost, not knowing where to find Him. Most encouraging is His "Come and see," and His making them at home with Himself where He stayed. It speaks of communion with Himself, and applies both to the present and to the future; both to the refuge for our hearts with the Lord Himself now; and to heaven as in John xiv. and xvii. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am."

But in the vignette of the present grace of the Lord Jesus, which the narrative of this day affords, there is

also service in the gospel. Andrew heard, followed Jesus, and then found Simon* and brought him to Jesus. He told his brother of Jesus, and he brought him to the Saviour. In the naming of Simon as Peter, there is an allusion to Matthew xvi., to the purpose of the Lord to gather souls now, and to build them into His church.

“The day following” (43-51), thus clearly the one following the picture of the ways of Jesus to-day, is a view of what He will do after the present work of His hands is done, when the fulness of the Gentiles has been got in; when the gospel of His glory has done its work, and He has Himself taken His own to be with Himself at His coming.

This time the Lord (for who else ever could?) begins the new work of mercy. Jesus finds Philip, and Philip finds Nathanael. Philip tells of Jesus, as the One of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write. Nathanael, like a Jew, questions the value of the Nazarene, and he too is told to “Come and see.” The words are those of the day before, but the meaning differs. This time it reverses the prohibition of Matthew xvi. 20; Mark viii. 30; Luke ix. 21. The preaching of the Messiah, and the offer of all the blessings of the kingdom, dependent on what Luke calls “that thing,” was stopped when He was rejected. But He Who stopped it will start it again, with a fuller scope and a deeper tone, see Matt. xxiv. 14, Rev. xi. 3, and many another passage. The essence of that testimony will be to discover in the Jesus crucified long ago, the Messiah, now raised again, and the One in Whom all God’s promises are then to be fulfilled. And the message will be effectual, “So all Israel shall be saved” (Rom. xi. 26).

Jesus receives Nathanael as “an Israelite indeed in

*“He *first* findeth his own brother Simon” and “brought him to Jesus” that he also might share the blessedness of spending that day with their newly-discovered Messiah. Thus the Holy Spirit sets before us the first company of two or three gathered to the Lord. Compare Matt. xviii. 20.—ED. WORDS OF HELP.

whom is no guile" as a type of the remnant of Israel to come to Him in faith during the dark days between the taking away of the church and His appearing in power. Jesus speaks of His present watchful eye over His unbelieving ancient people. Nathanael owns Him in terms suitable to the type, "Thou art the Son of God. Thou art the King of Israel." For us who are Christians to claim Him as our King is a double mistake. It is for me to think of myself as being either in the relation to Him of a Jew or of a Gentile when I am no longer either the one or the other. But being in the church of God to own Him as Jesus Christ my Lord is my highest privilege.

In this prophetic vignette the Lord, still dealing morally with Nathanael, speaks of what was yet to follow, of greater things, of the revealed glory of the kingdom; of the millennium, to use a word so unreasonably popular amongst Christians.

This vignette then speaks of the gospel of the kingdom before the appearing of Christ, when the greater things are still hoped for.

In the story of the marriage in chapter ii. the presence of the Lord leads to the manifesting of His glory. Except He fill the cup there is nothing in it. Yet at first this is not known. We have to learn it. It is not wise for us to make our plan and invite Him to partake of our provision. It is necessary to us, as it will be to the Jews for the kingdom, to learn that we have nothing; also to learn to obey implicitly whatever He directs.

There were there the six roomy waterpots of stone which should have held two or three firkins of the water of purification in each, but did not. In all the ritual we, or Israel in that day, may have, without Christ there is nothing.

There were but six, not a perfect number, but there was emptiness in them. He had them filled with water only. There is no more that man can do than to acknowledge before the Lord the need of purification. Then, as in Isaiah lv., the Lord of Hosts, Jehovah

Himself, creates the wine of blessing and joy, without money and without price. There is none like unto that.

There was glory filled the tabernacle in Moses' day (Exodus xl. 34), and the glory of Jehovah filled the house of God that Solomon was permitted to build (2 Chron. v. 14, and vii. 1).

But we may consider the two ends of the Book of Ezekiel the prophet, to get this opening of John ii. into focus. "The appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah" (Ezek. i. 28; x. 18; and xi. 23). "The glory departed from off the threshold of the house, and the glory of Jehovah went up from the midst of the city and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city," that is, it is touching to note, the Mount of Olives to which Jesus withdrew (Matthew xxiv.).

Neither He Himself nor the display of His glory is there now, and alas for the Gentile people that has assumed to itself the part of ruler and protector of that city, without Christ, to-day.

Ezekiel tells in chapter xliii. how he saw the glory come from the way of the east; come into the house, the rebuilding of which is as sure as the rest of God's unfailing word; and how the glory of the Lord filled the house before his eyes.

John ii. 10, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now" should be read with Haggai ii. 9. "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than of the former, and in this place will I give peace."

The answering three views of Jesus after His resurrection also happen to be arranged in our English Bible, the first two at the end of a chapter, and the third at the opening of another. (John xx. 19-25, is the present grace, 26-31, the making Himself known to the remnant of Israel, after the church is taken. The first fourteen verses of chapter xxi. correspond to the marriage of Cana.

In this series of views of Jesus our Lord it is the One Who has done the work the Father gave Him to do.

They are full of the finished work of Christ. At the beginning of the Gospel it was the Lamb of God Who came to die. At the end it is the Lamb Who did die; Who speaks peace and meets every doubt; Who makes His own to dine with Him.

The careful reader may find little difficulty in gathering how the account of the meeting with the disciples marked by the twice repeated "Peace be unto you" corresponds with the narrative introduced by "Behold the Lamb of God." And what a wealth of grace the latter adds to the former!

A reader shy of prophetic difficulties and not forward to mark dispensational differences, let us say a babe in Bible reading, can yet hardly fail to see in the Lord's dealing with Thomas a picture of His making Himself known to the remnant of Israel by-and-by.

A.C.

Notes of a Bible Reading on Genesis xxi. to xxiii.

IN this portion we have the birth of Isaac, the removal of Ishmael, Abraham's protection sought by Abimelech, the offering of Isaac, the pedigree of Rebekah, and the death of Sarah and purchase of Machpelah. Broadly speaking, the history of Isaac in this portion is typical of the Lord Jesus, the One in Whom all the promises of God are being fulfilled. This may be seen most easily in His birth, His service, His death (in figure), and His resurrection (also in figure, see Heb. xi. 19). The removal of Sarah after Isaac had been received back from the dead emphasises that Isaac is a type of Christ *in resurrection*, and that God's promises had been confirmed for the inclusion of Gentiles as well as Jews (Gen. xxii. 18; Gal. iii. 16-18).

xxi. 1-7. The birth of Isaac was *miraculous*. He came when, ordinarily speaking, he could not have come (Rom. iv. 19; Heb. xi. 11, 12). His birth was, therefore, a distinct act of Divine interference, as was

the Lord's birth. From another aspect, Isaac's birth into the line of promise is analogous to the miraculous "new birth" of the believer, making him an inheritor of the blessings of the promises.

His birth also was *at the time appointed of God*; the ill-timed attempt to effect the fulfilment of the promises (chapter xvi.) must be set aside. In Gal. iv. 4, we read, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son" Isaac is circumcised the eighth day, and thus comes into covenant relationship with the people of God. This was also true of Christ (Gal. iv. 4, 5). We read nothing about Abraham's birth, but the birth of the *son* of Abraham is recorded. Sarah shines here as a true saint. The laughter of unbelief had given place to that of joy, born of the wonderful experience of receiving the fulfilment of God's promise. Sarah was possessed of true faith (Heb. xi. 11).

xxi. 8-21. Sarah's spiritual intelligence here surpasses her husband's, and, contrary to the general family rule, God bids Abraham follow her advice; though in 1 Pet. iii. 5, 6, Sarah's subjection to her husband is emphasised. She now discerns the mind of God that the presence of the slave woman's son in the same house as Isaac is impossible. In Gal. iv. 30, her words are quoted as Scripture, and therefore inspired. The apostle takes up the story to illustrate how incongruous for the Christian is the attempt to keep the law of Moses. Ishmael displays his true character; with no regard for the work of God in Isaac's miraculous birth, he mocks. The feasting and joy at Isaac's birth remind us of the joy round Bethlehem when the Lord was born. Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness are no doubt typical of Israel wandering among the nations at present. Their proximity to the well, though they did not know it, speaks of the blessing awaiting Israel, though now the nation is all unconscious of this.

xxi. 22-34. Here Abraham's protection is sought by Abimelech. This remarkable occurrence shows the influence possessed by Abraham. A powerful chieftain

seeks protection of the "pilgrim and stranger." A similar event occurs to Isaac. This incident is no doubt typical of the millennial scene when the Gentiles will be blessed through Israel. The "well" and the "grove" speak of the refreshment and protection afforded to the world in that blest time through the reign of the Lord Jesus. The new name of God revealed in v. 33 (El Olam, the Eternal God) will no doubt be used in the millennial day, comprehending His other names. It is noteworthy that the three epochs in the life of Abraham, introduced by the words, "After these things," each end with a millennial scene: (a) the appearance of Melchizedec (xiv. 18), (b) Abraham sought by the Gentile (xxi. 22), (c) the birth of children through Keturah, speaking of the nations associated with the true seed of Abraham in millennial blessing (xxv. 1-4).

xxii. 1-19. In the offering of Isaac we have the supreme test of faith to which Abraham was subjected. There are two aspects of the incident:

(a) *Historical.* This trial was a great honour for Abraham. His faith had been gradually strengthening since he was first called about fifty years previously. His life had more and more been brought into conformity to the Divine will in setting aside the deceitful compact with Sarah and in the final dismissal of Ishmael, and his spiritual condition is such that God is able to try his faith in this supreme way. God desires it to be manifest to all that here is one man who is prepared to trust him utterly (1 Pet. i. 7). God touches the dearest object of Abraham's heart; beside this, all previous trials seem insignificant. When the command comes, *his ready response is evident. For the second time his faith leads him out "not knowing whither he went."* Faith is to be a constant virtue. Abraham informs the young men that he and Isaac will worship *and come again*. They were thus witnesses that Abraham believed God. In Heb. xi. 19, we read that he counted God able even to raise Isaac from the dead. Sceptics have called the demand for human sacrifice and the outrage to

fatherly feelings callous, but Abraham himself did not think so, and we can trust his better knowledge. In James ii. 14-26, we are told that through this he was "justified by works and not by faith only," clearly not before God, but before man. His justification before God by faith only is declared long before (xv. 6).

(b) *Typical.* This is one of the most beautiful types of the work of the Father and the Son culminating at Calvary. Abraham, who carries the fire and the knife, speaks of God in his judicial character, while Isaac, who carries the wood of the burnt-offering, speaks of the Son bearing the cross. In the antitype only the heart of the Father could fully appreciate the utter devotion of the Lord Jesus as the true burnt-offering (John x. 17, 18). The willing submission of the Lord Jesus to the Father's commandment is typified by Isaac's willing co-operation. The releasing of Isaac is a figure of resurrection (Heb. xi. 19). Isaac had been three days (from the time when he set out until they arrived at Moriah) dead in the purpose of his father. The ram "caught . . . by its horns," and therefore unable to defend itself, speaks of the unresisting character of the Lord Jesus at the cross. God spared Abraham's heart what He would not spare His own. God now confirms His promise to Abraham by an oath. This, and His "word," are the "two immutable things" given for the encouragement of faith (Heb. vi.).

xxii. 20-24. Rebekah's pedigree is told to Abraham. God's intention was, no doubt, that Abraham might be assured of finding a bride for Isaac among the descendants of Shem. It should be noted that in ix. 26, the promise of blessing had been given to Shem's line; Abraham acts in faith on this communication in chapter xxiv., but does not tell his servant specifically to choose Rebekah. This choice he leaves to God, and the result is that, in beautiful harmony, "Rebekah came forth" (xxiv. 45).

xxiii. 1-20. Sarah's death takes place before Isaac receives his bride, and after his death and resurrection

in figure. So the church is *heavenly* in calling and character, and is linked to the risen Christ in glory. Sarah died in faith (Heb. xi. 13); her departing was that of a true saint of God in the hope of the future fulfilment of the promises. Abraham experiences true sorrow in his mourning; the life of the pilgrim and stranger does not lessen deep human feelings. This is illustrated very beautifully in the Lord's life at the grave of His friend Lazarus. In his purchase, Abraham displays the proper conduct of a man of God in his business dealings. He obtains the land by fair purchase on righteous principles (1 Thess. iv. 12; 2 Cor. viii. 21; Rom. xii. 17). This chapter is true to Eastern life in all its details. The method of bargaining through the intermediary of others, the apparently generous, but merely conventional, words of Ephron, the settling of the contract "in the ears of all that went in at the gate of the city," the stating of the specific items of property (the cave, the trees in the field and also in the borders) to be conveyed, the weighing (not counting) of the money to ensure that it is current money with the merchant, are all repeated in the life of the East to-day.

F.T.P.

A Brief Word on Prayer.

In speaking about praying, have you not known what it was for the Lord to speak to you through some portion of His word, so that you had the confidence of faith to go to Him with the word He had given you? And you received the answer in a sense before you had it, though your faith may have faltered also. It is true that God is continually speaking through His word, but then there are times of trial and need when God speaks to us in a special way. Through the Lord's leading we are given to lay hold of and act upon a portion, either for prayer or any movement with courage and assurance of divine support; it is as if the Lord had spoken to us face to face, though at the same time how careful we need to be lest we act on mere impulse of nature.

F.E.H.

*"As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after Thee, O God."*

—Psalm xlii. 1.

I CANNOT breathe enough of Thee,
Oh, gentle breeze of love;
More fragrant than the myrtle tree
The Rose of Sharon is to me—
The balm of Heaven above!

I cannot gaze enough on Thee,
Thou fairest of the fair;
My heart is filled with ecstasy,
As in Thy face of radiance
I see such beauty there.

I cannot work enough for Thee,
My Saviour, Master, Friend;
I do not wish to go out free,
But ever, always, willingly,
To serve Thee to the end.

I cannot sing enough of Thee,
The sweetest name of earth,
A note so full of melody
Comes from my heart so joyously,
And fills my soul with mirth.

I cannot speak enough to Thee;
I have so much to tell,
Thy heart it beats so tenderly,
As Thou dost draw me close to Thee
And whisper, "All is well!"

W.S.W.

Healing a Man with a Withered Hand.

(Luke vi. 6-12.)

THE scribes and Pharisees were the recognised leaders of religion at this time, and were refusing the testimony of the lowly Son of man to be the sent One of God; so much so, that the Lord had to say, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin." If man was to be saved, it was necessary that the Son of God should become a man in order that He might die as a sacrifice for sin and so bring to naught him that has the power of death, that is, the devil; and thus He has brought deliverance for faith, from the terrible fear of death which holds men in bondage all their lives, for there is a lurking fear in the heart of man, that after death there is a judgment. Christ came in His Father's name, and they received Him not; and so the Son of man is always Christ's title as the rejected Son of God, and as such He will be the Judge of the world; for all judgment is committed unto the Son, because He is the Son of man.

But God lingers over us in His mercy, not willing that any should perish, but that all should turn to repentance and live. But there are clear landmarks given for our warning, that we should fear Him that is able to destroy both soul and body in hell—cases where he that despises God's grace, and being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. The day is coming when those who refuse His mercy will be judicially blinded to believe the lie of Satan, and receive him who will come in his own name, that is, the Antichrist, who will be energised by Satan with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, so as almost to deceive God's very elect. God shall send them strong delusion that they may believe the devil's lie, and accept his substitute for Christ whom he will then put forward. Why? Because they received not the love of the truth that

they might be saved. The written word of God is His truth, the knowledge of which is able to make wise unto salvation.

The profession made of worshipping God appeals to the natural heart, for it is inherent in man to have some religion and to worship something. The scribes and Pharisees were not like the heathen who made them gods of wood to worship, or cast a graven image and overspread it with gold; they were men of the highest intelligence. And not only so, but to them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose were the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Thus they were far worse than the heathen, for their whole history was one of resisting the Holy Ghost; and the law, given by the disposition of angels, they had not kept. They prided themselves on knowing God's will, and of being Abraham's children, yet they were seeking to kill the Christ of God. Thus did not Abraham, who looked forward in faith, and rejoiced to see Christ's day; and he saw it and was glad; for he not only looked forward to Christ as the Lamb God would provide, but his faith embraced the day of His appearing in glory. To all such, with like faith, who love Christ's appearing, there is laid up for them a crown of righteousness.

The mere outward display of religion without Christ is but hypocrisy.

Yet the profession made of worshipping God is sufficient to draw those who, in the vanity of their minds, blinded by the god of this world, think that if they outwardly acknowledge God and His Son, lead a respectable life, and in the language of the present-day world—"play the game,"—God will accept them. How vain are the thoughts of man who understands not, through the ignorance that is in him, that he stands a condemned criminal before God, because he believes not on His only begotten Son!

The Sabbath, however, would be an occasion when the people would come together with the professed object of worshipping God.

Hence the Lord, ever ready to use every opportunity for the blessing of man, takes this occasion for working the works of Him Who sent Him while it was day; for God never gave the Sabbath to the exclusion of His goodness to needy man. The Lord's ministry was but for the comparatively short period of three and a half years, and then the night of Israel's judgment as a nation came. Because they killed the Prince of life and Lord of glory, wrath has come upon them to the uttermost; their loved city Jerusalem is trodden down of the Gentiles, judicial blindness has happened to them, and they remain scattered and peeled amongst the nations of the earth.

The Lord had previously shown that their keeping of the Sabbath was but an empty form, and the seeking to observe it whilst rejecting the Lord of the Sabbath was but manifesting their hypocrisy. The word "Sabbath" means "rest from labour," and proclaims a rest which cannot take place until sin has been entirely put away. And so the Lord purposely heals a man on another Sabbath to emphasise the fact that, because sin was in the world, both He and His Father were working for the blessing of mankind.

(To be continued, D.V.)

H.K.

Extract from a Letter.

"It is all well, all that befalls us under the good hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. I make no exceptions of any kind for myself, or for those I love in Him. Surely some ray from His eye gilds every passing sorrow, every trial, thorn, sharp flint, every anguish of mind or body. Nothing reaches us save as having passed through the jealous flame of His love, and that makes all shine to us that believe."

G.V.W.

The Moral Value of the Cross.

AMONG the many interesting references to the burnt-offering there are two which we would specially notice here; i.e., 1 Kings xviii. 31 to 40, and 2 Chron. xxix. 27 to 30.

The burnt-offering clearly typifies a special character of the work of Christ. What that character is cannot be better stated than in the words of Scripture: "Christ also hath loved us and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour (Eph. v. 2).

In the burnt-offering we have the highest form, as well as the one most frequently presented, of all the sacrifices of the Old Testament. It presents in type the perfectness of the sacrifice of Christ and God's delight in and acceptance of that sacrifice; as it says, "Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God." Everything attached to Him was, according to the mind of God, therefore, a "savour of a sweet smell." The judgment (of which the fire was the type), which descended on Christ at Calvary, as He atoned for sin, could not fail to contribute all the more signally to bring out the fragrance of His perfect devotedness and death.

It is in "His acceptance" that the believer now stands before God and nothing else; His is the measure of our acceptance which is beyond human computation in its worth and preciousness. The highest place into which God has exalted Him, not only witnesses to the glory of His person, but to the unique and incomparable character of His work. The burnt-offering (see Leviticus i. 1-4, N.Tr.) was for the offerer's acceptance before Jehovah." "He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt-offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." This offering (in virtue of the offerer's identification with it in the laying on of his hands), imparted its own value to the one offering it. So to-day, it is "in the Beloved" that the believer is accepted; every perfection attaching to Christ

crucified, and now glorified, tells out how real is the nearness of the believer to God. Blessed, precious, priceless perfections! It is from the fire of the altar that the virtues and glories of the Lord Jesus, like incense, ascend; and as the very horns of the golden altar from which the sweet incense ascended in the Holy place were covered with the blood, so the sweetness of the saint's worship is, in God's esteem, linked with the precious blood that atones for his sins.

But there are other features of the burnt-offering disclosed in the two Scriptures named above, and it is these which have suggested the title of our paper. They give the burnt-offering still another character.

Striking moral effects spring out in both instances from which we may draw valuable lessons.

First as to 1 Kings xviii. : the prophet Elijah felt keenly the utter disorder and godless course of the people among whom and for whom he laboured. He challenged the prophets of Baal to publicly demonstrate who was God — Jehovah or Baal. The ox of the prophets having failed, Elijah offered up his ox as a burnt-offering "at the time of the evening sacrifice" (vv. 31 to 36). Then he prayed for the people, that they should acknowledge Jehovah, and that their hearts should be turned back again to Him.

The fire of the Lord consumed his burnt-offering, and so was realised the double answer to Elijah's prayer. They acknowledged God, and in measure, — as their subsequent history shows,—their hearts were brought back to Him.

We turn now to 2 Chronicles xxix., where is recorded the story of still another restoration and revival,—the cleansing of the temple by king Hezekiah. The sin offering "for all Israel" had been offered (vv. 21 and 24), then comes the burnt-offering, "and when the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also," accompanied with the remarkable manifestations here enumerated.

It but remains now for us to note very briefly the application of all this to us. In these two instances

Christ and His sufferings are presented to us. He Who united in His own person the virtue of all the sacrifices, and Whose death therefore touches the heart and ploughs the conscience more deeply than anything else is capable of doing. There are moments and scenes where this is felt perhaps more than others, such as at the meetings for breaking of bread, or for worship. But, moreover, the daily course of the believer surely takes its shape from the contemplation of Christ and all that He went through for us. This is more than turning to Him as a Saviour when first converted. Do we not find that His life on earth and all that He bore at the cross to glorify God, and on our account, fills us often with shame and self-reproach and so recalls the heart to Himself? At other times it fills us with joyful praise and glad worship to God as we ponder the glory He has brought to God, the delight the Father finds in Him, and all the blessing that comes to us both now and for ever that is ours through Him.

How thoroughly this is pre-figured in the two striking incidents before us! Let us try to tabulate them in their order.

- (1) Jehovah was God — a great step to minds and hearts corrupted by Baal worship as theirs were. In like manner it is a tremendous advance to find souls recovered from the errors prevailing around them; to believe, not only in God, but in the deity and true humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son of God and the revealer of the Father. It is around this standard that probably the greatest world struggle of modern religious thought is being waged. It is a struggle with momentous issues; for it is written "if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins," and nothing is so calculated to recover from the clutches of infidelity and suspicion as to take in the meaning of the cross and sufferings of Christ as presented in the Gospels. God's Christ, God and man one Christ, has died and given the infinite

value of His person to His work and so brings the believer in Him to God.

- (2) It healed their backslidings. So now, also, is there not some divine design in the fact that in our case the remembrance of the Lord in His death was established for celebration every first day of the week? (Acts xx. 7.) The frequency of it recalls the forgetfulness of our hearts and minds. But if, alas, we have gone back and have lost the first love, nothing probes us so deeply, and so surely effects our restoration, as the remembrance that He Who died in our stead still loves us. This is the lesson of 1 Kings xviii.
- (3) The songs of the Lord went up. The songs of the world filled us once, but how hollow these songs sound to-day! The Spirit of God has come and He fills the mind and heart with Christ, so that the believer now sings the songs of redemption. He cannot refrain from celebrating in song the worth and glories of God's Christ. It is the highest form of joy on earth or in heaven to sing the song of the Lord. It is the character of Christ as the burnt-offering that raises this song; it is what is instinctively evoked from the Christian's heart and lips.
- (4) It made worshippers of the congregation, king and court. So is it in relation to Christ; to ponder on His worth and work makes worshippers of His own. Worship is no mechanical performance. It is the natural, limpid, out-pouring to God of the heart that enters into what Christ is; it is the broken outflow of adoration to the Father and the Son, Who fill the soul and make it overflow with spiritual worship. King and people in this service are reduced, or should we not say elevated, to one magnificent plane of worship, with every distinction lost sight of save Himself, Who is the motive and spring of the most sublime occupation and service known to earth or heaven. Blessed, hallowed occupation!

- (5) Finally come gladness and "praise unto the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer" to fill up the service of that fleeting day. (2 Chronicles xxix. 30.) It was first the *cleansing*, then the *offering*, and, lastly, the *praising*. This, too, is the order in christianity: "We make our boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through Whom now we have received the reconciliation. (Rom. v. 11, N.Tr.) No being in the universe can know such gladness and happiness as the child of God. The source of his joy is Christ,—a joy that remains unexhausted and unfading for all eternity. Therefore, he has no difficulty in counting such attractions as the world offers as second-rate,—as smoke and tinsel unworthy of his regard. Surely there is nothing like a view of the glories of Christ's person and His cross for winning the human heart from the world and filling it with happiness and ceaseless praise. "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." (Ps. xl. 3.)

W.M.R.

Some Special Features of the Gospel of John—2.

AN attentive reader will have noticed that the *hours* named in John's Gospel are not the same as in the other three. For example, in the nineteenth chapter of John and fourteenth verse we read that the Lord Jesus was in the judgment hall in the presence of Pilate at the *sixth* hour, but in Matthew and Luke it says that He was on the cross at that hour: "and from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour." (Matt. xxvii. 45.) So also Mark. Now here is a real difficulty if it be not Roman time in John, and many have been confused about it and rash assertions as to inspiration have been made; but if it is Roman time in this Gospel all is clear.

Jesus was in the judgment hall at six in the morning, at nine (third hour) He was put on the cross, and at twelve (noon) until three (ninth hour) there was darkness over all the land.

If it be so in this instance, may we not reasonably conclude it is the same throughout John? In the first chapter we read that the two disciples who heard John speak and followed Jesus, "came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour." If ten in the morning the day was before them, otherwise it could by Jewish time be only for two or three hours at most. Also in the well-known incident of "the woman of Samaria," fourth chapter, much is often made of her being at the well for water at the sixth hour, the hottest part of the day, and an unusual hour for women to resort thither. But if Roman time be given here also, and the hour six in the evening, how reasonable the whole matter appears! Jesus sits on the well wearied with His day's journey, and the disciples were gone to procure food for the evening meal—the usual and often the principal meal for the day in the East.

While speaking of the disciples, another most interesting feature of the whole Gospel presents itself—it might well be called the Gospel of discipleship. The name "apostle" is not used in it, but the first chapter tells us of those who first "*found and followed*" Jesus, and the last word to His disciples is "Follow thou Me." The word disciple (or disciples) is found many more times in John than in any of the others, and nowhere else are we told how to become "*a disciple indeed*" (John viii. 31). May we, dear reader, be encouraged to seek this distinction.

A similar marked difference may be noted as to parables. In John the word is used only once, and then we understand it is not the same word in the original as is translated "parable" in the synoptic Gospels. We all know how numerous they are in Luke and in Matthew, more especially, a little less so in Mark, all full of meaning wherever found, but in

John (chapter ten) only one *allegory* (the scholars tell us), and for that one how many of Christ's sheep have reason to be eternally thankful!

Another notable distinction is the absence of the word "kingdom," so prominent in the teachings of Matthew, and more or less so in Luke and Mark. While in Matthew it is found about forty times, in John it is used only five. And it should be especially noted by us that three out of the five times are found in the thirty-sixth verse of the eighteenth chapter, where, in answer to the challenge of Pilate, our Lord says, "My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world then would My servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence."

The day is yet to come of which we read in the eleventh chapter of the Revelation, when "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." Meanwhile, may we know with all His saved people the grace and power of that for which the Lord prayed—"Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am" (John xvii. 24).

T.R.

(To be continued, D.V.)

The Value of Affliction.

Extract from a letter dated March, 1829.

Dear Friends,

Five months have passed away since you received my previous letter and during that time I have had much experience. I am considerably weaker than I was then and I shall not be able to arrange methodically what remains for me to say to you; indeed I shall have power to say very little; but I am most anxious to address you.

I feel constrained to confirm to-day all that I have

before spoken, and all that I preached to you and told you when I was with you ; for I have now proved those truths which I then taught you. Yes, now, more than ever, I feel the importance, the absolute importance, of being a Christian indeed, of living in habitual communion with the Saviour, of abiding in Him. It is in the time of trial that we can speak of these things as we ought. A Christian without affliction is only a soldier on parade ; but I experience it now, and I will openly bear witness of it, whilst God still gives me strength so to do. It is strictly true, that, through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom, and we must personally feel what is said of the Lord Jesus that it became Him to be made perfect through sufferings. Though He were the Son of God yet "learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." How much more need have we ourselves of this instruction ! Yes, I can now say, it is good for me that I have been afflicted ; this trial was needful for me. I felt beforehand that it was requisite, and I do not fear to tell you, that I prayed to the Lord for it.

My situation is indeed painful ; I who delighted so much in an active, stirring life, have long been reduced to the most complete inaction, scarcely able to eat, drink, sleep, speak, or to listen to reading, or to receive the visits of my brethren, and feeling it a great effort to dictate these few lines : I am weighed down by the pains of sickness, and often I am deprived, by agonies, or by the wiles of Satan and my own heart, of the sense of God's presence, and of the consolations which it would afford me. I can, however, without hesitation declare, that I would not exchange this state of trial, for that in which some of my years have been passed ; for though my life may have been spent in the service of Christ, and may have appeared exemplary in the eyes of men, I find in it so much unfaithfulness, so many sins, so many things which, in my sight, and above all, in the sight of the Lord, have polluted my work,—I have passed so much time in forgetfulness of the Lord, that had I still thirty years to live, I should

prefer a hundred times over passing them on this bed of languor and anguish, to recovering my health and strength, and not to lead a life more truly Christian, more holy, more entirely devoted to God, than I have done hitherto.

Ah, my dear friends, how much time we lose, of how many blessings and graces we deprive ourselves, when we live in levity and thoughtlessness, in seeking after perishable things, in the gratification of the flesh, and of self-love !

Now I feel that it is so, and you will feel it also in the day of trial. Redeem then the time : I cannot repeat it too often ; live unto God, by faith, by prayer, and by serious conversation.

But can I recommend duties to you without noticing those which you are bound to fulfil towards that multitude who live in the darkness, out of which the Lord has brought you by His grace ? Should the church of God be contented, like the garrison of a besieged town, to defend herself and preserve her own territory ? Ought she not, on the contrary, to make continual sallies, and to advance like a victorious army, over the enemy's land ? So soon as a tree ceases to grow, it begins to wither away ; so soon as an assembly ceases to advance, it becomes torpid, and begins to decline.

Ah ! if you feel the infinite worth of your heavenly calling ; if you know the love of Christ which passeth all understanding and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe, if you have tasted how good the Lord is, and how precious is the lot which is fallen to us, if at the same time you know the value of immortal souls, and how dreadful is the fate of those who know not Jesus, can you ever forget the worth of that glorious title, child of God, which you bear ?

Can you ever be anything but Christian, if you have felt what infinite happiness it is to be a Christian ? You will be such, in all things and in all places ; you will wish the world to become such ; each one of you

will become in some wise, a witness of God's grace, a servant of Christ. Your heart will burn with zeal for the salvation of souls, and from it will ascend, without ceasing, as from a burning altar, sighs and prayers in their behalf. Labour then in the kingdom of God; be courageous in this holy warfare, give no rest to yourselves, nor cease to importune the Lord.

As to myself, I have every reason to believe that my task is finished. Having then no hope of seeing you again in this world, and not thinking that I shall be able to write more, I must take leave of you, commending you from this time forward to God and the word of His grace.

Be of good courage, then, my dear friends! We shall soon meet again, and it will be for ever, for ever! Think upon this and grieve not at our short separation.

Once more adieu, my dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ! May the Lord bless and keep you! May He give you that peace and joy, which the world cannot take away!

Your very affectionate brother,
FELIX NEFF.

The writer of the deply interesting letter, from which the above extract has been made, lived and laboured for Christ in the early part of the last century.

He was a man of singular devotion to his Lord, who wrought with his whole strength for the betterment spiritually and temporally of the then poor and degraded inhabitants of the villages of the High Alps in France.

The descendants of primitive Christians who had never owned the supremacy of Rome, whose fathers were only delivered from the general massacre that followed the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes by the inaccessibility of their mountain fastnesses, these poor remnants of a once prosperous and happy people, were found existing in the utmost ignorance.

To them came Felix Neff, who in the course of a few years (he died at the early age of 31) had the joy and

satisfaction of seeing many of the valleys become wholly Protestant. Nor were they merely Protestants, there is no doubt they were truly converted to God and saved by faith in the finished work of Christ.

“The Christ.”

NOTWITHSTANDING all that has been said in days gone by regarding the use of the word “Christ,” written with the article, it is still taught by some that where the term “the Christ” occurs it means Christ and the church.

In order to enlighten any who are not clear on this subject, we append the following useful extracts:—

“ ‘Christ’ (Greek) or ‘Messiah’ (Hebrew) means ‘the Anointed’ Who, according to the promise of God, was expected. This word therefore expresses more than merely the name of a person. Although this use of it had already appeared at the time the Scriptures of the New Testament were written; and since, in our opinion, the designation of the office and the name should not be confounded, in order to retain the force of the word, we have translated ‘Christ’ when it is used as a proper name, and ‘the Christ’ when it designates the office of the Messiah, the Anointed.”

(Preface to the German Testament by J.N.D.)

“Whenever ‘the Christ’ is used it is for the purpose of emphasising the fact of His Messiahship which is peculiar to Himself. He is the One Who *alone* answers to all that the Old Testament says about Him. ‘Messiah’ is the Hebrew form for the Greek word ‘Christ,’ or ‘the Anointed.’ ‘Messiah’ has not become so much of a proper name in English as ‘Christ,’ its form in Greek; and the use of the article is appreciated by every English reader. But when we say ‘Christ’ we usually drop the article, though it would be more correct to preserve it, except in those cases where it is used as a name (as in Matt. i. 16, Mark ix. 41), Romans v. 6 and 8, Galatians iii. 29, etc., and so on), when the article disappears in Greek also. Our

Authorised Version has not maintained this distinction.

The only passage in the New Testament in which 'the Christ' might possibly be taken to include the church explains itself, namely, 1 Cor. xii. 12. To use the well-known words of another: 'It is tantamount to saying, 'so it is in the case of the Christ,' or in other words, 'the Christ' has a 'body' of which He is the mystical Head.

. . . Let us, therefore, bear in mind that in the chapter which, we may say, unfolds the most details relative to the value and functions of the "Body" the apostle is careful to insist strenuously at the beginning on the *Lordship* of Christ. We need the Holy Ghost to enable us to own Him as 'Lord Jesus' or in addressing Him, and we thus apprehend that all administrations, or services, are subject to His sovereign direction. (verses 4 and 5.)' W.J.L.

We do well to note that the word "head" as used in 1 Cor. xii. 21, must be taken figuratively, as referring to the human body, such as "eye," "hand," "head," etc. But there are other scriptures which maintain the Headship and authority of Christ, such as Col. i. 18, Ephesians i. 22 and 23: He is Head over all things; God gave Him "to be the Head over all things to the assembly, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all" (N.Tr.). Godly wisdom is needed lest we exalt the church into a place of authority and importance which scripture never contemplated, while careful to recognise the place it has as the special object of His love and concern. (Eph. v. 25-27.) **

Notes of a Bible Reading on Genesis xxiv. 1 to xxv. 18.

IN this portion we have the choice of a bride for Isaac, the death of Abraham, and the generations of Ishmael. The life of Abraham is fast drawing to a close. Only one matter remains to be settled in order

that the fulfilment of the promise in the posterity of Abraham may become effective; the choice of a suitable bride for Isaac. At the close of chapter xxiv. we read that Rebekah enters the tent of Sarah as the wife of Isaac (Romans xi.), and accordingly the line of promise is continued through Isaac and Rebekah. Abraham then passes off the scene (xxiv. 1-67).

The choice of a bride for Isaac (chap. xxiv.).

(a). *Historical*. The devotedness of Abraham to the call of God is still the same, and a like subjection to God's will on our part is greatly to be desired. His confidence that God would overrule in the choice of the bride of Isaac is also very beautiful. Although he had been told of the birth of Rebekah to Bethuel (xxii. 20-34), he does not mention the name of the damsel to his servant, but leaves the selection to God. The servant himself is a good example of the true servant. The task set him was a very difficult and delicate one, and he meets it with prayer and faith. He does not exalt himself, but he speaks of his master Abraham and of Isaac. He uses wisdom in the choice of Rebekah, the tests which he proposes being designed to show if she possessed kindliness of nature and an absence of pride. He does not waste time in the conduct of the business of his master, but desires to accomplish his task and to return home again immediately. Rebekah lived a very simple life in Haran. She seems to have been quite unaware of the wonderful path of responsibility and privilege to which she was to be called. Immediately she hears the call to go, she responds, and refuses to be hindered. This is the more remarkable owing to her comparatively little knowledge of Isaac. She had to detach her affections from all around her, and set them upon one who was unseen and unknown to her (cf. 1 Pet. i. 8). Chapter xxiv. is parenthetical in the general history of the life of Abraham, and he is not mentioned in it after the opening of the narrative.

(b). *Typical*. This aspect is best dealt with under

the various characters spoken of in the chapter as follows:—

1. *Abraham*. Abraham is a type of God the Father, the One from Whom all the purposes of the Godhead proceed. It was the purpose of Abraham that a bride should be found for his son, and in Eph. i. we read of the purposes of God the Father for the glory of Christ. These purposes involve the calling out of the church to be the bride of Christ to share his inheritance in the day of glory. The dignity to which Rebekah was raised was the result of the purpose of the father—Abraham. So in Ephesians we are said to be “predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory.” (See also Rom. viii. 29.)

2. *Isaac*. It is interesting to compare the way in which Isaac receives his bride with the ways by which Jacob and Joseph respectively received theirs. Isaac must not leave Canaan, and his bride has to be brought to him, whereas Jacob expressly goes to Padan-aram and receives his wife there, and Joseph receives his wife from Pharaoh king of Egypt. This shows that Isaac is a type of the Lord Jesus now, waiting to receive the church to Himself. We are told in ver. 67 that Isaac loved Rebekah, and in Eph. v. 25, we are told that Christ loved the church.

3. *The chief servant*. It is to be noted that we are not actually told the name of the servant, although it was probably Eliezer of Damascus (see Gen. xv. 2). He is a very beautiful type of God the Holy Spirit. He is the eldest servant in the household of Abraham his master, and all his master's goods are under his control. He carries out the will of his master while effacing himself. So the Holy Spirit is the One Who comes to make the purposes of the Godhead effective in the hearts of men. In John xvi. 13, we are told that “He shall not speak of (or from) Himself.” It is the Holy Spirit Who seeks the bride for the Lord Jesus, the heavenly Isaac, Who conducts her through the long wilderness

journey to the place where the Bridegroom awaits her. During the journey He ministers to her need. He often tells her of the Bridegroom and His greatness (John xvi. 14). He tells her also of the nearness to the meeting with the Bridegroom (ver. 65, and see the witness of the Spirit to the coming of the Lord in the New Testament). The servant gives gifts to Rebekah twice, once at his first meeting with her and again when her definite relationship to Isaac is assured. So, the Spirit is the One Who seals the believer at the beginning after receiving the gospel of his personal salvation, and also gives gifts to the church during her sojourn in this world. It is noteworthy that the servant prays and that his prayers are answered. The prayers of the Spirit are always answered, and His intercession is always heard (Rom. viii. 26). In vv. 26 and 27 we read that the servant worships; even so, the Holy Spirit is the source from which all true worship flows (Phil. iii. 3). If the camels, which bore Rebekah across the desert to Isaac, and who are said to 'chew the cud' but 'divide(th) not the hoof' and are 'unclean' (Lev. xi. 4), speak of the pastors, teachers and others who are used to the edification and care of the church whilst in the world, they are nevertheless under the control of the servant—the Holy Spirit. The chapter illustrates the work of the Spirit in seeking and serving the assembly rather than in seeking and saving the sinner.

4. *Rebekah.* Rebekah is a type of the church. She is subject to the 'foreknowledge' of Abraham; she is called out of her native land, attracted by the report of the glory of Isaac; she is made rich with gifts, and conducted across the desert to be the bride of the man whom she had never seen, but who had formed the subject of the conversation of the servant who conducted her. The reason for all this is not in the first place the good of Rebekah, but the fulfilment of the purposes of blessing of which Isaac was the centre. In like manner the church is the subject of the election of God before the foundation of the world, called to a

path of separation by the report of the glory of Christ her Head in heaven, enriched with the gifts of Christ and of the Spirit, and journeying on to the glory where Christ is. The end of this is the "marriage of the Lamb" in heaven, and the blessing of the church is secondary to the purpose of God the Father for the glory of Christ (see Eph. i. 1). The readiness of Rebekah to follow Isaac is an example to the church in her affection to her Lord. In ver. 64, we have the beautiful consummation of the hope of the journey. She lifts up her eyes, Isaac lifts up his, and they meet in the look of love. What a day it will be for Christ and the church, when the long-looked-for rapture takes place!

xxv. 1-10. *The death of Abraham.* This chapter is not necessarily in chronological sequence, and it is not quite certain from the Hebrew phraseology that Abraham took Keturah and had other children after the birth of Isaac. In the sixth verse Ishmael is evidently included as one of those sent away from Isaac while he yet lived. The descendants of Hagar and Keturah are the 'children of the east,' afterwards referred to in scripture. They received the portion of the younger son (see Luke xv.) while their father yet lived, and were sent away into the east country. In vv. 7 and 8, we read of the death of Abraham at the ripe age of 175 years, after a century of pilgrimage in Canaan. According to Heb. xi. he 'died in faith, not having received the promises,' but 'having seen them afar off' he was 'persuaded of them and embraced them' and confessed that he was a stranger and pilgrim on the earth.

xxv. 11-18. *The generations of Ishmael.* After mentioning again the dwelling of Isaac at Beer-lahai-roi (xxiv. 62 and xxv. 11), the posterity of Ishmael, Abraham's fleshly seed, is named. The energy of the flesh is marked by the record that Ishmael had twelve sons long before Isaac had twelve grandsons: that which is natural is first, afterward that which is spiritual (1 Cor. xv. 46).

F.T.P.

The Unfailing One.

"He faileth not" (Zeph. iii. 5).

HE Who hath led, will lead
 All through the wilderness;
 He Who hath fed, will feed;
 He Who hath blessed, will bless;
 He Who hath heard thy cry,
 Will never close His ear;
 He Who hath marked thy faintest sigh,
 Will not forget thy tear.
 He loveth always, faileth never;
 So rest on Him, to-day, for ever!

He Who hath made thee nigh
 Will draw thee nearer still;
 He Who hath given the first supply
 Will satisfy and fill.
 He Who hath given thee grace
 Yet more and more will send;
 He Who hath set thee in the race
 Will speed thee to the end.
 He loveth always, faileth never;
 So rest on Him, to-day, for ever!

He Who hath won thy heart
 Will keep it true and free;
 He Who hath shewn thee what thou art
 Will show Himself to thee.
 He Who hath bid thee live,
 And made thy life His own,
 Life most abundantly will give,
 And keep it His alone.
 He loveth always, faileth never;
 So rest on Him, to-day, for ever!

FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL.

What Resurrection Proves to Faith.

(Read Romans iv. 1-8; 20-25; v. 1-11.)

ONE of the great features of the gospel of God which those are privileged to enjoy who receive it by faith is its absolute certainty. So many matters in the world about us, though important, are uncertain, unsatisfactory, and doubtful. But in His good tidings God presents what is sure and steadfast, so that those who will simply believe His word may possess absolute assurance as to their present relationship to the things of heaven. This is no small mercy from God, though, alas, little known and little enjoyed by many of those who trust in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The chief reason why so many are at times filled with doubts and fears is that they abandon the simple foundation God has given, on which our souls may rest without anxiety. That foundation is His own written word. But men will not trust God and what He has spoken. Having given us the scriptures, He says, Will you trust My word? It is on that foundation that the gospel which comes to us rests. God's word is living and permanent, and the truth of the gospel will remain unchanged when all the worlds shall have passed away.

But the word of God is not the only foundation of the gospel; there are two pillars for man's faith. The scriptures contain the word of Christ and the work of Christ. This is double assurance, for the word of Christ can never fail, neither can His atoning sacrifice. These are the Jachin and Boaz of salvation. Thus every believer is furnished with the amplest assurance for his trembling heart. God Himself has spoken in His love and righteousness, and God Himself has wrought by Jesus Christ a complete deliverance from guilt and judgment.

HOW CAN A SINNER BE JUST BEFORE GOD?

Now, in the closing verses of Romans iv., we find

particular reference made to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ in connection with man's justification. The gospel does not disguise the necessity for every responsible person to be justified or righteous before God. Looking at your sins, you may say, I need forgiveness or salvation; but looking at God Who is righteous, you need righteousness. As the righteous Governor of this world of men, God loves righteousness and hates iniquity. Indeed, He will be satisfied with nothing but pure righteousness. Hence the question of Job arose, How can man be just before God?

Many of our readers must have felt what a terrible thing it is to be held responsible to God, Whose eyes look not merely upon the external manners, but into the heart, searching out the hidden motives. Every secret imagination stands naked and unveiled before Him. What folly for you to hope that God in His infinite mercy will overlook what you have done, and for His mercy's sake alone accept you as you are! How could God's righteousness stand unblemished in the universe if the sinners of this earth were allowed to go unpunished? God is righteous; absolute holiness is inseparable from the essential nature of His Being; and what God is in Himself demands that evil should bear its rightful penalty.

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And where sin has been committed punishment will inevitably follow. How will it be with you if that punishment fall in your day? You may shelve the question, perhaps, by saying, There is plenty of time yet for me to make myself right with God before I step off the platform of time into eternity. But is there time? The truth is there is no time for delay. "God . . . now commandeth all men everywhere to repent because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts xvii. 30, 31).

The matter of justification is therefore of the utmost urgency, for the risen and glorified Lord is coming to judge the world in righteousness. The open and empty grave of Jesus Christ is a solemn warning to all men that in a moment when they do not expect it they may be brought face to face with Him Who rose from the dead, and is now the appointed Judge of this world of living men.

The great fact of the coming judgment of sins stands fully revealed in the scriptures. Who will claim to be absolutely righteous? Who could lift up the head before the pure and white throne of His glory? Not a single sin can escape His eyes of flame. Hence the gospel is imperative. God *commands* all men everywhere to repent. He does not now beseech, but because of the excessive urgency He commands. He demands those who are unrighteous to seek that righteousness which is by faith alone, lest they in their sins stand before Him to be judged of their sins.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

There are some who lower the standard of righteousness to suit themselves. They apply to themselves the law of averages, and believe they are as good as most men, and better than some. They delude themselves, and, like some in our Lord's day, they trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others.

The Lord uttered to such persons a parable concerning a Pharisee and a publican. The Pharisee went up into the temple to pray, but he only went there to tell God what a good man he was, and how many good actions he had performed. And in his blind arrogance, he made an odious comparison of himself with the publican whom he despised.

But the eyes of the Lord discerned a wide contrast between the two men. He said of the latter, "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast,

saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke xviii. 9-15).

In the temple, the light of God shone into the publican's heart and showed him the depths of his degradation and sinfulness in a way he had not seen it before. Filled with shame, he durst not look up to heaven. How could he look into the face of Him against whom he had sinned? He had been proved unrighteous, and he knew it, for he cried out, God be merciful to me a sinner.

The Lord Jesus said of this man that he "went down to his house justified rather than the other." Why was this? The Pharisee sought to justify himself, but the publican confessed the truth about himself, and his was the right attitude of a sinful man before God. Of the two men, the latter was on the side of truth, and his plea was justified; though he himself is not said to be justified in the sense that it is taught subsequently. In this Epistle the apostle shows that a justification is received through faith, which enables a guilty person to stand unabashed and uncondemned before the holy God, having peace with Him through our Lord Jesus Christ.

ABRAHAM AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH.

The apostle refers to the faith of Abraham, who is the father of all who believe. Of him it is written, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness," so that in his case there was a connection between faith and righteousness or justification. When God called him, He gave the promise that through him blessing should flow to the ends of the earth. Year after year went by without any outward evidence of the fulfilment of this promise. Doubts assailed Abraham, for, as he said to the Lord, "To me Thou hast given no seed."

But God brought His word afresh to Abraham's heart, and bade him to look toward heaven, and behold the innumerable stars. Then the Lord said to him, "So

shall thy seed be." Whereupon Abraham said in his heart, "I believe Thee, O God; I believe what Thou hast said; I trust Thy word." It is with the heart that man believes unto righteousness, and God saw faith in Abraham's heart. And it is written, "Abraham believed God; and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. xv. 6).

God still looks into the human heart to find faith. He looks where men's eyes fail to reach. He beholds the inner motives. He scrutinises the secret movements of our spirits. Does He see faith in Himself? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Now the apostle declares that this record was not written for Abraham's sake alone. It was written for subsequent centuries. It was written for our sake also, if we believe on Him Who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead (Rom. iv. 22-24).

GOD RAISED JESUS OUR LORD FROM THE DEAD.

Abraham believed God, and we also have to believe God. There is a difference, however. Abraham was called to believe that something good would come to him in the future. God had said, I give you My promise that you shall have a seed. But now the call to us is to believe on Him Who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. This is not something that God has promised to do, but something that He has already done.

When the dead body of Jesus was lying in the tomb, His enemies sealed the stone, and set their own guard to keep Him there; but God raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. They were powerless to keep Him in the sepulchre. He had finished His work. He had glorified God upon the earth. Accordingly, the Blessed Lord was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.

But the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is not a mere historical fact. The apostle attaches a significance both to the death and to the raising. "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." We have first God's side of the death of Christ. The Jews delivered Jesus to Pilate for envy, and Pilate delivered Him back to their will. But God's

will was above all to secure our justification and salvation, and we read, "He was delivered for our offences." Our sins, our iniquities, our transgressions were all made to meet on His blessed head. He was delivered up that the wrath of God might fall upon Him as the Sin-bearer. The judgment fell; the sacrifice for sin was consumed; the Lord's own testimony was given: "It is finished." The foundation was laid for God's righteousness.

Nevertheless, God gave His testimony to the efficiency of the work of Christ. His demonstration of what has been done in respect of sins is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It is a witness to the universe that the work to which the Lord put His hand had been accomplished, and that atonement has been made for man's guilt. Do you believe the One Who raised Him? Do you believe He has accepted the sacrifice for your sins?

(To be continued—D.V.)

W.J.H.

Healing of a Man with a Withered Hand—2.

(Luke vi. 6-12.)

THE withered hand itself was a witness that sin had not been put away, but was still present in the world. The whole creation was involved in the fall of man, and the creature itself is groaning and travailing in pain together until now, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God; for all creation will yet be brought out of the bondage of corruption to which, in hope of a glorious deliverance, it has been subjected.

It is by hope that we are saved, and only after we have believed to the saving of our souls are we indwelt by that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the coming inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, giving us to look forward to the time when Christ will come and usher us into the

Father's house. In the meantime, it is the Spirit which witnesseth with our spirits that we are the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with *Christ; left here, it is true, to suffer with Him for a little while in a path of separation from the world which cast Him out.* But the apostle Paul says, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Shall we not seek to catch the spirit of our Master, Who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross and despised the shame?

We shall be glorified together with Him; and it is for the manifestation of this glory that the creature waits, for all creation shall be delivered and brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. But if such a future awaits the creature, what of the glory which excelleth awaiting those who respond to the love of God now! It has not entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. They are family secrets which the Spirit reveals to those who belong to the family of God, even to those who through faith in Christ Jesus have been brought into the closest relationship with the Father, and understand His counsels of love and grace. Are you content, with such a prospect offered you, to go on in your sins which, if unforgiven, will banish you from the presence of a holy God for ever? With what remorse would you look back upon this time when you heard the gospel of God's grace, and put it from you. Unto God the Lord belong the issues of life, and He Who sets before us life and death, exhorts us to choose life.

The Lord, in bringing home His lessons to the heart of man, whether he puts them from him for a more convenient season, or receives them to the saving of his soul, does not go outside the circumstances of their everyday life, but takes up the homely incidents of their surroundings to illustrate and enforce His teaching; and He teaches them as one that has authority, and not as the scribes. With the same power and authority

as He exercised in commanding an unclean spirit to come out of a man with the spirit of an unclean devil, so He deals with the man with a withered hand. And is not your case a far more serious one, for your eternal welfare is affected?

Putting him forth before them all, although He knew the murderous hate that was working in their minds, and was grieved at the hardness of their hearts, He lets them see that the grace which was so much needed for themselves was at hand in His blessed Person to meet the need of all who sought His aid. And so He says to the man, "Stretch forth thy hand," and as he did so his hand was restored whole as the other. It was an empty hand he stretched forth, for he had nothing to bring. But this exhibition of grace, instead of being received by the scribes and Pharisees as an encouragement to plead their own far deeper need, is viewed by them as sin against the law of God; the natural thoughts and feelings of the heart of man being ever at enmity against God and His Christ.

The Lord would not, however, withhold His grace and power in the presence of human misery, whatever man might seek to accuse Him of; for He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. God is too holy to look upon sin, and nothing less than the precious blood of His own beloved Son can make an atonement for Him; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. And so it has come to pass that in due time Christ has died for the ungodly; and now God commendeth His love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Have you accepted this rich provision of God's bountiful grace? Now is the day of salvation, now is the accepted time.

How often did the Lord express to His disciples that He must suffer and enter into His glory; and that only upon the ground of His being lifted up on the cross could guilty man be drawn to Him. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son

of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

If you have not accepted Christ you are but treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and disobeying God's direct command to repent and believe the gospel; for He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained. But here we see the scribes and Pharisees watching their opportunity to find by what means they might accuse Him. They did not even judge righteously, for did they not themselves circumcise a man on the Sabbath day, so as not to break the law Moses gave? And yet they were angry because the Lord had made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day.

The healing of the sick was one of the signs by which their promised Messiah was to be known; and here He was in their midst, God manifest in flesh, performing miracles which none other than He Who was sent of God could do. But they judged according to their hard and impenitent hearts, and saw in the Lord Jesus only the carpenter's Son Who was separated from His brethren, for neither did His brethren believe in Him.

The scribes and Pharisees, with all their professed enlightenment, knew not God, and therefore they rejected His Son Whom He had sent; and moreover agreed that every confessor of Him should be put out of the synagogue. Were they not filling up the measure of their iniquity in plotting against Him? Had not their fathers persecuted the prophets, and slain them that had shown beforehand the coming of the Just One, of Whom they themselves were so soon to become the betrayers and murderers?

But the Lord vindicates His action of grace, for it is only on the ground of God's sovereign grace that those who are dead in trespasses and sins can be quickened into life by hearing the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. The cross has closed the history of man as of any account before God, and man now stands fully condemned because he

believes not on the Lord Jesus Christ Who has died for him. Man sets himself up to judge the word of God, and only proves thereby that he is an enemy of grace, and of Him Who is the bringer of grace.

And in those days the Lord retires to a mountain to pray, and continues all night in prayer to God. Did He not seek from His Father how He might be made a blessing to man? The whole array of the powers of darkness were against Him in His pathway here below, and He was straitened until the cross should be accomplished. As the lowly Son of man He needed divine strength for the completion of His path of dependence upon God, and this was found by waiting upon God. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Will you not therefore repent in the presence of such goodness, and turn to Christ for salvation? For through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins—surely the greatest need of guilty man!

Like as the scribes and Pharisees watched the Lord, so the world is ever watching how Christians behave themselves; for the world is a very good judge of a Christian's walk. We are sent into this world to represent our Saviour; for as the Father sent Him into the world, so also He has sent us into the world, and we are called to maintain a path of separation from the world which cast Him out. Outside the camp with Him we shall experience the suffering for His name's sake; but His word to us is, "If they hate you, ye know that they hated Me first." There will be fellowship with Him in the path of rejection.

But if we be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are we, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon us. On their part He is evil spoken of, but on our part He is glorified. We are not to be ashamed if we suffer as Christians, but rather to glorify God on that account; for if we suffer with Him we shall reign with Him. If the children of God are called to suffer now, what will be the end of those who obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?

Now that the cross is an accomplished fact, the acceptance or rejection of Christ forms the one and only ground of acceptance or rejection of a sinner with God. God is offering you through the Lord Jesus Christ the forgiveness of your sins, and justification from all things through faith in Him ; so that to despise the grace which God offers you is to despise Him Whom God sent to die for you. The cross of Christ is not a new thing in your ears, for you have heard the tale frequently ; but how little have you realised how it affects you, and what it cost God to spare His only begotten Son ! How great must be His love to have given Him up for you ! "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16).

H. K.

Approved Unto God.

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."—2 Timothy ii. 15.

THIS exhortation was addressed by the apostle Paul to Timothy, his beloved son in the faith. Timothy had been left at Ephesus, when the apostle went into Macedonia, in order to see that no false doctrine was set forth in the assembly. Timothy being a young man, the apostle realised he stood in need of counsel and guidance in the work that lay before him, hence he lovingly warned him against the perils and dangers that beset him on every hand. He warned him against giving heed to fables and endless genealogies which minister questions rather than godly edifying ; he called upon him to witness a good confession of the truth taught him by the apostle ; he was to refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise himself rather unto godliness. He exhorted him to be an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity ; above all he was to study to shew himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the

word of truth. This exhortation in itself is of immense importance to all believers, especially to those gifted brethren who seek to feed and care for the church of God which He has purchased with His own blood; and well would it have been for the church of God to-day if gifted brethren had kept this exhortation steadily in view. It is a very great thing indeed to be approved of God. Jesus as Man was approved of God by works which God did by Him, but He was not approved by the religious leaders of His day or by His countrymen in general; but He was approved of God publicly on three distinct occasions—once at His baptism in the Jordan, when a voice from heaven testified to the Father's delight in His well-beloved and only begotten Son; once on the Mount of Transfiguration; and once at Jerusalem when some Greeks desired to see Him, God's final approval being given when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in glory.

Stephen was chosen by his brethren with six others ostensibly to serve tables, but God had other work for him to do. It is written of him that he was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost and that he did great wonders and miracles among the people, confounding all his opponents by the wisdom and spirit by which he spake. He testified to the faithfulness of God in His righteous judgments towards the nation in general; he boldly charged them with the betrayal and murder of the Son of man; he denounced them for their stiffneckedness and rebellion insomuch that they gnashed upon him with their teeth and stoned him to death. Stephen, like his noble Master, sought forgiveness for his murderers. Stephen was approved of God and was rewarded with a vision of heaven opened and a sight of Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

Paul was approved of God on many distinct occasions, though he was not approved by his countrymen in general and by a number of his brethren in Christ, from which we see it is possible to be approved

of God though not approved by some brethren. In saying this, I do not mean that we should ignore or despise the judgment of our brethren; that would not be scriptural and would not be approved of God, but occasions may arise when we may differ on what we may consider to be a vital point, and we may not, yea, we must not temporize or compromise under any circumstances with the precious truth of God; we must dare to stand alone if need be. The servant of the Lord Jesus must be free from all men. The apostle writing to the churches in Galatia says, "If I yet pleased men I should not be the servant of Christ."

W.M.C.

Some Special Features of the Gospel of John—3.

WE have already spoken briefly of some of the "precious things" in the opening verses of this Gospel, but it may also be noted that the writer never mentions his own name, but is content to speak of himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

Then it is also worthy of remark, and perhaps is one reason for its universal preference, that all is addressed to the individual. How often we find "If any man" in the appeal of our Lord's address! The Jew, or Israel, is rarely if at all distinguished from the rest, and no reference to the church in any aspect is found; but the disciples are with Him, the Son, and receive their instructions as children of the Father in the heavenly family.

Many of our readers will have noticed the fact that the Gospel is divided into three great parts. The first twelve chapters form part one, and may be regarded as our Lord's presentation of Himself as the Son of God, sent of the Father in grace to man generally. He presents and manifests God as His Father, but nowhere in John, not even on the cross, addresses Him as God. He is throughout the Son revealing the Father.

In the second section, from the 13th to the 16th chapters, we have what took place *in the house*, and what our Lord said there of which the other Gospels do not give us any account. It is the unfolding of heavenly truth to the heavenly company, as yet unable to receive it, as He said, intelligently, but they were the depositary of the new revelations; of which the Holy Spirit (yet to come) would be the power and unction.

The coming and offices of the Holy Spirit form a large part, and the most important part of these divine unfoldings. It must be specially noted that the well-known incident of the Lord washing the feet of the disciples (of which John alone tells us) is the preliminary act of this deeply interesting section; while the great revelation and prayer of the seventeenth chapter concludes it, we may suppose, as no interval or break is recorded.

What must have been the feelings of the disciples as these wonderful words were uttered in their hearing, the precious heritage of the children of God down through all time! Is it not a mine of spiritual wealth and blessing from which the choicest ore has been dug by the saints of God from apostolic times to our day? "If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God" (Prov. ii. 4, 5).

The third section of the Gospel, chapter xviii. to the end, contains the record of the final scenes of the Lord's life, and here the marks of divine inspiration are quite as evident as in the others. What is put in is a matter of divine inspiration as evidently as what is left out. The unmistakable marks of God-breathed origin pervade the whole record.

We find no mention of the Lord's supper as an institution in remembrance of Him, although the 13th chapter opens with the words, "before the feast of the passover." And when we pass out of the house into the place "where there was a garden," there is no detailed account of the prayer that "the cup" may pass

from Him, nor of the agonies of anticipation. Jesus does not appeal to His disciples to watch with Him, but in the calm and patient fortitude of dependence on God goes on to the end. Here only are we told that the mob were powerless to take Him until He gave Himself up, and when on the cross, as knowing that all things were now accomplished, He said, "I thirst," and having received the vinegar, cried, "It is finished," and bowing His head delivered up His spirit (N.Tr.).

Many other most interesting details may be noted—John does not mention the three hours of darkness, the cry to God as the forsaken One, nor does he mention the rending the vail of the temple; and he alone tells us that Jesus committed the care of His mother to "that disciple whom Jesus loved."

We would, in closing these brief notes, point out that the last chapter is a striking and unique feature of the difference from the other three Gospels. It has been spoken of as a kind of postscript.

The disciples had evidently returned to their ordinary occupation. Three out of the seven are mentioned by name, and Jesus stands on the shores of the lake that had been the scene of so many of the incidents of His wondrous life. The world had seen Him no more since the cross, and the mysterious "forty days" were drawing to a close, when Jesus appears with the evident purpose of clearing up a little matter between Himself and His beloved disciple Simon Peter, that He alone could adjust. It is not in the province of these papers to dwell on the details, but we note the grace of the meal already prepared, and that while John is only spoken of as one of the sons of Zebedee, Thomas and Nathanael are especially named.

We are reminded by the last verse that there are also many other things which Jesus did that are not written every one; and content ourselves with the hope that these brief notes may help some readers to a deeper appreciation of what is written, and that the last recorded word of our Lord may quicken and guide our steps in the path—*Follow Thou Me.* T.R.

Notes of a Bible Reading on Genesis

xxv. 19-xxvii. 46.

IN this portion we continue to see how God sets apart Messiah's line. Abraham had many sons, but only Isaac was chosen. Isaac had two sons, but Jacob was marked as the one through whom the blessings would flow. Afterwards we shall see Jacob and his twelve sons. All this is very important in connection with Messiah's place in the world; all the unfit were excluded from His line. The portion deals with the birth of Jacob and Esau, and the sale of his birthright by Esau; the experiences of Isaac during the famine; and the bestowal of the blessings upon Jacob and Esau.

xxv. 19-26. Like Abraham, Isaac had to show patience; it was twenty years before Jacob and Esau were given to him. Isaac was also a man of prayer (verse 21). In all the circumstances of Jacob's and Esau's birth God's sovereign election is displayed (cf. Rom. ix.); the Jews objected to the gospel going to the Gentiles; but Paul lays down that God is supreme, that He signifies His good pleasure and His will because He is God. This historical incident proves it: before Jacob and Esau were born, before they had done anything, God told Rebecca that the elder would serve the younger. That was His purpose: so also it was only afterwards that Paul's actions justified God's choice (see Gal. i. 15). Jacob trusted God; Esau, on the contrary, was refractory, he cared for present things. The character of Edom was also indicated from the very first; God knew it beforehand (cf. Mal. i. 2, 3). Edom was long subject to Israel, and when Edom disappeared, Israel remained (verse 23). God's predestination may present difficulties sometimes; it should not if we believe that God is sovereign.

Jacob indicated his character at once (verse 26); he took advantage of his rival. And it was so till he received a new name. Israel shows how the grace of God can be superior to the force of our nature. Esau was a true son of Nimrod (verse 27); what he liked he

did, without caring about God or his parents. But Jacob was upright; he stood true to his calling as son of Abraham. He was fifteen when Abraham died, but he had learned that, though a pilgrim and stranger in the land, his posterity would one day possess it.

Isaac loved Esau, whose character was in contrast with his own; but Rebekah loved Jacob (verse 28). Favouritism in a family always bears lamentable fruit.

xxv. 29-34. Esau did not care for the future; God's promise to Abraham was nothing to him. Being "profane," i.e., one who does not esteem God's word, he desired Jacob to give him something to eat, and caring only for the present, for red pottage sold his birthright. It is very easy to judge Esau, but we have many birthrights ourselves; do we not often sacrifice them for present things? Jacob made full use of this opportunity; but he was moved by faith, for there was no present advantage from it.

xxvi. 1-5. The famine tempted Isaac to go down to Egypt, a type of the world outside the spiritual domain (the Philistines were, on the other hand, the enemies of God's people in the land). Jehovah appeared to Isaac; the blessings given to Abraham were confirmed, and we are shown how God regarded Abraham: God praised obedience more than anything else (verse 5). This virtue shines more than any in our Lord.

xxvi. 6-11. So Isaac did not go down into Egypt, but dwelt in Gerar. The incident with Abimelech shows that trust in God does not alter the natural man. In the N.T. it is shown that man's nature is corrupted, that nothing can be done to improve it, and that the way of obedience is by believing that our old man was crucified with Christ. In the O.T. the fruit of the evil nature is made manifest. Isaac was not superior to others, who all had evil incidents in their lives. Isaac was guilty of deceit, and his deception seems to have influenced Rebekah and Jacob, for they deceived Isaac when he was old: Jacob, who deceived his father, was deceived by Laban and, later, by his sons. But Isaac obeyed God and remained in Canaan; therefore he was

blessed (verse 12). It is a signal example of how God honours obedience; it reminds us of the history of our Lord.

xxvi. 13-23. Wells, in God's word, are a figure of the refreshment that God gives. The Lord brought refreshment (John iv. 14) and the means of refreshment for others (John vii. 37, 38). That was Isaac's character during his stay in the land. When conflicts for the possession of the wells arose, Isaac did not strive, but gave way. So the Lord, when He was not received in one city, went to another; the same should apply to those who follow Him. The Philistines are a type of the Pharisees who had stopped the wells, but the Lord unstopped them.

xxvi. 26-31, reminds us of Christ. The chief priests saw that there was good in Him, yet did not want Him. The incident is a figure of the nations seeking Israel's alliance during the millennium.

xxvi. 34, 35. Esau despised God and his parents, and would not keep himself separate from the Canaanites.

xxvii. 1-40. Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to things to come (Heb. xi. 20). What he said to his sons was the absolute truth as to their future. The first verses present a piteous sight of Isaac, now old, but occupied with present things. Isaac's spiritual life seems to have been bright at first, then clouded, and at the end bright again. At this time he seems to be guided, even in the spiritual matters connected with the promise, by his natural appetite: a very low level indeed. Isaac bestowed the blessing (verses 28, 29) by faith; his soul was in touch with God. Isaac thought it was Esau, but God knew better than he; God's blessing was for Jacob, and it was given to Jacob. The nations are not mentioned in this blessing, as in Abraham's (Gen. xxii. 18); this is why in Gal. iii. 16, we find Abraham but not Isaac referred to.

Esau heard that he had lost the blessing, but there was no repentance, only the hope that it might be changed. The gross deception by Rebekah and Jacob

was not only morally wrong, but quite unnecessary. They showed their faith by valuing the promises, but they could not trust God to bring Jacob into them. The result of their crooked conduct was that both had to suffer under God's government. Jacob was exiled, and Rebekah never saw him again. In spite of her failures, however, Rebekah was true in faith in that she did not want Jacob to marry a daughter of the Canaanites (verse 46).

J.E.R.

Fragment.

“**H**OW foolish to listen to the enemy's whisper that you are too great a sinner for Christ to save. He came to save the lost : can you be worse than 'lost'? What does not 'lost' include? Think of the Samaritan ; of the sinful woman in a city ; of Mary of Magdala : all desperate cases, each different from the other ; all saved, and given to know it ; and all recorded that you too may believe and be saved. They were each saved 'by grace,' God's grace and not theirs, and 'through faith,' not feelings, or love, or service, or sacraments.”

W.K.

Then trust Him for to-day
 As thine unfailing Friend,
 And let Him lead thee all the way,
 Who loveth to the end.
 And let the morrow rest
 In His beloved hand ;
 His good is better than our best,
 As we shall understand,—
 If, trusting Him Who faileth never,
 We rest on Him, to-day, for ever !

F.R.H.

Peerless Worth.

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.”
(1 John v. 21.)

HAST thou heard HIM, seen HIM, known HIM?
Is not thine a captured heart?
“Chief among ten thousand” own HIM,
Joyful, choose the better part.

Idols, once they won thee, charmed thee,
Lovely things of time and sense;
Gilded, thus does sin disarm thee,
Honey’d lest thou turn thee thence.

What has stript 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.

Who extinguishes their taper
Till they hail the rising sun?
Who discards the garb of winter
Till the summer has begun?

’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?

Selected.

What Resurrection Proves to Faith—2.

(Read Romans iv. 1-8, 20-25; v. 1-11.)

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

BUT just as surely and closely as our offences are connected with the death of Christ, so surely and closely is our justification connected with His resurrection. What is the inevitable consequence to us, if we believe on Him Who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead? The consequence is that those who believe are justified; "therefore being justified by faith." And this justification rests upon the objective fact of Christ's resurrection.

Many make the lamentable error of looking within, instead of without, to find the ground of their justification, and are thrown into a state of confusion and doubt. After honestly examining their spiritual progress, they are dissatisfied, and doubt very much whether they are justified after all.

But we are justified by faith, and by faith in God. Trust God therefore. Accept His word about your justification, as you accept His word that Christ died for you. Paul said in the synagogue at Antioch, "Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." This was the part of his message founded upon the truth that Christ "was delivered for our offences." But the apostle did not finish his announcement at that point. He continued, "And by Him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts xiii. 38, 39). This was the word presented to that audience, and all that believed God were justified from all things. Accept then the truth of your justification, if you believe God.

PEACE WITH GOD.

But an important result follows justification: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Peace in scripture has more than one significance. Here the apostle is speaking about the peace which is a contrast with a

guilty man's feelings towards his God. There is in the heart of the natural man a spirit of animosity against God, but the man who is justified has peace with God.

What is it that makes man an enemy of God? The fact is that he is a sinner against Him, and therefore he fears His justice. His feelings of guilt fill him with resentment against his Judge. He is, in this world, proved guilty before God. Now the gospel comes to cast out these fears. The person whose sins are forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ, who is justified by faith, possesses peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the courts of human justice the guilty cannot escape, but must be punished for their crimes. And the more perfect the legal code, the less likely that any offence will be passed over. But in God's courthouse of grace the guilty are justified by faith. This is because Jesus our Lord was delivered for our offences, and the Judge of all the earth is just and the Justifier of Him who believes in Jesus.

"Therefore," the apostle says, "we have peace with God." This peace is the result of the shedding of the blood of the Lord Jesus. He "made peace through the blood of His cross." The great enmity has passed away. We are reconciled to God. There is peace with God.

This peace is not an immunity from the troubles and trials of this life. This peace has to do with our sins, not with our sorrows. We shall have tribulation in this world, but the Lord has overcome the world. In Him we have peace of mind and soul, for before He departed to His Father He gave us His peace (John xiv. 27; xvi. 33). The peace of Romans is connected with His work; that of John with His Person. We need the former in our approach to God; we need the latter in our pilgrimage through a hostile world.

ACCESS INTO THE FAVOUR OF GOD.

Having been justified by faith, and having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have a further

privilege in regard to our relationship with God. By the Lord Jesus Christ we also have "access by faith into this grace [or favour] wherein we stand." Upon whom do God's eyes rest with satisfaction and favour? Upon those who have been justified, and who have peace with Him. For them God provides the very best of His blessings.

The favour of God! Have you considered what this favour means? What would not man give to obtain the favour of His Majesty the King, or to be accounted the friend of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales? But through the Lord Jesus Christ we have a means of entrance into the permanent favour of God. Do we prize it as we should?

This privilege is known only "by faith." Justification is by faith; peace with God is by faith; and access into the favour of God is by faith also. Faith is the hand that lays hold of and appropriates the blessings God provides. Let us believe what God tells us, and enjoy what God gives us.

THE GLORY OF GOD.

The favour of God rests upon us now in our daily circumstances, but there is more to come. God fills the earthly vessel to the full, and we cannot contain more until the vessel is improved and enlarged. The apostle, looking forward, says, We "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." The grace of God is for those who are sinners, and the glory of God is for those who are justified by faith. How could we be in the glory of God if there was one guilty spot upon us? But here in this world God counts righteous those who believe.

Hence we rejoice in the sure and certain hope of the glory of God. Though it is future, it is a certainty, because God has pledged His word. On that account, we do not doubt, because we have that word. At His coming the Lord Jesus will transform these bodies of weakness and humiliation into bodies of glory like His own. Here our capacities are only adapted for an earthly measure of the divine blessing, but there we shall

be fitted to participate in the glory of the presence of God. Now we have been made to stand in the favour of God's grace, and then we shall be made to stand in the light of God's glory. Now, therefore, every justified person is entitled to exult in this hope of the glory of God.

W.J.H.

Two Remarkable Journeys.

(Luke ii. 41-52; xxiv. 13-36.)

THESE passages speak of two remarkable journeys. In the first one our Lord was twelve years of age, and from that time we get no other incident in His life for about eighteen years. The second journey was after the Lord's resurrection, when He goes with His disciples to Emmaus. Emmaus means despised—a significant meaning when we think how the Lord Jesus was, and is, despised, and His disciples were treading this same path with Him.

What a wonderful scene that was when Christ was born into this world! The shepherds out in the open, "keeping watch over their flocks by night," then suddenly "the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." What an experience those shepherds had! Something never seen nor contemplated before. A night to be remembered indeed! They were afraid! Do you wonder? Surely it was only natural in such a scene as that, but their fear was soon turned into joy.

And how did the world receive the Saviour? They put Him in a manger! What a contrast to the way the heavenly host received that Holy Babe! The angel named Him Jesus. Jesus the One Whom every tongue shall confess and to Whom every knee shall bow and own Him Lord! Thanks be to God for that precious Name of Jesus! We worship Him not only as Lord, but as God's Holy One. Simeon and Anna both give their testimony to the Person of God's Son, and Simeon blessed Him and said, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salva-

tion." A wondrous experience that was for Simeon as he took the blessed One in his arms, Who was "God manifest in flesh," though seen as a little child. Simeon was more in communion with the heavenly host than with the earth. Scripture records that "the child grew." His capacity as a son of man was growing, developing, and yet He was the Son of the Father. We can only admire Him, and adore, and praise God for this. If there was one spot in the wide earth which heaven delighted in, it was where that perfect and holy Child was found.

I understand it was not usual for children under thirteen years of age to attend the Passover, except under special circumstances. Probably it was the first time the Lord Jesus went with His reputed parents. We notice it was their custom to go in companies; the road to Jerusalem was dangerous, and wild animals were often encountered. It is an interesting sight to see these companies in their different Oriental costumes, some with merchandise to sell, who, when night falls, gather round their fires in various camps.

Outside Nazareth it was steep and rough travelling for three or four days, and, methinks, how the Lord must have entered into all the meaning of the Passover, that feast which was instituted in Exodus xii., when the children would ask, "What mean ye by this service?" How He would contemplate that it all pointed to the one great sacrifice He was going to accomplish at Jerusalem! Religion there to most was mere form and ceremony, but to Him it was not so, for He came from God and was going to the cross to offer Himself without spot to God—a Perfect Sacrifice! What thoughts must have filled His mind!

As the company returns to Nazareth they travel one whole day, and the Lord is not there. What a loss! He Whom the Father delighted in, that Blessed One, was absent, and they knew it not. No one noticed it! Does it not speak to each one of us? Oh! if you've never known what it is to be in company with Him, come *now*. Does He not say, "Come unto Me all ye

that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? Have any of us travelled one whole day without Christ. A Christian, yet not enjoying Christ! How sad a condition to be in! But it is still possible not only for one person, but for a whole company to go on without Christ, but what a loss not to have Him with us! They sought Him amongst themselves, that was in natural channels; but you can seldom find the Lord in natural channels—among your relatives. It is, however a blessed thing when we miss His company and are stirred up to seek Him, whether we be sinner or saint.

They looked for Him for three days! Yes, one day's absence meant three days' loss, but it is encouraging to see they found Him. And where was He? Sitting in the temple with the doctors, hearing and asking them questions. They never had had a Child like that in their midst. Did they answer Him? Methinks they couldn't, for it is written they "were astonished at *His* understanding and answers." Surely it should have proved to them that He was their God and no mere man or child.

How was it that Mary was in this condition? Surely she, above all, should have missed Him and known He was not with them. Mary, the one to whom many people pray to intercede for them, *she* didn't know even where He was, and *she* was sorrowing. The Lord answers her, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" That one sentence tells us He was the Son of the Father, the Christ of God, and that His object was to do the Father's will.

And now, as they come from Jerusalem to Nazareth—the downward road—the Lord of heaven and earth is "subject unto them." What unfathomable love and grace, and how glorifying to God!!

Now we will look at that other journey, the going to Emmaus, when the disciples thought He was not with them; but this time He was there. As they were talking about the wonderful things which had been happening in Jerusalem, thinking that He Who had come was

the One Who should have redeemed Israel, they were sorely disappointed. Instead of a crown of glory He had a crown of thorns, instead of kingly authority, nails had pierced His hands and His feet. He had been crucified between two malefactors. And now these two distracted disciples had turned their backs on that city where so much excitement was going on, and were on the road HOME. As surely as the Lord Jesus Christ drew near to those two and went with them, so will He draw near to us and go with us as we travel towards home. They were in blessed company though they knew it not.

Peter says. "He hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," but all the hopes these two travellers had had were seemingly dead, for they had thought He was their Messiah. We have a further wondrous revelation through Peter. That One they all forsook and fled from, that One Whose visage was more marred than any man's, that One Whom men had crucified, but Whom loving hands had laid in a sepulchre: that same blessed One had power to take up His life again, was here risen from the dead and was alive once more. Oh, how they wondered! Why, think you, didn't He make Himself known to them? It was not His way, because God's word was to be exalted; that word which men despise had to be upheld; He expounded unto them the scriptures. That which scripture speaks of is Christ, Christ from beginning to end—"the things concerning Himself." Oh, for eyes to see the beauty and the excellency of it all! What a wonderful end to that journey! They were going to a despised place, but Christ is there. Better to be "by night" with those timid shepherds with the heavenly host, and the Angel of God, than in the inn, where there was no room for the Lord Jesus.

He then takes bread and gives to them. He Himself was the true Bread come down from heaven. We know the bread is the symbol of His body given, and it is in death they had beheld Him, and through His death the

Spirit of God makes known to us Who Jesus is. They saw the Christ of God, they beheld now the One Whom they had last seen on the cross. And that same One we see, by faith, in heaven to-day. Jesus! What a sight! And it is the blessed effect of communion with Christ. May we each walk with Him, and in communion with Him Who loves us and died for us on Calvary.

T.H.L.

One Mind and One Heart.

(Read 1 Chronicles xii. 23-38.)

THEY came "to make David king." That was the point of their coming together. David was the anointed king, and we are reminded that our Lord Jesus is the anointed Lord, but He is not reigning yet. Do you remember that very remarkable word in the second epistle to Timothy, an apparently detached verse? It says, "Remember that Jesus Christ . . . was raised from the dead according to my gospel." Why does the Spirit of God give us in the midst of other teaching that singular verse? This is the point, Our Lord is risen from the dead and exalted. These tribes of Israel found themselves together, according to verse 31, with one heart and one mind, to make David king.

We know our precious Saviour is the anointed One, but where is He to-day? We know that He is not on His own throne to-day. "Sit Thou on My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." We are in a day when we need this exhortation to Timothy more than anything else. The Lord Jesus should be the one absorbing Object of our hearts, and the record of these tribes gives us a few hints how to do it.

Those of Issachar are the kind of men that are wanted. They had understanding of the times (ver. 32). We are not likely to make the mistake of thinking we are in the times of prosperity. We are in days of adversity and trial and difficulty and struggle. And what a joy it is to forget this at times, and raise our

voices in praise to the Lord Jesus in spite of what the wilderness is; but this is the point: We want to be like the men who had understanding of the times, who knew what Israel ought to do. What was right a hundred years ago is right to-day in the main truth and in all respects. The important thing is to walk in the power of the Spirit.

You remember the words in the prophecy of Haggai where God says, "My Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not" (ii. 4). Do not let us forget that this is the Spirit's day. Most especially it is now the day of the Spirit of God. He is here to glorify Christ, and what we want is to be in the power and unction of the Holy Spirit. Now the children of Israel had understanding of the times, and that is most important for us also, is it not?

The next were of Zebulun (ver. 33), and they were not of a double heart, not a heart and a heart. They were of one heart to make David king. Is not that the great necessity to-day, to have one heart of loyalty for Christ, not of loyalty to the brethren, nor of any speciality of our own? If you drift this way and I that way, the danger will be that we shall both get something between us and Christ.

Some of us know something of the difficulties of the present day. There never was such a day of division and trial as in the assemblies of what we call the gathered saints. Many of the dear saints of God do not know where they are themselves. Some cling to one thing and some to another, like the people did in the shipwreck of Paul. But the thing that keeps us, is not to be of a double heart, not of a heart and a heart, but of one heart to exalt the Lord.

Then we find those of this tribe were remarkable for being able to keep in rank. These men kept shoulder to shoulder, and to-day we want men who can keep rank, who will keep shoulder to shoulder. Some of us are inclined to keep ahead of the others, and some to lag behind, and this promotes disorder.

Then (ver. 37) we get, "On the other side of Jordan

... all these were men of war." We long sometimes to have done with the warfare, to clap our glad wings and fly away, to lay down our instruments of war. There is a tendency to say we have had enough of conflict. But all these were men of war who could keep rank. And they "came with a perfect heart to Hebron to make David king," king over all Israel, God's anointed king. The Lord Jesus is not reigning yet. He is still on high. "Sit Thou on My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." But He should reign in our hearts even now.

The tribes came together with a knowledge and understanding of the times. These men understood the times, were not of a double heart, could keep rank, and came with a perfect heart to make David king.

We have not got into the place of rest yet, but with what joy we raise our voices in praise to the Lord. Do you think the Lord is not interested in a company of His own like this? He saw us yesterday, He sees us to-day, and He sees the twos and threes, unknown to most, forgotten by many, perhaps unseen by other saints, but all are known to Him. He knows, and He sees us, and He has not forgotten us. And the day is coming when He says, "I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Rev. ii. 17). This is what we look forward to. May the Lord grant us that place of overcomers.

T.R.

His Command and His Presence.

THESE two things are necessary in our path of service to the Lord, if through grace we know Him as our Saviour, the One Who has redeemed us by His precious blood. In any path in which we desire to serve our blessed Master, we should be first assured that we have His word to go, and then shall we have the assurance of His presence with us. In the call of many, as recorded in His word, we have this again

and again illustrated, and we may find profit to our souls in looking at a few instances in scripture.

He distinctly called Moses to a work for Him : "Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt," and when Moses, who after forty years at the backside of the desert had learnt his own weakness, said "Who am I," etc., the word of assurance was, "*Certainly I will be with thee.*" (Ex. iii. 10-12.) Thus though his faith may not have risen to the occasion, he had the word of the Lord for his path and the assurance of His presence in that path.

Again, Joshua, who was his successor in the work, was thus encouraged and assured : "Moses My servant is dead ; now, therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them" (Josh. i. 2). And again : "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed"; and what was to be the happy source of this strength and courage, the verse tells us : "For the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (verse 9). He had previously said in verse 5 : "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee; *as I was with Moses*, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

Again in the following book (Judges), when Israel had again and again wandered and been restored, God raised up Gideon to be a judge among His people, and to him the Lord says, as He looked upon him, "Go in this thy might and thou shalt save Israel" (chap. vi. 14), and when he complained of his smallness and poverty ("little in his own eyes") the Lord said unto him : "*Surely I will be with thee.*" Thus might instances be multiplied throughout the word of God how again and again, as with Joseph, so with Samuel, David, Solomon and many others, it is said : "And the Lord was with him."

Passing on to the dark days of Israel's history, when God raised up the prophet Jeremiah, we hear the same voice of an ever-gracious God. If Jeremiah complains that he cannot speak, "for I am a child," the Lord answers him : "Say not, I am a child : for thou shalt go *to all that I shall send thee*, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces : *for I am with thee* to deliver thee, saith the Lord" (Jer. i. 6-8 ; also see 17-19 verses). In this way the prophet was encouraged in a most difficult and trying day to pass on the word of Jehovah to His rebellious people, a word of warning and of judgment, yet mingled with gracious promises of a day of future blessedness for those people who were beloved for the fathers' sake. In still later days, after the captivity, when some, having been restored to the land, had commenced to rebuild the temple and had flagged yet again, God sends a special messenger with a series of prophecies embraced in the short book of Haggai, and among them we have again the command and the assurance of His presence. After calling upon them to consider their ways, and pointing out to them the various ways in which His hand had been upon them, apparently unrecognised, He says : "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood and build the house ; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified." The effect of this is to produce obedience and fear with the happy encouragement contained in a special message to them, "*I am with you, saith the Lord*" (Haggai i. 13).

Surely this is full of encouragement to any heart that desires to walk with God and to have the happy assurance of His presence, and yet the Lord graciously repeats the promise in the following chapter a little less than a month later in these words : "Speak now to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory ? and how do ye see it now ? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing ? Yet now be strong, O

Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: *for I am with you*, saith the Lord of hosts. According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, *so My Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not*" (Haggai ii. 2-5).

We are reminded in Rom. xv. 4 that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." May God use these scriptures to this end, and if we have in any measure heard the word of the Lord: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15), we may be assured of His presence, for He has said, "Lo, *I am with you* alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). And the word to Paul in Corinth was: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: *for I am with thee*" (Acts xviii. 9).

T.W.

Service.

CONNECT your service with nothing but God—not with any particular set of persons. You may be comforted by fellowship, and your heart refreshed; but you must work by your own individual faith and energy, without leaning on anyone whatever; for, if you do, you cannot be a faithful servant. Service must ever be measured by faith, and one's *own communion with God*. Saul even may be a prophet when he gets amongst the prophets; but David was always the same—in the cave or anywhere. Whilst the choicest blessings given me here are in fellowship, yet a man's service must flow from himself, else there will be weakness. If I have the word of wisdom, I must use it for the saint who may seek my counsel. It is "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." But also "*Let everyone prove his own work*, and then

shall he have rejoicing in himself alone and not in another." There is no single place grace brings us into, but is a place of temptation, and that we cannot escape though we shall be helped through. In every age the blessing has been from individual agency; and the moment it has ceased to be this, it has declined into the world; 'tis humbling, but it makes us feel that all comes immediately from God. The tendency of association is to make us lean upon one another.

When there are great arrangements for carrying on work, there is not the recognition of this inherent blessing, which "tarrieth not for the sons of men." I don't tarry for man, if I have faith in God, I act upon the strength of that—let a man act as the Lord leads him. The Spirit of God is not to be fettered by man.

All power arises from the direct authoritative energy of the Holy Ghost in the *individual*. Paul and Barnabas (Acts xiii.) were sent forth by the Holy Ghost, recommended to the grace of God by the church at Antioch, but they had no communication with it till they returned, but then there was the joyful concurring of love in the service that had been performed,—he that had talents went and traded. Paul says: "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." Where there is a desire to act, accompanied by real energy, a man will rise up and walk, but if he cannot do this, and the energy is not there, the attempt to move is only restlessness and weakness.

Love for Jesus sets one to work.—I know no other way.

ANON.

Walking on the Water.

(Matt. xiv.)

THE departure of the disciples, besides its general character, sets before us peculiarly the Jewish remnant. Peter individually, in coming out of the ship, goes out to meet Jesus who has revealed Himself to it, and walks upon the sea—a bold undertaking, but based on the words of Jesus, "Come." Yet remark here that

this walk has no other foundation than, "If it be Thou," that is to say, Jesus Himself. There is no support, no possibility of walking, if Christ be lost sight of. All depends on Him. There is a known means in the ship; there is nothing but faith, which looks to Jesus, for walking on the water. Man, as mere man, sinks by the very fact of being there. Nothing can sustain itself except that faith which draws from Jesus the strength that is in Him, and which imitates Him. But it is sweet to imitate Him; and one is then nearer to Him, more like Him. This is the true position of the church, in contrast with the remnant in their ordinary character. Jesus walks on the water as on the solid ground. He Who created the elements as they are could well dispose of their qualities at His pleasure. He permits storms to arise for the trial of our faith. He walks on the stormy wave as well as on the calm. Moreover, the storm makes no difference. He who sinks in the waters does so in the calm as well as in the storm, and he who can walk upon them will do so in the storm as well as in the calm—that is to say, unless circumstances are looked to and so faith fail, and the Lord is forgotten. For often circumstances make us forget Him where faith ought to enable us to overcome circumstances through our walking by faith in Him Who is above them all. Nevertheless, blessed be God! He Who walks in His own power upon the water is there to sustain the faith and the wavering steps of the poor disciple; and at any rate that faith had brought Peter so near to Jesus that His outstretched hand could sustain him. Peter's fault was that he looked at the waves, at the storm (which, after all, had nothing to do with it), instead of looking at Jesus, Who was unchanged, and Who was walking on those very waves, as his faith should have observed. Still the cry of his distress brought the power of Jesus into action, as his faith ought to have done; only it was now to his shame, instead of being in the enjoyment of communion and walking like the Lord.

J.N.D.

Notes of a Bible Reading on Genesis xxviii—xxx.

GOD'S dealings with Jacob may be summed up as grace, guidance, and government. And the history of Jacob shows the personal operation of these things in human life, and the finished product, for:—

1. The supplanter becomes Israel, the prince of God.
2. The defaulter becomes the blesser of his own seed and of Pharaoh, the world-monarch.
3. The man of faith dies in full assurance of promised blessing.

God appears to Jacob on five occasions:—

1. At Bethel—in pure grace, with the knowledge of God (xxviii.).
2. At Padan-aram—in guidance and government, with a promise (xxxi.).
3. At Jabbok, Peniel, Penuel—in grace and government, with self-knowledge (xxxii.).
4. At Shechem—in guidance and government (xxxv.).
5. At Bethel—in grace, and with further revelation of Himself as El-Shaddai, the all-sufficient One (xxxv.).

Later on God spoke to him at Beersheba in the visions of the night (xlvi. 1-4).

xxviii. 1-5. With Isaac's blessing, and a strict charge not to take a wife of the daughters of Canaan, Jacob sets out from home. Never again did he see Rebekah, whose favourite son he was, and who instigated the atrocious fraud upon Esau which made his flight an urgent necessity. They both had to reap as they had sown.

Verses 6-9. Esau takes a third wife of the daughters of Ishmael, in imitation of Jacob. How often when God works does Satan seek to imitate (Acts xix. 13-17).

Verses 10-22. An exquisite picture of the grace of God. A wanderer, self-exiled from his father's house

by his own wrong-doing, lonely, friendless, a prey to dread of a just wrath, guilty of almost incredible meanness and deceit, presenting no single attractive feature in his character, Jacob becomes the subject of the grace of God. Neither by birth nor by character was he qualified for blessing. Yet God reveals Himself as near and a Blessor. There is nothing more wonderful than God's grace to the unworthy. By the sovereign grace of God men are saved now (Eph. ii. 8; Titus ii. 11-13).

In a dream a ladder—or, more strictly, something stepped, suggested possibly by the physical condition of the country in that part—is presented to Jacob's gaze, crowded with the activities of God's messengers. The angels, it may be, ascended with the tale of human need, and descended with the grace of God to meet it.

A blessing, full, free, and unconditional, is assured to him, based upon the purpose and promise of God. It exactly suited Jacob's need, for being:—

1. Alone—he sees the angels of God near him (cf. Heb. i. 14);
2. Friendless—God says, “I am with thee”;
3. Uncertain as to the future—“I will keep thee”;
4. Feeling the separation from his father's house—“I will bring thee again into this land”;
5. Experiencing the sad consequences of his own mistakes, a time when the heart is ready to doubt God's grace—God says, “I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.”

The permanence of the blessing is assured by the character of God, to which reference is made in Mal. iii. 6.

How little Jacob knew of God is apparent because the thought of God's presence terrified him. He knew not that perfect love which casts out fear (1 Jno. iv. 18).

Faith, the decisive factor in his life, was, however, working, though but feebly, for in his vow to God Jacob slips in a characteristic clause about food and

raiment. It is easier to trust God for eternal blessings than for temporal daily needs.

Conscious of God's grace to him, Jacob seems to feel that something must be given to God in return, if only a tithe.

Bethel marks the beginning of Jacob's spiritual life. On his deathbed he refers to what happened here as being the most important thing in his eventful life (xlvi. 3). It was his first experience of God's grace. Later in the same chapter, comprehensively and concisely, yet with great discrimination, he says: "God, before Whom *my fathers* Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God Which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel Which redeemed me from all evil," etc.—testifying thus to the guidance and government of God.

At the close of his life Paul remembers the exceeding abundant grace of the Lord and the mercy shown him at his conversion (1 Tim. i. 12-16).

xxix. and xxx. Abraham's and Isaac's wanderings were *inside* the land of promise; Jacob's *outside*. In this Jacob typifies Israel at present, away from their land, scattered amongst the Gentiles. Officially set aside as God's people, they are, however, the objects of His providential care, and, like Jacob, will be restored in a future day.

Unlike Joseph, who is a type of Christ throughout his life, Jacob typifies Christ only in the circumstances of his marriage. Jacob loved Rachel, who represents the Jews, but he got Leah first. So now the Gentiles are being blessed, not the Jews exclusively (Rom. xi. 11, etc.).

Neither tent nor altar appears in Padan-aram. There is little to choose between Jacob and Laban. Each endeavours to outwit the other in craftiness. How sad when the behaviour of the child of God is indistinguishable from that of the worldly man!

In His governmental dealings, God chastened His servant by the bitter experiences of Padan-aram. Yet Laban is obliged to admit that God has not forsaken Jacob (xxx. 27). As in the cases of Abraham (xii.

and xx.) and Isaac (xxvi.), God never disowns before the world, nor forsakes, the one who has true faith, however severely He may, governmentally, cause that one to suffer for his misdeeds.

Jacob married both wives at the close of the first period of seven years' service. The week (xxix. 27) is the customary week of the marriage festivities. Jacob therefore married Rachel one week after Leah, though he had to serve Laban another seven years for her.

Laban's cruel trick—cruel both for Jacob and Leah—led to unhappiness in the family life, revealed by the names given to Leah's and the maidservant's sons. Could there be a better example than Jacob's family history of the sad consequences of setting aside God's appointed order that a man should have only one wife? Several in the book of Genesis are deceived, but none so cruelly as Jacob, and then by his own sons. Deceit was evidently a family weakness.

The trick played by Jacob with regard to the flocks (xxx. 37-42), though not a breach of the terms of the bargain with Laban, was unworthy of one who believed in God, but without doubt there were very definite results to Jacob's action. Jacob himself attributed the result to God (xxxi. 8-9).

From what he says in the next chapter (vv. 36-42), Jacob had evidently suffered much harsh and unfair treatment at Laban's hands. Nevertheless, God blessed Jacob (xxx. 43), so that he returned to Canaan with a very large host.

E.A.P.

“All the grace that was in the Lord Jesus was brought out to meet man's sorrow and misery, and to bear on every circumstance through which He passed. In this we often find our failure. Even when the *motive* is right, the *manner* is wanting in graciousness. But it was never so with Christ. He was always seeking to promote the glory of God; but never did He in any manner, nor any occasion, depart from the spirit of grace.”

“He is Worthy.”

“**H**E is worthy”; take it with thee,
 Just this thought to ponder o’er,
 Till His loveliness and beauty
 Fill thy soul yet more and more;
 Till thy heart o’erflow with longing,
 Till thy mouth be filled with praise,
 And Himself become the object
 Of thy thoughts and words and ways.

“He is worthy,” take it with thee
 To the throne of grace on high,
 What thou in His name requirest,
 God can never more deny;
 Art thou asking for the interests
 Of His kingdom here on earth?
 Ask more largely—“He is worthy,”
 Ask according to His worth.

Shine this word upon thy labour,
 Lighting up the pathway dim.
 Does the daily task seem trivial?
 Think thou’rt doing it for Him;
 Do it heartily and gladly,
 “He is worthy” of thy best;
 Those who would be much in service,
 Must be faithful in the least.

“He is worthy,” He Who loved thee,
 Ere this world began to be,
 He Who suffered to redeem thee,
 Yea, Who gave Himself for thee.
 Then of Him the Lamb, the slain One,
 Be e’en here on earth thy song,
 Till thou on the throne behold Him,
 Praise Him with the ransomed throng.

ANON.

Meditation on Judges iii. 5-11.

REVIVALS.

IT is most important to understand that the church having been unfaithful to the call of God, restoration collectively is no longer possible. Christians are sometimes misled, in their thoughts, by 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 chapter 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 may find such revivals in their various phases from chapter iii. to chapter 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 (xi. 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 infirmity of these witnesses (characteristic of the period we are in) glorified the power of Him Who could use them.

Chapter i. speaks of Othniel in his private domestic life. 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 His 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 fruit 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 his 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 realise these heavenly things, and we shall be instruments well-fitted for the Master and *prepared* unto every good work. H.L.R.

The above is an excerpt from a very valuable little volume by the late Dr. Rossier entitled “Meditations on the Book of Judges.” Copies may be obtained from the publisher of this magazine. Paper 1/6, Cloth 2/3 each.

Extract from a Letter written Jan. 6th, 1892, by C. H. Spurgeon.

“**O**N looking back upon the valley of the shadow of death through which I have passed so short a time ago, I feel my mind grasping with firmer faith that gospel which for so many years I have preached. We have not been deceived. Jesus does give rest to those who come to Him; He does save those who trust Him; He does photograph His image on those who learn of Him.

“I hate the christianised infidelity of the modern school more than ever, as I see how it rends away from sinful man his last and only hope. Cling to the gospel of forgiveness through the substitutionary sacrifice; and spread it with all your might, each one of you, for it is the only cure for bleeding hearts.”

Satan Cast Out.

THE remarkable events recorded in Luke, chapters ix. and x., are still more significant when it is noticed how they are interwoven with prayer—that Christ-like attitude which forms such an essential factor in Christian life and service.

Chapter ix. speaks of Jesus *going up* into a mountain *to pray*—Matthew's Gospel terms it "a high mountain": "And *as He prays* the fashion of His countenance* was altered and His raiment was white and glistering." This response, as an answer to prayer, stands alone. The place and the moment were unique, as was the company gathered to be witnesses of "His majesty" (see 2 Peter i. 15-18, N.Tr. and R.V.). This "glory and honour," together with the declaration, "This is My beloved Son: hear Him," were the Father's radiant answer to our Lord's prayers. He lifts the veil of the coming kingdom and, in miniature, gives us to survey its lineaments; where the choicest gem and the central object of which is named in the glad words, "This is My beloved Son." Is it not still true that in order to know the mind and heart of God there must be supplication and prayer?

The next day they *come down* from the mount. What a sight met their gaze! and how it reminds us of the sight which Moses saw when he descended from another mount in earlier days (Ex. xxxiii). How changed is the atmosphere! "Above," God provided a setting in which to "manifest His glory" and where they could speak of "His decease" with its dread realities; but "below," unclean spirits ruled the scene. One of them, a deaf and dumb demon, had taken possession, from its birth, of a "little child"—the most defenceless of all God's creatures, in whom he indulged his cruel nature. But a cry—a prayer, above the din of the crowd, reaches the Saviour's ear: "Master, I beseech Thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child"

*See also the references to His *face* which is the same word in vv. 51, 52, 53 and chap. x. 1.

(v. 38). Agony, despair, helplessness, and Satan's power, largely held the world in their grip. It was a chaos which prayer, and prayer only, could cope with: "This thing goeth not out but by prayer and fasting," were the Lord's words, after He had delivered the little one and given him back to his father. That act is a sample of the gracious service He has been carrying on in this world ever since. Satan's might can only be thwarted, and precious souls set free, by prayer and the power of the name of Jesus.

They could speak of "His decease"[†] and of His being "received up," as showing that His death, and His being "received up into glory" (1 Tim. iii. 16) filled His mind beyond every other thought. But before carrying out His great purpose, which the disciples found it difficult to comprehend, He would first send out the seventy, as it says: "The Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before *His face* into every city and place whither He Himself would come" (x. 1). And as He sends them He bids them pray that labourers should be sent forth into the harvest. What an answer was given to their prayers when He Himself came and preached to Satan's captives! For He was set on preaching the glad tidings, ere He suffered, and so He sends them to prepare the ground and provide samples of the blessing He would Himself bestow when He came.

Having carried out their mission, "the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name." This, *their* triumph over the power of Satan, coming so soon after *His own* at the foot of the mount, lifted His mind onward, to anticipate another day. "And He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (v. 18).

What volumes of infinite love and suffering on the Lord's part lie behind the fulfilment of these words of Jesus; as well as woe and wretchedness unspeakable

[†]Or His "departure" or "exodus." It is the same word as used in 2 Pet. i. 15; Heb. xi. 22.

for humanity ! But, thank God, to faith, as it was to the Lord's heart then, all is over. Divine wisdom, in providing deliverance through the cross, and divine mercy, embracing ruined man, have triumphed. As the servants of the Lord had overcome wicked spirits *on earth*, so other servants in heaven would overcome the dragon himself—"called the Devil and Satan." What a combat was that waged by Him at Calvary, and by Michael and his angels in heaven (Rev. xii. 7) ! No pen can depict them. But the return of the seventy was a cheer to the Lord's heart, for it was the presage of the final conquest over Satan's power, the triumph of divine love which could write the names of poor sinners, once the slaves of Satan, in the very heavens from which now He saw him ignominiously cast out. What streams of sweetness this fact has yielded to millions ! Whether we think of the sorrows of the pathway as a whole, or of the agonies of His saints in Russia, or the special besetments of the Lord's servants everywhere in their varied labours, we can greatly rejoice. We are on the winning side. Victory is ours, through His grace, over the world, the flesh and the devil.

St. Paul's priceless epistle to Rome is of special interest in view of the events we are considering. The background of it is a picture of gloom and misery beyond parallel, in which humanity and creation are together completely involved. Then "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"; "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord," and "the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." See Rom. i., iii., v., and viii. "Children of wrath" become, through faith, "sons of God," indwelt by the Holy Spirit, whereby they cry Abba, Father, whilst they await the completion of that predestined purpose of God Who having already called and justified them shall also glorify them, thus conforming them to the image of His Son. Finally, if, in the meantime, some are

weak and some are strong, the epistle winds up with "the God of peace shall bruise* Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, Amen." *Bruise?* Yes, the very word used in Luke ix. 39, to describe the unclean spirit's treatment of the little child. What an epistle! What a conclusion! Jesus glorified is the pledge of Satan's final overthrow.

Nothing imaginable can cheer and hearten the Lord's servants more than this assurance. Frequently it means labour, disappointment, and physical fatigue, but what was seen in miniature on the mount will fill the whole earth very soon: the *glory of the Lord* will cover the earth. The Son of God—"MY SON"—will be the source and centre of it all. The harvest garnered, the redeemed at home on high, Israel restored, and Satan bound, heaven and earth may well become vibrant with the praise and glory of the Lamb on the throne, while even "things infernal" bow to the name of Jesus, to the glory of God the Father.

W.M.R.

The Virtuous Woman.

(Proverbs xxxi. 10-31. "Her price is far above rubies.")

THIS chapter has interested me very much in musing over it, and one has a desire to pass on to our younger sisters some thoughts that have been gathered up. They are with us in the heavenly road, and we wish not to find fault, but to show them some of the beauties in the word of God which they may have overlooked. Now that men in the religious world have discovered that woman is *equal* to man, and that man is no longer the *head* of the woman, it will be well for those of the weaker sex to take their bearings, and remind each other of God's plan for them! His order in creation is unchanged—"Adam was first formed." The relation of the wife to the husband, as also her distinct line of

*Rendered "break in pieces," Mark v. 4; "break in shivers," Rev. ii. 27; "break," Mark xiv. 3; John xix. 36.

work and conduct, is taught from Genesis to Revelation in beautiful types, in history, and later in the apostles' doctrine—so we are not left in doubt as to it.

This remarkable chapter shows us the value which the Lord put upon the godly woman in Israel, who had faith and courage to *live before Him*, in the midst of nations who knew Him not—"Her price is far above rubies." The beauty and shining of the gem was there, in the life of this "keeper at home," as the details show. People in these days think themselves so wise—and competent—that they do not take time to look into God's word. As to this daughter of Israel, we may notice that there is no thought of inability or lack of brains. She is indeed full of good works, maintains order in the household, and her children rise up and call her blessed! She can buy a field and care for the poor! Though her husband is known in the gate, she does not take her place there. It will be happy for Christian women, whether married or unmarried, to bow to God's order, and let their ways and dress, choice of company, etc., be formed after this pattern for "holy women" set apart for God! She is highly commended (ver. 29), and, believing women in our day, each in her own sphere, in like manner may have and enjoy the approval of the Lord. "She hath done what she could" must have been very sweet to the woman who heard it (Mark xiv. 8).

If it seems *hard* to you to take the lower place, just think of the love, and tender compassion of the Saviour for the women, when He so graciously dwelt among us! How often in their company, meeting every need as it appeared! Let us give the truth its place, and we shall have guidance for the path and great encouragement in this day of disorder.

"Careful less to serve Him much,
Than to please Him perfectly."

It may need some self-denial to discard some marks of the world which have been allowed to creep in, but a smile or a sneer will not hurt, and the joy of following

Christ is far better than the friendship of the world.

Before closing these remarks we may look at 1 Pet. iii. 1-5, and see how the apostle, by the Spirit, brings his programme into line with Prov. xxxi. :

1. Subjection to husband.
2. Chaste behaviour.
3. Modest apparel.
4. Trust in God.

The apostle Paul desired that his dear son Timothy should be a good bishop, and is careful to tell him what he should look for in the women, and we are constrained to quote these touching details of service—"If she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers—if she have washed the saints' feet, and followed every good work." Such a woman was to be honoured and cared for, in accord with God's value of her service for Christ. "The woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised" (Prov. xxxi. 30) !

The results, too, may be far-reaching. A sailor lad is sent aloft on his ship one stormy night. He knows not what may happen, but thinks of his *mother*, her *prayers*, and recalls the gospel texts she taught him, and as the angry waves roll over the deck below, a soul is saved from hell ! It is that life before God, shining out as the *ruby*, which may also remind us of the precious blood, by which the sinner is justified ! The lad went home to tell what great things the Lord had done for him !

A boy of ten years is brought into the Edinburgh hospital for an operation. On the "table" he appears calm and fearless. Doctors are pleased—call him a good boy, and prepare for the work. A voice is heard when all is ready—"Now please, doctor, we must have some prayer." The doctor tries to hush him, saying, "You can pray !" He pleads again—"Please, doctor, do pray ! *Mother* always says, 'When there's anything got to be done, we *must* have a little prayer.' " The poor doctor shook his head, he could not pray, but, turning quickly round to the students ranged to witness

the operation, said: "Now, you fellows, one of you must find your voice and pray for this child." One of them did get on his feet, and with all heads bowed in God's presence, asked Him for help with the operation and to spare the life. Was not this a grand result—the shining of the ruby again — the precious hidden thing brought up before the many, to the glory of God! A life of faith and obedience is ever beautiful before Him!

The prayer was answered, and the child restored to his mother!

But I fancy some of our young people will say, What a fuss! Why, I should lose my post, if I did not dress as others do. No! we think not! A diligent and competent worker in any department of life is appreciated—and therefore a longer skirt, and a modest manner, will not cause such a trouble!

A list of the things the Lord asks specially of women would not be a long one; should not the few things command both interest and loving obedience? What if (listening) they should hear Him saying to His Father: "They have kept Thy word" (Jno. xvii. 6). What a recompense for anything given up!

Women who have spent years under His eye, seeking through grace, and by the help of the Spirit, to keep His word, have found as the result a *safe path*, and a *joy* which the world can never give!

A DISCIPLE.

The Consecration of the First-Born.

THE words that Moses heard out of the midst of the fire in the bush must not only have awakened in his heart the remembrance of God's goodness towards his fathers, but also have shown him that he had a personal link with the God of Abraham; for God had said to him, "I am the God of *thy father*." (The faith of Moses' parents is made mention of in Heb. xi.) But "Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." Such was necessarily the effect produced

on the heart by the presence of God when He was not known as the Justifier. The instant it becomes a question of appearing before God, conscience makes itself heard bearing witness that we are *sinner*s.

When Jacob had seen in his dream the magnificent vision of the ladder, whose top reached heaven, he awoke to the consciousness of the presence of God, and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." And he was afraid, and said, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Surely God had only spoken to him in words of grace and goodness; but his conscience in the presence of a holy God condemned him, and his soul was filled with fear.

We find the same thing in the case of Isaiah the prophet. (See Isa. vi.) He saw "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims . . . And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." Then the prophet cries, "Woe is me! for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." God's answer to the prophet's cry, though it brought fully into light the real secret of his distress, applied to him the needed remedy at the same moment. One of the seraphims touched his lips with a live coal from off the altar of burnt-offering, and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

God knows what we need. He acts by His Spirit to produce "truth in the inward parts," bringing us into His own presence, that there we may be made aware of our true state; but there too He makes known to us the fulness of that redemption by virtue of which He is righteous in "justifying him who believes in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26). Before Christ had suffered for our sins, God, knowing what He was going to do in order to put them away righteously, "forebore" with

sins; that is to say, He did not impute them to those who believed on Him, although He could not yet direct their hearts to an already accomplished redemption. Psalm xxxii., which is quoted in Rom. iv., speaks of the blessedness of this forgiveness, though still looking on, in the spirit of prophecy, to its complete fulfilment; but after the death of Christ, God could make known to all that He had been righteous in granting it in anticipation of the work of redemption (Rom. iii. 25). In the various offerings God set forth by means of types, which all pointed to the one great sacrifice, the principle on which alone the righteousness of God could be satisfied with respect to sin; for "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). God was revealing Himself as "the God that taketh away iniquity, transgression, and sin"; and although only in figure, still He made it clear that for the putting away of sin there must be shed the blood of a spotless victim. But if we are thus delivered from judgment, we are at the same time sanctified, or set apart in holiness to God. Therefore we read (Heb. ix. 13, 14): "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" This is precisely what Isaiah found through grace at the seraph's hand; and we shall see the same principle presented in figure in the history of Moses, at the time when "the deliverance," of which God had spoken to him in the bush, was about to be accomplished.

God had said to Moses, "The cry of the children of Israel is come up unto Me: and I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt" (Ex. iii. 9, 10). In accomplishing the work of deliverance God brought nine plagues upon the Egyptians. At the moment when He

was about to send upon them the last, which was to smite all the first-born of the land of Egypt, He instituted the passover as the means of sheltering His people from the sword of the destroying angel, who was to execute His judgment. The blood of the paschal lamb, sprinkled on the two side-posts and on the upper door-post, put the house and all who were in it beyond the reach of the sword of judgment; "For," it is said, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the *Lord*. And the blood shall be you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (Ex. xii. 12, 13). At the same time the Lord says to Moses: "Sanctify unto Me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both man and beast: it is mine" (Ex. xiii. 1, 2). Similarly in Num. iii. 12, 13, we find it stated of the children of Israel: "all the first-born are Mine; for on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto Me all the first-born in Israel." God comes down to deliver His people; that is the first truth set before us, and the immediate result of it is that His people are set apart for Him. This great moral principle is thus clearly established, the destruction of the first-born being an intimation of God's thoughts as to this world, shadowing forth beforehand the judgment reserved for it.

The deliverance corresponds in extent to the judgment, and expresses at the same time the measure of personal sanctification, which is intimately linked up with the deliverance itself. "Fear not," it is said: "for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by name; *THOU art MINE.*" And again, "*This people have I formed for Myself; they shall shew forth My praise*" (Isa. xliii. 1, 21). So too, after the complete deliverance of the people of Israel from the land of Egypt,

God sends them this message by Moses: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you UNTO MYSELF. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and AN HOLY NATION" (Ex. xix. 4-6).

W.J.L.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Hold Fast.

IT is a noteworthy fact that the first question on record came from the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Its object was to invalidate the word of God. "Hath God said?" was the fiery dart aimed with deadly accuracy at the human heart: alas! no shield of faith was uplifted to quench it. Reason then, as reason now, sought to controvert and enter into explanations, little realising that it was with Satan it had to do. Faith, faith in God, was lacking, and this is our only safeguard; with this shield, we are told, we "shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." And faith, be it remembered, is always unreasoning, though never unreasonable.

In spite of the reasonings of our modern rationalists, we still believe that we have in the Bible a solid foundation on which our faith may rest.

Is the Bible a revelation from God? And, is it inspired of God? These are the questions which are agitating minds at the present time. If it be neither the one nor the other, then it is the cleverest, and consequently the most wicked, imposture ever palmed off upon mankind; and yet, strange to say, wherever it has gone it has brought enlightenment, peace, comfort, and blessing both in life and at death.

But these questions, we repeat, are the questions of the day, and must be faced as coming directly from

Satan. They spread themselves to the remotest corners of Christendom, and forebode the rapid approach of the apostasy long since foretold (2 Thess. ii.). Let us not be thrown off our guard by the discovery that the authority of the Scriptures is being questioned by professors of divinity, doctors of theology, learned clerics, or eloquent preachers. Let us not imagine that any section of Christendom is free from the poisonous influences which are at work. Each individual Christian needs to be on the alert. "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (Extract)

Friendly Advice on Reading the Word of God.

TO interpret scripture we need a power and a wisdom above our own. We cannot understand by forcing the lock; the key is wanted, and grace gives it in Christ as taught by the word and Spirit of God. If you have Christ by faith, you have already the key. In faith apply Him to the Bible, and the Holy Spirit enables you to understand it. It is not a question of a superior mind or of great learning;—for many learned men have been foolish enough in their mistakes. The simple saint who knows not beyond the mother-tongue may understand the Bible, if he with true simplicity submits himself to the Lord and has confidence in His love. This is produced by the Spirit of God: this, and only this, makes men humble, giving withal confidence in God and in His word, by taking away objects which darken, misdirect, or overpower his own mind.

"Take the advice of a friend: read the scriptures prayerfully but believingly, and you will understand what is infinitely better than anything found in the various schemes of man. It is just the same as regards the interpretation of prophecy as in doctrine. No man should convince a Christian that one part of the word

of God is sealed up and the other open. Once on a time it was so. When Daniel of old received those very communications to which the Lord directs the reader (Matt. xxiv. 15), he was told to seal up the book; when John was called to have the same communications and yet greater ones, he was told not to seal up the book. Perhaps you have seen the difference and the reason of it. The principle lay here: Jewish saints could not enter into the true and full meaning of the future until Christ came, at least until the end arrives. For then indeed, when the last days of this age are here, the godly remnant will understand. You cannot separate moral condition from real intelligence of God's word. But the Christian already has, not Christ only, but the Spirit in virtue of redemption; and hence he is called and qualified to search all things, yea the deep things of God. They are now, including the things to come, revealed fully and finally.

"When the grace of God gives faith and the desire to do the will of God, then souls become able to understand both doctrine and prophecy." WILLIAM KELLY.

Notes on a Bible Reading on Genesis xxxi.-xxxiii.

TWENTY years have elapsed in the history of Jacob since he took up his abode with Laban. In chap. xxxii. 1, we read, "Jacob went on his way." To go on our way we need guidance. Chap. xxxi. gives us the second chapter in the history of the spiritual life of Jacob, and deals with God's gracious guidance.

All who have known the grace of God desire guidance by God. Guidance is therefore (1) desired by all who know grace; (2) defined in scripture; (3) described in the life of Jacob.

It is desired by all who know grace because "it is not in man to direct his steps." It is defined in scripture so that we may know exactly how to obtain God's guidance.

The guidance of God is a perpetual miracle in the lives of His people, because of the difficulties which it encounters. We discern it very faintly now, but we shall recognise it very fully hereafter. Though we may not understand it at the time, we are led the right way when we follow God. Jacob's own summary on his deathbed (xlviii. 3, 15, 16) is a very satisfactory comment on God's grace and guidance. Jacob's character was reproduced in his sons.

Guidance desired. God's guidance is desired, by all who know grace, (a) against the bewildering maze of human affairs in which our lot is cast; (b) against the steady opposition of the enemy, who uses men and things subtly, covertly, or openly, to turn us out of the pathway; (c) above our own abysmal ignorance, and the incredible perversity of the human heart; (d) athwart all the currents and cross-currents of schemes and plannings.

Guidance defined (see Ps. xxxii. 8, 9). Here we learn that guidance is certain, and it always comes along one of two roads. There is the high-road of communion (Ps. xxxii. 8). See John viii. 12. Our Lord walked through this world guided. He walked along the high-road of communion. God's guidance will come along this high-road if we are willing ourselves. Abraham lived almost entirely along that high-road. God could speak to him as His friend (so our Lord could say, "I call you not servants . . . but . . . friends"). This re-acted upon Abraham's life. At the time of the destruction of Sodom, Abraham was in the counsels of God, and so in the position in which he could intercede.

Jacob seems to have travelled for the most part along the lower road of guidance. He was very largely guided by how things shaped. For instance, in xxxi. 12, Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, and beheld the countenance of Laban. Then the Lord said to him, "Return" (ver. 13). It is true that God came in, but it is equally true that Jacob was preparing to do it on the force of circumstances.

Before us two roads are always presented, the high-

road of communion, of spiritual elevation, or the lower road of circumstances, with all its attendant disadvantages. God will guide. He will guide by communion. If not, we shall get there all the same, but we shall be driven by circumstances.

Guidance described. In xxviii. Jacob experiences the grace of God.

In xxix. there is a reminder that grace neither bars from human love nor does it free us from domestic cares. The fact that we have known the grace of God does not keep us from getting married, for example.

xxx. warns us of the danger of becoming engrossed in seeking prosperity and comfort, whether in our home or in our business affairs.

xxxi. gives us the very unpleasant circumstances which are used to re-awaken Jacob, and to reveal his spiritual character, and the faith embedded in it.

xxxii. is the complement of xxviii. It is the second great spiritual crisis, and it leads to the changed name and the changed walk.

Names have a wonderful significance to our minds, the very mention of a name bringing a crowd of associations. This is abundantly illustrated by the names, Bethlehem, Nazareth, the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, and Calvary. In these chapters we have (1) Beth-el (xxxi. 13)—“God’s house.” The place where God met Jacob in pure grace; (2) Mizpah (xxxi. 49)—“God’s beacon, or witness”; (3) Mahanaim (xxxii. 2)—“God’s host”; (4) Peniel, or Penuel (xxxii. 30, 31)—“God’s face.”

Our section leaves Jacob happily in possession of the things that constituted the full and true equipment for a real pilgrim. These were (a) the tent (xxxiii. 19); (b) the altar (xxxiii. 20); (c) faith in the Lord God of Israel, shown by the name of the altar.

With regard to Jacob, it is true that he did not walk in the intimacy of communion to the same extent as his father or his grandfather. He was certainly true to his name in that he was a supplanter and a deceiver, and this character he carried throughout his life. It is

well to note, however, that in spite of all his failings he had respect for the birthright and the blessing. The value he set upon them is shown by the very fact of his trying to obtain them by false means, and in this way he shows a certain amount of spiritual intelligence. Jacob valued the birthright and the blessing; Esau, in direct contrast, did not. Esau seems to have had no spiritual discernment whatever; notice his attitude in xxviii. 6-9. Esau, seeing that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father, took a wife of the daughters of Ishmael, himself the child of the flesh. Jacob, in spite of all his shortcomings, was the man of God; Esau was not. Moreover, it is important to notice that throughout scripture God places Jacob with Abraham and Isaac in the oft-repeated formula, "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." After the death of Isaac, Jacob was the foremost man of God in the world, and therefore had great dignity.

The New Testament counterpart of Jacob's wrestling in xxxii. 24-32, is "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 10). It was not in his wrestling that Jacob prevailed, but when he clung. In ver. 26 we read, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." This is a lesson to us. We shall not overcome by striving, but by owning our weakness and clinging to Him. Here also Jacob has to come to an end of himself. When asked, "What is thy name?" he replies, "Jacob." He confesses that he still has the old nature, that he is no better. He is still Jacob, the deceiver; Jacob, the supplanter. We all have to confess, sooner or later, in our Christian life, that "in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Romans vii. 18). When we have come down to this we can prevail.

A. E. D.

ERRATUM.

See page 189, line 13 from top, in our October issue. For "Israel" read "Issachar."

The Soul's Desire.

I 'M waiting for Thee, Lord,
 Thyself then to see, Lord!
 I'm waiting for Thee,
 At Thy coming again :
 Thy glory'll be great, Lord,
 In heavenly state, Lord ;
 Thy glory'll be great
 At Thy coming again !

Caught up in the air, Lord,
 That glory we'll share, Lord !
 Each saint will be there
 At Thy coming again ;
 How glorious the grace, Lord,
 That gave such a place, Lord ;
 It's nearing apace
 At Thy coming again.

The traits of that face, Lord,
 Once marred through Thy grace, Lord,
 Our joy'll be to trace
 At Thy coming again :
 With Thee evermore, Lord,
 Our hearts will adore, Lord ;
 Our sorrow'll be o'er
 At Thy coming again.

For ever with Thee, Lord,
 And like Thee to be, Lord !
 For ever with Thee,
 At Thy coming again :
 I'll live in Thy grace, Lord,
 I'll gaze on Thy face, Lord !
 When finished my race
 At Thy coming again.

J.N.D.

Letter from an Old Disciple to a Young Sister in the Lord.

I DULY received your kind and loving note. It was very welcome and very acceptable. And now I am proving my willingness, at least, to respond to your wish, though I am nothing of a letter-writer. But I have asked the Lord to give me a word for you, and He never fails. *Still, so poor and weak am I, that though* He may graciously give me a word, and present a sweet and profitable line of truth for me to pursue, I may spoil it in the detail.

The flesh ever seeks to intrude itself, and if allowed to get in and show what it can say and do, the fair work of the Spirit will be marred. Hence the need, my dear young sister, of constant watchfulness and prayer.

The blessed Jesus is our perfect example in this — watching and praying, when the deep, and dark shadow of Calvary was gathering thick around Him. He separated Himself from His disciples, that He might “offer up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.”

By watching He saw and anticipated all that was coming. By prayer He passed through it all before it came, in spirit with His Father. So when the deep trial actually came, He was perfectly prepared for it, having gone through it all beforehand in deep and blessed communion with His Father.

Hence the beautiful tranquillity of soul which He manifests in the presence of His enemies. With what sublime dignity He meets Judas, officers, men, chief priests, multitude, etc. In the calm fortitude of One Who could truthfully say “Not My will, but Thine be done,” and Who sought only the Father’s glory, He could say, “Whom seek ye?” “I am He.” Oh! what majesty and holy courage, combined with simple child-like dependence on His Father in heaven.

The deeper the trial, the thicker the darkness, the

heavier the sufferings, He is just the more profoundly subject to His Father's will, and the more entirely cast on Him. The Father's glory, the children's salvation, He kept full in view; which led Him to look beyond the hour and power of darkness "to the cloudless morning" when the "countless multitude" of ransomed hearts will cluster around His blessed Person, beating with perfect love and endless joy to this ever-blessed name, in the bright and eternal effulgence of the Father's glory. "Praise the Lord, Who died to save us; Praise His name for ever dear."

This, my dear child in the gospel, is your only safe and perfect example, looking to Jesus whether joy or sorrow lies before you. Before it actually comes, seek to go through it all in secret with the Lord, so that you may not be taken by surprise and thrown off your guard when called to enter upon the scene. If you have in spirit gone through the trial with the Lord in private, He will be with you and carry you through it in public to His glory; and that's all you have got to care about it.

Read first the scene in the garden as described by Matthew, Mark and Luke, and then add John. When Christ was watching and praying, the disciples were sleeping. Ah! what a lesson! Sleepiness and self-confidence characterised the bold and loving Peter; perfect subjection to God, and simple dependence on Him characterised the dependent "Son of man." But when the hour of the conflict arrived, who stood in the fight alone? Those who had neither watched nor prayed were unprepared; therefore they all forsook Him and fled. Of the people there was none with Him. Ah! what a practical lesson we get here.

And now, my one-year-old, let me ask you. Have you learned (when you know, feel, or fear any trial or difficulty coming upon you) to go away by yourself and lay it all out before the Lord, and in true, sweet, and blessed fellowship with Him go over it all, round it all, through it all, thus honouring the Lord by watching and prayer, knowing that He will honour you, His depend-

ent one, when the difficulty comes, or prevent it from coming altogether? Oh! how different would be our walk and testimony, our practical exhibition of Christ, were we thus to watch and pray. The blessed Lord Himself, my dear young Christian, effectually teach you by His own blessed Spirit; for I, in measure, feel ashamed to speak about things which I have realised so little. But the Lord is very patient, He has borne long with me. I know, and it is a great deal to know, that His precious blood cleanseth from all sin.

Two things make me very happy :—

1. I am washed in the blood of Christ;
2. I am made in Christ the righteousness of God.

Therefore I am fit to be in the holy presence of God without a veil, where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

I state this for you to try yourself on the same ground. Of course you are on precisely the same ground; so is every believer; but all don't know it, because of looking to themselves.

May you be kept, my dear child in the faith, living, walking, and acting in the holy presence of our God and Father, with a single eye and an undivided heart for the glory of His Son, your living Saviour, by the divine power of the Holy Ghost.

With very much love in Christ, I am faithfully yours in the immortal bonds of the ever-blessed gospel.

A. MILLER,

London, 1st June, 1855.

The Consecration of the First-Born.—2.

BUT the consecration to God of all the first-born in Israel supplies us with other unfoldings as to the character of personal holiness; it shows us in what it consists, as well as the extent of its practical application. In an especial manner God said of every first-

born, "It is MINE." This implied that it was to be offered in sacrifice; and with every clean animal this was the case. "The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto Me. Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen and with thy sheep; seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it Me." (Exod. xxii. 29, 30.) Unclean domestic animals were to be redeemed; "But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb." And this same principle is applied to man: "All the first-born of thy sons thou shalt redeem." (Exod. xxxiv. 20.)

Now this redemption of the first-born sons in Israel was accomplished in a remarkable manner. (The details are given at the beginning of the book of Numbers.) They were replaced by the Levites. "Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the first-born that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel; therefore the Levites shall be MINE" (Num. iii. 12). The Levites were thenceforth consecrated to the service of the priests, and afterwards for the instruction of the people in the law of God. They had no inheritance as a separate tribe amongst the children of Israel, but were to live on the tithes of the produce of the land, brought regularly by the people. "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord" (Lev. xxvii. 30; Num. xviii. 21-24; Deut. xxvi. 12, 13).

We see, therefore, that the consecration that flowed from redemption was *entire and personal*. As the sacrifice was wholly consumed upon the altar, thus the redeemed person is considered as belonging wholly to the Lord, soul and body, and in every respect set apart for His service.

The Lord said of His sheep, "I know *My* sheep;" to His Father He says of them, "The men which *Thou gavest Me* out of the world" (John x. ; xvii.). Consequently the exhortation addressed by the Spirit to the believer is, that "ye present your bodies a *living sacrifice*, holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom. xii. 1); and

again, "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. vi. 13, 14). The Christian, brought to God, and already delivered from death and judgment and Satan's power, is to live in dependence upon God and in communion with Him; reflected in the details of his daily walk. He has been delivered from the world, and from the judgment that is to come upon it; his daily life is therefore to express that he is dead to the world, and alive unto God, and that, recognising that he is a pilgrim and stranger upon the earth, he is seeking the country and the city which God has prepared for him; for he already possesses, by faith, his inheritance in the heavenly Jerusalem. There is seen "the assembly of *the first-born*, which are written in heaven;" there are enjoyed the presence and communion of God the Judge of all, surrounded as He is "by the spirits of just men made perfect"; there is found the climax of eternal joy and blessing in Jesus, the First-born from among the dead, the Mediator of a new covenant. There too the soul finds the ground of all confidence before God, in "the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than Abel." There also we are surrounded by myriads of angels, the universal gathering, and learn that they are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. xi. 13, 16; xii. 22, 24; i. 14). Redemption brings us into the immediate presence of God, setting us there with a good conscience to learn that every need of the soul is met, and full provision made to meet all our spiritual enemies and all the difficulties we have to encounter in this present life. Faith simply accepts what God has said, and takes freely and joyfully the place He has given. He has set us *in Christ*; and we have to learn in the path of obedience what it is to count on God in everything. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He has chosen us in Christ "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love;

having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved; in Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. i. 4-7).

We have only been able to glance at the truths contained in the sanctification of the first-born. But what a field of study is opened to us in the word in connection with the service of the Levites! Our present principles involved, and which we have sought to lay before our readers: first, what it is to have a "good conscience" in the presence of God, by means of the blood, under the shelter of which God has set us in sovereign grace; then that the completeness of personal consecration must correspond with the extent and perfection of the deliverance. Of course we do need God with us, as well as God for us, in order that this practical consecration may be carried out in practice, and He can never fail us. Moses went on in obedience, learning step by step from God the marvellous lessons of His grace. "Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them" (Heb. xi. 28). Is he not in this a precious example for us—one of those witnesses of faith by whom we are "compassed about"?

W. J. L.

From an Address given at the Alphen 1930 Conference.

**"The Lord is my strength and song,
And He is become my salvation."**

THIS is a song which was first sung by Moses and the children of Israel on the wilderness side of the Red Sea (Exodus xv. 1, 2). Then centuries later David embodies it in Psalm cxviii. (v. 14); while we find the same chorus will be revived again in the millennium;

where Isaiah, looking down the stream of time, hears it sung by Israel again, when brought back and redeemed from every corner of the earth; in a future day (ch. xii. 2).

Can this ancient and glorious song be of any use to us to-day? We cannot go back to join those who first sang it on their coming out of Egypt. We are too late, for they have long since passed away; while we are too early for the company in Isaiah xii., for we cannot hope to associate ourselves with them; they are yet to be gathered on Zion, and before then, the church, of which all God's people of the present time form a part, will be gathered home on high.

The only other thing we can do then is to seek the company of David in Psalm cxviii. There we shall feel more at home, for David was in similar circumstances to ours. His song has many notes suited to our day. Let us look a little at the three occasions on which this chorus was used in Israel.

What sort of a people do we find singing it in Exodus xv.? From Joshua (xxiv. 2-14) we learn that they had been idol-worshippers and slaves in Egypt; and yet God could shelter them through the blood of the Lamb. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." The nation of idol-worshippers was yet a nation beloved of God.

In this song they triumph that He had become their strength, song and salvation; while they further celebrated, in faith, that He had brought them into His habitation, into the beautiful habitation of His holiness. They sang as if they were already there. It means much more to be guided to His holy habitation than to be delivered from judgment. They were now a redeemed people, and they are therefore the first company to sing of God's habitation (vv. 13-17). Their faith sees the end of the journey, with every obstacle overcome, and they are at home in the place grace destined for them, on the other side of Jordan, in the dwelling-place of God's holiness.

Some may think our condition and conduct as Gen-

tiles are not as contemptible as that to which the Israelites appear to have sunk in Egypt. Yet "Gentiles, having no hope and without God in the world," truly describes our state. It is good for us to feel this and to "look unto . . . the hole of the pit whence we are digged." Then comes in the wonderful gospel of God, which speaks to all men in our day as He did to Israel. Just as the blood was God's provision for them to shelter them from danger, so the blood of Christ, shed at Golgotha, is the God-given remedy to redeem us from a much worse condition; "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

What a wonderful fact; sinners ready to perish, and ripe for judgment, redeemed, so that we too can sing a song of deliverance like this! Yea, more. Go on our way rejoicing as they did towards the habitation of His holiness. We have the Father's house, and the place of which Christ says that "where I am there ye may be also," as our blessed prospect (John xvii. 24).

I wonder whether everyone listening to me can say—

"The Lord is *my* strength and song,
And He is become *my* salvation!"

What is a Sect?

THE word sect is employed in the English translation to express the Greek word, "hairesis." The meaning of this word is well known. It is used (except in the Acts of the Apostles, where it is found six times) only once in the Epistle to the Corinthians, once in the Epistle to the Galatians (v. 20), and once in that of Peter (2 Peter ii.). In the first Epistle to the Corinthians it is translated by the word, "heresy" (1 Cor. xi. 19). It signifies a doctrine, or a system, whether of philosophy or religion, which has its adherents united as adopting this doctrine. Its meaning is a little modified now, because the professing church (at least the greater part of it) has taken the name of Catholic, that is to say, universal. Then every reli-

gious body, every Christian gathering, which does not belong to this community (so-called Catholic), is by it called a sect; from this the word is become a word of censure. All the Christian bodies are sometimes called sects, in the sense of divisions, when they separate themselves from the whole complement of Christians, or from those who bear this name. However, the word sect implies in itself always more or less of censure, from the idea that those who compose it are re-united by a doctrine or a particular denomination. We cannot say that this way of looking at it is entirely false; the application may be false, but not the idea itself. But what is important is to discover that which, in fact, is an assembly of Christians justly deserving this name; or, since it is applied to assemblies or Christian corporations, it is necessary to understand the true principle on which we ought to assemble: that which is not based on this principle is really a sect.

Although the Catholics (so-called) have made a bad use of this truth, it is not less true that the unity of the church is a truth of the greatest importance for Christians, whether the unity of all individually manifested in the world (John xvii.), or that of the body of Christ, formed by the Holy Ghost, come down here (Acts ii. ; 1 Cor. xii. 13); so in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel the Lord asks the Father, with regard to those who shall believe through the word of the apostles, "that they all may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John xvii. 21). We see there the practical unity of Christians in the communion of the Father and the Son. The apostles should be *one* in thought, word, and deed, by the operation of one Spirit, as the Father and the Son in the unity of the divine nature (verse 11); then those who should believe by their word ought to be *one* in the communion of the Father and the Son (verse 21). We shall be perfect in the unity of the glory (verse 22); but we ought to be *one* now, in order that the world may believe (verse 21).

Further, the Holy Ghost came down from heaven

on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii.), baptised all believers of that time into one body, united to Christ as a body to the head, and manifested here below on the earth in this unity (1 Cor. xii. 13). We see clearly that it is on the earth, where it says, in the twelfth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, "If one member suffer, all the members suffer; and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." We do not suffer in heaven. But then it is added, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

The whole chapter shows the same truth; but these verses suffice to demonstrate that it treats of the church on the earth. See here, then, the true unity formed by the Holy Ghost; first, the unity of brethren between themselves; and second, the unity of the body.

The spirit of a sect exists when we see disciples unite outside this unity, and when it is around an opinion that those who profess it are gathered, in order that they be united by means of this opinion. This unity is not founded on the principle of the unity of the body, or of the union of brethren. When such persons are united in a corporation, and mutually recognise each other as members of this corporation, then they constitute formally a sect, because the principle of the gathering is not the unity of the body; and the members are united, not as members of the body of Christ, when they are even such, but as members of a particular corporation. All Christians are members of the body of Christ—an eye, a foot, etc. (1 Cor. xii. 13-25). The idea of being a member of *a* church is not found in the word. The Holy Ghost compares the church on the earth to a body, of which Christ is the Head (Ephes. i. 22, 23; Col. i. 18); then each Christian is a member of this body, so of Christ. But to be a member of a particular corporation is quite another idea. Now, the supper of the Lord being the expression of this union of the members (as it says, 1 Cor. x. 17), when a corporation of Christians recognises its right to receive its members to it, there is a unity formally opposed to the unity of the body of Christ. It is possible that this

may be ignorance, or that these Christians have never apprehended what is the unity of the body, and that it is the will of God that this unity be manifested on the earth; but, in fact, they form a sect, a denial of the unity of the body of Christ. Several of those who are members of the body of Christ are not members of this corporation; and the supper, although the members partake piously of it, is not the expression of the unity of the body of Christ.

But now a difficulty is presented: the children of God are dispersed; many pious brethren are attached to this opinion, to that corporation, and mixed up for advantage' sake, even in religious things, with the world. There are, alas! many who have no idea of the unity of the body of Christ, or who deny the duty of manifesting this unity on earth. But all that does not annihilate the truth of God. Those who unite themselves, as I have already said, are but a sect in principle. If I recognise all Christians as members of the body of Christ—if I love them, and receive them, from an enlarged heart, even to the supper, supposing that they are walking in holiness and truth, calling upon the name of the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Timothy ii. 19-22; Rev. iii. 7), then I am not walking in the spirit of a sect, even although I cannot gather together all the children of God, because I walk according to the principle of this unity of the body of Christ, and seek the practical union among the brethren. If I join with other brethren to take the Lord's supper only as a member of the body of Christ, not as a member of a church, whichever it may be, but verily in the unity of the body, ready to receive all Christians who are walking in holiness and truth, I am not a member of a sect; I am member of nothing else but of the body of Christ. But to gather together upon another principle, in whatever manner it may be, to make a religious corporation, is to make a sect. The principle is very simple. The practical difficulties are sometimes great by reason of the state of the church of God; but Christ is sufficient for all; and if we are

content to be little in the eyes of men, the thing is not so difficult.

A sect is, then, a religious corporation united upon another principle than that of the body of Christ. It is formally such when those who compose this particular corporation are regarded as being the members of it. It is to walk in the spirit of a sect when those alone are recognised in a practical manner, without properly saying so, who are members of a corporation. We do not speak of the discipline which is exercised in the bosom of the unity of the body of Christ, but of the principle upon which we are gathered together. The word does not recognise anything such as to be a member of a church; it speaks always of the members of the body of Christ. But these are held to manifest the unity in walking together. We can cite Matt. xviii. 20, as a precious encouragement in these times of dispersion, in these sad times of the last days, where the Lord promises His presence to two or three gathered together in His name. He gives us 2 Timothy ii. 22 to direct us in the way of His will, in the midst of the confusion which reigns around us. J.N.D.

Notes of a Bible Reading on Genesis xxxiv.—xxxvi.

THE government of God in these chapters and throughout the life of Jacob, secures His grace from abuse, and is an essential part of God's dealings with us.

It is hopeful, because God perseveres with us in spite of our failures (cf. Phil. i. 6); helpful, because God's dealings with Jacob exemplify the way He deals with His children to-day; heart-searching, because God's government is a very real part of His economy.

A permanent principle of God's government (its necessary accompaniment of relationship with Him) is illustrated in Amos iii. 1, 2 and 1 Pet. i. 17.

God is the moral governor of the world, also of His own household. Jacob, as David later on, had private and public experiences of God's government.

xxxiv. 1-31. These shocking events resulted from Jacob's pitching his tent before Shechem, exposing his family to the temptations of an idolatrous city.

Jacob's fear (ver. 30) that the inhabitants of the land would avenge his sons' cruelty and slay himself and his family, shows he had forgotten God's promises. His faith was temporarily eclipsed. Nevertheless God delivered them; *His grace never fails.*

This was another attempt by Satan to mix up God's people with the people of the land. God, however, intervened, or the identity of the chosen race would have been lost.

xxxv. 1. Jacob is told to return to Bethel. Bethel indicated to the patriarchs the mountain-top of their spiritual experience.

vv. 2-4. Thirty years had elapsed since Jacob's vow (xxviii. 20.) The day of his distress had been the day of his good resolutions, but the good impressions then gained seemed to have faded out of his life. Now, however, he awakens to his responsibility and discerns what befits God's presence. The household gods — obtained maybe from the Shechemites—have to be put away. Holiness becomes the house of God (Ps. xciii. 5; 1 Pet. i. 17.) All God's grace, guidance and government are with a view to holiness. Government is to correct and bring us back when we go astray (Titus ii. 11-15).

Jacob's family were also to have clean persons and changed garments. Garments denote our outward habits; the Christian is to exhibit the graces of Christ.

v. 8. Evidently Rebekah had died, though the fact is not mentioned, no doubt because she typifies the bride of Christ. Her burial is however referred to in xlix. 31. Deborah is only mentioned in connection with Rebekah (xxiv. 59) and at her death. "Rebekah was the heavenly church . . . brought by the Holy Ghost to Christ, Deborah was its earthly Jewish care

—taken in infancy—its nurse—what went with, but was not the spouse” (J.N.D., Notes and Comments, i. 227).

vv. 9-15. God graciously reappears to Jacob, to confirm his new name, and to enlarge His promises. Only now that he has arrived at Bethel is he finally settled in the line of promise.

It is not said that Jacob dwelt *at* Bethel, but “in that land” (v. 22); there he was called Israel. God punished Jacob for leaving Bethel, but His anger does not endure for ever. Jacob is restored, but his troubles persist (cf. David and Absalom). Peter confessed Christ to be the Son of the living God, but later denied that he knew Him. But the Lord probed his heart with the thrice-repeated “Lovest thou Me?” and Pentecost follows. So at Bethel Jacob’s private pruning and governmental chastening was followed by public confession of God—a pillar. What before was Bethel only to him is now Bethel to all. God then renames him Israel; not a double account, but the confirmation by an oath.

In xxxii. 29, Jacob asked “Tell me . . . Thy name,” but was not told directly that it was God. In xxxv. 11, God told him His name without his asking. In xxviii. 13, Jehovah spoke; now God Almighty (cf. Exodus vi. 2, 3).

v. 9. God’s appearance in this verse seems to be His last personal appearance to the patriarchs. See however, xlv. 2.

At this climax of Jacob’s life he takes the place of repentance where he began. One last trace of Padan-aram (Deborah) disappears. All is well. Hence God appears and blesses him. For the third time he is given a place in the line of promise. God went up; the solemn matter had been gone into—at Bethel, the place where Jacob proved God.

vv. 16-20. Was Rachel’s death the result of leaving Bethel? Or had Jacob still some lingering dread of the place where God appeared? If we walk in holiness we need not fear the house of God; only if we

are wilfully going our own way, cherishing some unholy object.

Rachel disappears when Benjamin, typifying Christ in exaltation, is born. So Israel were put out of sight for the time being when Christ was raised to the right hand of God.

Rachel's "soul" departed; her body remained and was buried (see 1 Sam x. 2).

vv. 21-26. Reuben's birthright was cut off for this act, and that of Simeon and Levi for what they did in xxxiv. 25, so that it came down to Joseph (see 1 Chron. v. 1, 2). Israel stored up in his mind what had happened (xlix. 4). Compare Moses' blessing—Let Reuben live, and not die (as he deserved) Deut. xxxiii. 6.

vv. 27-29. Though recorded here, Isaac's death evidently occurred later on in the chronological sequence of the story. Esau and Jacob meet again. In xxvii. 41, Esau had made a vow to slay his brother when their father died. Now Isaac is dead, but God restrains Esau from his purpose of so many years before.

xxxvi. 1-43. The maturing of government (kings and dukes). They appear much sooner in the earthly line than in the spiritual, though promised to Jacob's line. Ex. xv. 15 mentions the dukes of Edom, but Israel had no king until Saul.

The natural is disposed of before the spiritual, as in iv., Cain and Seth; x., Japhet and Ham before Shem; xxv., Ishmael before Isaac. Edom is only traced to four generations, but the line of promise is never let go. There is spiritual design here as elsewhere. The men of renown (Ps. lxxxvii.) are Zion's children.

Some were dukes of the Horites (v. 29), who were the aboriginal inhabitants; there was hideous amalgamation with the people of the land. Here, perhaps, is the reason for the inveterate hatred in Esau's descendants, although not displayed by Edom himself.

Obadiah the prophet deals with the later history of Edom.

E. A. P.

A Song of Praise.

PRAISE Him with gladsome tongue,
 God's Lamb upon His throne,
 Oh, lift to Him the heart in song
 Who loved and bought His own.
 Thy blood, Thy cross, Thy grave,
 The thorn, the gall, the spear,
 All tell aloud Thy love to save,
 Thy sufferings for us here.

Praise Him, the Father's Son,
 Blest Impress of His grace,
 God's living Light to every one
 Of Adam's fallen race.
 Incarnate Son, we hail
 And bless Thy peerless name;
 While seraphs high before Thee vail
 At Thy eternal fame.

Praise Him, the Son of man,
 Jehovah's Servant meek,
 Yet Firstborn Son ere time began,
 Whose glory all things speak.
 In Thee Thy Father's heart
 Is known for evermore;
 Of Godhead Thou the Fullness art;
 We worship and adore!

Praise Him, the church's Head,
 True Lover of His Bride,
 His goodly pearl won from the dead,
 His trophy from His side.*
 Thee, Heavenly Christ, we praise,
 Bowed lowly at Thy feet;
 Enthroned on high, God's glory-rays
 Transfigure Thee most meet. W.J.H.

*Genesis ii. 22.

(Written to the tune, "Diademata," Hymns Ancient
 and Modern, No. 304.)