

WORDS OF TRUTH.

“The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words:
and that which was written was upright, even words
of truth.” (Eccles. xii. 10).

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WORDS OF TRUTH.

The Style of Divine Forgiveness.

WE are all conscious of how much depends upon the style of an action.

Indeed there is frequently far more power in the style than in the substance. How often have we heard such words as these? "Yes, I own he did me a favour; but, then, he did it in such a way as to take away all the good of it." Now, the Lord has His style of doing things, blessed be His name. He not only does great things, but He does them in such a way as to convince us that His heart is in the doing of them. Not only is the substance of His acts good, but the style most charming.

Let us have a sample or two. Look, for instance, at Christ's touching word to Simon the Pharisee, in Luke vii. "When they had nothing to pay, he *frankly* forgave them both." Now, so far as the mere matter of the debt was concerned, the result would have been the same whatever style had been adopted. But what heart does not perceive the moral power of the word "*frankly*"? Who would part with it? Who could bear to see the substance stripped of its style? The creditor might forgive with a murmur about the amount. That murmur would, in

the judgment of a sensitive heart, rob the act of all its charms. On the other hand, the frankness of the style enhances beyond expression the value of the substance.

Again, look for a moment at that familiar but ever fruitful section of inspiration, Luke xv. Each of the parables illustrates the power and beauty of style. When the man finds his sheep, what does he do? Does he complain of all the trouble, and commence to drive the sheep home before him? Ah! no; this would never do. What then? "He layeth it on his shoulders." How? Complaining of the weight or the trouble? Nay; but "*rejoicing*." Here we have the lovely style. He showed that He was glad to get His sheep back again. The sheep would have been safe on the shoulders however it had been placed there; but who would part with the word "rejoicing"? Who could bear to see the substance of the action stripped of its charming style?

So also in the case of the woman and her lost piece of silver. She lights a candle, sweeps the house, and seeks. How? With dulness, weariness, and indifference? By no means; but "diligently," like one whose whole heart was in her work. It was quite manifest that she really wanted to find the lost piece of silver. Her style proved this.

Lastly, mark the style of the father in re-

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ceiving the poor, returning prodigal. "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." He does not send out a servant to tell the erring one to turn aside into one of the out offices, or betake himself to the kitchen, or even to confine himself to his own room. No; he himself *runs*. He, as it were, lays aside his paternal dignity, in order to give expression to his fatherly affection. He is not satisfied with merely receiving the wanderer back. He must prove that his whole heart is in the reception; and this he does, not merely by the substance of the act, but by his style of doing it.

Various other passages might be adduced to illustrate the style of divine forgiveness; but the above will suffice to prove that God graciously recognizes the power which style has to act upon the human heart.

Christ does not merely give us forgiveness of sins; He also gives us a place with Himself, and we have to grow up into the knowledge of this, which was always in the mind of God for us, our portion as looked at in the Second Man. God has dealt with us in grace, according to the salvation that is in Christ; but beyond all that is the place that He has given us in Him.

"One Step."

READ ACTS ix. 6-16.

WHEN Saul of Tarsus, struck down on the road to Damascus, asked the question, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" the Lord told him one thing only; that is, He directed him in only *one step*. "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

I think this is important to remember. In seeking guidance, how often it is that the soul is perplexed with a multitude of thoughts! whereas one thing only is needful, namely, *to know the next step*.

When a child is learning to walk it only takes one step at a time, and that totteringly and feebly; and even the most grown and steady walker must confine himself to the "one step" till the next is plainly before him.

One step, and listen: "It shall be told thee what thou must do." He had to obey first. "Arise, and go into the city." How simple! as all the Lord's commands surely are. And they are not grievous either. It is not the yoke of the law that He puts upon us. "I am Jesus," was the word that revealed Him. And oh! how precious to know God thus, the incorruptible God in the Person of Christ. He is the Master; and joy lights up the soul, and freedom fills it, when His voice is heard, and His glory is revealed.

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"I am Jesus." What wonders in these three little words! I am Jehovah; the living God; the God of Israel; the Creator of all things; the beginning and the ending, the first and the last. A fire infolding itself, yet quenched in blood for the sinner, the sinner that believes. How wonderful it is, this mystery that none can fathom, none reach down into the depths of. Jesus Christ; the Son of God; the great I AM; the Holy One; once crucified on earth, but now exalted, glorified in heaven. Christ Jesus, the Man in glory, real and true and perfect Man, yet over all, God blessed for ever; Object of worship to all in heaven, to many sons and daughters coming up from the wilderness, washed, cleansed, made happy by His love.

No dungeon can shut out that, if He be pleased to manifest Himself therein. The high and lofty One, inhabiting eternity, *can* dwell and *does* dwell with the contrite and humble. As the poet says,

"Thou, within no walls confined,
Inhabitest the humble mind;
Such ever bring Thee where they come,
And, going, take Thee to their home."

Yes, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth *grace* unto the humble." This is what we all want, *more grace*. He is the God of all grace; He *giveth* more grace. Ah! it is needful in a

day like this; yet the believer may take courage, thank God, and take courage, as Paul did in a later day, though he had tremendous opposition to encounter, and the powers of the world were against him.

He had learned then somewhat of the meaning of that word, "I will show him how great things he must *suffer for* My Name's sake." He had asked, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" and he had to learn that the path in which a risen Saviour would lead him was one of *suffering*.

Christ on earth was a *suffering* Christ; and whoever would be led of Him must count upon suffering too. "I will show him how great things he must suffer," said the Lord. And this is *honour*; surely it is, honour from God Himself.

Christ is glorified in heaven. He suffers only in His members *now*; but they will be glorified by-and-by. *It is the path*, the appointed path. The Head *suffered* while on earth, the members must also *suffer*, if they follow Him.

But all is measured. When He leads, He leads on softly; as Jacob says, according as the children are able to endure (Gen. xxxiii.), *one step at a time*, as we have noticed.

Oh! for the willing mind, the listening ear, the sitting at the feet of Jesus; that thus the soul may be instructed, comforted, sustained,

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kept peaceful even on the thorny road, till He shall come, and lift it out of all its sorrow, and the desert journey shall be for ever past.

Sanctification is before justification, and, when they come together in Scripture, it is so habitually. You are sanctified to the blood of sprinkling (1 Pet. i. 2). I think Scripture speaks as plainly as possible of progressive sanctification; but still, when you have sanctification and justification spoken of together as two things, sanctification comes first. The reason is that, if you put that last, you would have the man with a perfect title to heaven, and yet unfit for it. But, again, you never find fitness for heaven connected with progressive sanctification. There is plenty of Scripture about sanctification as to the fact: “Growing up into Him in all things”; “Purifieth himself even as HE is pure.” These all show progress when I am a Christian, but are not connected at all with fitness for heaven. On the contrary you get: “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,” speaking of all Christians together. Then there is the poor thief who went straight to paradise; of course he was fit for it. Scripture is plain enough on progressive sanctification, too; that is, likeness to Christ here.

Old Testament Parables and New Testament Arguments.

IT has been observed by those who have acquired a competency to speak on such subjects, that hieroglyphics went before letters, and parables before arguments. Nature suggested this order, rather demanded it; and it is to be seen that Scripture has observed it, thus following where nature led the way.

The Divine Volume opens with parables, and closes with arguments. It begins with illustrative teaching, and ends as with rudimental or dogmatic. But the things taught in these different methods are the same. We find the narratives of Genesis in the reasonings of the epistles. I might extend this, as we all know, and say that events in Exodus and Numbers are found in the Epistles to the Corinthians, Leviticus in Hebrews, and so on.

Thus the earliest and the latest books are linked together in the most attractive and persuasive manner. All, I may say, are welcoming each other's presence and company. They converse together; they understand each other's language, though one speak in the artless style of childhood, and the other in the grave, sententious wisdom of age. And the whole is thus wondrous as well as precious, bearing its own self-evidencing light to this

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great fact, that it is the same Spirit which has quickened and filled the whole Volume from first to last.

And let me further say that, in this wondrous combination, nothing can exceed the sweetness and simplicity of the child's language, as we listen to it in Genesis; and nothing can be more sound and sure than the reasoning of the man, as we follow it in the epistles; and yet, as we said, the stories of the patriarch combine with the arguments of the apostles. Each of them announces the like mysteries.

I would instance what I mean, and look first at Abraham in Genesis xv.

As we may say, on a fine, clear, starry night, in the land of Canaan, Abraham is called forth, by the voice of the Lord, to look to the sky, and mark the number of the stars, if he can; and this simple circumstance, with the intercourse between him and the Lord which accompanies it, serves the apostle's close and conclusive treatise on the justification of a sinner, in the Epistle to the Romans. (See chap. 14.)

Abraham, dead in himself, believing, as he looked on the sky, that God could and would, according to the promise then made him, give him a seed as numerous as the stars on which he was then gazing, is used by the apostle as illustrative of the faith which justifies the sin-

ner. The patriarchal story is thus found to be a parable as well as a story, or mystery as well as history, and to join with the reasonings and conclusions of the apostle in giving us sinners holy confidence before God.

Let us now look at Sarah in Genesis xxi. Can any circumstances, I ask, be more homely, more commonplace, amid the events of human life, than the dismissal of a servant because she had, perhaps, forgotten what she owed her mistress; a female servant discharged for disrespectful behaviour? And yet this is the fact in the history of the family of Abraham which is wrought into that argument of the apostle which proves a sinner's title to walk before God in the spirit of adoption, or the liberty of a child. (See Gal. iv.)

Surely there is something both affecting and attractive in this. What illustrations, I ask, can be more inartificial, more level to the young or to the untutored mind, than those which the early Book of Genesis is thus seen to supply? And what reasonings, on some of the profoundest inquiries which the heart of man can entertain, more satisfactory than those which the epistles conduct to their conclusions?

And yet these things are found together! Who, I then ask again, has been the artificer of such a book? Who has woven together those hieroglyphics and letters, these parables

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and arguments? Surely "the key of this inquiry lies at the door." The parable went before the argument in the order, as we have said, which nature suggested. The stories of the patriarchs have answered well for the treatises and discussions of the apostles; and if, as another has said, we get "the sweet harmonies and deep analogies of *nature*," surely we may add, after all this, that we get likewise the sweet harmonies and deep analogies of *Scripture*.

But I must give another instance. It is the Abraham of Genesis xiv. The victor-patriarch, on his return from the battle, is there met by the priest of Salem, with suited refreshments sent to him as from God Himself with a blessing, by the hand of that august stranger. Abraham accepts it, and so feeds upon what Melchizedek had brought him, so deeply drinks into the very spirit and virtue of the occasion, that he is able to give the king of Sodom and all his offers an answer, a triumphant answer, on the spot.

But this striking scene in the Book of Genesis is wrought into an argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It stands there as a testimony to us of the effective priesthood of the true Melchizedek, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus; and we are called to enjoy, by faith, the virtues of that priesthood, as Abraham enjoyed his communion with the royal

priest of Salem, and proved the power of it.

Surely all this makes the Divine Volume wonderful and attractive. What authority it acquires and maintains! what delight it awakens! Would that one used the mysteries and communications of it as one does the book that contains and conveys them. Abraham and Sarah were beyond us, if one may speak for others, in this.

How simply and at once, with a believing mind, did Abraham accept the promise of God in Genesis xv., not considering his own death-estate, nor that of Sarah, but believing in God as a Quickener, he came forth as justified by faith! How, with full decision of faith, did Sarah accept the spirit of liberty, the privilege of adoption, when she sent Hagar and Ishmael out of the house, that she might enjoy her weaned Isaac alone! And with what fervency and grasp of soul did Abraham accept the refreshments and the blessing of Melchizedek, going forth from that communion to gain a victory over all that the world could have made him or given him!

And *we* are to be like-minded in all this. *We* are to be simple in our acceptance of the fruits of grace; *we* are to walk with God in the certainty of justification, in the liberty of children, and in the sure hope of accomplished warfare and of the refreshments of the kingdom.

But we are not in the glow of these mysteries as grace would have us to be. We need the exhortation, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," and again, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." Let me rather ask, Do we not very feebly image these circumstances, these narratives to ourselves, and thus lose much of the force of those blessed truths which they contain and convey? These artless histories are strange, and somewhat out of the way, it may be. Yes; and so are the mysteries they illustrate. What a singular thing to see an aged couple, after a life of disappointment, embracing a child! What a strange thing to see a sinner, who has involved himself in death and judgment, glorying in the assured possession of life and righteousness! It is beyond death, rejoicing in life. It is exultation in resurrection form: and yet, strange and out of the way as all this is, in the reckoning of flesh and blood, this is the believer's condition, as once it was our father Abraham's. We must *live* this parable if we would rightly understand it.

So in Sarah's case. The inmates of the house who, for fourteen years and more, had lived with the family (yea, and in such relationship, too), sent off at a moment's warning, for such a slight offence! What a strange thing, and more than strange! Would not a respectable neighbourhood be indignant at

such conduct? Would not the dismissal of a servant under such terms be resented by all who heard of it? Sent away at once, without getting time, even if she had affronted, to restore herself, and seek forgiveness!

And in like manner does not respectable flesh and blood resent the thought of a sinner freeing himself, through faith in the Son of God, from the spirit and fears and bondage of the law? Does not the moral sense denounce such pretension?

Surely we may say all this. We do not realize these scenes and narratives in the strangeness that attaches to them, or their great originals; I mean the mysteries which they exhibit. We are cloudy in our apprehension where we should be bright, and feeble and cold in our faith and affections when we should be bold and fervent. We are too little like Abraham in Genesis xv., and Sarah in Genesis xxi.; and too much like Abraham in Genesis xxi., and Sarah in Genesis xviii.

Here, however, we must distinguish things that differ; and we shall find our relief and comfort in doing so. We may be indisposed, like Abraham in Genesis xxi., to send Hagar away at the demand of Sarah; but this is not the same as if we brought her back after she had been sent away. I may but feebly act on my liberty in Christ, and linger still, in a legal spirit, over myself; but this is not as

if I were advisedly to turn again to the rudiments of the world or of the law, again putting myself, as the apostle speaks, under "bondage" to "beggarly elements."

Abraham never did this. He never brought back Hagar after the demand of Sarah had taught him to dismiss her. The Lord came and gave him counsel when, through weakness, he hesitated about listening to Sarah's requirement that the bondwoman should be sent away; but how would He have dealt with him, had he attempted to bring her home again after she had been sent away?

The Epistle to the Galatians answers this question. For the Galatians were doing this. They were reviving ordinances; they were returning to fleshly confidences; they were proposing to sustain their conscience before God by religious doings, thereby to perfect what Jesus had begun for them; and the fervency and holy anger which glows in the epistle to them may stand before us as the counterpart or expression of what the Lord's way with the patriarch would have been, had he attempted to bring back again the dismissed Hagar and her son.

All this, which we get in the word, is surely excellent. What a combination of moral glories! What a harmony of sweet voices! All we need is eyes to see and ears to hear the wonderful works and words of God.

Gideon, God's "Mighty Man of Valour."

READ JUDGES vi.—viii.

I.

THE history of Gideon is of much practical importance. It is the history of one of those revivals recorded in the Book of Judges so peculiarly applicable to the present circumstances and need of the Church.

Every now and again (as we learn in the previous chapters of this book, which will be seen, at once, to be occupied throughout with the failure of Israel, when placed in the land into which Joshua had brought them in blessing), Israel had been sold into the hands of their enemies.

Groaning under the consequences of their sin, they cried unto the Lord; and the Lord, ever faithful, had raised up some one as a deliverer out of the hands of those that spoiled them. He was grieved with the afflictions of His people. He judged their sin and evil; yet, at the same time, pitied and saved.

But then the persons by whom He wrought were always in themselves insignificant. We do not find revivals beginning from the head. Very generally, when there has been anything of a recovery from the doctrines and traditions of men, it has taken place through

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the instrumentality of some obscure individual, raised up in the energy of the Spirit. Such a "saviour" was Gideon.

"The children of Israel," we read, "did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years" (vi. 1).

The Midianites knew not that it was the Lord who had delivered Israel into their hands; yet in reality they were but the rod with which it pleased Him to punish His people. As with the Assyrian: "O Assyrian, the rod of *mine* anger, and the staff in thine hand is *mine indignation*" (Isa. x.). When He has done with His rod, He can break it, or burn it. "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood."

Satan himself is very often the rod used by God for the discipline of His children.

"And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel."

Nothing could have prevailed against them, had they been faithful to the Lord.

"And because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strongholds.

And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came up as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their cattle were without number; and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites" (vv. 2-6).

They were in such a sad condition. "And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord."

This is always the first symptom of anything like a revival. When the people of God, instead of saying that they are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, feel how really poor and miserable and blind and naked they are, and that they can only receive that which God is pleased to give, He is about to interfere and raise them up.

The sin of the Church has brought it into desolation. Yet little real cry has gone up to the Lord. And wherefore? We are not aware of how far we have departed from our original standing. We have got so much of the *world's* dignity, and influence, and riches.

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These things, though they hide us not from God, or from Satan, are hiding from ourselves our real poverty. Did we but know our destitution, did we but cry unto the Lord, He, "when He saw that there was none shut up or left," would deliver and raise up.

Whether as to Israel, or an individual, or the Church, the lesson needed to be learnt is the same, that of its impoverishment and destitution. No matter how poor we are, if sensible of our poverty; for there is all fulness in Christ.

"And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you out of Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage, and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land: and I said unto you, I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but ye have not obeyed My voice" (*vv. 7-10*).

He first of all shows them their sin, as He did when they could not take Ai. There the secret of their impoverishment is found out. "You are crying unto Me now," He, in effect

says, "because you feel your impoverishment; but the real cause of your impoverishment is this: you have sinned against Me." They had none to blame but themselves. So with the churches in the Apocalypse. And, therefore, the word to them is, "Repent" (Rev. ii., iii.).

God had been faithful to Israel, but Israel had not been faithful to God. This was the point of the prophet's testimony. He ever vindicates His own conduct. "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. ii. 12). Were we walking as He would have us, neither the world nor the flesh nor the devil could prevail against us. Whenever we find ourselves under the power of our enemies, we must be sure to charge the fault on ourselves, and not on God.

Does Joshua lie on his face because the people have turned their backs before the men of Ai? The Lord says to him, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou on thy face? Israel hath sinned." Joshua ought to have known that sin in Israel, not any changeableness in God, was the cause of their being smitten. The Lord would not be amongst them any more, until they had put away the accursed thing. Could He go out to bless iniquity? Nothing can weaken our hands but sin. Greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world. (1 John iv. 4.)

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Whether in the restoration of an individual soul, or of a body of saints, God will have it acknowledged that there is no failure in Him, but that we have suffered because of our own sin and folly.

Having testified of their sin, the Lord next raises up for them the instrument of their deliverance.

"And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abi-ezrite; and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites" (v. 11).

Not anything could have been more abject than the condition of Gideon, as described here, stealthily threshing wheat (for fear of the Midianites), to feed his family! But here is one whom the Spirit of God delights to ~~make mention of~~; whose name, unrecorded of man, is thought worthy to be recorded by Him. (Heb. xi. 32-34.)

The Spirit of God writes to magnify the grace of God, not to exalt man. He would have us bear in mind such little incidents in the history of the soldiers of faith as that noticed here, in order that we may see by what weak and insignificant instruments God works. His mightiest victories have ever been won by such; and not by those who had resources in themselves.

“ And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour ” (v. 12).

What a remarkable salutation ! Stealthily threshing wheat to hide it from the enemy looked not like valour. To the human eye there was everything that betrayed depression of spirit. But God’s “ mighty men ” have ever been such as were arrant cowards in themselves, men distrustful of their own strength and wisdom, in coping with the enemy, “ out of weakness made strong.” None are mighty men of valour, but those to whom it has been said, “ The Lord is with thee.”

When God calls a person by a name, He makes that person what the name imports. But He takes the most abject man of an abject tribe, to make him His “ mighty man of valour.” “ Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called ” (1 Cor. i. 25-29).

God works not ordinarily by such. The credit would then be given to *our* wisdom, *our* influence, and the like ; and it is written that “ no flesh shall glory in His presence.” He takes “ the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are

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despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."

Is Timothy exhorted to "fight the good fight of faith"? It is as one "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." To every Christian it may be said, as Paul writes to those at Corinth, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." But again we are told to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

"And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites" (v. 13).

His heart has been touched and prepared of the Lord for the work to which he is called. He has a deep sense of the condition of Israel upon his soul, though he is without the power to help them; and he has been comparing that condition with the title and power of the Lord. This is the way of faith.

It is not for us to be comparing ourselves among ourselves; we should compare our condition with the title and will of the Lord to bless. Is not something of this sort the language of many a saint now? Can it be possible that the Holy Ghost is in the Church, whilst, at the same time, the Church is so

worldly, so divided? Is it at all like what it was in the apostles' days?

The answer of the Lord to the cry of Israel discloses the secret of our condition. We have sinned. We have not obeyed His voice. And, if awakened to the sense of what we have lost, oftentimes there has not been the acknowledgment of our sin in departing from God, and it has, therefore, only led to fretfulness and impatience, or to wrong pretensions.

Gideon sees the *Lord's* hand to be upon His people, and that because of sin. But he identifies himself with the people. He might have said, "Israel has sinned," or "Satan has driven us here"; and then there would have been no hope. He cannot understand the Lord's presence, without making His people happy; and he at once loses himself in his interest in, and thoughts about, the people of God, as God's people, and says, "If the Lord be with *us*, why, then, is all this evil befallen *us*? . . . the Lord hath forsaken *us*, and delivered *us*," etc.

"And the Lord looked upon Gideon, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel out of the hand of the Midianites: *have not I sent thee?*" (v. 14).

The Lord looked upon him. That is the first thing. The man who is really strong and mighty is he who has thus got into the secret of Israel's impoverishment. The Lord

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has looked upon him. The Lord has identified Himself with him, and shown His heart to be towards him. There is no limit to his might.

But does Gideon feel himself to be a strong man? No! never before had he so known his own weakness and insignificance; never had he so felt the poverty of his father's house, as now.

"And he said unto Him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (v. 15).

Thus it is always with the soldiers of faith. They have never so felt their own weakness as they feel it when called to be God's mighty men of valour. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

People often say, "I want to *feel* that I am strong."

What we need is to feel that we are weak. That brings in Omnipotence. We shall have a life of feeling by-and-by in the glory. Now we are called upon to lead a life of *faith*. What saint but knows, from the experience of the deceitfulness of his own heart, that had we power in ourselves, instead of in Christ, *we* should be something. This is what God does not intend.

"Wherewith shall I save Israel?" His

threshing instrument would have been a poor thing indeed to look to, as that "wherewith" to go against the host of Midian. Never, we repeat, had he felt the poverty of his father's house as now. When God is about to use a man He makes that man feel most consciously nothing in himself. If He delivers by Gideon's hand *He* must have the glory, not Gideon; *His* must be the strength, not Gideon's.

It is always as it should be when we drop down into our nothingness. Strong in the Lord; we are weakest in ourselves. Can we not, almost invariably, trace our failures to self-confidence? When a believer thinks he is going to do a feat, his failure often becomes ridiculous. God must abase that which is proud and lifted up.

"And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee."

As with David, in another fight of faith, there was no sword in the hand of Gideon, not anything "wherewith" to go against the Midianites. But what matter of that? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He goes not forth unarmed. "Surely I will be with thee; and" (as a consequence of that) "thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

Here, then, is the "mighty man of valour," and here is his armour.

Gideon asks a sign.

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"And he said unto Him, If now I have found grace in Thy sight, then show me a sign that Thou talkest with me. Depart not hence, I pray Thee, until I come unto Thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before Thee" (v. 18).

There is feebleness, doubtless, here; he ought to have had simple confidence, and not have needed a sign; still all he really cares for is haying the Lord with him.

"And He said, I will tarry until thou come again.

"And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour; the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto Him under the oak, and presented it. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight.

"And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face" (vv. 18-22).

Another mark of feebleness. We do not see this fear in Abraham, under similar circumstances. But the Lord will give Gideon confidence to stand before Him.

"And the Lord said unto him, Peace be

unto thee, fear not: thou shalt not die” (v. 23).

Is there not most important instruction for ourselves in all this? Faith has that to present to God which He can accept. Whatever our own failure, still Jesus is the same, the value of His work is unchanged.

There has been, of late, an awakening to a good deal of busy activity in service; but God never says to a soul, “Peace be unto thee; fear not,” because of service. We are in danger of putting service in the place of the burnt-offering. Where this is done, the soul gets weighed down, not being able to find satisfaction in the service, instead of going on in happy liberty of spirit.

Gideon’s heart reassured, he builds an altar there unto the Lord, and calls it JEHOVAH-SHALOM [Jehovah (send) peace] (v. 24).

You will find truth in Scripture connected at one end with God, and at the other end with man; but if you cut these ends off, you will find you have got a dry stick instead of a plant. And (as it is connected with man), in order to get at the mind of the scripture, you must put yourself in the place of the people addressed, and in that way look at it.

Man's Impossible and God's Possible.

READ LUKE xviii. 18-27, and xix. 1-10.

THESE two scriptures present a striking and instructive contrast between a rich ruler and a rich publican, a contrast between man's *impossible* and God's *possible*, a contrast illustrating most forcibly the truth that, though man is neither willing nor able to get up to God, yet God is both willing and able to come down to man; a contrast proving most clearly that, though the sinner is unable to do the necessary work, and unwilling to pay the necessary price, for "eternal life," yet God can GIVE that life without price and without labour. Such is the interesting lesson set before us in these two narratives. Let us ponder it for a few moments.

I. In the person of the rich ruler we have a member of a very numerous class. He was evidently one who would fain "make the best of both worlds." He stood on legal ground, and was governed by a worldly principle. His history suggests and answers two questions which in the history of the human family have been put and answered thousands of times over, namely, "What must I *do*?" and, "What must I *give*?"

These questions are very simply answered, inasmuch as it is evidently man's duty to do

the whole law; and as to the price which should be given for eternal life, what less could God possibly demand than *all* that a man has? God could not accept of anything less than a PERFECT obedience; and if eternal life is worth anything, it is worth ALL. The whole law must be fulfilled, if heaven is to be reached by *doing*; and we could never expect to get heaven at a lower price than the *full* surrender of earth.

If the question be, "What am I to do?" the answer is, "All that God requires." If the question is, "How much am I to give?" the answer is, "All that you have." Nothing less will ever do. Not a tittle less than the whole law; not a fraction less than all your possessions. It would be the very height of absurdity to expect eternal life upon any lower terms. If you want to *work* your way to heaven, you must do "all that is written in the book of the law." And if you want to pay your way to heaven, how could you possibly expect to get there for less than all that you possess on earth?

This will explain Christ's remarkable method of answering the rich ruler. He answers the *man*, not his *question*. He answers with His penetrating gaze upon the moral condition of the inquirer. He lays out the work for a legalist, and He lays down the price for a bargainer. And, be it noted, there

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is an intimate connection between the two things. If the ruler had really been able to do the work, as he vainly imagined, he would have been willing to pay the price. The two things would most assuredly go together. But inasmuch as there has never been a single member of Adam's fallen family who was able to do the prescribed work, so neither has there ever been one who was willing to pay the stipulated price. And, moreover, when once a man becomes convinced, by God's Holy Spirit, of his natural unwillingness and inability, he never thinks of asking such a question as, "What must I *do* to inherit eternal life"; for he knows quite well that unless eternal life be a free gift he can never have it at all.

However, the ruler had not reached the ground of divine conviction when he stood in the presence of Christ with his legal inquiry. And if my reader would clearly understand this entire scene he must bear in mind that our blessed Lord is dealing, not with a convicted sinner, or an anxious inquirer, but with a legalist and bargainer; not with one whose all-engrossing desire was to reach heaven, but with one who wanted to hold heaven and earth at the same time; that is, "to make the best of both worlds."

This simplifies the matter amazingly. It makes it all clear. Christ did not mean to

teach that heaven could be reached by works, or bought with money; but He did most strikingly make manifest that even if it could be so, yet man would neither do the work nor pay the price. He proved, in the case of the ruler, that when heaven was offered to the human heart, on the reasonable terms of some earthly possessions, the human heart deliberately refused to pay the price. We are not taught that heaven is to be sold; but we are taught that even though it were to be sold for a few thousands, man would not pay the amount.

And do we not see the truth of this every day? Men think far more of money than they do of heaven. True, they would like to get to heaven when they die. No marvel they should. But then they want to hold this world as long as they can. They would be glad to "inherit eternal life," and yet cling to their earthly possessions. This is a vain thought, and it is as contemptible as it is vain. It is utterly impossible to hold the two worlds. This should be distinctly understood. You might just as well endeavour to hold heaven and hell, Christ and Satan, light and darkness, as to combine this present evil world with that bright and blessed world to come, for which the redeemed are waiting. The two are diametrically opposed in every possible way. Satan is the god of this world. Christ is Lord

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of the world to come. How could you make the best of these two? Impossible. The attempt can only be regarded as a piece of consecrated selfishness all the more dangerous because sanctioned by many from whom we might expect a measure of faithfulness to Christ.

However, if those who practise and defend this Godless, Christless, soul-destroying principle, would only ponder the narrative of the rich ruler, they might gather up some wholesome instruction. See him with the balance in his hand. Eternal life is in the one scale, and some perishable goods in the other. What is the result? The scale that holds a priceless and enduring substance flies rapidly upward, and kicks the beam; while that which holds a fleeting shadow sinks to the ground: and the poor, infatuated worldling gathers up his goods, and turns his back upon Christ, upon heaven, upon eternal life. He prefers an inheritance which death will wrest from his grasp to one which is "incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" for all those who simply put their trust in the name of Jesus.

He moves away in sorrow, no doubt; but sorrow for what? Because he could not make "the best of both worlds." His heart had been detected, though his conscience was not reached; and his history proves to all who

will weigh the proof that it is morally impossible to hold Christ in one hand and the world in the other; and, further, that it is impossible for man to get to God by aught that he can DO or GIVE. Eternal life cannot be earned by works or bought with money. It can only be had as "the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. vi. 23).

II. This conducts us, in the second place, to the consideration of the case of Zacchæus, the rich publican of Jericho, whose history so strikingly proves that "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." The rich ruler was told to DO and to GIVE: the rich publican was saved without being told to do or give anything. Why was this? Because the ruler took the ground of a legalist; whereas the publican took the ground of a lost sinner looking for Jesus. Now, while it is utterly impossible for a legalist to get to God, it is quite possible for God to get to a lost sinner.

This is beautifully exemplified in the narrative of Zacchæus.

"And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which was chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who He was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a

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sycomore tree to see Him; for He was to pass that way."

Here, then, we have before us God's "possible." Zacchæus, as he took his place in the sycomore-tree, stood before the eye of Jesus as one of those whom the Father was drawing to Him; and it mattered not in the smallest degree what he was, rich or poor, publican or sinner, Christ fixed His eye upon him and said, "Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house."

True, Zacchæus was "rich." He belonged to that class of whom Christ said, "How hardly shall they enter the kingdom!" But what of that? The Lord Jesus beheld in him an object of God's eternal counsels, and a subject of the Father's drawings (John vi. 37). He connected the act of climbing the sycomore-tree with the divine purpose which was formed before the foundation of the world, and He proceeded to act in pursuance thereof by publishing the glad tidings of a free salvation in the ears of the wealthy publican of Jericho. Beholders might "murmur"; Zacchæus, too, might recount his honest and earnest efforts in the way of alms-giving and restitution; but Christ was true to the object which had brought Him from the Father, and that object was "salvation." "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come

to seek and to save that which was lost." If Zacchæus had been called upon to keep the commandments, or sell all that he had, in order to inherit eternal life, he would have found it as hard as the rich ruler. It is impossible for any one, ruler, publican, or aught else, to get to heaven by a pathway of works. There is but one way to heaven, and that way is marked from the throne of God down to the lost sinner by the footprints of divine love; and it is marked upward from the lost sinner to the throne of God by the sprinkled blood of the Lamb.

It is all well enough, and very beautiful, to give to the poor, and make restitution for any injury done one's neighbour; but these things can never purchase salvation, for it is not to be purchased by anything; and even though it were, the case of the ruler proves that man would not pay the price. The fact is, salvation is as free as the air we breathe, for this simple reason, that it has been BROUGHT to all by "the GRACE of God." "This day is salvation come to this house." (See Titus ii. 11.)

These precious words present three features in the salvation which "the grace of God" brings. It is a *present* salvation; a *perfect* salvation; a *personal* salvation.

1. "*This day.*" Here we see it to be a *present* salvation. My reader, if unsaved now, needs not to wait till to-morrow to be saved. The

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great fact on which salvation depends was accomplished, over eighteen hundred years ago on the cross.

“ 'Tis done; the great transaction's done.”

All is finished. Jesus has “appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. ix. 26). “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet. iii. 18). The soul that believes this grand fact is saved on the spot; saved now; saved for ever. He has no need to go hither or thither, to do this or that; he has just to believe what God has said about Jesus, and be saved.

2. But, further, it is a *perfect* salvation. “This day is salvation *come*.” It is not coming; it is not on the way; it is actually “come.” It was wrought out by Christ, for us, and is as perfect as He could make it. It demands nothing from the sinner. It is brought, in all its divine fulness and completeness, to his door, and his only title to it is that he is “lost.” It is only a *lost* sinner that needs *salvation*; and nothing but a perfect salvation would do for one who is utterly lost. It is not merely “help” I want, but full salvation. Many will say they hope to be saved “by the help of God.” This is a mistake. There is a wide difference between God's helping me to be saved and His saving me alto-

gether. In the former case I co-operate; but in the latter case God does all.

3. Finally, it is a *personal* salvation. "This day is salvation come to *this* house." It is important to see this clearly. We are very apt to generalize in reference to the matter of salvation. Many there are who say, "We are all sinners; and we know that Jesus died for *all*"; but yet they have never made it a personal matter. They have never been brought to say, from the depth of a broken heart, "I am lost; but Jesus loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*." (See Gal. ii. 20.) The devils believe that Jesus died for sinners, and it avails them nothing. The thing is to believe that Christ died for *me*; that a full, free, eternal salvation has come to *me*; that *my* sins were laid on Jesus, and that He bore them "in His own body on the tree," and put them away out of God's view for ever. Of what value is salvation if it be not for *me*? If I cannot make *my own* of it, it avails me nothing. But, blessed be God, it is for me, because I am a lost sinner. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Hence we see that the sinner has not to wait till to-morrow in order to be saved; he has not to add anything to the salvation which grace brings him; and he is not to raise so much as a single question as to the fact that salvation

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applies to him; for the very moment he takes the ground of a lost sinner the salvation of God applies to him as truly as the air is intended for all who have lungs to breathe, or the sunbeams for all who have eyes to see.

Does anyone ever think of questioning whether the atmosphere and sunlight are intended for him? Surely not, while reason holds her seat. Well, then, neither should the poor conscience-smitten sinner entertain a single doubt as to the precious truth that God's salvation is not only a present, and a perfect, but also a personal salvation.

And why? Is it because he has kept all the commandments from his youth? Nay. Is it because he has sold all, and given to the poor? By no means. Why then? Simply because "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

Ask a man to give up some ruling lust, some darling pleasure, in order to be saved, he will tell you it is "impossible." But let that man be brought to see himself as lost, let him take his place as a ruined, guilty, hell-deserving sinner, then all he has to do is to accept a full, an unconditional, and an eternal salvation through the blood of the Lamb.

Let a man come as a doer, and what less could he be told to do than "the whole law"?

Let a man come as a buyer, and what less could he be told to give than "all that he has"? But let a man come as a lost sinner, and he gets eternal life as a *gift*, and eternal salvation "without money and without price." Thus it was with Zacchæus. The Lord Jesus fixed His loving gaze upon him, and said, in effect, "I shall have that man in heaven, though all the powers of earth and hell were set in array against him."

And now one word in conclusion. Are we to suppose for a moment that Zacchæus ceased to give alms when he had got salvation? Nay, it was only then he learnt to give them upon the true ground. It is only as SAVED that a man can do anything right. Till he finds Christ he is but ploughing the rock. He may be very earnest; he may do many things in order to be saved; but it is only when a full and all-sufficient Christ is laid hold of by faith that good works can be performed or good fruit produced. When a man knows and loves his master he can use his talent aright, whereas the legalist, who regards Christ as "an austere man," will go and hide his talent in the earth.

It is the Holy Ghost taking of the things of Christ, and revealing them to the soul, that is the power of present practical conformity to Christ.

The Whole Armour of God.

READ EPHESIANS vi. 10-18.

THE position of the Christian in heavenly places, through his death and resurrection with Christ, can only be practically maintained and enjoyed through the use of the armour which God has furnished. The sharp arrows of the enemy would instantly strike through a merely human defence. Nothing short of "the whole armour of God" will enable us to turn aside the subtle wiles and the poisoned arrows of hell, and to make good in experience our inheritance on high.

I will speak, as simply and briefly as possible, of the character and uses of the different pieces of the Christian's armour; and may He who has gone before us through every scene of conflict, the Captain of our salvation, and who knows every movement of the enemy, train His young soldiers to follow in His footsteps on earth, while their hearts are maintained in communion with Himself in heaven.

I. THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH. "Having your loins girt about with truth." We may learn something from the use of the girdle in those parts of the world where Judæa is situated. It is a band, or belt, used for gathering up the loose, flowing folds of an Eastern's garment, and fastening them firmly to the waist, so that the person may not be entangled or hindered in such exercises as walking, run-

ning, or working. It is also used to strengthen the loins, and to give firmness to the whole man.

Now you can easily see the character and use of the Christian's girdle. It is the application of the truth of God, by the Holy Spirit, to our thoughts, affections, and conscience. If you would walk and work well for the Lord, and be a good soldier of the cross, there must be the constant application of the truth to the entire "inner man." All the outgoings of the heart must be kept, as it were, within the sacred belt of Holy Scripture. And further remember that this great and needed work of girding, at the outset, can only be done in communion with God, and by the power of His Holy Spirit. There is no better safeguard than the glance of His eye. To allow your thoughts, affections, and desires to fly loose, like the flowing robes of an Oriental, would greatly hinder your own spiritual growth, unfit you for active service, and constantly expose you to the cutting wounds of the enemy. Often has the Christian smarted keenly from gratifying the desires of the heart and mind on objects which were not sanctioned by the word of God.

2. THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. "Having on the breastplate of righteousness." Let me call attention to what seems to be a common error as to this

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part of the armour. It is generally spoken of as the righteousness of God, in which the believer stands justified in His presence. This is a mistake. The breastplate is *practical righteousness*, the righteousness of a godly walk, which necessarily follows the loins being girded with truth. When the movements of "the inner man" are guided by truth, the movements of the outer man will be practically right. Christ Himself, the Risen Man, is our righteousness before God, and He being always there, our righteousness is always there, and our peace is settled for ever in God's sight. There is no conflict on that account. The assurance of this fills the warrior's heart with true valour; and is the foundation of all his victories. Nevertheless, a holy walk, a good conscience, is our breastplate before the enemy. It covers a vital part. It is always needed. To forget it is like forgetting that we have enemies. "Herein," says the apostle, "do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts xxiv. 16).

A good conscience makes a man brave, both naturally and spiritually. A man fears nothing when his conscience is good; but how often has even a falling leaf startled, and filled with fear, the guilty conscience! When we have done wrong we are afraid of being detected and exposed before others. Hence, we

are timid, afraid to stand up for truth and godliness, lest we be assailed on our own weak point. We allow things to pass that we know to be wrong. We become unfaithful, the conscience gets bad, Satan accuses and triumphs. We get out of communion with God. We are unhappy. Our strength is gone. We are drawn into Satan's snare, and sorely buffeted by him. Under such circumstances, until there be full confession before the Lord, and the soul restored to happy communion with Him, there will be no strength to stand up against the enemy. But how different things are with the soul, when we are kept in happy communion with God, enjoying and maintaining the truth, and delighting in the ways of practical godliness! Then have we good courage before men and before all the powers of darkness.

The blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanses from all sin, gives us a "perfect" conscience before God. A holy walk gives us a "good" conscience, a breastplate of righteousness before all our enemies.

3. THE FEET SHOD. "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." When the inward movements of the heart, and the outward conduct of the life, are governed by the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, the general walk is sure to be characterized by the peaceful spirit of the

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gospel. And here, again, let me observe, that the peace spoken of in this passage is different from the peace that was made "by the blood of His cross." That is made, blessed be God, and can never be unmade. Nothing can ever disturb the believer's peace with God. Christ Himself is "our peace," and He is in the presence of God for us.

Remember the word of the Lord which says, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. v. 9). In all your movements be sure that your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Then you will be sure to carry peace with you wherever you go. In every scene through which you pass, let the sweet odours of the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, be richly diffused; but in no place let its fragrance be more plentifully shed around you than in your own family at home. So shall your walk be divinely guarded on all sides.

4. THE SHIELD OF FAITH. "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." The object of the shield is to defend the whole man. Hence the meaning is *over all* the shield of faith. But this, observe, is not the faith that receives the testimony of God about Christ, and the salvation of our souls, and by which we are justi-

fied; although we may say it is founded on the revelation of God in Christ to us as sinners, and necessarily flows from it. "The shield of faith" is full, unwavering confidence in God, the God of love. We know and confide in Him, knowing His love to us. Our language is, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things" (Rom. viii. 32). In the divine reasoning of the apostle every lesser blessing is included in the greater. He who has given His Son for us, will never fail nor forsake us. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31).

Pray that you may be kept from ever dropping your shield, from ever losing confidence in God's love and goodness, whatever may be your trial. Imagine for a moment what state Peter would have been in after his fall had he thought that God was against him. He would have been without a refuge, and in dark despair. But Christ had prayed for him, and his faith failed not. Ah! this is the secret of our faith abiding: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke xxii. 32).

5. THE HELMET OF SALVATION. If the shield be what God is for us, the helmet is what God has DONE for us. It is the known and enjoyed salvation of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a truth of immense

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practical importance, like all the other parts of the Christian's armour. Uncertainty on this point would greatly enfeeble us, and expose us to the assaults of the enemy. Christ has accomplished it for us. "It is finished." Jesus says it; we believe it. So that we may well hold up the head in the day of battle. No weapon of the enemy can ever pierce, or even scar, our helmet. "The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation" (Psalm cxviii. 14). He who was on the cross for us, is now on the throne for us. The grave is empty, and heaven is filled with the glories of the Risen Man.

6. THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT. "And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." We are furnished with only one offensive weapon; the other parts of the armour refer to our condition and defence. This is the only one of active energy. The sword is the symbol of that by which questions are settled. The nations of the earth appeal to the sword that is used by carnal force in settling their questions. The Christian has to learn to appeal to the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, in settling all questions that come before him. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah viii. 20).

The blessed Lord, always perfect in every

position, is our example in the use of the Spirit's sword. Here you have both example and precept. All through the Scriptures, and especially in the Psalms, you may learn the many uses and applications of the word of God; but, above all, in using the word of God as a weapon of offensive and defensive warfare, follow the Lord's example, study the way He used and applied the word in the Temptation, and all through the gospels, when in conversation with the cavilling Jews.

7. PRAYING ALWAYS. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." This remarkable verse points out the true position of a successful warrior, namely, dependence upon God, intercession for all saints, always, and "in the Spirit," the power of the Holy Ghost. We never feel much interest in people until we pray for them. If we have been at the pains to water our plants in the evening, we shall expect to find them looking fresh in the morning: thus, loving all saints, uniting in the one dear uniting name, our sympathies flow out as wide as the sympathies of Christ, and our prayers and intercessions flow in a channel wide as the circle of the Holy Spirit's action in the body of Christ.

All this praying for fellow-believers, and

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all this fighting with enemies, can only be maintained in a spirit of entire dependence upon God. "*Praying always.*" God is our strength, our all; we can do nothing without Him.

Oh! how complete, how practical, is the armour of God, the panoply of heaven! The thoughts and affections well ordered by the truth, the practice right, and the ways peace. This sound moral condition of soul keeps the enemy at a distance, and leads the heart into happy nearness to God, and strengthens its confidence in Him, which is a shield over all. The head is covered with the helmet of God's salvation, present oneness, in the heavenlies, with the Risen Christ. The word, as a sharp two-edged sword, used in the wisdom and power of the Spirit, puts the enemy to flight.

The spiritual warrior, thus secure in the strong tower of entire dependence on God, can look out on the movements of the enemy, and abide in prayer and supplication for all saints, in the happy assurance of his own final victory over every foe, and of the indestructible unity of the Church, which is the body of Christ, and the Bride of the Lamb.

Gideon, God's "Mighty Man of Valour."

READ JUDGES vi.-viii.

II.

AND now he is prepared for service. He has been under God's tutorage. He has learned where his strength is. He no longer says, "Wherewith shall I save Israel?" And the Lord has given him confidence to stand before Him.

But where does He set him to work? With the Midianites? No, not in the least. He has to begin the Lord's work at home, with that which is nearest to himself.

"And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's youngest bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal, that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it; and build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of the rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down" (vv. 25, 26).

There judgment commences. We must "cease to do evil" before we "learn to do well." The Lord comes to us as "the God of peace"; still it is, "Down with the idols

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in your father's house." We may have been restless in service; but, in the midst of much doing, how little have we done this, or ever practically attempted to set up God's altar "in the ordered place." Man's *will* has not been invaded. It is of the essence of wilfulness to say, "I have a right to worship God how I like." Obedience to God is the saint's rule and liberty. Not all the powers in the world have a title to interfere with this. And, moreover, if God says, "Throw down the altar of Baal," He will give strength to do it.

How does Gideon act? His conduct is that of simple faith and obedience.

"Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night" (v. 27).

He acts unhesitatingly. And what is the consequence? Immediate opposition.

"When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cut down, and the grove was cut down that was by it [the grove might add beauty to the altar of Baal, but God's altar must be set up in its native simplicity], and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. And they said one to another, Who hath done this? And when they inquired and asked,

they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die, because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it " (vv. 28-30).

The action of faith always excites the flesh. Israel knew not where their strength was; they thought it was in Baal. Gideon had learned it to be in God.

These are sifting times. In the Lord's day everything was in beautiful order apparently; but because He was setting aside men's traditions all were against Him. So now. How many suppose the strength of Christians to consist in the things they see around them! The soul taught of God knows it is only in Jehovah-Jesus.

" And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he has thrown down his altar " (vv. 31, 32).

It was of no use to argue the case, except to show the people the folly of pleading for Baal. If the things set aside were Baal's, and Baal was a god, surely he would arise, and

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take their part. It was of no use to debate. And do not let us suppose that all the arguments of all the good men in the world can make that which is evil good. It is melancholy, indeed, to see the arguments that are devised by the wit of men in vindication of evil. The bounden duty of the saint is to separate from evil, however sanctioned by antiquity, or anything else. It is a most fearful instance of the want of a sound mind, when we find so much perverse ingenuity, so many subtleties, so many analogies drawn, in order to lull the awakened conscience into contentedness with evil.

The name "Jerubbaal" was no defence. On the contrary, it brought up the question whether there was power in Satan now that faith was in exercise.

When mixed up with the world, Satan has no occasion to disturb us. Let him be alarmed, and up come Midianites, Amalekites, etc. "Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel" (v. 33).

Here is Gideon, with his own people against him, and the enemies of Israel gathered together, and pitching in Jezreel. But he has peace with God, and the Lord is, so to speak, bound to appear on his side.

How does he act? The Spirit of the Lord comes upon him, and he blows the trumpet, and Abi-ezer is gathered after him (v. 34).

Had Gideon been serving Baal, he could not have blown the trumpet thus. But Baal is down, and the altar of God is set up in "the ordered place." He sends messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also are gathered unto him, and to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; and these all are gathered around the man who is least in his father's house, the poorest of the tribe of Manasseh, but to whom THE LORD has said, "Go in this thy might."

There seems still to have been a measure of distrust in Gideon's mind (vv. 36-40). He asks a fresh and double sign that the Lord will save by his hand, as He had said, proving by the fleece, both wet and dry.

The Lord grants his desire; and he is sent forth with the confirmed assurance of his divine call and mission, to "turn to flight the armies of the aliens."

Again, let us remark, faithfulness begins not with the Midianites, it begins at home. This is a great principle (whether as to an individual soul or as to the Church of God). Gideon must attack the evil inside his father's house and in the midst of Israel before he is used of the Lord to save Israel out of the hands of the Midianites.

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The moment there is a thorough sense of grace, the word is, "Go in this thy might."

He is set up as captain of a large army; and now he stands forth to confront the enemies of Israel, and of the Lord.

"Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh, in the valley" (vii. 1).

This is God's way of acting. He never honours us when we are thinking that *we* are anything. Great blessing has often been preceded by our deep humbling, by humbling, even, sometimes, in the eyes of others. We were brought low, and the Lord lifted us up.

But Gideon has a still further lesson to learn (one painfully our own). He has known the acceptance of his offering. The youngest of an idolatrous household, he has built an altar to the Lord, and begun to destroy idolatry. But he has yet to be taught that there is not a bit more courage or prowess really in the men that had gathered after him than in himself.

"And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for Me to deliver the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me" (v. 2).

At once he has to get rid of a great number of them. This is done, first of all, by means of an ancient ordinance of Moses. The Lord tells him, "Now, therefore, go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and faint-hearted, let him return, and depart early from Mount Gilead." (Compare Deut. xx. 8).

God's great design in His dealings was to teach Israel to trust in Himself. He wants to find in His people a *true heart*. A true heart makes a strong hand. Having confidence in the Captain of our salvation, and not in ourselves, we faint not at the sight of our enemies, but reckon, with true-hearted Caleb, that "we are well able to overcome them."

"And there returned of the people twenty-and-two thousand. And there remained ten thousand" (v. 3).

Do we not know what this means? We know that the Lord Jesus sent forth the proclamation, "Let those who will follow Me count the cost." "Foxes have holes" (told He one who had said unto Him, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest"), "and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head"; and then there was fearfulness and faint-heartedness.

Rest: The Believer's and God's.

IN a day of terrible strife and unrest, it will, I doubt not, be of profit and comfort for us to consider some scriptures which speak of rest, rest based on the work of Christ.

“ 'Tis finished: here our souls have rest,
His work can never fail.”

I. THE BELIEVER'S REST.

(1) Matt. xi. 28. Through grace we have been enabled to accept the Lord's loving invitation to come to Him, and our consciences have been set at rest from the burden of sin. This He bore for us on the tree, and in the terrible travail of His soul on account of it, glorified God, and met His holy claims. But that labour has not been for naught, for “ He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied ” (Isa. liii. 11).

(2) Matt. xi. 29. Having the rest spoken of in verse 28, the Lord exhorts us to take His yoke, and learn of Him; that yoke of perfect subjection and obedience to His Father's will, in His devoted labour for God. Sharing His yoke, He will enable us to bear it, and not only this, but in so doing, even in a path of diligent service, we shall find rest to our souls.

The chapter strikingly shows the restfulness of Christ's soul, and that in face of all the opposition He encountered, and the apparent

failure of His service. It seemed as though He had "spent His strength for naught, and in vain" (Isa. xlix. 4). Yet the Meek and Lowly One could say, "I thank Thee . . . for so it seemed good in Thy sight." That was enough for Him.

(3) Psalm cxvi. 7. The rest of our souls is in the Blessor, rather than in the blessings. These we can praise Him for. He has indeed dealt bountifully with us. He has bestowed upon us "His unspeakable Gift," and with Him He freely gives us all things.

A similar thought is manifest in Ps. cvii., when the goodness of God to those in trouble leads to the exhortation to "praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works" (vv. 8, 15, 21 and 31). But verse 1, which, as in different other Psalms, seems to sum up the lessons taught in the Psalm, says, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for *He is good*," it is Himself in all His goodness, even more than His wonderful works, that fills the soul with praise.

(4) Heb. iv. 9. This is for us the eternal rest in glory. True, for Israel there remains a blessed rest, or keeping of Sabbath, on earth; but ours is a glorious rest in His own loved presence, when, gazing on Him, we shall be satisfied with His likeness (Ps. xvii. 15). The labours, the weariness, the sufferings, and, alas! the failures of the pathway

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through this scene will be over, and we shall enter into God's rest.

Meanwhile let us seek to be always abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. xv. 58).

II. GOD'S REST.

(1) Gen. viii. 21. Sin came in to break God's rest in creation, but God has gotten for Himself a yet deeper and sweeter rest in redemption. Noah's burnt offering (pointing on to Christ's infinitely precious sacrifice) ascended up to God as a "sweet savour," or "savour of rest" (see margin). It was indeed because Christ loved us, that He gave Himself for us; but it was "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph. v. 2). It is because God has thus found His rest in that offering, that He is free to come out in the fulness of His love as the Blessor (see Gen. ix. 1).

(2) Ps. cxxxii. vv. 8 and 14. God's desire is to find His rest in the midst of His redeemed people. In Eden God came down to man in innocence to talk with him: but redemption brings in greater nearness, and He dwells (finds His rest) among those whom He has redeemed. They, too (fear being removed through divine love, that has provided the sweet smelling sacrifice,) desire His presence. "Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest: Thou and the Ark of Thy strength." So, too, the Lord

Jesus, as in John xx., loved to come into the midst of His own, with the blessed message of "Peace unto you." No wonder the hearts of the disciples were glad.

To-day likewise, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). There weary and sorrowful hearts are refreshed and gladdened by His presence. Hearts, too, that are in the enjoyment of health and strength and many temporal mercies, find that which surpasses all these, as they sit under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit proves sweet to their taste (Cant. ii. 3).

(3) Zephaniah iii. 17. In the future day of Israel's glory, how deep will be God's joy in the midst of His people: all that would mar that joy being removed! He will joy over them with singing. Perhaps even a fuller measure of satisfaction is told out in the words, "He will *rest* in His love" (the margin puts it, "He will be silent in His love"). Thus there is the glad expression of His love and joy in singing, and the silent resting in His love towards them.

So will it be for the saints in eternal glory (Rev. xxi.). God will put away with His own hand all the pains and tears, and make all things new. His presence, and the light of His glory will fill that scene with love and joy unspeakable. We shall rest with

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Him, and He will find eternal rest in having His blood-bought saints with Him in the likeness of His beloved Son.

“ Rest of the saints above,
Jerusalem of God,
Who in thy palaces of love,
Thy golden streets have trod?

“ *That rest secure from ill*
No cloud of grief e'er stains,
Unfailing praise each heart doth fill,
And love eternal reigns.

“ The Lamb is there, my soul;
There *God Himself doth rest*,
In love divine diffused through all
With Him supremely blest.”

How can I know that God loves me? By looking at the perfect object of His love; and this gives me rest. Why? Because in Him I see how wondrous is the love that sent down His Son to give me eternal life, and be a propitiation for my sins. If I have not rest, what I want is a deeper sense of sin. I must learn what sin is at the cross of Christ; and then I shall see the love that has met it, and suffered for it: and thus my soul gets rest.

“Partakers of the Divine Nature.”

READ 2 PETER i. 1-4.

THE very care which the apostle takes to write a second time to these Hebrew believers, giving them instructions as to their own pathway, and warning them of the evils coming, is a striking proof that he did not look for a continuance of the apostolic order. The broad outline of the epistle, and the details also, forbid the thought. Indeed, in the second chapter he shows the terrible state that is coming in, and then that God is going to judge the whole earthly scene.

The difference between this epistle and that of Jude's epistle is, that though by Peter the Spirit of God speaks a great deal about corruption, it is in *the world*; whereas Jude tells of corruption in what bears the name of the Lord, *ecclesiastical corruption*. You get apostasy in both, especially in Jude's.

The careful way in which the apostle Peter seeks to help and guide these believers shows he did not look for any continuation of apostolic authority; he throws them on the Lord and His word.

He takes up the whole question of God's dealing with the earth in a manner and majesty that suits God's character. He addresses them as a servant and an apostle,

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and speaks to Jewish believers, as in the first epistle.

“To them that have obtained like precious faith” (v. 1). While it has a particular application to those to whom he wrote the first epistle, yet it has a little wider bearing than the first.

Peter is fond of the word “precious.” “*Precious* blood”; “He is *precious*”; and here, “*precious* faith.” He speaks of faith, the thing that is believed, and also the fact that you believe; but whichever it is, he says you get it on the ground of the righteousness of God, “our God and Saviour.” You have this faith through the faithfulness of Him who was the Jehovah of Israel, and who was likewise the Saviour who came down, and walked in this world. God has been righteous and faithful; and as the result, spite of the sin of the nation, you have this faith in God’s own blessed Son.

In verse 2 is a very customary salutation. “Grace,” the present favour of God; and “peace,” the present standing-place of the soul. He wishes it “multiplied.” There is where the soul stands, in perfect peace with God; and in the present acceptance of God, and favour with God; and Peter wishes their apprehension of it “multiplied.”

It is not *mercy* here. And why? You only find mercy brought in where it is an indi-

vidual who is addressed; because though I may have "grace" and "peace" as an individual, yet I need "mercy" for my soul day by day, as I go through a scene where everything is against me. When it is the Church that is addressed, mercy does not come in; because the Church is always viewed as in relation to Christ, and as having received mercy because of her connection with Christ.

In the Epistle to Philemon, Paul writes to him and to the Church which is in his house, and that is why mercy is left out there.

How is this grace and peace to be "multiplied"? "Through the knowledge of God." The intensification of that grace and peace can only come as we walk with God. You show me a person who is walking with God, and I will show you one who gets grace "multiplied" day by day. You walk closely by Christ, and you will get the peace that He came to give "multiplied" day by day.

There is nothing so difficult as to walk in grace; for, on the one hand, there is the tendency to looseness, and, on the other, the tendency to legality. Going, as these believers were, through a scene of difficulty, no wonder that the apostle wished that it might be "multiplied."

See how beautifully you get divine power in verse 3, and divine nature in verse 4. In verse 3 we are the subjects of divine power, a

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divine operation working in us, and giving us all things that pertain to life and godliness; eternal life, a life that enjoys God, and is suited to God; and godliness, a character that is like God in all its ways down here, a moral likeness to Him. The first thing is a “life” that is from Himself, and is never occupied with anything but Himself, and “godliness,” God-likeness.

“Through the knowledge of Him that has called us by glory and virtue.” It is the deepening acquaintance with the blessed One who has given to our souls a distinct call. And if there be one thing we are apt to forget, it is our calling. We do not forget our gifts, our blessings; but the thing we are so apt to forget is our calling. And what is our calling? He has called us to glory. We are called to heaven in the first chapter of the first epistle, and here he says the God of glory has come out and called us.

The contrast is very striking between the Christian now and Adam in innocence. Adam in innocence was responsible to obey God, and stop where he was; but our responsibility is, not to stop where we were, for we were in the world, and sin and lust was our nature. But God says, “I have called you out of that, called you by glory and virtue.”

Abraham was called to be a pilgrim; Moses to be a law-giver; Joshua to be a leader; our

call is to glory. See, the apostle says, that you have your faces set thither. Glory is the end of the road. And what by the way? Virtue, or spiritual energy, on the road of which glory is the end.

What we have to manifest and express is what he calls virtue, spiritual energy. There is nothing more difficult, because it calls on us to refuse the flesh, to refuse the world; like Moses, "who refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. x. 24, 25).

The man who has this spiritual energy knows how to say "No" to the thousand things, in him and about him, that appeal to his flesh. We give way too often; lack this energy, and the result is, we often fall.

Moses refused earth and its delights, refused the highest place in this world, said "No" to the allurements of the flesh and the world, and took his place outside, with the few despised ones of God's people. It needs this virtue, this courage, to do this. Moses "refused" what nature would have chosen, and "chose" what nature would have refused; namely, to be in company with a set of brick-making slaves.

How much we need this courage to refuse the world in all its shapes and forms, and to

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cast ourselves in with a little company of those who love the Lord, and are united to Him!

There is nothing more difficult than to break away from the old things that everybody goes on with, for the power that tradition has over us is wonderful, and it needs this courage to break away. These Jewish believers had separated from their religion, their temple, their ordinances, their observances, from everything that their nation and their forefathers had gone on with.

If we do not keep alive in our souls this virtue, this courage and energy, we slip back into the things which once we gave up.

All the promises are connected either with this life, or the glory where we shall be by-and-by, and as the promises coupled us with Christ, the effect should be that “ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (v. 4). We are partakers of the divine nature in conversion, by being born again; but he shows what is the sweet result of tasting what the Lord is, and walking with the Lord. He gives you to be a partaker morally of the divine nature; that is, we are brought into the atmosphere that suits God; breathe the atmosphere He breathes; become *spiritual*. The soul gets enlarged in its sense of what God is. There comes the capacity for

the enjoyment of God, and then the deepening enjoyment of God.

Just as much as we enter into the word and the things of our Lord Jesus Christ, we become the partakers morally of this divine nature. If you live with the Lord, and walk with the Lord, this will be the result; and you escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. What is lust? Man's will. The apostle is talking here of this state, and of the walk of a saint who escapes it. You have every thought of the heart brought into captivity to Christ; you are delivered from your own will; you are not even carried off by the imaginings of your own heart; you breathe the holy, pure atmosphere of God's presence, an atmosphere where the soul finds its delight in doing God's will.

You once were in the world doing your own will. Now you have been delivered, and you do God's will. What a sweet thought it is that when we get up there in the glory all taint of sin will be gone! "Oh, but," says Peter, "you may know a great deal of that down here. You have the new nature that delights in God, and this new nature having room to expand, your peace grows, and your grace, and you escape the corruption that is in the world through lust."

Paul preaches the same thing, "If ye live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit." And if a

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man lives in the Spirit, how will he walk? Like Christ! Every thought of Christ's heart was Godward. What will it be by-and-by when every thought, every turn of your hearts will be Godward! When we get up there we shall breathe the atmosphere our souls delight in, and we shall breathe it freely, without thought or fear lest any Philistine or Amalekite intrude.

“Well,” says Peter, “you may know something of this down here.” Thus he gives them what would cheer and refresh their hearts.

Our union with Christ is a real living union. I am in Christ above, and Christ is in me below; and there I find the principle of all my walk, and the power of it too. I may be about my work and business, but in that work and business I have to live Christ; to walk in the Spirit of Christ, whatever circumstances I am in. Supposing I am doing that, the Spirit is not grieved, and I enjoy the third heaven; I have not been inconsistent with it. I have not been there, but I have walked consistently with it, because I have walked in the Christ who is there. He is both my life and the power of my life.

Divine Grace and Divine Government.

THE title of this paper may possibly present a theme to which some of our readers have not given much of their attention. And yet few themes are more important. Indeed, we believe that the difficulty felt in expounding many passages of Holy Scripture, and in interpreting many acts of divine providence, is justly traceable to a want of clearness as to the vast difference between God in grace and God in government. Now we purpose, in dependence upon the Spirit's teaching, to unfold a few of the leading passages of Scripture in which the distinction between grace and government is fully and clearly presented.

In the third chapter of the Book of Genesis we shall find our first illustration, the first exhibition of divine grace and divine government. Here, we find man a sinner; a ruined, guilty, naked sinner. But here, too, we find God in grace, to remedy the ruin, to cleanse the guilt, to clothe the nakedness. All this He does in His own way. He silences the serpent, and consigns him to eternal ignominy. He establishes His own eternal glory, and provides both life and righteousness for the sinner, all through the bruised Seed of the woman.

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Now, this was grace; unqualified grace; free, unconditional, perfect grace; the grace of God. The Lord God gives His Son to be, as the Seed of the woman, bruised for man's redemption, to be slain to furnish a robe of divine righteousness for a naked sinner. This, I repeat, was grace of the most unmistakable nature. But then, be it carefully noted that in immediate connection with this first grand display of grace we have the first solemn act of divine government.

It was grace that clothed the man. It was government that drove him out of Eden. "Unto Adam also, and to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." Here we have an act of purest grace. But then we read, "So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Here we have a solemn, soul-subduing act of government. The coat of skin was the sweet pledge of grace. The flaming sword was the solemn ensign of government. Adam was the subject of both. When he looked at the coat, he could think of divine grace; when he looked at the sword, he was reminded of divine government.

Hence, therefore, the "coat" and the "sword" may be regarded as the earliest expression of "grace" and "government."

True, these things appear before us in new forms, as we pass down along the current of inspiration. Grace shines in later days in brighter beams, and government clothes itself in robes of deeper solemnity. Moreover, both grace and government assume an aspect less enigmatical, as they develop themselves in connection with the personal history of the people of God from age to age. But still it is deeply interesting to find those grand realities so distinctly presented under the early figures of the "coat" and the "sword."

The reader may perhaps feel disposed to ask, "How was it that the Lord God drove out the man, if He had previously forgiven him?"

The same question may be asked in connection with every scene throughout the entire Book of God, and throughout the entire history of the people of God, in which the combined action of "grace" and "government" is exemplified. Grace forgives; but the wheels of government roll on in all their terrible majesty.

Adam was perfectly forgiven, but his sin produced its own results. The guilt of his conscience was removed, but not the sweat of his brow. He went out pardoned and clothed; but it was into the midst of "thorns" and "thistles" he went. He could feed in secret on the precious fruits of grace, while

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he recognized in public the solemn and unavoidable enactments of government.

Thus it was with Adam; thus it has been ever since; and thus it is at this moment. My reader should seek to get a clear understanding of this subject in the light of Holy Scripture. It is well worthy of his prayerful attention. It too frequently happens that grace and government are confounded, and as a necessary consequence, grace is robbed of its charms, and government is shorn of its solemn dignities. The full and unqualified forgiveness of sins, which the sinner might enjoy on the ground of free grace, is rarely apprehended, because the heart is occupied with the stern enactments of government.

The two things are as distinct as any two things can be, and this distinctness is as clearly maintained in the third chapter of Genesis as in any other section of the Inspired Volume. Did the "thorns" and "thistles" with which Adam found himself surrounded, on his expulsion from Eden, interfere with that full forgiveness of which grace had previously assured him? Clearly not. His heart had been gladdened by the bright beams of the lamp of promise, and his person clothed in the robe which grace had fashioned for him, before he was sent forth into a cursed and groaning earth, there to toil and struggle, by the just decree of the throne of government.

God's "government" "drove out the man"; but not until God's "grace" had pardoned and clothed him. *That* sent him forth into a world of gloom; but not until *this* had placed in his hand the lamp of promise to cheer him through the gloom. He could bear the solemn decree of GOVERNMENT, in proportion as he experienced the rich provision of GRACE.

Thus much as to Adam's history, in so far as it illustrates our thesis. We shall now pass on to the Ark and Deluge in the days of Noah, which, like the coat of skin and the flaming sword, exemplify in a striking way divine grace and divine government.

The inspired narrative of Cain and his posterity presents, in lines of unflinching faithfulness, the progress of *man* in his fallen condition; while the history of Abel and his immediate line unfolds to us, in glowing contrast, the progress of those who were called to live a life of faith in the midst of that scene into which the enactments of the throne of government had driven our first parents. The former pursued, with headlong speed, the downward course, until their consummated guilt brought down the heavy judgment of the throne of government. The latter, on the contrary, pursued through grace an upward course, and were safely borne through the judgment into a restored earth.

Now, it is interesting to see that before ever

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the governmental act of judgment proceeded, the elect family, and all with them, were safely locked in the Ark, the vessel of grace. Noah, safe in the Ark, like Adam clad in the coat, was the witness of Jehovah's unqualified grace; and as such he could contemplate the throne of government, as it poured its appalling judgment upon a defiled world. God in grace saved Noah, before God in government swept the earth with the besom of judgment. It is grace and government over again. *That* acts in salvation; *this* in judgment. God is seen in both. Every atom of the Ark bore the sweet impress of grace; every wave of the Deluge reflected the solemn decree of government.

We shall just select one case more from the Book of Genesis, a deeply practical case, one in which the combined action of grace and government is seen in a very solemn and impressive way. I allude to the case of the patriarch Jacob. The entire history of this remarkable man presents a series of events illustrative of our theme. I shall merely refer to the one case of his deceiving his father for the purpose of supplanting his brother.

The sovereign grace of God had, long before Jacob was born, secured to him a pre-eminence of which no man could ever deprive him; but not satisfied to wait for God's time and way, he set about managing matters for

himself. What was the result? His entire after life furnishes the admonitory reply. Exile from his father's house; twenty years of hard servitude; his wages changed ten times; never permitted to see his mother again; fear of being murdered by his injured brother; dishonour cast upon his family; terror of his life from the 'Shechemites; deceived by his ten sons; plunged into deep sorrow by the supposed death of his favourite Joseph; apprehension of death by famine; and finally death in a strange land.

Reader, what a lesson is here! Jacob was a subject of grace; sovereign, changeless, eternal grace. This is a settled point. But then he was a subject of government likewise; and be it well remembered that no exercise of grace can ever interfere with the onward movement of the wheels of government. That movement is resistless. Far easier would it be to stem the ocean's rising tide with a feather, or check the whirlwind with a spider's web, than to stay by any power, angelic, human, or diabolical, the mighty movement of Jehovah's governmental chariot.

All this is deeply solemn. Grace pardons; yes, freely, fully, and eternally pardons; but what is sown must be reaped. A man may be sent by his master to sow a field with wheat, and through ignorance, dulness, or gross inattention, he sows some noxious weed. His

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master hears of the mistake, and in the exercise of his grace he pardons it, pardons it freely and fully. What then? Will the gracious pardon change the nature of the crop? Assuredly not; and hence in due time, when golden ears should cover the field, the servant sees it covered with noxious weeds. Does the sight of the weeds make him doubt his master's grace? By no means. As the master's grace did not alter the nature of the crop, so neither does the nature of the crop touch for a moment the master's grace, nor interfere in the smallest degree with the pardon flowing therefrom. The two things are perfectly distinct; nor would the principle be infringed even though the master were, by the application of extraordinary skill, to extract from the weed a drug infinitely more valuable than the wheat itself. It would still hold good that "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7).

This will illustrate in a feeble way the difference between grace and government. The passage just quoted from the sixth of Galatians is a brief but most comprehensive statement of the great governmental principle, a principle of the gravest and most practical nature, a principle of the widest application. "Whatsoever *a man* soweth." It matters not who he is. As is your sowing, so will be your reaping. Grace pardons; nay, more, it may

make you higher and happier than ever; but if you sow weeds in spring, you will not reap wheat in harvest. This is as plain as it is practical, and as practical as it is plain. It is illustrated and enforced both by Scripture and experience.

Look at the case of Moses. He spoke unadvisedly with his lips at the waters of Meribah (Num. xx.). What was the result? Jehovah's governmental decree prohibited his entrance into the promised land. But, be it noted, while the decree of the throne kept him out of Canaan, the boundless grace of God brought him up to Pisgah, where he saw the land, not as it was taken by the hand of Israel, but as it had been given by the covenant of Jehovah. And what then? Jehovah buried His dear servant! (Deut. xxxiv.).

What grace shines in this! Truly, if the spirit is overawed by the solemn decree of the throne at Meribah, the heart is enraptured by the matchless grace on the top of Pisgah. Jehovah's government kept Moses out of Canaan. Jehovah's grace dug a grave for Moses in the plains of Moab. Was there ever such a burial? May we not say that the grace that dug the grave of Moses is only outshone by the grace that occupied the grave of Christ? Yes; Jehovah can dig a grave or make a coat; and, moreover, the grace that shines in these marvellous acts is only en-

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hanced by being looked at in connection with the solemn enactments of the throne of government.

But let us take another case ere we close this paper. Look at David, "in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." Here we have a most striking exhibition of grace and government. In an evil hour David fell from his holy elevation. Under the blinding power of lust, he rushed into a deep and horrible pit of moral pollution. There, in that deep pit, the arrow of conviction reached his conscience, and drew forth from his broken heart those penitential accents, "I have sinned against the Lord." How were those accents met? By the clear and ready response of that free grace in which our God ever delights. "The Lord hath put away thy sin." This was absolute grace. David's sin was perfectly forgiven. There can be no question as to this. But hardly had the soothing accents of grace fallen on David's ear, ere the solemn movement of the wheels of government were heard in the distance. No sooner had mercy's tender hand removed the guilt than "the sword" was drawn from the scabbard to execute the necessary judgment.

This is deeply solemnizing. David was fully pardoned, but Absalom rose in rebellion. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The sin of sowing weeds may be forgiven, but the reaping must be accord-

ing to the sowing. The former is grace; the latter is government. Each acts in its own sphere, and neither interferes with the other. The lustre of the grace and the dignity of the government are both divine. David was permitted to tread the courts of the sanctuary as a subject of grace before he was called to climb the rugged sides of Mount Olivet as a subject of government (2 Sam. xii. 20; xv. 30). And we may safely assert that David's harp never sent forth sweeter notes in praise of DIVINE GRACE than at the very moment in which he was experiencing the impressive action of DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

Sufficient has now been said to open to the mind of the reader a subject which he can easily pursue for himself. The Scriptures are full of it; and human life illustrates it every day. How often do we see men in the fullest enjoyment of grace, knowing the pardon of all their sins, walking in unclouded communion with God, and all the while suffering, in body or estate, the terrible consequences of past follies and excesses! Here again you have grace and government. Nothing can be more important in its way than a clear sense of this subject. It is immensely practical, and will be found to aid the soul very effectively in its study, not only of the page of inspiration, but also of the page of human biography.

I shall close this article by quoting for my

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reader a passage which is often erroneously adduced as an exhibition of grace, whereas it is entirely an exhibition of government. "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7).

Were we to regard this passage as a presentation of God in the gospel, we should have a very limited view indeed of what the gospel is. The gospel speaketh on this wise: "God was in Christ *reconciling* the world unto Himself, *not imputing* their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. v. 19). "Visiting iniquity" and "not imputing" it are two totally different things. The former is God in government; the latter is God in grace. It is the same God, but a different manifestation.

Every right feeling in a creature must have an object; and, to be right, that object must be GOD, and God revealed in Christ as THE FATHER; for in that way God possesses our souls.

Gideon, God's "Mighty Man of Valour."

READ JUDGES vi.-viii.

III.

WHEN there was nothing but Christ, and everything else was against them, many turned back and walked no more with Him. Confidence in the flesh must be renounced; God will not use the flesh.

The present is an age when people are coveting to know a little about everything. Were God to employ the learning of learned men, the influence of men of rank, and the like, the Church would say, We have saved ourselves. Those who have had what are called "the advantages of a good education" find that He says, Set your learning, your wisdom, your influence aside; I cannot save *by these*. The use to be made of these things is to say of them, with Paul, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

Often are these much coveted things found hindrances in the way of those who possess them, and the great thing to be done in conflict is to keep them under. God will not allow human learning, influence, moral character, or aught else, to come in as any item in our deliverance. He is very jealous of all

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man's substitutes for, and imitations of, the power of the Holy Ghost.

In stripping ourselves of such things we may seem to others to be throwing away our influence, and our usefulness. But what is usefulness? what is "doing good"? The doing of God's will. And God is faith's sufficiency. To all appearance, Gideon was weakening his own hands; at the first proclamation, twenty-two thousand left him; but in reality, instead of losing strength, he was a gainer by their departure. These fearful and faint-hearted ones would have discouraged the rest had they remained amongst them: "Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brother's heart faint, as well as his heart."

The flesh is very bold in word; but when it comes to the point of trial, with Peter, it curses, and swears that it knows not Jesus. There is a great deal of "philosophy and vain deceit" going about now. "Beware lest any man *spoil* you," says the apostle. Were all the trappings of the flesh laid aside we should discern how little real spiritual energy there is amongst us. Do you ask, What shall I study? Study well these four words, "THE FLESH PROFITETH NOTHING."

"And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down into the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say

unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go " (v. 4).

There is such a thing as the trial of our faith; and, whilst we very often should be quite unable to test one another, God knows the best way of doing this as to each.

" So he brought down the people unto the water : and the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were THREE HUNDRED men : but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the THREE HUNDRED men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand : and let all the other people go every man unto his place. So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets : and he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those THREE HUNDRED men. And the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley " (vv. 5-8).

God's ways are strange to sense. The infidel scoffs at them.

The Two Natures ; or, "Man" and "The Son of Man."

READ JOHN iii. 1-7 ; MATTHEW xx. 17-28.

"**Y**E must be born again," is a statement of the Lord Himself, at once absolute in its character, and of universal application.

As those who have sinned we need, and in Him we find, a Saviour. His sacrifice has made atonement for all the sins of His people, and is sufficient for the sins of the whole world.

But forgiveness of sins is not all that God's word speaks of. It tells us of our corrupt nature, the flesh, which cannot be improved. A nature may be trained and restrained, but it cannot be changed. Man has sinned, and he is also a sinner. His sins must be atoned for, and a new nature he must receive. Hence the necessity of that new birth spoken of in John iii., for by birth, and by birth alone, does anyone receive a nature. By natural generation from Adam we receive a fallen nature ; by spiritual generation of water and of the Spirit we receive a new nature, unchangeable in its character, sinless, impeccable. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (v. 6).

There are few in this land who will not own

they have sinned, however trivial the iniquity may appear in their eyes; but how few have learnt that their nature, derived from Adam, is not only sinful, but incapable of amendment. Yet this lesson the cross of Christ plainly teaches. It was because of this that God sent His own Son into the world, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, that He might condemn sin in the flesh. (Rom. viii. 3.) It was to show the need of a new nature, that from the pierced side of a dead Christ flowed out water as well as blood. (John xix. 34.) He came to make propitiation for our sins. He came, too, that we might live through Him. (1 John iv. 9, 10.)

It was to impress on Nicodemus a truth so important to all, but so generally overlooked, that the Lord addressed him in a seemingly abrupt way that night: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again [or *anew*], he cannot see the kingdom of God." And what He then so plainly affirmed, "Ye must be born anew," received a striking illustration from the incidents of His last journey to Jerusalem, recorded in Matthew xx. 17-28, where the fruits of the two natures are respectively brought out.

On the one side we have the fruits of the old man illustrated in the conduct of the Jews, Gentiles, and the two disciples, James and John. On the other side we have the fruits of

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the new man (new when we speak of ourselves, but not new when we speak of the person of Christ), illustrated in the conduct of "the Son of man." Hatred and self-seeking characterize the one; love and self-renunciation characterize the other. The locality, the people, the time in which this is manifested, are all worthy of notice.

I. The LOCALITY. "Behold we go up to Jerusalem." In the city of the great King, where God had manifested His presence, where the ark had found its final resting-place in the days of Solomon, where was the temple, and the dwelling-place of the high priest, "the Son of man" was to be betrayed. No other spot in the whole universe would have done as well for this act of man, for Jerusalem was regarded as the centre of religious knowledge, the metropolis of Judaism. Had He been betrayed elsewhere, it might have been said, At Jerusalem they would have acted differently. But to bring out what man is, as a child of Adam, at Jerusalem He must be crucified.

II. How could that be accomplished? "He shall be betrayed," is the Lord's announcement. He voluntarily surrendered Himself to do God's will, but He was betrayed to the Jews by one of His disciples. Judas had heard His words, had seen His acts, had received freely with the rest power to cast out

devils in His name, yet he should betray Him. Acquaintance with the Lord, close intercourse with Him, he surely had enjoyed, yet he would be found ready for this sin for the paltry price of thirty pieces of silver. Advantages such as none but the twelve apostles possessed may be enjoyed, and the individual turns traitor at last, unless he is born again, becoming partaker of a new, the divine, nature. Nothing short of this is of any avail.

“Betrayed” unto the chief priests and scribes, they shall condemn Him to death. To execute they had no power. What they could they did, and only there stopped. They condemned Him to death. Their will was manifested, the power only was wanting. He must die, was their judgment of the case. Their hatred could never be satisfied whilst He lived.

And who were these who took such a prominent part in the matter? Not the unlettered Galileans, not the people, the rabble who knew not the law and were accursed (John vii. 49); but the professed conservators and expounders of God’s word. They were not ignorant of the law or the prophets, but they condemned Him to death. The highest authorities in Israel, the chief priests and scribes of Jerusalem, must be specially guilty of this sin. Neither acquaintance with the Lord, as Judas enjoyed, nor familiarity with the letter of Scripture, as the chief priests and scribes laid claim to,

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preserved the persons concerned from imbruing their hands in the blood of their King and Lord.

To execute the Lord was beyond their power, so they were to deliver Him "to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify." Examined by Pilate, He was declared to be innocent. Sent to Herod, He was brought back to Pilate as one who deserved not to die. As the Roman governor, Pilate sat to administer the law. As a rule, the Romans showed respect to law. An unrighteous governor could be impeached and punished. Paul made the magistrates at Philippi tremble, because they had beaten two Roman citizens previously uncondemned. He escaped being scourged at Jerusalem, because the chief captain was restrained by Roman law. He could appeal to Cæsar, and that instant he was sheltered by the law from the fury and fanaticism of a Jewish mob.

It was to no barbarian power, therefore, that the Lord was delivered. But, to show up what man is, whilst handed over to the Roman governor to be tried by law, He was mocked and scourged before being crucified. Declared by the judge to be innocent, He was given up to the malice of his soldiers, and to be the sport of Herod and of his men of war. Finding no fault in Him, Pilate yet ordered Him to be scourged, and at last, yielding to the

clamour of the Jews, condemned Him to be crucified. Everywhere that man's nature, as a child of Adam, comes out, it is found to be only evil. From the corrupt tree only corrupt fruit must be expected.

III. From the PEOPLE concerned in it, let us turn to the TIME when it took place. Had the crucifixion taken place in the world's infancy, some might have excused it. Education had not time to take effect, men might have objected. Intellectual cultivation had not fully developed itself. Moral training had not a suitable sphere in which its influence could be tested. But surely to nullify all such excuses, and to bring out what the nature of man really is, the Lord Jesus was crucified in the reign of Tiberius.

For fifteen centuries had the Jews been in possession of God's word, read every sabbath-day in the synagogues; yet the chief priests and scribes were found unchanged in heart. For centuries had the Gentiles possessed a literature betokening great intellectual cultivation. Very many of the classical writers read and valued in these days were well known in those. The golden age of Roman literature was still existing. If secular education could avail a fallen creature to change his nature, or guide him aright, the Gentile had for long the opportunity and the means at command. The time of trial came, and found man just

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as ready to act unjustly, just as ready to act after the dictates of his fallen nature, as ever. Neither time, nor moral training, nor mental culture, nor the possession of a divine revelation, restrained either Jew or Gentile from showing their hatred of what was good, and enmity to God in their dealing with His Son. Betrayed to the Jews, the Jews condemned Him to death, and delivered Him to the Gentiles, who in their turn tried and then crucified Him.

Such is the simple history of man in connection with the cross of Christ.

How refreshing to turn for one moment from the direct subject before us, the unchangeable character of our fallen nature, to the unchangeableness of God's word. "And the third day He shall rise again." Man showed what he was; but he could not frustrate in any one thing God's counsel. The DEATH of the Lord exhibited man's nature as utterly bad; incapable of amendment. The RESURRECTION of the Lord demonstrated God's counsels about His Son to be incapable of alteration. And all that man, instigated by Satan, could stoop to attempt, never for one moment diverted God from His purposes of grace.

But not only have we such striking examples of the character of man's fallen nature in those who were unconverted; but

here we can advance a step further, and observe the workings of that nature in those who were converted. This is of great importance, because it sets at rest a question which often disturbs godly but uninstructed souls. They see what man is when unconverted, and (expecting that when they are converted their old nature will change) are distressed, and doubt the reality of their new birth, because the old man, when it works, is still the same.

A nature, we again repeat, can never change, as the history before us proves.

The mother of Zebedee's children, with her two sons, prostrated herself before the Lord, desiring of Him a favour. "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, the other on the left in Thy kingdom." A place of pre-eminence above others they sought. What place had Peter or Andrew, or any of the others, in their hearts, when they asked this? They would provide for themselves, not for others; for, though the mother is introduced as the speaker, they clearly, as this history shows and Mark relates, joined in the request she made. Converted they were; the special companions of the Lord they had been (Matt. xvii. 1; Mark v. 37); yet that nature derived from Adam still existed, and, when it was allowed to act, gave no indications of any change. Man by nature is selfish. It may manifest itself in a thousand different

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forms; but, traced to the root, self-pleasing or self-seeking will be found at the bottom.

If such is "man's" nature, what of "the Son of man"? As light is opposed to darkness, so what He displayed was the opposite of that which man here exhibits. James and John cared for themselves; He only cared for others. Men manifested the intensest hatred; He shows the strongest love.

"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." What an entire abnegation of self is here. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto." Who is "the Son of man"? Let Psalm viii. furnish the reply. What is His position in the universe? Let Daniel vii. give the answer. "The Son of man" has dominion given Him by God over all the earth. "The Son of man" is the Ancient of days Himself (Dan. vii. 13, 22). The great ones of the earth exercise authority over their fellows. "The Son of man" came to minister to His creatures. He could claim the homage of all, and command the service of the heavenly host. But on earth He appeared as a servant, to minister to the children of men. The blind men of Jericho, the Syro-Phenician woman, the centurion, the ruler of Capernaum in Galilee, the impotent man at Bethesda, the blind beggar at the temple gate, the widow of Nain, as well as the sisters of Lazarus, tell us

how truly He came to minister. He visited the sick chamber of Peter's wife's mother with healing power for her; and went to the house of Jairus to raise up his daughter to life. In the house the multitude followed Him, so that He could not so much as eat bread; but He never sent them away because He could not attend to their wants. The wilderness, and the temple thronged with worshippers, attest His readiness to feed and refresh the multitude; the well of Sychar, and the sycomore-tree of Jericho, His willingness to minister to individual needs.

He was God, some might say, and so could thus act. He was man also, we must remember. He hungered, He thirsted, He was weary, He lay down to sleep, He was strengthened by an angel in the garden, He was ministered to by women for the supply of bodily wants. Perfect man He was, yet came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. He could receive from His creatures, for He needed it; but He came to give them what they wanted. How gently, yet how plainly, He rebuked His disciples!

But, further, whilst Jew and Gentile would be showing their enmity to Him, He would manifest love for them; for He came "to give His life a ransom for many." For His disciples, for the Jews who condemned Him, for the Gentiles who crucified Him, that "ran-

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som " would avail. He " gave Himself a ransom for all," we read in 1 Timothy ii. 6; " a ransom for many," He here says.

Why this difference? Was He less inclined to save sinners when on earth than He is now? Would He limit the extent to which the value of His death could be applied? The truth must be told: He would save all; but all will not be saved. When He speaks of many, He speaks not of the extent of His desires, but of what man in his folly would restrict. All are not saved, BECAUSE ALL WILL NOT BE SAVED.

Such, then, are the characteristics of the divine nature as here displayed in " the Son of man "; for whilst His atonement is spoken of, the motive which prompted it, LOVE, is implied. Are we then simply to study these characteristics as beautiful subjects for contemplation, with which, however, we have no concern? They are written for our instruction, and for our example. " Even as the Son of man," are words which teach that as He acted so should we. Atonement was His work, and His only; but love which prompted such a sacrifice is to be manifested in His disciples. (1 John iii. 1, 6.) To act as He acted, we must be " partakers of the divine nature." Such characteristics and motives are not found in the unconverted children of Adam.

So Matthew xx. 17-28 is a beautiful illustration of the doctrinal statement of John iii. 6,

and furnishes ample grounds to all who read it for the absolute statement of the Lord to Nicodemus, "Ye MUST be born again."

The world's integrity, like every other thing belonging to fallen man, is a mere hollow system of selfishness, though it may be polished over by the decorums and civilities of society. The source from which TRUE integrity must spring is LOVE TO GOD; and this love can only flow from an assurance that our guilt has been pardoned, and that our sins have been washed away in the blood of Jesus.

Whenever God works, the *first* with Him is to secure *manifestly* His own glory in what He does. When unrenewed man works, or when renewed man works like an unrenewed man, God's glory is left out of the question.

Let us remember that the wisdom of God leads us in the path of the will of God. If our own wills are at work, God cannot accommodate Himself to that. This is the essential thing to discover. It is the secret of the life of Christ.

The Christian's Addition Table.

READ 2 PETER i. 5-16.

HAVING given what would comfort and refresh the hearts of the believers, the apostle turns to the subject of their practical state, and says, "Besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge" (v. 5).

"Virtue" is that energy and courage of soul that knows how to refuse, as well as to choose; like Moses, who "*refused* to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; *choosing* rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. xi. 24, 25).

He knew how easy it was to get slothful, and so he exhorts them to give all diligence in thus adding.

He says, You have the faith that connects you with God, and you believe in what as yet you do not see, but now you must add "virtue," that courage which knows how to say "No" to the thousand things that come up day by day, and to press on unswervingly in the pathway that is set before us.

Then you may find a person who has this energy, but who is a little rough, and so he says, there is something else needed, lest this roughness turn to rashness, therefore add to virtue "knowledge" of God, of the mind and

ways of God, and of what suits God; for mere knowledge puffs up, but this is the knowledge that humbles.

A man who knows God well cannot know Him without being in His company; and a person who is near to God is tender in his ways, though there may be energy in him to follow on. We need grace from the Lord to add this.

“And to knowledge temperance” (v. 6). Not the mere external restraint, but the cultivation of the inward mastery of the soul day by day, governing ourselves, keeping ourselves in order: and, depend upon it, if we cannot keep ourselves in order, we cannot keep anyone else.

“Temperance” is that quiet gravity of spirit that is equable in every circumstance; like Christ, never upset by anything or anyone that came along.

“And to temperance patience.” “Temperance” will keep me from saying or doing a thing that will wound you, and “patience” will keep me from being upset by anything that you may do to wound me. “Temperance” is active, “patience” is passive.

If you have not “knowledge,” you will not know how to meet the mind of God. If you have not “temperance” you will be sure to do something that will hurt someone else. And if you have not “patience” you will be

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upset by what someone else may be doing to you.

“And to patience godliness,” God-likeness. Walking through this scene, and possessing the divine nature, see that you illustrate it, exemplify it.

Show me a man's company, and I will show you what sort of a man he is; and if you are keeping company with God you will be a godly person, for we all resemble what we are occupied with. It comes out in a thousand blessed details, too, every day.

Then in this, the Christian's addition table, we have “brotherly kindness” and “charity,” two things that may seem alike but are different (*v.* 7).

Brotherly kindness is a thing that might be merely human, and might degenerate and fade away; and brotherly kindness might only love the lovable sort of people, might be partial; but when I come to “charity,” it is impartial and unfailing, it is divine “love.”

“Charity never fails.” In 1 Cor. xiii. there are eight things it does not do, and eight things it does do, and it never breaks down. It is the very thing our souls need as we go through a scene where everything is against us.

Supposing a person repulsed me, and considered my love interference; “brotherly kindness” only might say, I will not go back;

but "charity" is a divine thing, and says, "I think of the blessing and good of the object, and of the glory of God in connection with that object."

"Charity" is not the love that makes light of evil, but the love that seeks the real good of its object.

We have a guide by which we may learn if we really love the children of God. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments" (1 John v. 2). If you love the Father you love His children. If we love Himself we love His people likewise, and we seek each other's blessing; but always desiring to meet His mind. You act as one who comes directly out from God, dependent on Him, and obedient to Him, and goes in grace to a person, no matter what his state may be.

The Lord help us to profit by His word, and to seek to add these things to our faith, for there are many beautiful consequences of so doing. If there be not this blessed adding, there is going back, for there is no such thing as standing still; if we are not progressing, we are retrograding. "Unto every one that hath, shall be given . . . but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matt. xxv. 29).

If there be not the desire to press on, to go on with the Lord, what is there? There

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is only a returning to the things from which the Lord called us out in days gone by. The Lord give us to have diligence of heart in thus adding to our "faith," and progressing in the "knowledge" of Himself. From the frequency with which the apostle alludes to the eight things mentioned in verses 5, 6, and 7, it would seem almost impossible to overrate their importance. He brings out the effect of having these things, and the result of not having them.

THE END OF EVERY DEALING OF GOD WITH OUR SOULS IS TO MAKE US KNOW CHRIST BETTER. If a person goes on with these three verses, you find about that person the savour of Christ. The apostle felt that everything was nothing that did not lead a person to a deeper knowledge of Christ. That which puts us nearer to Christ has this effect; we feel how unlike Christ we are; and also it allures us from the world, so that we are more fit morally to pass through the world.

Many a saint of God feels, I am fit for heaven, but not fit for earth, because I am not sufficiently with the Lord to be equal to the occasions that arise as I pass through this scene. We feel our impotence and folly, feel how we have broken down as witnesses for Christ. It is only as Christ becomes better known that there is a fitness to pass through this scene.

You will say as to the subject of verse 9, This is a backslider. Not at all! He is confident about his eternal salvation. "But," you say, "he is blind." Quite true; put the things that belong to the Lord before him, he does not see them, he has forgotten, too, that he was purged from his old sins.

What has he forgotten? Has he forgotten that his old sins were purged away? Not a bit! He has forgotten that he was purged away from his old sins, and so he has turned back to them again, got back into the world, lost completely the sense of what Christianity is as being a heavenly thing, and the Christian as being a heavenly person. There has been a dropping down, and losing sight of the things the Lord has called us to, a dropping down to earth and its ways, its principles, and its religion likewise. The true thing has been let go. Bit by bit the standard has been lowered, till there has been a dropping down so far, that the Lord has had to awaken one in a startling way.

In verse 10 the apostle comes again with the solemn exhortation "give diligence," and it is a thing we need, this holy diligence of soul to keep up, with purpose of heart, to the thing the Lord has called us to. Peter alludes, doubtless, in this verse to the terrible fall he had had himself.

"But," you say, "how can we make our

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calling and election sure? " Who called us? Our Father. Who chose us? Our Father. But this does not do for other people. Who are you to make your calling and election sure with? with the One who called you? the One who chose you? Not a bit! but with every one who watches you, every one who could say, "*You* a called person! *You* do not look a bit like it. *You* a chosen person! No one would think so." You are to make it manifest to the eyes of every one else that you have been thus called of God.

v. 11. That is more than the soul being sustained, kept of the Lord, though that in itself is a wonderful mercy, for there is many a fall in the history of a child of God that God and his own heart alone know of.

But is there not something very beautiful about the path of a Christian of whom you could say, from the first till the Lord took that one home, "He never took a backward step, there was not a trip, nothing manifest but a pathway of beautiful devotedness"? There is no reference here to forgiveness or pardon, but the apostle reverts to his great subject of the government of God, and he says, If you have these things, and abound, not only will you be kept from falling, but there passes before his mind the thought of the place and the portion and the reward that the saint of God has in the coming kingdom of

the Lord; for, though the grace of God gives us a common place in heavenly glory, there is such a thing as the kingdom, a place in the kingdom, and reward for service which has nothing to do with grace.

Grace gives us a common place in heavenly glory, but the government of God gives us an unequal place in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to service. It is a question of the reward that a saint gets from the Lord by-and-by; and there is the same difference in this as there is between a vessel that goes abroad, and encounters storms by the way, but has been badly rigged, badly manned, and badly commanded, and though it gets into port, yet it comes up the channel with masts torn away, and tugged by a steamer, and a vessel that comes into port with all sails set, everything in order, and cargo safe.

He says, If you do not go on adding, you will fall down by the road, and there will be a sense of loss at the end. There comes a moment when the soul deeply feels, Would to God I had been devoted to Christ, instead of being worldly, cold, trivial, half-hearted. Most beautifully Peter guards the sheep, lest they should fall into the thing from which he would fain protect them.

vv. 12, 13. We may sometimes think it not worth while to be going over the same

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things again and again. Not so Peter. And if our hearts are only put in remembrance of these things, God be thanked. It will be blessed fruit to our account in the days to come.

Do we not need stirring up? We do. Satan does his utmost to hinder our souls. The Lord lead us to be more watchful, more on our guard against the wiles of the enemy.

v. 15. How persistent the apostle is. "To have these things always in remembrance." "These things" are five times spoken of. It is impossible therefore for our souls to overestimate the value of the things mentioned in verses 5, 6, 7, to which the apostle thus alludes five times after. The Lord grant we may have them always in remembrance, have them engraved upon the tablets of our hearts.

How Peter felt there was no apostolic succession, no one to do the work he was doing, after his death! I leave you, he says, in my epistle that which may always be a blessing and a help to your souls.

In all ages the people of God have clung in a peculiar way to Peter's epistles. Why, do you think? I believe it is because they come right down to where we are in the world, and meet us so beautifully with a presentation of Christ, which comes to us and suits us in our need in this world.

Satan is alluded to as a roaring lion in the

First Epistle, and as a snake in the grass in the Second Epistle; but we have what meets him in both these characters, and preserves us from his power and devices.

All the grace that was in the Lord Jesus was brought out to meet man's sorrow and misery, and to bear on every earthly 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 manner, on any occasion, depart from the spirit of grace.

We are to walk even as Christ walked. He was the display of divine life in a man. Not merely is there in Him the perfectness of a man before God, but the perfectness of God before man: therefore His example is far more than "the law" for us. Another fact is that the Holy Ghost is given to us. We are responsible, too, for gifts bestowed by the Holy Ghost, as seen in the parable of the Talents. If I have any service as a Christian, I must do it, or I shall be chastened.

Gideon, God's "Mighty Man of Valour."

READ JUDGES vi.-viii.

IV.

THESE people were really not afraid (as those who departed before) to go to the battle; they were all of them soldiers girded for war. The test was this, whether in that thirsty day they would lap the water, putting the hand to the mouth, or bow down and drink at their ease. The **THREE HUNDRED** chosen ones (those by whom the Lord was about to work) had not time for halting, their hearts were in the work, and they merely took a draught as they went on their way.

The apostle speaks of being "entangled with the affairs of this life" (2 Tim. ii. 4). All that we can safely take, would we "please Him who has chosen us to be soldiers," is just a draught by the way. There is a very great difference between being *in* the circumstances of this life, and being *entangled with them*. When tested by the Lord, those who bowed down were not fit for His use, any more than (though they were not) the faint-hearted. They must go to their homes.

Glory is (for all who believe) God's answer to the work of Christ; grace is followed by

glory : “ Whom He justified, them He also glorified.” Instead of its being this, the devil seeks to put it before the soul on the ground of our devotedness and zeal. At the same time, beloved, would not you and I that our place should have been with the THREE HUNDRED? Shall we let slip the opportunity of confessing Jesus because we are saved? In the experience of almost every believer there is a *being brought down to the water*, some turning-point, when he either goes onward in devotedness to the Lord or otherwise sinks down into a mere commonplace Christian. Not one of us is too obscure to be tried whether he will seek God’s honour or present things *first*.

Gideon (instructed that the battle is the Lord’s, and that he must get rid of all encumbrances) is next shown his enemies.

“ And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand ” (v. 9).

It is a blessed thing to be shown our enemies, and to be told with Gideon that the Lord has delivered them into our hands. Our old man is “ crucified ” (Rom. vi. 6), the world “ overcome,” and its prince “ judged ” (John xvi. 11, 33). If we are walking by faith, as risen with Christ, Satan, the world, and the flesh are under our feet.

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And mark, further, how graciously the Lord anticipates the need of His servant, in adding :

" But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host : and thou shalt hear what they say ; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host " (*vv.* 10, 11).

Nothing could be more alarming than to see the fearful odds that are against the people of faith ; the world, the flesh, and the unceasing hostility of Satan ! Who would not be faint-hearted if he saw but this ? God is pleased to let Gideon hear what *is* in the Midianites' hearts. So, too, is He pleased to let us know very often what is in the hearts of our enemies. " Art thou come hither to torment us before the time ? " lets out the secret. And as to the men of the world, there is not one in a hundred of them but has the fullest conviction that Christians are right ; yet, because they have numbers on their side, they try to persuade themselves to the contrary. Almost everything he hears bids the intelligent Christian " be strong."

Let us follow Gideon.

" Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude ; their camels were without number,

as the sand by the seaside for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel : for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host " (vv. 12-14).

Divine encouragement is never to the puffing up of the flesh. Anything of pride and self-importance must have been sorely wounded. When God will show His favoured servant the things that are coming to pass, and that he shall smite the Midianites as one man, He makes him feel that (in himself) *he* is but as a "cake of barley bread."

And is there not instruction for ourselves in this? Were Christians stripped of their worldliness, more really like the "cake of barley bread" (the most homely thing possible), the world would stand more in fear of them. We have clothed ourselves with its trappings, and desired its respectability, so that it thinks we are obliged to go to it for help. There is an unhealthy kind of zeal, often found amongst us, which makes a person ask himself, *How shall I give a testi-*

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mony? Rather let each saint seek to show forth "the mind that was in Christ Jesus." A man always anxious to prove himself an honest man we should begin to suspect; and if a person is always so very anxious to prove that he is a Christian, it is doubtful whether he yet knows much of the mind of Christ. Let us quietly subside into simple, God-fearing, God-acknowledging Christianity; and, though outwardly as a cake of barley bread, the world would feel about us as the Midianite speaks of Gideon to his fellow.

"And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped."

Before he goes to battle, he worships in the full confidence of victory. The worship of faith is always the worship of *confidence*. Were we more really, in our own eyes, the "cake of barley bread," there would be more abounding praise. "He worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of the Midianites" (*v. 15*).

Here again there is the setting aside of self. He does not say "into *my* hand," but "into *your* hand." The Lord had said "into *thine* hand" (*v. 9*), and the Midianite "into *his* hand" (*v. 14*).

What is this "host of Israel"? THREE HUNDRED men! The Midianites are "as

grasshoppers for multitude"; the "Lord's host" a handful of men! It is most important to see the dignity attached to the THREE HUNDRED. God (as we have before remarked in the history of this mighty man of valour,) reckons not according to what we are in ourselves, but according to that which He *makes* us.

And had He actually delivered the Midianites into the hand of Israel? No. Neither, as yet, is Satan actually under our feet, though *faith* counts him to be. Had Gideon said, "I will not believe before I get the spoil," that would have been unbelief.

And now comes the conflict.

"And he divided the THREE HUNDRED men into three companies, and put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon" (*vv.* 16-18).

The weapons of their warfare were the most foolish things imaginable: trumpets, pitchers, and lamps in the pitchers! Faith's weapons must be mighty through *God* alone.

Jesus in Resurrection.

READ LUKE xxiv.

WE might observe that here the Lord Jesus takes the scene into His own hands.

When He was apprehended in the garden He recognised that moment as “man’s hour,” and “the power of darkness” (Luke xxii. 53). *Man* was the principal then; man took Him, man nailed Him to the tree; thereby verifying the word, “This is your hour.” *Man* was disposing of the scene as it pleased him. And so it went on till the three hours of darkness. Then GOD took it into His hands. That was the time when God bruised Him, and “made His soul an offering for sin” (Isa. liii.).

It is very desirable that we should see the special characteristic of that moment. All through life, His Father’s countenance was beaming on Him. Was He forsaken of His Father through life? Read His utterance in Psalm xvi. But now, according to the prophetic voices, according to the premonitions of John the Baptist, there He was, God’s Lamb.

Then at once He becomes a conqueror. God did not wait for resurrection to sanction the death of Jesus. He sanctioned it by rending the veil (Matt. xxviii. 50, 51). That was not the public seal; but before the third appointed

day had come, for the *public* seal (of resurrection), God put His *private* seal on it.

And the rapidity of it is beautiful. We cannot measure the time between the giving up the ghost and the rending of the veil. That was the seal of the satisfaction of the throne.

In two ways He was doing the will of God here. Through life His business here, as at the well of Sychar, was turning darkness into light. That was the will of the Father when He was a living minister. As a dying victim He was doing the will of the throne. The throne where judgment was seated was satisfied when Jesus gave up the ghost. *One* was doing the will of the Father in grace; the *other* was doing the will of God in judgment.

After that, having passed through man's hour and God's hour, we see Him in resurrection in His own hour. His own hour is eternity. How blessed to be in His company, to enter a bright and intimate eternity with Jesus!

We see Him now in resurrection, and we find many things here to invite attention. We find in the opening that, as soon as the Jewish sabbath was over, the women came with spices which they had prepared, and they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre; "but they found not the body of the Lord Jesus."

Now, what do you say to all that? There is something exceedingly comforting in it. It

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is ignorance and affection mingled. It was *ignorance* that took them to look for "the living among the dead"; *affection* took them, counting the dead body of the Lord of more worth than all around.

What are you to do with ignorant affection? Just what Christ did with it. He could appreciate it, but He was not satisfied with it. He will not have *love* in place of *faith*. Love is the principle that *gives*; faith is the principle that *takes*.

Which is the more grateful to Christ? He will tell you in this chapter. He *will* have us debtors. He *will* occupy the place of the "more blessed" (Acts xx. 35). Faith says, "Lord, you shall have it so."

Another has said, "Faith is the principle that lets God think for us"; and to that I add, That puts God into the chief room. If I come naked and empty, and make God everything, that is faith.

The law makes *man* principal, and God secondary. Man is to be doing this and that, while God is passive. The gospel changes sides altogether. In the gospel God is the giver, and you are the receiver.

Here, instead of faith, was ignorant love. They had affection, but they did not understand the victory He had gained in their behalf. It is Christ that has visited me in my grave; not I that have visited *Him* in *His*

grave. He is the living One, I am the dead one.

So they bring their spices and ointments to the tomb; and there the angels meet them. They were afraid. They were looking for a dead body; they might well be startled by seeing a glittering stranger. The angels were fresh from heaven, the witnesses of the risen and victorious Lord. They had not been thinking of that, so seeing the angels put them to fear.

And they said, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? Remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee."

That was a rebuke. Do you like to see love rebuked? It is not pleasant, but it is faithful. They were about the business of love, but the business of unbelief too. So in everything God stands vindicated. *Then* "they remembered the words."

How much mischief do we get into by not remembering God's words! When the Lord Jesus was tempted He had the word of God at hand, and by that simple word He gained the victory in the battle.

They do this piece of foolishness because they had not remembered the simplest words that could have fallen on their ears. How sweet to see the God of all grace in intercourse with us even in our mistakes! Would you like a person to be always standing before

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a glass fitting himself for your presence? You would rather find him at his ease before you; and so would God have us.

The rebuke was well meant and well deserved, but it was "an excellent oil that would not break their heads." Now this light puts them on quite a different road. Let my *mistakes* be a link with Christ, rather than the Ephraim condition, "Let him alone." "Be not silent to me, lest I become like them that go down into the pit" (Hosea iv. 17; Ps. xxviii. 1). All this is anything but *that*. They were well-deserved and sharp rebukes; but again I say, Let my mistakes put me in company with Jesus, rather than I should not be in company with Him at all.

So they went and told these things to the apostles; "and their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not."

Now, would you call the apostles *Corinthians*, who by intellectual workings denied the resurrection? or Sadducees, who as a depraved sect denied the resurrection? I could not say that. I should not put them among the Sadducees of Israel or the Corinthians of the Gentiles.

How, then, do you account for their unbelief? Ah, it is hard to believe that God is doing your business in this world. It is much easier to us to do Christ's business, than to believe that He has done ours. Not a form

of human religion takes up that thought. So it was with the disciples. They could bring their spices and their ointments, but they were not yet able to believe the mighty fact that He had been doing their business. We think of Him as hard, and exacting, and watching above the clouds to find occasion against us. Their hearts had been as leaking vessels of the words of Christ, and they come as the living to the dead, instead of believing that He as the living has come to us the dead. We will spend our days in penances, but we will not trust Him.

Then we see Peter in the same plight. Peter! Is it possible? He that had made the very confession on which the Church founds herself! (Matt. xvi.). When Peter has to *live* the confession, he fails.

The one among the eleven that ought eminently to have blushed was Peter. How you can distinguish a man from himself at times, his condition from his experience! If he had known what he was confessing, he never would have thought of "the Son of the living God" as among the dead.

Then we leave Peter, and return to the Lord in company with two disciples. He got the very same element in them. The only exception lay in the distant corner of Bethany. We do not find Mary, Martha, and Lazarus at the sepulchre. They had already been at the tomb

of their brother. Was it from want of love that they were not at the empty sepulchre? No, but from faith in Christ. Ignorant *love* brought the Galilee women there; intelligent *faith* kept the Bethany women aside.

Now He joins these two disciples on the road, as with gloomy, clouded hearts they were going back to the city. What made them sad? It was unbelief. That sadness was attractive to Jesus. If the affection that took the spices to His tomb was delightful to Him, the sadness that gathered round their clouded hearts was delightful to Him too. It was reality.

Do not you believe the Gospels give you little bits of eternity? The Gospels give you intercourse between "the Lord of glory" and poor sinners, and eternity will give you the same intercourse. IT IS WORTH THE WORLD TO HAVE AN INTIMATE ETERNITY WITH CHRIST.

The Gospels prepare our hearts for it even now by such confidence. Their confidence was won and retained, though the Lord never made an effort about it. He just threw Himself out on their hearts, and they took Him up as He was. And He drew near, and asked them, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one with another as ye walk, and are sad?" And they said, "Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" We have turned our

backs, not only on Jerusalem but on all our expectations. This is the third day, and now we are going home. It is all over with us.

“O fools, and slow of heart to believe.” To believe what? “*All* that the prophets have spoken.” That was the cure, and that was where they came short. Oh, how that should bind round your heart and mine every jot and syllable of God’s word! Then He showed them how Christ should suffer, and “expounded to them in *all* the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

Now their reasonings turn into kindlings. What turned them? Jesus had interpreted Himself. How natural, then, that He should make as though He would go further! He was hiding Himself under a veil, and as a stranger He would not intrude on them.

“But they constrained Him.” I do not thank them a bit; I thank the kindlings they were enjoying for this piece of courtesy. We had better take up our thanks to the One to whom thanks are due.

We know how it ended. Be sure the joy of eternity will never weary you. Kindlings will be there of seraphic order. Give me a seraphim-mind within, and the glories of Jesus around; that will be heaven.

In verse 33 we have the journey to Jerusalem where the disciples were gathered, and we still find the same thing, the unbelief that

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lurked in their hearts touching the resurrection. Now the Lord sets Himself to dissipate it. It must be dissipated, for it is fatal to the faith of God's elect.

Nothing could be a substitute for RESURRECTION. The whole dealing of God with sinners depends on its being an accomplished fact. In several cases during His ministry we get the people expecting Him to interfere between sickness and death. But that was not God's way. "The wages of sin is *death*" (Rom. vi. 23). So now He must go into death. He must meet the enemy in the place of his strength, and defeat him there.

In the history of Jairus's daughter it was just that. He tarried so long that she died; a beautiful witness that the Lord did not come to *intercept* death, but to *defeat* death. So in the case of Lazarus. The Lord tarried till the sickness ended in death. They were all crying and bewailing, howling over the ravages of death.

That was the very place for the Son of God to display Himself in. To be sure He *did* heal and cleanse, but He came into the world, not to interfere between sickness and death, but between death and life again. HE IS THE HOLDER OF VICTORIOUS LIFE. Supposing He had met sickness and not death, nothing would have been done, for "the wages of sin is death." Did He come to

qualify the original judgment? "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." He *did not*; He *could not*. He came to meet it, suffer it, verify it, and get the victory on the other side of it.

When the two disciples are satisfied, they get back to the city, to report what they have seen; and while they speak, Jesus Himself stands in the midst of them.

There are many things for us to observe here. I will tell you a sweet thing. He not only *rose*, but He *rose the same as He died*. Could you put up with the thought of an *altered* Son of God? Though throned in glory this moment, He is *the very same* as He was at the well of Sychar. If you want to know what Christ is *now*, go and learn Him in the four Gospels. Do you want a different Jesus from the One that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have introduced to you?

Perhaps it is hard to understand that He is the same now in glory as He was here. It is part of the business of the post-resurrection scenes to assure us that He is the *very, very same*. Treasure that up in your souls. It will make the pathway to heaven so easy. He has come into your world before ever He asked you to go into His; and the way to make the path there easy is to know that you will find in yonder world of glory the *very same Jesus* that came into your world.

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The Lord of the distant glories has been in the midst of my ruins, and has shown me that He is the same in the midst of the glories as in the midst of the ruins. It is among the moral wonders of the gospel that the blessed Lord has taken such means to accommodate my eye and ear to future glories.

He has given beautiful pledges of that. As He entered, He said, "Peace be unto you." Had He ever said that before? Were those words strange on His lips? He was only redeeming His pledge. Before He died He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). After He rose, "He breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx. 22).

That is another witness. Before He died He said, "I will meet you in Galilee." Did not He take up the pledge? You may say that was a little thing. But, whether big or little, a *risen* Christ makes good what a *ministering* Christ had promised. Circumstances cannot change Him. Ruins here and glories there have no power to touch Him. He said before He suffered, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John xiv. 2). After He rose He said, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father."

If you go through the post-resurrection scenes, you will be able to track a risen Christ in company with a ministering Christ, taking

up the pledges and showing all the beautiful traits of character that He exhibited before. Do you ever think of sudden death? You may be borne without a moment's notice into His presence. Will it be a strange place to you?

I may be a stranger to His *circumstances*, but not to *Himself*. Therefore THE MORE WE ACQUAINT OURSELVES WITH JESUS, THE MORE WE ARE IN HEAVEN ALREADY. It is little matter about His palace if I know Himself. The blessed Lord *wants* to make us intimate with Himself. So in the post-resurrection scenes, He lets us know that we know Him already.

Now we come to the verification of the *fact* of resurrection. Why is that such an important point? Suppose God had said, "Satan has ruined your *body*, so I will take you to be with Me in *spirit*," it would have been verifying the victory of Satan over the body. Did God come into the world to do that? So the apostle says, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain." Then He makes us in our glorified bodies the witnesses of His victory. Resurrection was not only the seal of His victory. He has made an atonement, and the throne has owned it by raising the Surety from the dead.

But not only so. It is necessary to see that He has got a victory in this world; so to verify this the Lord wonderfully condescends.

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“He said unto them, Have ye here any meat?” Why was all that? Simply to verify that it was no mere spirit that stood before them. The Lord came to fight a battle for *you*; palpable flesh and blood. Palpable manhood had been destroyed; palpable manhood must be redeemed.

Having established that fact in the 44th verse, He makes all to hang on it. Then having recited what He had once told them, He here knits His present ministry with what had gone before. He opens to them, in Law, Prophets, and Psalms, the things concerning Himself. We see something like this in His dealings with Peter. He had said, “The cock shall not crow twice till thou shalt have denied Me thrice.”

That came to pass. Then the Lord looked at Him. He had awakened his conscience by the *crow*; He re-linked him with Himself by the *look*. When the Lord rose, He took up Peter exactly where He had left him. He did not want to awaken his conscience again, or to re-link him with Himself again; but He takes him up at the critical point where He left him. He puts him into the ministry again.

The Lord knows the path of your spirit, and will take you up exactly where you are. He had told them while He was with them that all things should be accomplished, and

now He gives them an opened understanding (which He had not done before), and sits down to give them a lecture on them. It is beautiful to see how He educates us. What a wonderful moment ! and that moment has been *continued to this moment*. That was a moment that characterized the present dispensation ; that on the warranty of His death, remission of sins should be preached to every poor sinner. In one sense we have never got beyond it, and we never shall till the last of the elect is brought in.

Now He had done everything ; and, as a preacher to the world, He was silent. He had declared remission of sins to a world of sinners. I take leave of Jesus as an evangelist there. We have not yet fully seen Him as a high priest ; but that was a stereotyped moment of His ministry as an evangelist. He cannot add to that. He has told me, as belonging to a world of sinners, that through death and resurrection remission of sins is preached to me.

Now He led them out to Bethany. I believe it was a silent walk. If my spirit is drinking in the simplicity of such a gospel it will be in deep-toned, silent satisfaction of soul. " And He lifted up His hands, and blessed them." That was priestly service. *There* He " ever lives " (Heb. vii. 25). I have *never* done with His up-lifted hands, and in

that attitude He was taken up to heaven, to carry on His priesthood on high.

What effect has all this on you and me; to look at an evangelist Jesus giving peace to the conscience, and then see Him going up to heaven in the act of blessing? What effect had it on the disciples? The whole character of their religion was changed. They were no longer trafficking with Moses. Their service became that of eucharistic priesthood. They went back to the city with great joy, "And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."

Can anything be more divine? *Nothing*. And there Christ takes leave of you. The heavens will retain Him "till the times of refreshing." But have you lost Him? Could He leave a more graphic impression than He has done here? He has accomplished redemption, and He ever lives to bless you. Go to *your* Jerusalem and be ever praising and blessing Him.

There the scene closes. "We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness." The trail of the serpent is *everywhere* but in such shining paths as I see the feet of Jesus treading here. Whatever He lays His hand to, He accomplishes it to perfection.

The Life of Jesus the Pattern of Christian Life.

MY VERY DEAR BROTHER, I think you are entering upon that period of activity which makes reflective life a far more hidden life than before. This is a very real advance in Christian life.

I liked divine philosophy, and it is still to my taste. As long as our external life is composed of it, we appear to be far more spiritual and deep. Thus, the steam which escapes from the engine appears to have much more force than that which draws the heavy train . . . but it is when hidden for the most part that the force really acts. Thus its reality also is tested.

And why do I say that this is real progress? Because it makes less appearance before men, because it is more entirely before God, with whose approval we must be satisfied. We must be content to possess the thing with Him, nay, to find it in Him; but that is to possess it in reality. This is the principle of all moral perfection; to enjoy things, instead of accrediting oneself with them in the eyes of others.

Active Christian life is an ordinary life of service, in contact with human passions, faults, and failings; in a word, in contact with the flesh. But to act in it, to introduce God into it, and this is what Christ did, we need power, we need to be really in communion with Him,

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thus partaking of that nature which nothing can touch, and which shines in its own perfection in the midst of all; to be above all that we encounter.

Divine philosophy, supposing it to be real, and to meet with no opposition when displayed before others, is an easy enjoyment; and, as I have said, one may adorn oneself with it, and display it to admiring eyes. To walk in Christian life we must *be* what we admire: that is another thing. We must be divine, in the sense of being made partakers of His nature.

And this is why Jesus was the most isolated of men, and, at the same time, the most accessible, the most gracious: the most isolated, because He lived in absolute communion with His Father, and found no echo, no sympathy [in man] answering to the perfect love which was in Him: the most accessible, the most gracious, because He was that love towards others.

Speaking of the ineffable work which was to open a way for that love through all the sin, He says: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened until it is accomplished" (Luke xii. 50). That baptism of bitterness and death, which made an end of sin, even in its last fortress and uttermost rights of ruin through the justice of God against us, gave free course to that love in its

infinite designs of grace. For love is of infinite invention for the happiness of the beloved, and the love of God has in view that which is beyond all our thoughts. It is the spring of the thoughts of the Infinite God.

Again, when towards the end of His career the opportunity presents itself, at the moment when the unbelief of His own makes Him say, "How long shall I be with you and suffer you?" (for—and this is what He expects from us in this poor world—there was not, even in His disciples, faith or capacity to make use of the resources of grace and power which were in Him,) He adds, without even a moment's interval: "Bring thy son hither" (Luke ix. 41).

The consciousness of being so isolated in His love that others did not even understand how to profit by it, does not for a moment arrest His energy and activity. The same sentence which contains the "How long?" says also, "Bring thy son hither."

And what was then the life of this Jesus, the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? A life of activity in obscurity causing the love of God to penetrate the most hidden corners of society, wherever needs were greatest; among persons whom human pride rejected, in order to maintain its own reputation, but whom the love of God sought, because it needed not to establish for itself a reputation,

or to preserve one. He was always the same : and the more He compromised Himself in appearance, the more He manifested Himself in a perfection which never denied itself. The love of God needed not, like human society, to preserve itself from that which might lay it too bare. It was always itself.

The toilsome life of Jesus was passed in seeking souls in all circumstances. It went through everything that could put it to the proof, but we see in it a divine reality which never failed; then (in presence of self-righteousness and pride and the tyrannical boldness of the contradiction of sinners, or in favour of some poor crushed soul, or, lastly, to justify the ways of God in their favour) we discover in it from time to time a divine wealth of touching, exquisite thoughts, a depth of truth which betrayed its perfection by its simplicity, showing a soul always fed with the most intimate communion with infinite love and perfect holiness.

He was the One who could say, " We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen " ; the One who weighed evil by the perfection of good which was in Himself, and who found, in the fearful discoveries (if we may speak of discoveries where all was laid bare,) made by the holiness of His soul, opportunities for the manifestation of infinite love ! Or, rather, it was the love of a Holy Being

which made these discoveries, a love which clothed itself with a grace which, by its very humiliation, placed itself within the reach of the needs of the heart, and which, at the same time, in presence of the pride of man, showed itself to be at the height of the dignity and majesty of God.

How beautiful to see this Person, these divine qualities, piercing through the humiliation which placed them within reach of those whom the world despised ! Wearied with His journey, indebted for a draught of water to a woman who scarcely dare show herself with others, He finds meat to eat which the world, and even His disciples, knew nothing of. This was in the deliverance of a poor heart crushed by the weight of a bad conscience and the contempt of its fellows, to which He had given back (or rather, given) the *spring* of life and joy. What a prospect ! how much of blessing to sinners this opened to His soul ; for He did not disdain such consolation in the midst of a world which chased Him from its bosom ! Thus love consoles itself : the heart which loves the sinner needs it in such a world.

But where is it to be found ? In retirement, in the labours of a life which had to do with the common needs of souls, but still abiding in the truth ; for this life did not shelter itself from the misery of the world, to walk in the

midst of that which has an appearance only, but it brought in—precious grace!—the love of God. He *was* that of which others could *write*.

How many needs, hidden even in the most degraded souls, would confess themselves, would come to light, if a love, a goodness which could give them confidence, were presented to them : but for this one must be content often to find oneself in the midst of such degradation, being preserved from it only by what is within; and this was the life of the Lord. How many souls are whirling in pleasure, in order to silence the moral griefs which devour them !

Divine love not only answers needs; it makes them speak. It is delightful to see the opening of a soul, and at the same time the entrance of spiritual intelligence. One may not exactly seek the degradation I speak of, but we have to do with the world as already knowing what is really in it, and its external forms do not rebuff the soul. But it is a life of labour, of patience and of happiness, the like of which cannot be found. Christ could say through all, “ That they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves ” (John xvii. 13). Without doubt there are diversities of gifts, but even when God opens this path before us in His grace, how slow we are to follow the track of the One who draws us there.

Courage, dear brother, grace is there in the path which He has opened to us; we find it every day as we go along; and what glory, when all the principles which have been formed in the heart by faith blossom in heaven, and are reproduced in the fulness of their results according to the heart of God! We must wait, while walking by faith. . . .

(Translated from the French.)

October, 1849.

Three Estimates of Christ.

I.—THE WORLD'S ESTIMATE. (Psalm lxix. 12.)

When He, the Lord of glory, came,
 Earth's proud ones spake against His name,
 While men of low degree
 In dens of vice where drunkards throng,
 Made Him the theme of ribald song
 And jest in revelry.

II.—THE SAINT'S ESTIMATE. (Canticles v. 16.)

When He, the Saviour of mankind
 Appears, His poor, lost sheep to find
 And claim me for His own;
 His beauty quite transports my gaze,
 Words fail me now to tell His praise,
 That wholly lovely One!

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III.—GOD'S ESTIMATE.

(Matt. iii. 17; Isaiah xlii. 1, li. 13; Heb. i. 3.)

What says the Father of the Son?

"My well-beloved, My only One,

In whom I find delight;

My Servant, Mine elect is He,

Extolled, exalted He shall be,

In glory none so bright."

**Gideon, God's "Mighty Man of
Valour."**

READ JUDGES vi.-viii.

V.

"SO Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp, in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And

the THREE HUNDRED blew the trumpets, *and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow*, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites" (*vv.* 19-23).

These things shall yet be acted over again. *Now*, the weapons wherewith we have to fight are testimony by word of mouth and our own insignificance. Our power is in giving testimony to Jesus, and never getting out of the place of being but "earthen vessels." We must remember that the vessel only *contains* the light, let us not pretend that it *is* the light. The excellency of the power must be of *God*, and not of *us*.

"And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim," etc.

Impotent in ourselves for blessing (and having found this out), but having proved the blessedness of simple dependence upon God, we can, with Gideon, call upon others to have fellowship with us (*vv.* 24, 25). But let us not be setting up ourselves. Everything depends upon the presence of the Holy Ghost, *un-grieved, unhindered*. Let this be told, and let us hide ourselves.

The men of Ephraim are seen at the close

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of chap. vii. slaying Oreb and Zeeb. (They are allowed to come in for blessing in result.) Now they turn and chide with Gideon for not having called them at the first.

"And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply" (viii. 1).

This is just what the *half-hearted* Christian does. He is very angry at not being associated with those who are whole-hearted. But whose is the fault? Whenever there is any energy of the Spirit of God working in the Church, the language of the men of Ephraim is the language of such, "Why not have taken us with you?"

Faith's answer is very simple, "Because then we must have gone on *your* ground. What we have to do is, to go wherever the Lord leads; we cannot stop to make compacts and agreements."

No one Christian has a right to stop on his way for another; he must go forward himself in individual faithfulness. The effort to drag others along with us is in reality but a device of Satan to keep ourselves back. Note the Lord's word to Jeremiah: "Let them return unto thee; but return not thou to them" (Jer. xv. 19). Are any desirous of going forward, let them not stop to carry along with them

“the men of Ephraim.” Far better is it to go on with but few to follow, than to get numbers with us who are only half-hearted.

“And Gideon said, What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer? God hath delivered into *your* hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I to do in comparison of you?” (vv. 2, 3).

Let us mark this. Where the power of God is most working, there is always the deepest grace, and the consciousness that all that we are we are by the grace of God. What a manifestation have we here of the mind that was in Christ! How graciously did the Lord speak of His poor, failing, faithless disciples! “Ye are they,” said He, “that have continued with Me in My temptations” (Luke xxii. 28).

Gideon esteems others better than himself. Not any thing so hinders blessing (individual or collective) as a feeling of superiority to others. The exercised soul will judge itself, whilst it sees that which is done by another in the light of grace. Gideon casts himself and his THREE HUNDRED in the shade, and brings into prominence the victory of the men of Ephraim.

If honest in self-judgment, have we not at times detected in ourselves something of an inclination to overlook grace in other saints

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because they "followed not with us"? Grace is able to fasten on that in a brother that is pleasing to God, and seeks to bring it out, passing over, in so doing, very much there may be along with it of failure. Jesus knew, and perfectly, the weakness and failure of His disciples, though He addressed them as He did. It is a blessing when we can sink ourselves, that others may come into prominence. "Let your light," it is said, "so shine before men, that they may see your good works" (not you), "and glorify" (not you, but) "your Father which is in heaven." If any chide with us, let us seek grace to go down and take the lowest place, and give them credit. "Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that." (See Prov. xv. 1.)

"And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the THREE HUNDRED men that were with him, *faint, yet pursuing them*" (v. 4).

What three little words could be more blessedly descriptive of the Christian than these? Not "faint, and *sitting down*"; not "faint, and *giving up*"; but, "faint, *yet pursuing*."

We have to do with Him who "giveth power to the faint." "To them that have no might He increaseth strength" (Isa. xl. 29). It is a blessed use to make of our faintness and weariness, that of drawing out of the fulness

of the supply of grace and strength in Christ. It is said, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might"; but to whom? To the one who has no strength in himself, who would give up his course if strength were not supplied to him. One victory achieved, the conflict goes on afresh. Do we find ourselves fainting in spirit? Still let us go on; for *our* God giveth strength to the weak.

We like not this trial of faith. It is very painful, doubtless, to feel day after day our own weakness. We want to feel that the battle is over; but let us remember that now is our time of war. We are called on to fight "as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," and that in a daily round of conflicts. To-day there has been sufficient grace and sufficient evil; and to-morrow there will be sufficient grace and sufficient evil.

What we need is to live day by day on God. He is faithful, and will supply strength according to the occasion and need. The Church will not be at rest till the Lord comes. But weakness ought to be no hindrance to our going forward, "faint, yet pursuing." It is a sad thing to be a spiritual sluggard; for a saint, like a door on its hinges, never to get off himself. The moment a person has learnt to renounce himself, he goes forward. Were felt weakness a reason for standing still, who so weak as Gideon?

“Why do ye Look One upon Another?”

(GEN. XLII.)

THE attention of the million is always awakened by some pressing emergency, however varied in its character this may be. Sometimes a political question will arise, like “reform”; and at another time a social question, such as “the schoolmaster abroad.” The nations of Christendom have their emergencies too; and a revolution may clear away the obstructions, or a war adjust “the balance of power.”

But far more important than all this is the fact that God also can create and use an emergency, and often does, in order to bring forward the resources of His own grace, by which He may discover Himself to mankind in the deepest of their necessities as creatures; and, better still, in their most distressing wants as sinners: “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. v. 6).

Genesis xlii. affords a striking example of this fact.

“Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us

from thence; that we may live and not die" (*vv.* 1, 2).

When God exercises the conscience of a sinner by pressing on him the depth of his need, He will not fail to lead him in due time to the Person and the place where his resources are provided. The prodigal began to be *in want* when he was in the "far country," but found abundance and the father's hearty welcome when he said to himself, "I will arise, and go to *my father*" (Luke xv.). When the extreme pinch comes men will look one upon another, like Jacob's sons, and indeed like the prodigal, who looked outside himself, and "when he had spent all . . . he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country"; but the citizen did not carry the secret of the father's house in his heart, and therefore "he sent him into his fields to feed swine." Man is no resource for his own need, nor can his neighbour provide a remedy.

And Jacob said, "Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die." How truly may we say, "God's thoughts are not our thoughts; nor His ways our ways" (Isa. lv. 8). They may go down to Egypt about corn; but God's intentions were that they should find a Joseph and a land of Goshen, although at the same

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time they are in the right path, and going to the right person about their hunger and the dearth in their land.

“ And Joseph’s brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth. And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them ” (v. 7). Grace, whether in God or in Joseph, is always beforehand with us, or grace would be shorn of one of its brightest features. “ And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them ” is only a companion picture with “ when he [the prodigal] was a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”

How both these scenes must give place to the grace of the gospel ! “ 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). If Joseph “ made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them ; and said unto them, Whence come ye ? ” it is but the ingenuity of a love that yearns *after* them, and will not be confined to the narrow limits of their own thoughts, but introduce them in due season into the largeness of his own affection.

A greater than Joseph made Himself strange to the outward ear when He said to the Syrophenician woman, “ It is not meet

to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs"; but only to justify her in the end by saying, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matt. xv. 21-28). Moreover, if Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamt of them, and will say, "Ye are spies," it is but in the same grace, which will perfect its object in the depth of an awakened conscience, and in the unfoldings of a love suited to the brother and the brethren.

What a foreshadowing of our precious Jesus and ourselves, upon a deeper work between God and our souls! And they said, "Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not" (v. 13).

But this superficial style will not suit the mind of Joseph, either when they refer to their father as "one man in the land of Canaan" or when they speak of himself as "one is not." He cannot make himself known to them upon such a footing as this. "One is not," indeed! and is this all they have to say about their treatment of this very Joseph, just as men in our day pass over the betrayal, rejection, and crucifixion of the Lord Himself!

Consideration for their own blessing will lead Joseph to behave yet more roughly and

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strangely, that he may put their own sin and its guilt upon their consciences. And “ Joseph said unto them . . . Hereby ye shall *be proved*: by the life of Pharaoh ye shall *not* go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither . . . If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison : go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses ” (*vv.* 14-19).

God Himself wounds that He may heal. He kills, to make alive. Righteousness must now come in, and, though mingled with grace, will do its own work in a guilty conscience, and put the trouble and terror of judgment on the heart.

“ And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us ” (*v.* 21).

Did Joseph utter a word of reproach to call for this self-impeachment? No ! but the upbraidings of guilt in the presence of their brother, like our sin when looked at by the side of the cross and in the presence of God, will do what nothing else ever does, and speak in a language which no tongue can express.

What a way of settling sin is this, by bringing to light in this present time, and leaving nothing for the future, when mercy shall be hidden from the eyes ! How blessed to learn

the lessons of the atoning value of the blood of Christ for God, and its cleansing virtue for the polluted sinner! "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. i. 18).

And Reuben answered them, "Spake I not unto you saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required" (v. 22).

Their brother's blood and their sin have now got into their proper places, and are doing the work of putting "the sentence of death" upon themselves. But if their wickedness is thus brought to light and to its fullest enmity too ("when he besought us, and we would not hear"), Joseph will begin to show *the grace and goodness that are in his heart*. "And they knew not that Joseph understood them, for he spake unto them by an interpreter. And he turned himself about from them, and wept" (vv. 23, 24). Joseph must be Joseph, supreme in love in the midst of a scene like this, even to tears. If his brethren are as bad as they are, he will be as good and as great in his goodness as he is; only to be excelled by the grace of God which pursues the sinner, and asks, "Why will ye die?" and pleads with the backslider, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember

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him still ; therefore my bowels are troubled for him : I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord ” (Jer. xxxi. 20).

And Joseph “ returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.” If Reuben was used to put the sin before his brethren, and to close up all by saying, “ His blood is required of us,” it is Simeon’s turn to be bound before their eyes, and take his place as their substitute and surety in “ the house of their prison.”

What deep searchings of the heart and conscience are here on the one hand ; and what reserves for the grace and glory of a future day in Goshen are embodied in this Simeon ! But all this has been taken up and exceeded by the love of God in the deeper matter of the blood-shedding and crucifixion of Christ by rebellious sinners. How have our sins and transgressions been made the sole business of our Saviour Jesus, when at the Cross He was taken from prison to be our substitute and surety ! Do we see the love of Joseph in all he was doing from first to last ? Oh ! turn to a more perfect love which has busied itself about *us*, and taken the place of the guilty before God, that He may take His new place, by the death of Christ, as the “ Justifier of the *ungodly* that believeth in Jesus ” (Rom. iii. 26).

If man has exceeded himself in wickedness at the cross, God will be greater there than ever by means of the blood that blots it all out. Is the cross the witness of the deepest enmity against God on the part of man? So shall it be from God to man the brightest expression of a love which nothing could ever turn aside. It is nothing short of triumphant grace!

“Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man’s money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way; and thus did he unto them” (v. 25).

Grace will take the rule of its actings only from itself. “And thus did Joseph unto them,” is the manner of his love to the brethren who hated him, and yet the more for his dreams and for his words. If work is work, and hard work, too, grace will be grace, and gives, never demanding nor receiving, and therefore “sacks filled with corn” for the famine of their households, and the provisions Joseph gave them for the way, and every man’s money in his sack besides, reveal the heart of their brother to them, and tell plainly enough that, if they have not discovered him, he has found them out, and will not let them rest till all his purposes of blessing are sealed to them in their forgiveness, and in settled peace and confidence in his presence.

“And as one of them opened his sack to

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give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money. . . . And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored, and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid; saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us? ” (vv. 27, 28).

Every believer in Christ knows the difference between the exercises of a guilty conscience and a troubled heart about unconfessed sin, as we have seen with Reuben and his brethren. Joseph is now setting them to learn a very different lesson, that “ where sin abounded, grace did much more abound ” (Rom. v. 20).

“ And they said one to another, What is this that GOD hath done unto us? ” God is found out as a giver, and they are learning the difficult lesson of taking the place of receivers on the ground of conscious worthlessness, debtors to grace from first to last. “ Not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins ” (1 John iv. 10).

“ Their hearts ” are not failing them *now* because their sin is brought to remembrance, nor are they saying one to another *now*, We saw “ the anguish of his soul, when he besought us and we would not hear ” (heart-breaking recollections these!), but sovereign goodness has come in; and unworthiness is

felt to be ten thousand times more unworthy in the presence of grace, which will not open its lips in reproach, but with both hands gives all that it has to give. Oh! it is this that melts the heart, and produces *another* fear, not a guilty one "which hath torment," but one which says, "What is this that God *hath done* to us?" "And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them. . . . And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack, and when both they and their father saw the *bundles of money*, they were afraid" (*vv.* 29, 35).

The activities of Joseph's love could produce these *precious fruits* in a past day, but what could the outgoings of a Father's love create in the souls of His redeemed family, who are not only standing in "the grace that bringeth salvation," but looking for the blessed hope of the glorious appearing of Christ, and of being (not in Goshen, but) like Him and with Him *where He is* (1 John iii. 2)? What are Joseph's actings (though lord of the land as he was) to these?

Grace and glory are united at the cross of Christ, we look from one to the other, and a moment will clear the distance! "Bundles of money" told their tale in Joseph's days, but "the unsearchable riches of Christ" *now*

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may well lead every adopted child to say, “ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” What a portion have we in a risen, exalted, and glorified Lord at the right hand of God !

“ All things are yours ; whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” (Eph. iii. 8, i. 3 ; 1 Cor. iii. 21-23.)

CHRIST is the great object of the love of God ; and the Spirit of God in Scripture always LOOKS ONWARD TO HIM. No matter what the substance of the prophecy, no matter what the circumstances of those addressed, the Holy Spirit LOOKS FORWARD, seeing all things as they concern CHRIST and His future glory. The Jews, for instance, had many deliverers raised up for them of God in times of need, “ saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies ” (Neh. ix. 27), but the moment the Spirit of God begins to speak of these many “ saviours ” He LOOKS ONWARD. They were but types of THE Saviour, “ CHRIST THE LORD ” (Luke ii. 11 ; Acts xiii. 23 ; Phil. iii. 20, 21).

"Good Things to Come."

(READ ISAIAH XLIX.)

THE great outline of the New Testament is anticipated both in patriarchal narratives and prophetic revelations.*

In GENESIS, which is the book of the patriarchs, we travel from Matt. i. to Rev. xxii.; that is, from the opening of the New Testament to its close.

We have the incarnation and birth of Christ in the first promise, the promise of "the seed of the woman," in chapter iii., and in that promise too we have the death and resurrection of that Seed of the woman. "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel," involves or conveys those wondrous, blessed facts.

We have the heavenly calling in Enoch, and the restored earth in Noah.

We have the Church in Eve. We have Israel reprobated or cast off for a time, and then received again in Joseph and his brethren.

We have the gathering together of heavenly and earthly things, as in the days of the king-

* There are still things "new and old," as we read in Matt. xiii. The forms of the kingdom of heaven, anticipated by the Lord in that chapter, are among the "new" things; as also the Church, as "the body of Christ"; the secret revealed to Paul, but hid from ages and generations.

dom, in the two families of Joseph in Egypt; that which he had as from the Gentiles, his near kindred, and that which he had by birth or in the flesh, his Jewish, Abrahamic kindred.

Thus we gather up, as in fragments, all the materials of the New Testament in the Book of Genesis. And this is wondrous food of faith, for it tells us how He with whom we have to do knows the end from the beginning. But if this one patriarchal book by its narratives furnishes all this to us, so this one chapter from the prophets, I mean Isaiah xlix., does the same.

It opens as with the first chapter of Matthew. The Speaker, Messiah, the Christ of God, who is Jesus of Nazareth, announces that He was called by His name before He was born. And so it was; for it was said to Joseph in that chapter, “Thou shalt call His name Jesus” (v. 21).

Messiah there shows Himself to us in His ministry, as One that is as a drawn sword in the hand, and as a polished arrow in the quiver. And in certain features of it these symbols strikingly illustrate that ministry; for as with a drawn sword the Lord was ever exposing all that was around Him, laying bare the springs and principles of human nature. The axe was at the root of the trees. And He also again and again gave warning

of a judgment to come; but He did not execute it. He judged everything *morally*, but nothing *retributively*. He refused to judge, saying that He had come to save. And thus He was as a shaft or arrow hid in a quiver, while He was as a sword drawn in the hand (*v.* 2). He would stoop down to write on the ground as though He heard not the accuser, and yet He would say, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matt. xxiii. 33; John viii. 6).

But there was another feature in His ministry. As man was thus exposed by it, God was glorified by it. It was the witness of God among men. He who saw Jesus saw the Father. God committed the glorifying of His name to Jesus; so that now, if we are enlightened with the knowledge of the glory of God, we must have found it in the face of Jesus Christ. Here He Himself announces this, through His servant the prophet (*v.* 3).

This ministry, however, as far as Israel was concerned, ended in present failure. Israel was not gathered. "Ye would not," is the Lord's word to them at the end of it, after telling them again and again that He would have gathered them as a hen her chickens (Matt. xxiii. 37). This was so in the New Testament history of the Lord's ministry, and in Isaiah's anticipation of that ministry here.

But Messiah's work, if refused and disappointed by Israel, was accepted of God. Jesus was raised from the dead; and His resurrection, among other things, was the justification of all that He had said and done. The voice from heaven when He was beginning His ministry sealed Him then; the resurrection at the close of it seals Him and His work now.

And this He here foretells by His prophet, saying, “My judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God” (v. 4). And then, being thus accepted for His work's sake, and raised from the dead, He is crowned with glory in heaven, and seated in possession of all power. This is the ascended Christ, as before we had the risen Christ; and His glory and strength as ascended He anticipates here (v. 5). Upon this, the present age of the Gentiles is foretold; the mercy which is now visiting, in the gospel, all the ends of the earth. This verse is cited to that effect by the apostle to the Gentiles in his preaching in Acts xiii. 6.

The kingdom, or millennial age, is next announced. In the verse that follows, Messiah is seen as seated in the dignities of “the world to come,” His own world. His title to be there, “King of kings,” is found in His precious sufferings, or in His rejection by men when He first came among them.

Others, however, became connected with the kingdom, as well as He; as these verses also tell us. But they do so on another title altogether; because the acceptable time or the day of salvation had visited them.*

Israel are accordingly represented by this prophecy as prisoners now released, or like those who once sat in darkness now called out into the light. And heaven and earth are summoned to rejoice in this millennial day here anticipated. And I may add, that in the course of this rich and animated prophecy the things in Rev. vii. are announced, the gathering from all parts of the earth, and the feeding of them at the fountains of water (vv. 7-13).

Wondrous all this is, accurate and beautiful. Surely I am warranted in saying that in this one chapter of Isaiah (nay, in thirteen verses of it) we are carried through the New Testament. We have the birth, ministry, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord, His rejection at His first advent by the Jews and the world, the present age of mercy to the ends of the earth, and the coming millennial kingdom.

* The early part, but that only, of v. 8 is cited by the apostle in 2 Cor. vi. 2; and there is great accuracy in this. The early part of that verse expresses grace *generally*; the latter part expresses grace *to Israel*: it was only grace in *its general application to sinners* that the apostle was teaching in 2 Cor. vi. 2.

Fully do I grant we have not here the Church as the body of Christ. This was the hidden mystery. Still we have this age of mercy to the Gentiles, as we have seen.

At v. 14, Zion is heard complaining. She had not once been named in the progress of this wonderful prophecy, and now she complains that she was forgotten and forsaken. Messiah had been surely remembered, the secrets of grace and glory had been announced, the millennial joy of heaven and earth celebrated, and Israel itself gladdened with hope and promise; but she, Jerusalem, had been passed by. “The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me,” she says (v. 14).

The Lord answers her grief in words of fervent affection. He tells her at once that it was impossible she could be forgotten.

And we may say, “Surely so.” Jerusalem had “a gift and calling” of God, as well as Israel. Israel was Jehovah’s *people*; Jerusalem was Jehovah’s *city*. His sanctuary and His palace were in her; she was the seat of His government and the place of His worship. The Lord loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. (Ps. lxxxvii. 2.) Jerusalem was as the family mansion where, at stated seasons, the children, settled through the land in their different inheritances, had to come and keep holy-day.

All this was so, and all this constituted "a gift and calling," which we know is never repented of (Rom. xi. 29). It was therefore impossible that she should be forgotten.

And having thus pledged to her the constancy of His remembrance of her, the Lord then, in the closing verses of this chapter, goes on to tell her of her coming blessedness and dignities; and gives her good reason to know that her *millennial beauty* and honour will far exceed her *Solomon* distinctions, that she shall be greater and more excellent in the day of Messiah than ever she had been in the days of any of the sons of Jesse. Kings and queens of the earth shall wait on her. She should deck herself with ornaments, as a bride doth. And the Lord promises that He will fill her with her children, and empty her of her destroyers; and then rescue all that belongs to her out of the hand of her oppressors.

He speaks this very fervently, and in the style of many other scriptures in the Psalms and Prophets which address themselves to Zion. And among other things, He promises her that she shall stand lost in wonder and amazement at her own condition in those coming days, as one that scarcely knows herself, so excellent and blessed will she be. Her heart, as another scripture has it, "shall fear, and be enlarged" at the sight of her prosperity and honour (Isa. lx. 5).

What a state for the grace of God to bring the heart into! How He satiates the soul with fatness! The queen of Sheba tasted this when there was no more spirit in her, and when she said the half had not been told her. The disciples experienced it in their way and measure, when their hearts burned within them under the words of the Stranger who had joined them on the road. The sinner knows it at times, when he is introduced to the grace that saves him; as when the poor Samaritan left her water-pot behind her, forgetting everything but her new-found treasure in Christ; or as when the woman of the city spent, in company with her tears and her kisses, the treasure of her house on the person of her loved and worshipful Redeemer.

Thus *it has been*, beloved, and thus *it will be*. Would that we knew that *it is so*, from our own joys in the Lord! But each heart knows its own humiliations.

If I think of the world, I get the impress of the world.

If I think of my trials and sorrows, I get the impress of my sorrow.

If I think of my failures, I get the impress of my failures.

If I think of CHRIST, I get the impress of CHRIST.

Gideon, God's "Mighty Man of Valour."

VI.

(CONCLUSION.)

THE next thing taught us in this history is that the world is neither able nor willing to supply refreshment to the man of faith. The world never *gives*. It may *concede* something to us if we concede something to it; but it never gives. That which is required by it is generally the sacrifice of faithfulness.

"And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they be faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian. And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna *now* in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?" (vv. 5, 6).

If you profess to the world that you are "following after" resurrection glory, "pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii.), you will not meet with anything at its hands but some such taunt as this.

"And Gideon said, Therefore *when the Lord hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand*, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with

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briers. And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him. And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, *When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower* " (vv. 7-9).

In the confidence of victory Gideon was going forward (though consciously faint); and these princes of Succoth and the men of Penuel would not come to the help of the Lord against the mighty. To them, it seemed a foolish thing to be fighting with THREE HUNDRED men against such enemies. So we seem to be very fools when we speak of certain glory. We must make up our minds to this. There are no resources to be had from the world to help us on in the conflict in which we are engaged. "You say you are kings and priests unto God, that you are to have glory," is the taunt of unbelief, "but you cannot *show* us anything for it; when we *see* you in the glory, we will believe."

We have not one thing *to show*, not anything of which the natural man can take notice. Our wisdom is foolishness. We must go on feeling our weakness, confident of victory. By-and-by the tables will be turned. The taunts and reproaches of the world will bring down judgment on their own heads. One special thing that the Lord is

coming to judge is, we are told, "all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (Jude 15). There is not any present ridicule of His saints that will not be regarded as against Himself in that day.

"Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Kar-kor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east; for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword" (v. 10).

"And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure. And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host" (vv. 11, 12).

"And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun was up, and caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, even threescore and seventeen men. And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, *Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me*, saying, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men that are weary? And he took the elders of the city,

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and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city" (vv. 13-17).

"Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king. And he said, They were my brethren, even the sons of my mother: as the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you. And he said unto Jether his first-born, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks" (vv. 18-21).

"Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: *the Lord shall rule over you*" (vv. 22, 23).

The Lord Jesus would not be made king by the people. (John vi. 15.) He came in His Father's name (they would not receive Him thus), and He would not be received in

His own name. It is a very different thing being received in our own names from our being received in the name of the Lord. Gideon retires; he will not take the place of rule that belongs only to the Lord. He knows that if the people's minds are fixed upon *Gideon nothing but weakness and dishonour* can result; but that if the Lord be acknowledged and leaned on there will be strength and blessing. Do we not find this principle running all through the New Testament?

Paul hides himself. Though having had such revelations from the Lord, though possessing such a compass of knowledge, yet the moment he sees the spirit coming in of setting up *Paul*, he says, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as *the Lord* gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but *God* gave the increase." So again, "Therefore let no man glory in *men*. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas," etc. (1 Cor. iii.). Had he put himself forward, Christ would not have been seen. And this principle, true of Gideon, true of Paul, is true of every saint acting in faith.

One special mark of growth in grace is evidenced in our magnifying the name of the Lord Jesus, even though it be in the vilifying of our own names before the saints and before the world, in our taking all blame to

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ourselves, and our giving all praise to the Lord. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. i. 31).

Had the history of Gideon closed here what a beautiful picture would it have presented! There is none perfect but the Lord. He is the true Gideon, the true Samson, the true David.

At the close of the chapter we see declension after revival, speedy declension, proceeding from Gideon himself.

"And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings because they were Ishmaelites.)"

He wanted some monument to signalise his victory. These earrings were the spoils of triumph confessedly from the Lord.

"And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey. And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; besides ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside chains that were about their camels' necks. And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and *all Israel went thither a whoring after it*: which thing

became a *snare* unto Gideon, and to his house" (*vv.* 24-27).

Man seeks something whereby to *perpetuate* present blessing. This has ever been one way of his perverseness. "What security have you that it will last?" he asks, and *faith* answers, "None whatever, but the presence of the Holy Ghost." If we attempt to *secure* it by other means, like Gideon, we make an ephod. We seek to perpetuate blessing, to secure it to others, and, in a very short time, keep up the *form* (having lost the *power*), and worship that instead of God, just as Gideon's ephod had divine honours paid to it. What is it to have a set of principles (however scriptural) without the power of the Spirit?

The only thing to give perpetuity of blessing is the presence of the Holy Ghost. God has wrought in the way of revival, and men whose hearts bounded with love to God and to their fellow-men, have said, "Oh, we will *perpetuate* the blessing," and nothing but evil has come of it. We cannot secure the truth of God by arrangements of our own. Such arrangements may spring from a feeling of piety, but they evidence a want of *dependence* upon God. There was the energy of the Spirit working in Gideon, but he it was who prepared the way for Israel's re-apostasy.

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The restoration lasted not longer than there was individual energy of faith.

"Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years *in the days of Gideon*. And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. . . . And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites."

"And it came to pass, *as soon as Gideon was dead*, that the children of Israel turned again and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god. And the children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side: neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shown unto Israel" (*vv. 28-35*).

Of what use was the ephod now? It had entirely failed of effecting that which, doubtless, Gideon designed it should effect. And have not the well-designed efforts of men of God, who had sought to provide for the pure truth, repeatedly ended in the same way? The great thing we have to look to is, not the holding in prominence of this or that particular *doctrine*, but the ungrieved presence of

the Holy Ghost. Let us remember that He is the *Holy* Spirit, repressive ever of the flesh. If I have set up something, that something becomes *an object* to me, instead of the Lord. His glory must be the prominent thing. How speedy was the departure of the Church from God at the first, even in Paul's days!" All sought their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. ii. 21).

We are to be kept moment by moment in a state of dependence, yet reckoning on the constant grace and help of God. . . . It is not enough for victory that in the battle we have ranged ourselves on the Lord's side. The tendency of the flesh, whether in praying or preaching or anything else, is to get out of dependence on God. We may be saying true things in prayer or in testimony; but if we are not realizing our dependence on the Lord we shall not have *His* strength in the battle; and He must make us learn our dependence on Him through weakness and failure and defeat, because we have refused to learn it in the joy and confidence of communion with Himself.

The Grace of God.

READ TITUS II. 11-14.

THIS lovely and familiar passage of Holy Scripture occurs in the midst of a number of exhortations adapted to various classes of people, in reference to their conduct and character. Aged men, aged women, young men, young women, and servants are to be exhorted as to their proper deportment in their respective conditions.

But lest by any means our hearts should be tempted to place these exhortations upon a legal basis, the inspired apostle breaks forth in one of the most magnificent and comprehensive statements of the gospel which is anywhere to be found in the sacred volume. "The grace of God," and that alone, must be the foundation of all Christian conduct and character. Legality, in all its forms and in all its workings, is most hateful to the Spirit of God. The robe of self-righteousness with which man attempts to cover his sins is more unsightly in God's view than the very blackest sin that could be committed. Nothing can be accepted of God but that which flows from His own grace in our hearts.

Now, in the scripture before us the reader will find three distinct points, namely, The salvation which grace brings; the lessons

which grace teaches; and the hope which grace presents. And first, then, as to

THE SALVATION WHICH GRACE BRINGS.

This is a grand cardinal point. To be uncertain or obscure as to this must assuredly involve uncertainty and obscurity in every thing. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared." (See the marginal reading.)

This is clear and conclusive enough. The very first thing that grace does for the lost sinner is to *save* him; save him unconditionally; save him perfectly; save him eternally. It does not ask him to be anything but what he is. It does not ask him to give anything. It *brings* him salvation, on the ground of his being *lost*. It is only as a lost one that I need salvation; and the more I feel myself to be lost, the more clearly I see my title to that full and free salvation which the grace of God brings. Salvation is intended for the lost; if, therefore, I am lost, salvation applies itself to me just as distinctly as though I were the only lost sinner in the whole world.

And observe the immense breadth of this word "*lost*." It takes in all. High and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, savage and civilized, moral and immoral, religious and irreligious, all are comprehended under this one title, "*lost*." It is well to see this

clearly. Men make distinctions, and necessarily so. Social life has its distinctions. Law and equity maintain their distinctions, which must be duly recognized by every well regulated mind. Society awards to the chaste, the sober, and the moral, a respect which it justly withholds from the profligate, the drunkard, and the unprincipled. But directly we get into the presence of the grace of God all these distinctions are swept away, and all men are looked at on one common ground as lost. The most respectable member of society and the vilest outcast are both in the same condition as regards themselves; they are both lost, they both need salvation; and the grace of God brings salvation to the one as well as the other; and be it well remembered that the poor broken-hearted outcast is nearer by far to the salvation which *grace* brings, than is the cold-hearted, self-sufficient moralist. (See Matt. xxi. 31).

If the law of God could bring salvation, then the case would be quite the reverse. But the law never brought salvation to any one, because no one could keep it; whereas grace brings salvation to all, because all need it. It is no longer confined to the Jews. The Sun has risen far above the Jewish horizon, and poured His blessed beams over "all the world," so that "every creature under heaven" may bask in the light thereof. Such

is the wide aspect of "the grace of God," which, let me say, leaves wholly untouched the grand question of God's eternal counsels and God's moral government. God has His counsels; and God displays His mysterious wisdom in government. This must never be forgotten, nor does it interfere in the smallest degree with the precious truth that "the grace of God bringeth salvation to all," and "the righteousness of God is unto all" (Rom. iii. 22). The inspired apostle is speaking of the aspect of these things, not of their final result. This is a grave and important distinction.

Now, it must be obvious to my reader that the word "*all*" necessarily includes him. It could not possibly be otherwise. If he is not included, then it follows that there is some one for whom the grace of God has not brought salvation; but the Holy Ghost expressly declares that it bringeth salvation unto "*all*." This must satisfy the most anxious soul as to the question so often raised, namely, "How am I to know that salvation is intended for me?"

Is any one excluded? Is not salvation brought to all? Does not this "*all*" comprehend every anxious inquirer? Unquestionably. The declaration of the inspired writer is that "The grace of God that bringeth salvation unto all men hath appeared." This is as plain as a sunbeam. Men may reject this

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salvation. Alas they do reject it; but that can never touch the question of the wide aspect of that grace which shines with undimmed lustre in the gospel, and brings a full and free salvation unto all. Their guilt in rejecting it flows from the fact that it is freely offered. If they could not get it, whence their guilt in not having it? Where the righteous judgment in punishing men for not receiving what was never intended for them? (2 Thess. i. 6-10.) True it is, divinely true, that God is sovereign; but it is equally true that man is responsible. Are we called to reconcile these things? Nay, they are reconciled already, inasmuch as both are taught in the word. All we have to do is to believe them.

But let us inquire what is included in the salvation which the grace of God brings? The answer is, *Everything*. Salvation is a precious casket containing all I want for time and eternity. It includes salvation from the future consequences of sin, and from its present power. To be a divinely saved person, a person saved by the grace of God, saved by the blood of Christ, as every believer is, involves entire deliverance from wrath, from hell, from Satan, from every thing that could possibly be against me. A man whom God has saved is surely safe from all. There is nothing doubtful about God's salvation; it is all settled. There is no delay; it is all

finished. We have neither to wait for it nor to add to it, but to receive it *now*, and enjoy it *for ever*. The mighty tide of grace rolls down from the very throne of God, and bears upon its bosom a full salvation, salvation for *me*. I receive it as a free gift; I bow my head and worship, and go on my way rejoicing.

We shall now proceed, in the second place, to consider

THE LESSONS WHICH GRACE TEACHES.

Grace is a *teacher* as well as a *saviour*; but it never begins to teach me until it has saved me. It is well to see this. Before ever it asks me to hearken to its pure and holy lessons, it brings me a salvation as free as the air we breathe. It is as a divinely saved person I enter the precincts of the school of grace, and take my place upon the form. Grace teaches *only* the saved. All its pupils are saved. Grace as a saviour seeks only the lost. Grace as a teacher instructs only the saved. This makes all plain, and puts everything in its right place. We must never place unsaved persons on the forms of the school of grace. Such have no capacity to learn its holy lessons. There must be a proper material, a proper capacity. This capacity is included in the salvation which grace brings me. I am a debtor to grace both for the les-

son which I learn, and the capacity to learn it. I owe *all* to grace. Grace seeks me, and finds me in my lost estate; it saves me with an everlasting salvation, and introduces me as a saved person to the sphere in which its hallowed instructions are imparted. Grace does not teach those who are dead, it *quickens* them; it does not teach those who are guilty, it *cleanses* them; it does not teach those who are condemned, it *justifies* them. It is as quickened, cleansed, and justified that I become the pupil of grace. The very first thing that grace does for the lost sinner is to *bring* him salvation; and when he receives this salvation, it *teaches* him to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

I desire that my reader should be clear as to this. If he is as yet in an unsaved state, let him understand that the grace of God brings him salvation as a *present* thing; and, moreover, until he has accepted this free gift, he is wholly unable to understand or take in the lessons which grace teaches. If grace is to be his teacher, he must be saved in order to be a pupil. This simple fact gives the death-blow to all legality, to all human righteousness, to all man's pretensions. If none can comprehend the lessons which grace teaches save those which have accepted the salvation which grace brings, then assuredly our lan-

guage must ever be, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory."

But let us look particularly at the lessons which grace teaches. It teaches us to deny every thing unlike God, and all desires after this present world; and not only so, but it teaches us how we are to live. The law could never do this. It *tells* us how we ought to live, but it does not *teach* us. It neither gives us the lesson to learn nor the capacity to learn it. It does not bring us salvation. The law could never have any saved pupils, because it does not save the lost, but condemns them for being lost. No doubt men ought to keep the law, and if they were right they would. But they are not right. Quite the opposite, they are wrong, totally, irremediably wrong, hopelessly lost; and in this condition grace brings them salvation. Christ the Saviour is our Teacher, not Moses the lawgiver. May we learn His lessons! May we sit at His feet in all docility, and drink in His hallowed instructions!

These instructions range themselves under three distinct heads, as suggested by the words, "Soberly, righteously, and godly."

I. *Soberly*. This refers to the inner circle of one's own heart. It simply means *with inward self-government*, a most comprehensive expression. The grace that saves me teaches me to exercise a holy government over *self*. I

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am to govern my thoughts, govern my tongue, govern my temper, govern them, not in order to be saved, but because I am. The One who teaches me to exercise this government has saved me before ever He commenced His course of instruction. It is as a saved person that I submit my whole moral being to the wholesome control of my heavenly Teacher. The law could not teach me to govern my nature. It condemns me, root and branch, throws me overboard, and leaves me there. Grace follows me, saves me, and endows me with a new nature, seals me with the Holy Ghost, so that I can exercise myself in self-government.

And be it observed that this self-government is totally different from anything that human philosophy or the energy of an indomitable will could ever produce. These things might enable me to subdue some of the accessories of self, while the parent stem was left wholly untouched. But "the grace of God that bringeth salvation" gives me victory over *self* in all the length and breadth of that comprehensive term. Full victory over all the evil that dwells in me is as much a part of "salvation" as deliverance from hell. Alas! we fail to make use of this victory; through spiritual indolence and unbelief we fail to possess ourselves practically of that full salvation which grace has brought us;

but that in no wise alters the truth of the matter. If I am a saved man I should live as a saved man in every respect. And how is this to be done? By faith. "The just shall *live* by faith." (Hab. ii. 4; Gal. iii. 11; Heb. x. 38.) I can only exercise inward self-government by faith.

II. The second grand lesson which grace teaches me as to my practical life is to live "*righteously.*" This contemplates me not merely in the inner circle of my own moral being, but in the midst of the circumstances and relationships of the scene around me, that outward world in which I am called to live and move from day to day. My divine Teacher not merely instructs me as to the government of myself, but also as to the government of all my transactions with my fellows. Here, too, I am to remember that my teacher is the grace that hath *saved* me. I must never forget this. If the resources of philosophy, or the energy of a strong will, might enable me to exercise a kind of inward self-government, so also the principles of a lofty morality, or that pride which spurns a mean action, might lead me to seek the maintenance of an unblemished reputation in all my transactions with my fellow men. But all this leaves me unsaved. Philosophy cannot save me, and therefore it cannot teach me. Morality cannot save me, and therefore

it cannot teach me. It is "the grace of God" that alone can save me, and it is that same grace which alone can teach me. Hence, if I see a person who professes to be saved giving way to bad temper, indulging in passion, or enslaved by a habit, I infer that that person has not learnt practically the first great lesson of his divine Teacher. And if I see a person who professes to be saved, yet not guiding his affairs with discretion, but getting in debt, and indulging in extravagance, I infer that he has not learnt the second great lesson of his divine Teacher. Let us not be deceived with vain words. If the legalist is silenced by the freeness of the salvation which grace brings, the antinomian is silenced by the purity of the lessons which grace teaches. "These things are good and profitable unto men." The gospel meets every thing. It meets the lost sinner with a full salvation; and it meets the saved sinner with the purest and most perfect lessons, lessons of holy self-government and practical righteousness.

III. But there is a third lesson which grace teaches its saved pupils. It teaches them to live "*godly*." This opens up our relations with the world above. There is great force, beauty, and completeness in these words used by the inspired apostle. They present to us three great circles in which we are called to

act: the world *within*, the world *without*, and the world *above*. They must be all taken together to see their divine beauty. There is really nothing left out. All that we can possibly want to learn is taught in the school of grace, if we will only accept the lessons; and let us bear in mind that the surest proof of our having received the salvation which grace brings, is our learning the lessons which grace teaches—those hallowed lessons of inward self-government, practical righteousness, and true godliness.

May God the Holy Ghost make us to understand the fulness and freeness of the salvation, and the purity and elevation of the lessons, so that we may more distinctly apprehend, in the third and last place,

THE HOPE WHICH GRACE PRESENTS.

The apostle speaks of it as “a blessed hope,” and surely nothing can be more blessed than “the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” This is the proper hope of the believer, and he is taught to look for it by the self-same grace that has brought him salvation, and that teaches him how to carry himself in reference to the world within, the world without, and the world above. “The Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Ps. lxxxiv.).

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Now, there are three things in reference to this "blessed hope," which I desire that my reader should clearly understand, namely, title, capacity, and moral condition. Our title is furnished by the blood of the cross; the capacity is furnished by the Holy Ghost; the moral condition is founded upon our learning and exhibiting the holy lessons taught in the school of grace.

Reader, permit me to ask you if, when the subject of Christ's appearing is introduced, you ever feel a sort of hitch, difficulty, or reserve in your mind? Would you be afraid to see Jesus? Would you rather put off the moment of His advent? Do you feel yourself not quite ready? If so, it may be you are not yet able to "read your title clear"; or, it may be, you are not cultivating a spiritual capacity; or, finally, your moral condition is not such as would naturally introduce you to that scene of glory for which we are privileged daily to look.

These are points of immense importance, points to which my reader should give deep and prayerful attention. If there be cloudiness as to my title; if there be defectiveness in spiritual capacity; or if my general moral tone and character be not formed by the holy lessons of grace, I shall not be in an attitude of waiting for the glory. In other words, to speak according to the peculiar style of the

passage before us, if I am doubtful as to the salvation which grace brings, or if I am backward in learning the lessons which grace teaches, then I shall assuredly fail in looking for that blessed hope which grace presents. It is well to see this in all its clearness, point, and power. If we are the recipients of grace and the expectants of glory should not our lives exhibit the moral power of these things? Should they not have their proper effect in the formation of our character? Unquestionably. "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure" (1 John iii. 3). If I expect to be with Jesus and like Jesus by and by, I shall seek to be as much with Him and as much like Him now as possible.

May the Lord work in us that which is well pleasing in His sight, and bring out in all our ways a more faithful exhibition of the divine life! The language with which our scripture closes is eminently calculated to awaken in our souls the most intense desire after these things; indeed, I cannot conclude this paper without quoting this noble passage at full length, praying the Holy Ghost to apply it in much power to the heart and conscience of both the writer and the reader.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,

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we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave HIMSELF for *us* that He might redeem us from *all* iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people of possession, zealous of good works."

God's Grace and Power in Christ, and the Humility of Faith.

READ LUKE vii. 1-17.

WE have here the case of the centurion, and a very full and striking one it is. It is not merely an act of grace, but grace to a Gentile.

Nor is this all. The principle on which the great apostle of the Gentiles rests this question is brought out: "It is of faith, that it might be by grace, that the promise might be sure to all the seed" (Rom. iv. 16). Faith, as the great turning point, is introduced. It was no mere theory: it was living faith, and such faith as had not been seen in Israel.

Neither was there presumption, but on the contrary, remarkable humility. The centurion recognized the honour God had put upon His people; he sees, holds to it, owns and acts

upon it, spite of their low and debased, and, in every other respect, unworthy condition. Despised and failing as they might be, he loved the Jews as God's people, and for His sake, and he had built them a synagogue. Unfeigned lowliness was his, though (yea, rather, for) his faith was far beyond those he honoured.

Consequently he had a very high apprehension of the power and glory of the Person of Christ as divine, reaching out beyond Jewish thoughts altogether. He does not refer to the Lord as Messiah, but recognized in Him the power of God in love.

This was blessed faith, which forgets itself in the exaltation of its Object. He saw not Jesus, it would seem, but assuredly gathered from what he "heard," that diseases were nothing to Him but occasions wherein to display His absolute authority and His sovereign mercy. He was a stranger, and the Jews were God's people; must not they or their elders be the fittest to bring this wonderful Person? For he confided in His mercy as well as His power, and his servant, "dear unto him," was sick and ready to die. He needed Jesus.

"Then Jesus went with them. And when He was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying unto Him, Lord, trouble not Thyself; for I am not worthy

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that Thou shouldest enter under my roof; wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee : but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed."

There was surely the deepest personal respect and affection. Untaught as he might be in other things, he strongly felt the excellency of Christ's Person, and here again with humility correspondent to the measure in which His glory was seen. This message of the centurion's friends admirably depicts his character and feeling. He himself told nothing to Jesus of his service to the Jews, spoke of nothing personal save his unworthiness, and this so consistently that he begged Jesus not to come to his house, as being unworthy to receive Him.

There was in this soul the exact opposite of doing Christ an honour, by believing on Him, and far from him was the pretence of receiving Christ to set himself up : both, alas ! often found elsewhere. The genuine simplicity of his heart is as apparent as his strong faith. There was none such in Israel, and yet it was in one who loved Israel. It was a lesson of grace, in every way, for the crowd that followed Jesus; for us, too, most surely.

Along with grace to the Gentiles came the evidence of power to raise the dead; but here it was manifested in human sympathies, in witness that God had visited His people. It

was the power of resurrection, a power which was yet to be shown more gloriously, and to be the source of that which is new for man according to God, the God who raiseth the dead. It was another and wondrous proof that, in the character of His action, He is here going without the sphere of the law and its ordinances. "For the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth." What can it avail for one who is dead? But "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. viii. 3). It was grace, indeed, and divine energy, but withal displayed in One who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

And how astonishingly all the details bring this out! The dead man was "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." "And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. . . . And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother."

How exquisitely human! and withal how unmistakably divine!

When the heart is made full with the rich blessings of Christ it will not turn back to gnaw upon itself.

The Christian Overcoming in Conflict with Spiritual Wickedness.

READ 2 TIMOTHY 1.

IT is a striking fact that the effect of bringing out the full purpose of God's grace before the world has always been to bring in difficulties and trials. This we find here: "Be thou a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel" (v. 8).

The cross is the characteristic of the gospel, and the effect of bringing the gospel out is that it always brings in afflictions. Paul was abounding in them.

It is a terrible testimony to the state of the world that bringing in light produces hatred. Men love darkness because their deeds are evil; but, on the other hand, whilst it is a dreadful testimony of the state the world is in, it is an admirable and healthy exercise to him who bears the testimony. It meets his flesh, whether in his family or in the world; for our flesh can never carry the testimony. Paul must have the thorn; it brings a thorough sifting of what the flesh is in him who carries it.

Paul felt it more and more bitterly as he went on (v. 15). They turned against him in all the places where the testimony had been

most blessed. It was a terrible state. They did not give up being real Christians, but all ran away and forsook him. They made him turn Jew again, but the moment he got into a difficulty not one of them was with him.

Every one in the testing always finds what is in himself the greatest trial and difficulty. It is the sifting of the flesh. The truer the testimony, and the more you go on, the harder the conflict becomes. You will find in the Lord's life He was more pressed at the end than at the beginning. It was, "Woe unto you, hypocrites," at the end.

All will have testing and trying. You may see one delighted to possess Christ, and the moment he is faithful to his family they say that he is mad; and it is well if he is not turned out of the house. Often we shall find we have great difficulty in knowing how to act; but we shall find it all very useful. It is the sifting and the discovering of what the flesh is in us; as in Moses when he kills the Egyptian, and has to run away.

The Holy Spirit takes special care to show what the effect of light is in the world, how it stirs up all sorts of difficulties arising from within. Paul talks of "fiery darts" (Eph. vi. 15). You may see a dead sleep among Christians; and that is worse than anything. On the other hand, you may have the devil as "a roaring lion," which I should take to

be his bringing afflictions on you; or as a serpent, ensnaring by subtilty, which creates mental difficulties. It may be either by these or something outward that the heart will be tested, and it is accompanied by more sorrow.

As the enemy's power declines you get, after Joshua's death, into Judges work. You have to get up from Gilgal to Bochim (the place of weeping). At Gilgal they were circumcised, the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. He led them into a place of conflict and sorrow instead of victory. It may be Joshua work or Judges work, but all was for testing, and in the time of Israel's direst testing you get the brightest faith. The love and faithfulness of the Lord to His people is never so much put to the proof as when they are passing through the conflict. It goes on at all times.

In Joshua i. 7 you get all the principles by which the conflict is to be carried on: "Only be thou strong and very courageous." Not in self (that is not strength), but "in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Eph. vi. 10). If all is in the most perfect confusion, if I get Christ in it, He is never in confusion. If there is simplicity of faith it is owned by Christ; and it has always its strength in Him. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God . . . and it shall be given him" (James

i. 5). If we lack it for the place we are in, there is never a lack of love in Christ to guide.

The first thing for us as Christians is to be content to be in the conflict, for we can never escape it. If you try to do so you will find that you have either lost the thing you would have gained or you will have to meet the enemy again. There is really no escaping the conflict, save by losing what you would have gained by it. We must lay it to our account that "the prince of this world" is not going to let us pass through it without conflict. But with Christ for us we have the certainty of victory.

In Joshua we find that until the Jordan is passed we never get the principle for conflict, that is, death and resurrection. There is never any allowance for the flesh. That is a settled principle. You can never combat Satan with live flesh; it is always subject to his power; and if you are a Christian the flesh is counted a dead thing.

Another thing: you are not going to get Canaan without turning the devil out. As soon as they pass over Jordan Joshua sees a man with a sword drawn, and asks, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" (Josh. v. 13).

All we meet with here is for one or the other. If I have a neighbour, he may be an infidel, and I have not discovered it; but if

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I come to do with spiritual things, and find in that man one who loves to pervert the souls of others, "Oh," I say, "I have met an adversary!"

If you look for victory, remember you can have nothing to do with the flesh in it. It can never give the enemy a stroke.

When Israel got into Canaan they eat the old corn of the land. The heavenly Christ is all ours. God says, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you," and the moment I set down my foot I find a Canaanite. It is not rest in Canaan, but conflict begins at once.

Then we get circumcision. Not only risen with Christ, but I have to mortify the members; all is to be judged according to the place I am in. A man has to see that all his ways are judged: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our body" (2 Cor. iv. 10).

No matter what the victories, they always have to come back to Gilgal. You must get back to God, or your very victory will puff you up.

The word is, "Be strong and very courageous." What for? To conquer? No, but to keep God's word. It is obedience. First Gilgal, then practical obedience to the Word of God, that we may prosper.

It may not be apparent, but if I am in the path of God, God must always have the last word in everything. It might have seemed a small thing to the world when the Lord was crucified, but at that very time victory was accomplished for us. Again, Saul and Jonathan being killed put David on the throne. The path of obedience is the place of the wisdom of God. The place of lowliness and obedience is the one of real power, though perhaps not apparent.

Look at Samson. The secret of God's strength was there; it might not be apparent nor manifested, but the moment Samson makes proof of the strength he had as a Nazarite to God, the gates of the city are taken up, and the strongest fetters broken off like straw. His power goes the moment Nazariteship is not maintained. All power to maintain a Nazarite course comes from secret intercourse with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the secret breaking of a man's own will. It is just that power in us which the apostle speaks of in verse 1: "The promise of life which is in Christ Jesus."

It is a time of confusion and darkness. If a man walks in daylight he cannot stumble; but a man in pitch darkness is hardly in the perplexity that he is in when it is neither dark nor light, so that everything seems confused. Darkness came in by man putting on

religious forms to cover worldliness. Lawlessness is man thinking he can have his own way in the face of God, setting free man's mind in the place of God's. Other ages piled up the superstructure of that which has never been so progressive as now.

It is very touching to see that what is to be done with modern evil is just the same as with ancient evil. What have we to do? To go back to the Word of God. When blessed light has come in, and set truly religious minds afloat, the next thing is, where is the cement to bind together?

Sometimes there is a great deal of blessing from light coming in, but at the same time there is confusion; souls can no longer accept things, and there is nothing they can find outwardly to rest in. But where there are hearts subject to the Word there is no kind of difficulty; they find there that which never changes, that which is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8). "If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (John vii. 17).

Paul goes on all through putting this as the power of walk. It is that which gives indomitable courage, united with the greatest lowliness, because then my own will is not a light to this or that thing, but I know I am bound to do Christ's will on all occasions.

Doing this, Paul felt he had Christ with him entirely (*vv.* 9, 10).

With Christ, life through death comes in. Christ brought out life and incorruptibility; and through death. Where the complete power of evil was displayed, grace came in, and the greatest display of the power of God.

Remark, Paul calls to remembrance the faith in Lois and Eunice. The great thing to have is a heart that accounts it the greatest blessing to be with God in happy confidence. The apostle looks for this confidence of heart with God, that sort of confidence that makes us lean on the Lord as on One we know we can always trust. There may be a duty: all right to do it; but it is there the heart is apt to get contracted. In the ups and downs of daily life is there a simple heart of uniform confidence in the Lord's love? We should not be saying, when the waves roar around, "What shall I do? Jesus is asleep"; but trusting Him, knowing His love in whom we believe, and that He is able to hear us always. There is ever to be this character of confidence in God.

Another thing full of blessing: suppose all I care for are safe in some place, I shall not be troubled (*v.* 12). So with the apostle amid all his own tossings: those he had begotten through the gospel were all safe with Christ. For himself, he might be forsaken

by all he loved, but what was so blessed was that if all deserted him it did not alter what made his happiness, what he had in and with Christ. He could say, "My blessing is laid up in Christ, He will keep what I have committed to Him, my circumstances can never touch that at all. If I toil here, the fruit of my labour is laid up with Christ up there."

Are our thoughts like his, untroubled, because all is so settled and laid up with Christ that we have the consciousness that the things that touch us here never touch our happiness in Him? Not that we do not feel things (that would be insensibility), but we are happy in Christ above them all.

The next verse (13) is thorough-subjection to the Word of God. This keeps the heart steady. It is as a weapon ever to be used, and unfailing; and there we find all the bright and blessed happiness of that which is possessed in Christ: He Himself mine.

I do look in saints for undiminished courage, whether successful or having to go through difficulties. It is not here insensibility to that which tries the heart, but that the heart should be set stedfastly to endure the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God, knowing we always have Him to walk with us in them. So that, in whatever thing we are doing, whether serving at home, or on our travels, or in whatever thing our

hands find to do, the heart should never get out of communion with Him.

May the Lord make us faithful, unwearied and increasing in courage. What is Christ's is ours.

People very often take "the kingdom of heaven" as if it were the same thing as "the Church of God." But this is in no way the case, though those who compose the Church are in the kingdom. Supposing for a moment that Christ had not been rejected, the kingdom would have been set up on earth. It could not be so, no doubt; but it shows the difference between "the kingdom" and "the Church." As it was, the kingdom was there in the Person of Christ, the King. Only, as He was on earth, it was not "the kingdom of heaven." But, Christ being rejected, He could not take it outwardly then, but ascended on high. Thus the sphere of the rule of Christ is in heaven. "The heavens do rule" (Dan. iv. 26), and the kingdom is always "the kingdom of heaven," because the King is in heaven; only at the end [of "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke xxi. 24)] it will be subdivided, so to speak, into "the kingdom of our Father" (Matt. xiii. 43), the heavenly part, and the kingdom of the Son of Man (Matt. xvi. 28; Luke xxi. 30), the earthly part. If we understand "the kingdom of heaven" as the rule of Christ when the King is in heaven, it is very simple.

Lessons from the Names in 1 Chronicles i.-iv.

THOUGH "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," yet how often have the above and similar passages been passed over by the child of God as being but dry and uninteresting at the best. But it is not so; for we have only to be simple, as "he that is simple shall learn wisdom," content to give up our own thoughts, and in child-like simplicity accept God's, to find a vast field indeed open before us, "green pastures and still waters," blessed results to us of His never-failing grace.

We have presented in the Book of Chronicles, as another has put it, "the history of God's people as He loves to remember it," their dark spots are passed over, or but lightly touched upon. Not that God was indifferent to the evil; far from it; other scriptures show that that indeed was not the case. Here, however, it is His blessing and grace to His own, only such of their failings being noticed as would the better serve to show His patience and long-suffering.

While the clothing of the book is Jewish, and speaks directly of Jewish blessing, more especially of that of the family of David and

the tribe of Judah, what God is, His heart of love and the blessed fulness of divine grace, is thus made known to us; so that by tracing His ways with His people Israel we the better learn Him "who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace." And this is the great object of our wilderness journey. As with Israel of old, so with us now, "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger . . . that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

In this apparently mere list of names we find an order and arrangement telling of past events and future glories, all of which, whether past, present, or to come, unite in unfolding the ways and grace of God. The direct object of the Holy Ghost is to trace out the line of genealogies from Adam to David, who with Solomon his son is presented as a figure of Christ reigning in His millennial character on the earth, as Son of man, Son of David, and as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Thus the events in their respective histories, which are more particularly figurative of that time, are here given strong prominence to. In the description of the temple, the millennial state of things is especially presented; consequently we find the vail in-

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roduced, which is not so in Kings, the little chambers also found there (vi. 5) being omitted here; for in Kings we have it more as symbolical of that which is heavenly, of the Father's house, from which the veil for us is gone, and we have boldness to enter into the holiest.

For the Jews in the millennium there will still be a veil, even their prince (who may be the Lord's vice-gerent on the earth) entering no further than "the threshold of the gate," while "the people of the land worship at the door of this gate before the Lord" (Ezek. xlvi. 2, 3). To that place which is now our portion they are strangers. Blessed on earth they indeed will be, with all earthly blessings. But what is that to ours, "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," and in the very light itself? "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." Can anything be compared to such a place as this? May the Lord give us to appreciate it more fully, and be very jealous of our hearts straying away and seeking rest or joy in any other place but that supremely blessed one, our assured portion through the unchanging value and efficacy of the precious blood of the Father's well-beloved Son!

The genealogies, then, commence with Adam, "the first man." Abel is omitted, and

so is Cain, who was "of that wicked one"; to make room for Seth, who, in Genesis iv. 25, is raised up instead of Abel. Thus early in man's history is the grand truth of resurrection brought out as the platform on which everything that is to remain must be built, and consequently the only ground on which we can stand before God for permanent blessing.

The seed of God are then named, seven in number (vv. 2, 3), that being ever used in Scripture as a number of perfection. While man was thus running riot on the earth, giving full vent to his self-will, God had a people whom He here traces out for us. Noah begins the second group, and his three sons, in the order of their birth, are given; but in verse 5 Japheth takes the chief place. So it is ever; for God always allows nature to work first, that when it fails, as most assuredly it will, and ever does, there may be room for Him to come in and act in grace according to the goodness of His own heart and perfection of divine wisdom. In Genesis ix. 27, Japheth is given the place of power and authority; in accordance with which, in the description given of the inroad of the great northern nations in the latter days upon Palestine (Ezek. xxxviii.), the names of his sons and their immediate descendants appear as the stock whence those nations sprang, who are

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there found in opposition to God's people, and to His thoughts and purposes concerning the earth.

The sons of Ham come next (v. 8). He first takes the upper hand, and from him and his seed sprang those who afterwards became the bitter and unrelenting enemies of the people of God, and in whom were fully developed the wickedness and abomination of man's heart. Then, in verse 17, we have the line of Shem, whose genealogy is minutely traced, the period of Babel being especially marked, as it was then that God arranged the nations with a view to having an elect branch of Shem's seed for His earthly centre. (Deut. xxxii. 8.)

Abraham, the father of his race, is the next to whom a prominent place is given, and his sons; but not in their order according to nature (v. 28), but according to God's purposes, the child of promise and of grace, the one in whom death and resurrection, as the ground of blessing, is so blessedly set forth, being given the first place, though, as far as nature and appearances are concerned, the other has the uppermost hand. Then Keturah, Abraham's Gentile wife, comes (v. 32), figure of the Gentiles being ultimately brought into a place of blessing in the latter days. (See Gen. xxv.)

The posterity after the flesh being given

first, then the child of election and grace, we accordingly find that of the descendants of Isaac's sons, Esau and Jacob. The former has the priority, and we have a long list of them, dukes and princes; but, as is ever the case, nature comes short, it fails when put to the test. We only read of eleven dukes of Edom (*vv.* 51, 54), but Gôd's number is twelve. Israel, as such, were set the centre of His earthly system.

All the sons of Jacob are given, but not in their order of birth, Judah being repeated in verse 3 to lead up to the family of David. Thus we find the circle narrowing. First the family of SHEM, from among whom Abraham is chosen out of the midst of idolatries (*Joshua* xxiv. 2.) Then, of the twelve sons of Jacob, JUDAH is chosen to be the royal race, "the one whom his brethren should praise," "whose hand should be in the neck of his enemies, and to whom his father's children should bow down" (*Gen.* xlix. 8). Though Judah was thus to hold the sceptre, and be as a lion's whelp, the others were all under the care and eye of God, and hence have their place here. Of Judah's sons the eldest is first mentioned, and then when he fails grace comes in, where there was not nor could be any claim because of the grossness of the sin (*Gen.* xxxviii.); "but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"; hence the line is continued

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through guilty Tamar, through Pharez, his son Hezron, and Nahshon, a prince of the children of Judah, to Boaz, who in grace takes up the Moabiteess Ruth; whence spring Obed, then Jesse, of whose sons the seventh and the least is taken from the sheepfolds, from following the ewes, in preference to his elder brother Eliab, the one according to nature, and one so apparently well suited that the prophet of God, when he is brought into his presence, exclaims, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him." DAVID, of whose root and offspring the Messiah was to be, is thus brought upon the scene. "The man after God's own heart," from this point occupies the chief place, the whole of chapter iii. being given to his genealogy and to that of Solomon, who along with him complete the type, as far as a type can, of what 2 Chron. especially presents, namely, the reign of Christ as "Son of man" and "King of Israel." Verse 17 brings us down to the captivity, and 24 beyond it; for Chronicles was written on the return of the remnant under Ezra and Nehemiah. (See vi. 15, and ix. 1.) Hence the apparent discrepancy in many of the names, their language having in a measure changed during the sojourn in Babylon.

There are two points in these first four chapters that are especially worthy of note, as they bear a practical lesson for our own souls, to

which we shall do well to give heed. They are the path of Caleb and Jabez. In the one we have the sure and blessed consequences for the single eye and undivided heart; and in the other, that, no matter what the state of things around may be, no matter how great the failure of others, the faith which counts and reckons on God ever finds an answer, not merely according to its thoughts, but according to the heart of the One, even God Himself, on whom it has leaned.

In Numbers xiii. 30 Caleb's faithfulness is narrated, how he stood for God in the face of universal declension; a somewhat parallel time to 2 Timothy, where the apostle, walking in the power and energy of the Spirit of God, is left to stand alone, "all they in Asia having turned away from him"; "at his first answer no man stood by him"; and so will it ever be. He who would be for God in the midst of a scene where His testimony has been rejected, must be prepared to stand alone. In grace, because of our weakness, He may give us the fellowship of others; but not necessarily so. Paul had none; the Lord Himself had none. He was "as a sparrow *alone* upon the housetop." As to Paul, he says, "No man stood by me"; "notwithstanding the Lord stood with me"; for He never fails. As He stood by Paul, so He stood by Caleb His servant, and said of him, "Because he had

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another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land." And not only did God bring him into the land, when the others "fell by the way," but the greater part of chapter ii. is occupied with the genealogy of his family, tracing them through many vicissitudes and fortunes, till, in verse 55, we find "Hemath the father of the house of Rechab," of whom it is said (Jer. xxxv. 19), "Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever." Thus to this day, as far as this world is concerned, a member of the house of Caleb stands before the Lord. Blessed testimony to us of His faithfulness, and proof of how, in a higher and more spiritual way, God ever stands for those who stand up for Him. Amazing privilege to be granted to such as we are!

May we through grace value and count it the highest and most excellent honour that can be bestowed upon us, *to stand* (it may be alone, and in a place of reproach, yet still to *stand*) for Him and His truth in the place where it has been either rejected or perverted, where the Beloved One of the Father found no place to lay His head, where in the midst of "His own things" He passed a Stranger, unknown and uncared for, except by a "little flock." May He deepen in our hearts a sense of His grace, of that love which led Him along such a path, that we may be constrained to

follow in His footsteps, at a distance it may be, but still to follow, accounting His word to be more precious than rubies, that thus our feet may be guided in the way of His commandments, and then, whatever appearances for awhile may be, the result will prove that He who stood by Caleb and by Jabez will likewise stand by us; for He is still "THE SAME," and still values as highly the feeble efforts of His redeemed ones who stand for Him in the scene of His rejection.

The more delicate the conscience is as to the sense of the least defilement the more the need of the Mediator is felt. You say, I find that which ought to be dead is still alive. Did Christ die for the sins you have not, or for those you have? The very things you are finding out are the very things He died for. The more the jealousy of conscience the better; only be sure to see the GRACE too. . . . What are you doing with GRACE? How can you come to God for anything if you are not standing in GRACE? To whom can you go if you are not in GRACE? Romans v. comes before chapter vi., and if you try to reverse them you get into chapter vii.

Peace: What is it?

“**H**AVE you found peace?” is a question frequently put to people; and it may be there are many who do not exactly understand the question, or know how to answer it. They look upon “peace” as a certain feeling of calm repose in their own minds; and inasmuch as they feel any thing but that, they come to the conclusion that they have not yet found peace.

Further, there are many, we doubt not, who think that, unless they experience this feeling of repose, they cannot be Christians at all; and, seeing they have it not, they conclude that they have neither part nor lot in the matter.

Finally, there are many who think that, if only they possessed this peace, they should never again have to bewail the inward workings of evil. They imagine that true gospel peace and indwelling sin are wholly incompatible; and seeing, alas! that they are painfully conscious of a mass of evil within, they conclude that they have yet to wait for the enjoyment of peace. Thus do all these three classes of persons, by harbouring wrong ideas on the subject of peace, only augment their sore trouble.

I. First, then, let me say distinctly and emphatically, that true gospel peace is not a

mere feeling of calm repose in the mind. It is something far more solid and settled than that. It is a certain condition into which the believer is introduced by the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Take the following passage of Scripture: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1).

Is this a mere feeling in the mind? Clearly not. It is a blessed condition into which the soul is introduced by the death and resurrection of Christ. No doubt the heart will feel happy and peaceful in proportion to the simplicity of its faith in this grand truth that *all* sins are forgiven, and that the soul is as justified as God can make it, as justified as Christ Himself. But the apostle does not say, "Being justified by faith we have a happy feeling of peace in our minds." This would never do. Our feelings are as uncertain and changeable as the winds. The peace of which this noble passage speaks is as stable as the throne of God itself.

Again: "Preaching peace by Jesus Christ" (Acts x. 36). Does this mean preaching a certain feeling in the mind? Nay, but a glorious proclamation of peace between God and man, founded on the accomplished work of Christ, who, having "made peace by the blood of His cross," is Himself our peace in the presence of God. It would be a very

serious mistake to suppose that "peace," as spoken of in the above passages, is only a calm and comfortable frame of mind. It is far more. It is not our *feeling* of peace, but *God's foundation* of peace. This makes all the difference. We should never confound our sense of a thing with the thing itself, a plain fact with the effect which that fact, when known, may produce upon us.

In the gospel I get divine truth, to be received in a divine way, and to be productive of divine results. It is not an intellectual assent to a certain proposition which I receive as true because I have no reason to doubt it. It is a poor, guilty rebel, a slave, an enemy, receiving, though grace, pardon, liberty, and reconciliation from God, through the precious sacrifice of the cross.

Will such a one not have happy feelings? No doubt; but the feelings must never be mistaken for the blessed truth which gives them birth. Peace is a divine, independent, changeless reality, based upon the blood of Christ, proclaimed on the authority of the word of God, and received by faith through the power of the Holy Ghost.

If, therefore, I were asked the question, "Have you peace?" should I look in at myself, and shape my reply according to what I find there? By no means. What then? I should say, "Yes, thank God, I

have peace, perfect peace, peace as perfect as Christ could make, or God could give." Nor can anything ever disturb my peace, inasmuch as God has preached it to me "by Jesus Christ, Lord of all." If anything could disturb my peace, then Jesus Christ would not be "Lord of *all*"; for whatever caused the disturbance would be lord of Him, which it were blasphemy to suppose for a moment. My feelings could be easily disturbed, but God's foundation never can.

II. And now one word to those who think that, unless they have this inward feeling of repose, they are not Christians at all. I do not believe their idea is borne out either by Scripture or Christian experience. It is not that I want to justify doubts or fears, or lead any to be satisfied with themselves, or their present practical state. Far from it. I fully believe that doubts and fears are as dishonouring to Christ as they are subversive of our own true peace of mind. They are wholly unwarrantable. They spring, in many cases, from a false apprehension of the real nature of gospel peace; from looking at self instead of at Christ; from confounding our enjoyment of peace with the peace itself; from looking at what we are to God, instead of looking at what God is to us. But, from what cause soever they spring, we should judge and disallow them, just as we should any other evil

thought or feeling that might spring up in our minds.

But while it is unquestionably wrong to harbour doubts when God has spoken peace, or to harbour fear when Christ has made peace, it is much more wrong to call in question our personal interest in Christ because we do not feel quite as happy as we might or ought. This is just allowing Satan to gain his end. Should I doubt my natural existence because I have headache? Surely not. And why doubt my spiritual existence, my life in Christ, because my heart is not as happy as I should wish it to be?

Very many true Christians, genuine, earnest, devoted souls, are afflicted with doubts and fears at times. Indeed, in proportion to their seriousness will be their anxiety, until they learn to look away from themselves and rest simply in Christ. Not to feel anxious until I know, on divine authority, that Christ has put away all my sins, and perfectly satisfied, on my behalf, the claims of the throne of God, would only prove hardness of heart and indifference as to sin and holiness. May God preserve my reader from aught of this! God forbid that he should ever cease to be anxious until his anxiety is hushed by the blood of the cross! It is to be feared that many have a flippant way of talking about peace, and finding peace, which argues

a very shallow apprehension of the evil of sin, the claims of divine holiness, or the solemn reality of the cross. We should ever remember that though peace has been made, without any demand upon us, yet it cost Christ everything. We do not lose aught of the simplicity and certainty of divine peace by having a deep sense of its solemnity. Quite the opposite. The more fully I apprehend what had to be done, the more thankful I am that Christ has done it. But I must never forget what it cost Him to do it.

III. In conclusion, let me add a word for those who are troubled with the thought that the enjoyment of settled peace is incompatible with the sense of indwelling sin. This is a serious mistake, which must produce great darkness and heaviness of soul. The most advanced believer upon earth has sin dwelling in him. "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," must be our language to the very end of the chapter. "If we say that we [believers] have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8).

It is interesting and consolatory to see that in the law of the peace offering *leavened* bread was to be offered, because of the *evil* in the worshipper; for leaven is, without so much as a single exception, only symbolical of evil (Lev. vii. 13).

So also in the "two wave loaves" leaven

was permitted because they were typical of the people of God, who have evil in them, and who will have it so long as they are in the body (Lev. xxiii. 19).

God knows all about us. He knows the very worst concerning us, but yet He loves us, and has made provision for the evil which He knows to be in us; so that it should not in the smallest degree interfere with our peace. If the evil be suffered to act and show itself, it will very seriously interfere with our enjoyment of peace, and put us upon our faces before the Lord in confession and self-judgment. God the Holy Ghost, who dwells in us, cannot sanction a single thought of evil indulged. All must be judged. The struggle must be maintained. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. v. 17).

This conflict will never cease in the believer until that blissful moment when he shall lay aside his body of humiliation. Hence, if indwelling sin were to hinder our peace, it would come to pass that not a single member of the family of God could ever enjoy one moment's peace. Thank God, such is not the case. Our peace does not rest upon sinless flesh, but upon THE PERFECT SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

The Translation of Elijah.

READ 2 KINGS I., II.

WE might read these two chapters in connection with this event, though it is only in the second of them we have it recorded.

Ahaziah, of the house of Omri, and the successor of his father Ahab on the throne of Israel, appears before us here as in deep apostasy from the God of Israel. He was sick, and in his sickness he seeks to a god of the nations; and being withstood because of this by the servant of the God of Israel, he sends officers to take him.

This was a full expression of apostasy; and accordingly his death is to be read as condign, specific judgment. It was a *judicial* death, and so was that of his captains and their fifties, who had entered into the spirit of their master, and were the representatives and executors of his iniquity. This was all in righteousness. The king of Israel had perfected sin, and judgment was executed upon him.

In Luke ix. this is referred to. When the Lord Jesus was refused entrance into a Samaritan village His disciples would fain have acted the part of Elijah upon Ahaziah's captains, but the Lord forbade them. They did not know what spirit they were of; that is,

they did not discern the time; they did not understand the Lord and His business in this world.

They mistook the dispensation, and would have treated it as a time of *judgment*. It was in *intelligence*, in that light which distinguishes things that differ, that they were wanting. Their *affections* were right; their purpose and design will be answered in due season, when the day of vengeance comes. So that it was not in affection that they erred, but in dispensational knowledge; and thus in true holiness, or in the holiness of the truth. Their Lord had come to save, not to kill. He was here among men to bless them, not to judge them.

This is important; for it tells us, as many other witnesses do, that true holiness is *conduct according to light or truth*, according to the way and place of God at the given time. "Everything is beautiful in its season." That which is holy in divine seasonableness is unholy when found elsewhere.

This may surely instruct us; but the scene in chapter i. has but little relief in it. We are in the next place, however, introduced to a very different thing. We are encouraged to enter upon it with the brightest expectations, being set on the eve of the translation of Elijah: for the time, we are told, had come "when the Lord would take up Elijah into

heaven by a whirlwind." But there is much incidental instruction here.

At an earlier moment Elisha had forfeited, as I may express it, the mantle of his master. He had not proved himself to be fully up to the possession of it; his heart had not been thoroughly single, and from that moment to the time of this chapter we had not seen him in company with his master. (See 1 Kings xix. 19-21.) This subjects him to a fresh proof; and Elijah himself, and the sons of the prophets, are made the instruments for conducting the process under the hand of God.

Elijah tells him again and again to go back, as he himself was pursuing the stages of his journey from Gilgal to the eastern side of the Jordan. And the sons of the prophets, whether at Bethel or at Jericho, come forth again and again to exercise his spirit, and try the earnestness and stability of his faith, by casting a shadow across his path, and thus bring his soul into perplexity and doubt.

This is a common case. The Lord, at times, with some of His choicest servants, will enter upon severe processes of purifying. He purges the vessels of His house, that they may be fitted for the Master's use. And in doing this He will use different instruments, as He pleases, in His wisdom. It may be the direct action of His own word and Spirit; it may be more immediately through His saints, or

through the people of the world. Here He exercises Elisha by the word of Elijah; His own word, I may say, expressed through His prophet. He will prove, after this manner, by the patient, successive stages of a long journey, whether Elisha's heart were indeed now freed (as once it had not been), from the entanglements of mere human influences, from the honey of home and kindred associations. And He also allows him to be exercised by the ways of those who were not in his elevation, a generation of saints who were not standing in the light and certainty of his own spirit, and who, therefore, by their communications, were well fitted to cast a shadow across his path, or introduce some perplexity into his soul.

But he stands these tests, and pursues his way, in full and close company with his master, the prophet of God, who was about to be translated to heaven. He has his answers ready, whether for Elijah or for the sons of the prophets; and we find him calm, decided, patient, undistracted all along the way from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, from Jericho to Jordan, and then across the river, to wherever, in short (for he knew not the way any more than Abraham of old), Elijah, that is, the hand of God, the God of glory, might be pleased to call him or to draw him.

Surely this was recovery. There was no

longer a going back to kiss father or mother, but a single heart that made the Lord and His presence its place, the Lord and His pleasure its business.

The sons of the prophets at length retire. They stand to view afar off, while Elijah, with a stroke of his mantle, divides the waters of Jordan, making a passage for himself (and for Elisha, too, if he should have courage to follow on in such a wondrous, perilous path) to cross the river. And he does so. Then Elijah himself also closes the severe and heated trial through which he had been putting his friend and minister. For when they together reach the opposite side of the river, he says to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee." For every testing time shall end, every process for purging shall have its measure. Men's iniquities against the Lord shall close in the judgment of righteousness; God's discipline of His saints shall close in the possession of glory. Elijah yields; and Elisha has to write his own story for the future. "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee."

This reminds me of Solomon in 2 Chron. i.; for, after he had approved himself as taking his throne in the right spirit, God appears to him, and says to him, "Ask what I shall give thee." And Elisha's answer to Elijah is as Solomon's answer to God. Solomon does not

ask for the life of his enemies, nor for riches and honours for himself, but for wisdom to execute the service appointed him over the Lord's people. So Elisha here simply replies to Elijah, "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."

This was beautiful. This was aiming high; this was proposing great things; this was asking as for the right hand and the left hand place in the kingdom. "Are ye able to drink of My cup, and to be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized?" we might say, would be the spirit of the answer. And Elijah accordingly says to him, "Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so until thee; but if not, it shall not be so."

The single eye is the secret of pure spiritual energy. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." These were the terms then, and these are the terms now. It is not a question of life, but of strength in the Spirit. Elisha must stand it; and through grace he does. They still go on together, he and Elijah; and as they walk, they talk. But all the time the eyes of Elisha were open. His heart was upon the word of his master. He had hid the promise there; and though he may be still passing on, there is no distraction.

And so with us it ought to be. We may

take up one circumstance after another, and converse with them too, like Elisha here; but what is the heart affecting, where is the eye directed? Is it like this dear man's, in the right place? The walk and the talk, the circumstances of the journey, had not disturbed his spirit, nor diverted his eye; so that at the moment when the horses and chariot appeared, and Elijah was about to be carried up to heaven, Elisha's eye was upon them. He saw his ascending master, and got the mantle.

This is certainly beautiful, to be walking and talking still, still occupied with the circumstances around us, but all the time the eye kept towards the object which God had proposed to it. It is like Abraham again, whose ear was so attuned to the voice of the Lord that the moment that voice called him he had only to say, "Here am I."

Elisha at once used what he so prized. He took up the mantle of his master, and with it, after the manner of his master, divided the waters of the Jordan, and returned to Jericho.

Here, however, I would pause to notice a matter. It is in the name of the Lord God of his ascended master, and not in that master's own name, that Elisha does this. This is so; but this is not so in the case of the apostles and their ascended Master. Peter preaches that it was his ascended Lord who had sent down the Spirit; that it was His

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name which carried salvation with it; that it was in His name in which sinners were to be baptized for the remission of sins; that it was His name which had made the lame man to walk. (Acts ii.-v.) The name of Jesus of Nazareth is to them what the name, not of Elijah, but of the Lord God of Elijah, was to Elisha.

And further. The ascending Lord needed not a convoy, as did the prophet. He who had, before His death, said of Himself and of His body, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," now, after His resurrection, "not needing [as another has expressed it] the cleansing of that fiery baptism, nor requiring a commissioned chariot to bear Him up, did, in the far sublimer calmness of His own indwelling power, rise from the earth, and with His human body pass into the heavenly places."

This is so; and this way of distinguishing the Lord Jesus is to be seen elsewhere. As when Joshua commands the sun and the moon to stand still, much is made of it, and that day is declared to have had none like it; but when the Lord Jesus did like things, things which showed His sovereignty over the forces and the course of nature, it is treated as no wonder at all. (Joshua x.) But then, as to the great fact of this chapter (the translation of Elijah), it has, I believe, its own place character. In

my sight (may I so speak?) it stands in company with the translation of Enoch in *patriarchal* days, and with the death and burial of Moses on Mount Pisgah, in the stricter days of Israel and *the law*. It took place in the later times of *the prophets*, as we know.

In the progress of other ages or dispensations, earlier times and seasons, times of the fathers, of Moses and the prophets, it has been the way of the wisdom of God to give forth certain notices of His future purposes. The coming kingdom, when the Son of man shall take His lordship, and the Son of David His throne, has been the subject not only of prophecy, but of types and shadows. There have been historic pledges of it, and the faint foreshadowing of it in certain distinguished eras in the course of Old Testament times. But so also as to the deeper mysteries of the call of the Gentiles and of the heavenly calling, yea, indeed, of the mystery of the Church. And so, too, of the glorified "children of the resurrection." And I read the story of Enoch in the days of Genesis; the story of Moses with the Lord on Mount Pisgah; and this story of the translation of Elijah in the later days of the prophets, as witnessing that mystery in three distinct successive eras in the Old Testament times. Moses and Elijah, as we know, appear in glory on the Mount of Transfigura-

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tion. The shadowy pledges which God gave by them of old were then, in the days of the gospel, redeemed and substantiated. Moses represents the dead and risen portion of the glorified saints; Enoch and Elijah those who shall still be alive, and those translated in the day of 1 Cor. xv., or at "the coming of Christ." This has its deep interest for us.

Soon after this, the sons of the prophets betray the low, uncertain state of their souls. They are saints, but not in Elisha's elevation; and they propose to search for his master, though they reverently acknowledge him. They, as it were, go to the empty sepulchre, and have to return rebuked and confounded. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Why search on the mountain or in the valleys for one who has gone to heaven? But the grace that is to be seen (and some of us have good reason to appreciate it) in thus delineating various measures and different elevations among the people of God, may be deeply and thankfully owned by us. "Some thirty, some sixty, some a hundredfold."

The lessons of this scripture are surely various, and each of them healthful for the soul. "Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them. The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Ps. cxix. 130).

Rest.

THERE is REST for the weary soul,
There is REST in the Saviour's love;
There is REST in the grace that has made
me whole,
That seeks out those that rove.

There is REST in the tender love
That has trodden our path below;
That has given a place in the realms above,
But can all our sorrows know.

There is REST in the calming grace
That flows from those realms above;
What REST in the thought we shall see His
face,
Who has given us to know His love!

There is REST in the Saviour's heart
Who never turned sorrow away,
But has found, in what sin had made our part,
The place of His love's display.

There is REST in the blessed yoke,
That knows no will but His;
That learns from His path, and the words He
spoke,
What that loving patience is.

Where He, too, has gone before,
Is the path which we have to tread;
And it leads to the REST where sorrow's o'er,
To the place where His steps have led.

Nebuchadnezzar: Exalted, Abased, Renewed.

READ DANIEL i.—iv.

THERE is much interest attaching to the person of this great Gentile. The place he occupies in the progress of the divine dispensations, the circumstances which connect him with the saints of God, and his own personal history, all contribute to give him a place in our recollections, and to read us some holy and important lessons.

He was the man in whom God set up the Gentiles. The house of David, the throne of Judah, had corrupted itself; the measure of the people's iniquity was full, and the term of the divine long-suffering was spent in Nebuchadnezzar's day; and he is used by the Lord to be the rod of His indignation against Jerusalem, and the hand to take from Him the sword of rule and judgment in the earth.

The glory had departed. It had left the earth. The prophet had seen it in its gradual and reluctant, but sure and judicial, flight on the cherubim and the wheels, as far as the mountain, on its way to heaven (Ezek. xi. 23). But though "The glory is departed" might have been written on Jerusalem, "The glory is here" could not have been correspondingly written on any seat or city of the nations.

The silence of Scripture is at times holy and impressive. I observe this as to the ark. We

are not told a word about its fate in the day of Jerusalem's sorrow. It is never mentioned: the theme was too sacred. The ark was the symbol of the divine presence; and the Spirit could not contemplate its captivity, if He could not do so in connection with glorious victory, as in 1 Sam. iv. Therefore He will leave it untraced in the day of Jerusalem's downfall. When next it is seen, it is in heaven (Rev. xi.-xv.).

This Chaldean, however, this Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, is set up by the Lord, and the sword is committed to him. Power in the earth, for the punishment of evil-doers and for the praise of them that do well, is put into his hand, formally put there, by God, on the glory forsaking the earth, or the Lord, for the present, refusing to take His place as King of Israel.

This is Nebuchadnezzar's connection with the dispensational purposes of God. He was glad, of course, to extend his dominions, and to let his conquests be known far and wide, and Jerusalem is welcome plunder to him; but all the while he was filling out the purposes of God. At length his sword is in its sheath, and we see him, not in connection with the *purposes*, but with the *saints* of God; and then we get a more personal sight of him, and a subject of still holier interest and meaning. For then we see the *man* under divine opera-

tion, and not merely the *power* under divine commission and appointment. And it is this sight which Daniel gives of him in these chapters.

The tumult of war being over, and the sword, as I said, in its sheath again, the king is seen in his place at Babylon. His royal estate he purposes to set off to all advantage. Elegancies and accomplishments, and provisions of all sorts, shall fill his court. Both his greatness and his pleasures shall be served by all that conquered lands can furnish, and the ancient land of the glory is now only one of them. Babylon, famed for its wisdom in its astrologers and soothsayers, shall be set off by some of the captive youths of Judah, distinguished for their understanding science, and skilfulness in knowledge. This is the first chapter.

As it often happens, the Lord comes to disturb him. His heart is moved, if not his estate and condition in the world. Before he goes to sleep, one much-to-be-remembered night, he is thinking on what was to be thereafter. He then sleeps and dreams, and the dream being all about what was to be thereafter, shows that the hand of God was in the whole scene.

The king, however, does not understand anything of all this. Even the dream itself goes from him. He has no remembrance of it. It leaves uneasiness behind it; but that is all.

Often it is thus with the soul. There is a disturbance, but no intelligence. A restlessness has been awakened; but whence it came is not known, or whither it goes, what is its purpose, is not conjectured. And it is too high for man. It is the hand of God, and mere man cannot reach it.

All the wisdom of Babylon is at fault. The departed dream, which had left only its shadow to scare the heart of the king, is beyond all Chaldean art.

This is beautifully significant. We live amid these wonderful shakings, these hidden operations of God with the hearts of the children of men. And when it is with the elect, the work thus begun is conducted to a blessed issue.

The man of God, however, gets into the secret. The saint is made to know the mind of God in this great operation of His hand. Daniel tells it all to the king. Nebuchadnezzar is naturally moved to wondering admiration. The knowledge of the prophet is marvellous in his eyes, and all that he can do for him he is ready to do. The wisdom of the God of Daniel he also religiously acknowledges, and, under the excitement, even delights in it. This is the second chapter.

But with all this he is but Nebuchadnezzar still, a mere child of nature, the sport of human passions, and of the devil's wiles. Vanity seems to feed on the communications which the

prophet of God had delivered. Wonderful, but natural! These communications had dealt with solemn truths, that an image was to be broken in pieces, and made like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor. But this is all passed by the heart of the king, and that he himself is the head of this image, the golden head of it, is all that practically works on him. His pride can get food out of that; but the rest may remain for a future day, however awful it may be.

Accordingly, he sets up a golden image for all to worship. All orders and estates of men are summoned, by musical instruments of all sorts, to own the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Marvellous that our hearts can so deal with God's revelations! God had spoken of an image being broken to pieces, and scattered like the chaff before the wind. Nebuchadnezzar can set up an image to be honoured with divine honours by all the world. How falsely the heart traffics with divine truth! We turn to the present account of our own vanity what connects itself with the most solemn realities.

Admiration of God's wisdom will not do. Nebuchadnezzar had that. But with that he was a self-worshipper, and to himself he can sacrifice everything. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the very instruments or vessels for awaking that admiration, shall burn in the

fiery furnace if they consent not to fall down before this image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Wonderful infatuation!

God, however, is but again displayed. If *wisdom* belong to Him, so does *power*. If He can reveal secrets, and make known the thoughts of the head of the children of men upon the bed, He can quench the violence of fire, and save every hair of the head from perishing, though in a burning fiery furnace.

The king is again moved; and he does more than before. He had honoured the servants of the God of *wisdom* already; now he is for honouring the God of *power* Himself, establishing His name in the land, and making reverence of Him a part of the business of the State, a standing ordinance of the realm. This is the third chapter.

But what of this? He is as before, only Nebuchadnezzar still, the haughty, self-pleased, self-pleasing child of the dust, man, who, like Adam of old, would be as God. For after these witnesses of divine wisdom and power, and after the motions which his heart and conscience had passed through, he was, as in earlier days, "at rest in his house, and flourishing in his palace" (iv. 4). He was the same self-pleased, self-pleasing, important king of Babylon.

Nature outlives a thousand checks and improvements. The new wine poured into the

old bottle is but spilt. "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented" (Matt. xi. 17). The various melody of the dispensations of God is lost on the dull ear of man. But the Lord is not weary. He can still sit at the well, and talk with the sinner (John iv). He shakes the heart of this king with another dream, and Daniel again interprets it. It is still, however, the new wine in the old bottle, and it is spilt as ever. Twelve months after this solemn visitation, the king walks in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and his poor proud heart, after all this, can say, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have builded for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (iv. 30.)

Here, surely, is *old* Nebuchadnezzar still, the "old man" of nature. The divine revelations are spent on him in vain. All the goodly emotions are but as the morning cloud and early dew. The new wine to be preserved must be put into new bottles.* And so, at last it is. Nebuchadnezzar is made a new bottle. Deeply and solemnly is this process conducted, or this work accomplished. The sentence of death is lawfully laid on him.

* See Note at the end.

The case is one of great character; and it might well be so, because, as we have seen, the light of the wisdom of God, and the hand of the power of God, had already addressed this man; and the further care and diligence of the Lord had been, in the recent dream, also bestowed upon him; but all to no real purpose. The new wine had been spilt again and again. Nebuchadnezzar is the same man still, and the old bottle is now to be cast away. The former vessel having been marred on the wheel, the lump is now taken into the potter's hand, to fashion it another vessel, a new vessel, as it pleases Him (Jer. xviii. 4). The story of this operation, as I said, is solemn beyond expression. "Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish" (Ps. xlix. 20). In honour, indeed, Nebuchadnezzar had been; but he had not understood, and now he becomes as a beast. "He was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws" (iv. 33).

Thus is he made to know himself, and to learn the lesson that he was, in all his honour, as brutish as the cattle of the field, having no understanding. The occasion was special, and the display of the operation of God signal, almost without parallel.

But if he learns that he "has destroyed

himself," he shall learn also that there is One that lifts up even from dunghills, and under the further working of His gracious as well as mighty hand, Nebuchadnezzar revives; he becomes a risen man in due season. The field and the oxen are left; his understanding returns to him; his kingdom and its glory, his honour and its brightness, his nobles and his counsellors, all return to him, and even excellent majesty is added to him. And then, as one of understanding indeed, who had come to the knowledge of God and himself, he no longer thinks of honouring God by State decrees only, ordinances of his realm, but bows before Him as a sovereign Lord in heaven and on earth, and publishes His doings. He is no longer the *king*, but the *dependent*. The old thing has passed away, and all is become new (2 Cor. v. 17).

NOTE.—The figure of the new wine and the old bottles is used by the Lord after He had been experiencing the resistance of the Pharisees in various ways (Mark ii.). He had been gracious to the man with the palsy, let down through the roof; but they said He spoke blasphemies. He sat at Levi's table in company with publicans and sinners; but they upbraided Him for want of common holiness, as they judged. His disciples were not fasting, as the disciples of John and the Pharisees

were; but again this is complained of. All this was the witness that the new wine had been spilt, the good ways of Christ had been lost on them. They had not contained this new doctrine, the way of God and of grace. His miracles of delivering love and power, His ways with sinners to lead them to repentance, the liberty and joy of His Gospel, or the Bridegroom-mystery, all had been lost on them; and from all this (to speak after the manner of men) He learns that man was worth nothing for God; that he could never be a vessel for His praise or service; that he must, therefore, be made another vessel; that the old thing must pass away, and all become new.

“ We know,” says the apostle John, “ that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren ” (John iii. 14).

To believe in Christ, and love one another, are the two great gospel commandments; and no one ever obeyed these two without possessing a life which cannot be forfeited, ETERNAL LIFE.

The Church is in relation to eternity, and does not take account of time. All computations as to the time of Christ's second coming are false in their very thought.

Encouragement and Warning.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.

READ JOHN XIV. 12-14; JAMES IV. 7; 1 PETER V. 8, 9; JOHN XI. 39-44; REV. III. 16.

IN a day like this, when so many are morbidly occupied with the low condition of saints, and weakness of testimony, it is well to look up and consider the almighty power and changeless love of our God. It was when David had been acting very badly, and the people of Israel had widely departed from Jehovah, when all human resources had utterly failed, we are told that "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (1 Sam. xxx. 6). Jehovah was *his* God. This he knew; and reckoning upon His arm of strength, and His abundant mercy, when despair was filling every one else, "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." Nor was it in vain. David's God abundantly responded to David's trust. The sequel tells us how largely God honoured the faith of His poor failing servant. And is God changed? Are His resources less than they were? Or is He less willing to be found *now* of His servants who truly seek Him than He was *then*? We know it is not so.

In a later day, when the apostle Paul was leaving the much-loved saints of Ephesus, and

saw the terrible flood of evil that was coming in upon them, did he not say, "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace"? (Acts xx. 32). To be sure he did; for where else can those look, who desire to be true to Christ, than to the living and true God? And surely the word, which tells us of the sufficiency of His grace, is able to encourage and strengthen our hearts in the most trying and failing circumstances; for,

"Though all things change, He changeth not;
He ne'er forgets, though oft forgot;
His love's unchangeably the same,
And as enduring as His name."

And so now. Christians have deeply failed, we know. The manifest current of things around is to exalt man, and make little of Christ. The candlestick has been shattered. The living stones of the Church of God are found scattered here and there. Its manifested unity is gone, and, so far as we gather from Scripture, never again to be re-constructed on earth. Such is the present ruin. Nevertheless God abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself. With Him is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning. His word, which endureth for ever, is still with us. The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who is in us, abides with us for ever. Jesus, "the Head of the body," and "Son over His own house,"

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our life, righteousness, and High Priest in God's presence, is as much FOR us as ever; for He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." He has given us plain directions in His word for the present time, and abundant encouragement for our poor hearts in Himself, constantly bidding us to look away from difficulties and felt need to Himself. "Verily, verily," said Jesus, "I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father."

Observe, that the Lord is here addressing BELIEVERS, and says, "He that believeth," he that exercises faith in Me. It is one thing to be a believer, it is another to be a *believing* believer, hanging on Christ, cleaving to Him, drawing from Him, expecting from Him. Mark, then, it is "he that *believeth*." On another occasion (we are told) when the Lord "saw their FAITH" He gave the blessing; and again we read that, in another place, "He did not many mighty works there, because of their UNBELIEF." Oh, the mighty power of faith! looking off man, off circumstances, off self, and simply taking hold of the almightiness and grace of our Lord Jesus, relying on His strength, and wisdom, and grace. Thus we see that the blessing is promised to him that BELIEVETH.

The result promised is, "The works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do." How these wondrous words raise our expectations! How they silence unbelief, and bid us cleave unto the Lord with full purpose of heart!

The reason given is not because of our faithfulness, our worthiness, our ability, but because Jesus is at God's right hand: "because I go to the Father." Only let us look to Him who has sent down the Holy Ghost, who has all power in heaven and in earth, and reckon upon Him, whatever be the difficulties or need, and we shall surely prove that His grace is sufficient for us, that His strength is made perfect in weakness, and that He is able to do above all that we ask or think.

But with the abundant encouragements of Scripture there are many warnings; and we need to watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. Satan is a mighty foe. Few seem to believe it.. We are told that he is *our adversary*, and that he walks about, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. These are solemn words, and are addressed to Christians. Let us think of these things. He lays his snares. Satan's aim is always to get us to dishonour Christ, in doctrine or practice. May we not yield to his devices. He is a wily enemy, and can transform himself into an angel of light. But if God be for us, who

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can be against us? We are to *resist* the devil. How? By steadfastness in the faith, looking up BELIEVINGLY to Jesus, who is gone to the Father. And what then? Satan will flee from us. We are to beware, then, of this mighty foe, and we are commanded to "resist" him.

We must also beware of carnal reasoning and unbelief. It was the PURPOSE of Jesus to raise up Lazarus. It was also His WILL to associate His saints with Himself in connection with this mighty work. Therefore "Jesus said, Take ye away the stone." But, instead of willing obedience to the Lord's word, there was unbelief and carnal reasoning. Unbelief is very clever at reasoning. "By this time he stinketh," said one; as much as to say, "It is no use now to think of his being restored to life; it is too late." But the Lord suspends His working till the stone is removed. He reproves this unbelief by saying, "Said I not unto thee, that *if thou wouldst believe* thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Martha had forgotten the Lord's word, and began to reason about the matter. This is unbelief. Hence the Lord's work was hindered. He must have a *believing* vessel to use; for no other gives Him the glory. Faith always acts on God's word. The Master's reproof, however, is heeded. It seemed to quicken faith; for we are told,

“ *Then* they took away the stone ”; and this was followed by the accomplishment of the Lord’s purpose in raising Lazarus from the dead. If we are cleaving to the Lord and to His word we shall readily obey His voice, and not hinder His work by unbelief.

Indifferentism, too, which is a marked feature of these days, must be carefully watched against, and prayed against. The surrounding religious atmosphere easily draws into its lukewarmness. It is the spirit of the world, present ease and prosperity to the exclusion of Christ; hence indifference to Christ’s honour, Christ’s truth, Christ’s ways, Christ’s interest, Christ’s members. If Christ Himself has His right place in our *affections*, we cannot be indifferent to what affects Him. Of all things *indifferentism* seems most intolerable to Christ. He cannot, will not, own such in His service. He said, “ Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth.” Let us earnestly watch against indifferentism. If Christ is the object of our souls, and we are seeking to know Him, to serve Him, to please Him, we shall be encouraged ourselves, and able to help others to walk in His ways. May our loving, coming Lord Jesus be more precious to our souls.

A Few Words on Falling Away.

THE passage in Hebrews vi. 4-6 forms a part, and doubtless a needed part, of God's word, and it behoves us to understand and ponder the warning it contains.

It is connected with the close of chapter v., in which the apostle upbraids the Hebrew professing Christians with their dulness of hearing, in that, when they ought to have been teachers, it was needful that someone should again teach them the first principles of the oracles of God.

He exhorts them, therefore, to leave "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," or, as in the margin, "the word of the beginning of Christ." These expressions denote the glimmerings of truth as to Christ, contained in the doctrines and shadows of the bygone dispensation. In these the Hebrews had been reared from infancy, not knowing their import till visited by the full light of the gospel, here called "perfection."

The special danger to which these Hebrews were exposed was that of receding from the ground where the full light of the gospel had placed them, and of relapsing into Judaism, which at best did but contain "the word of the beginning of Christ." The principles enumerated in verses 1 and 2 all formed a part of Judaism, and do not embrace one feature of Christianity as distinct from Judaism.

The word "baptisms" is in the plural, and refers, not to Christian baptism, but to Jewish washings. They were not by relapsing into Judaism to lay again these principles as a foundation, but, leaving these, were to "go on to perfection," the full revelation of God in Christ, as made known in the gospel. "And this will we do," says the apostle, "if God permit."

To understand the next verses we have not only to remember thus the context, but must also bear in mind that these Hebrews were not all necessarily true converts, because for a time they had appeared and professed to be such. There might be among them those who, when put to the trial, showed they had never really known the grace of Christ, or heartily embraced His gospel.

They might be outwardly enlightened, as surely all are who are favoured with the full light of the gospel as compared with the darkness of heathenism, or the glimmering light of Judaism. They might have had their affections stirred, and tasted of the heavenly gift and of the good word of God. The stony-ground hearers, in the parable of the Sower, had some such "tastes," seeing that they heard the word, and anon *with joy* received it. Yet had they no root in themselves, but in time of temptation fell away.

They might still further be either witnesses,

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subjects, or possessors of those miraculous powers so common in apostolic times, being made partakers of the Holy Ghost and of the powers of the world to come. Judas wrought miracles as well as the other eleven apostles. There will be many to say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" The reply to such will not be, "I once knew you, but you fell away." No! "Then will I profess unto them, I *never* knew you: depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity" (Matt. vii. 22, 23).

The falling away then here treated of is not any of those ordinary falls from which Scripture and experience alike show the grace of Christ to be sufficient to restore us, but a total apostasy from Christ, and return to Judaism. It is such an apostasy, moreover, on the part of those who, in addition to the ordinary privileges of professing Christians, had the gospel of Christ confirmed to them by miracles of which they themselves were witnesses or performers.

Evidently any one apostatizing under those circumstances would have to account for these miracles; and the way in which they were accounted for in early times by those who could not deny the facts, was by attributing them to magic or the power of Satan. Now,

this would render the apostasy in question *virtually*, if not *formally*, the sin against the Holy Ghost. It consisted in attributing to Satan the miracles which Christ wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost. "Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit" (Mark iii. 30).

This sin it is impossible to commit now that the miraculous powers of the Spirit have ceased to be manifested. How nearly any may approach to committing it, it is impossible to define. Every tendency to turn away from Christ points in that direction; and hence the solemn need to guard against all such tendencies. But the sin itself, of such apostasy as is here supposed, could only be committed in those days; and any who then committed it had never really passed from death unto life.

Having discharged his duty in warning thus against apostasy from Christ, the apostle instantly turns to the better hopes he had of most, if not all, to whom he wrote. "But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." He comforts himself as to them by recalling to mind, not their gifts or miraculous powers or knowledge, but the proofs they had given of love to the saints.

What the Cloudy Pillar was for Israel.

WE are all of us in wealthier places than we are aware of, and have far richer interest in Christ than we are disposed to allow. Many quickened souls scarcely dare to stand in the justification of their persons; and yet they read of "justification of life" (Rom. v. 18). "The glory of God" in their own history as sinners who have received Jesus has still to be learnt in some of its further brightness.

This suggests to my remembrance the cloudy pillar that accompanied the camp of Israel, and I am too much attracted by this object not to turn aside and look at it for a little space.

Israel in Egypt had wondrous witness of what God was to them. Plague upon plague, in which they had been preserved, had swept through that land; and in the night of the destroying angel the blood on the lintel had sheltered them. The cloudy pillar had also begun to lead them on the way out of the land (Exod. xiii.). Still, after all this, when they came to stand between the host of Egypt and the Red Sea, all this was as a thing forgotten. They feared and murmured.

How dull we are to learn, how slow of heart to believe, the secrets of grace and the faithfulness of God! Whether Israel stand at the

edge of the wilderness in the presence of the cloudy pillar, or, as I may say, whether disciples stand at the grave of Lazarus in the presence of Jesus, we see this (Exod. xiv., John xi.). But again and again He proves that it is not in Him we are straitened.

That mystic pillar, as I may call it, accompanied the camp all along the road from the very heart of the land of Egypt to the very borders of the land of Canaan. That is, as soon as it was wanted till it was wanted no more. It lets us know, likewise, that it had many and various virtues in it, and all of them suited to the rising and changeful exigencies of the people. It did not travel along that road but for the sake of Israel. It was there because Israel was there. It was therefore what Israel needed it to be. It was the condition of the camp, be that what it may, that drew out its secret glories and virtues. This was its character. Thus we read its history.

As soon as Israel have been redeemed by the blood on the lintel, and have started on their journey, this pillar meets them, and sets itself before them to be their guide. They are about to enter on a trackless waste. No man dwelt where Israel was soon to travel. There were no land-marks, no sign-posts there. Its barrenness would demand bread from heaven, its drought water from the rock, but its pathlessness would as surely need a leader; and He

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who was to open angels' stores for them, and rivers in rocks, would raise for them a pillar to be cloud by day and fire by night, that they might still be on their way, whether by night or day. And thus they would be independent of highways and sign-posts in the *trackless* desert, as they would be of cornfields and vineyards in the *barren* desert.

But the pillar was much beside this to Israel. It was not merely cloud and fire alternately, as day and night succeeded each other; it was also light and darkness at the very same moment, when Israel needed such a thing. The host of Egypt had come out, and were pressing on the heels of the children of Israel; and then the pillar puts itself between the two hosts; and, instead of being lighted and luminous throughout, it becomes darkness on the side turned to the Egyptians, and light on the side turned to the Israelites, so that the one could not come near the other. It was a shield now, as it had been a conductor before. It is just whatever the people wanted. This is the due account to give of it. This was its way. It expressed the grace of Him who had now saved Israel. It is alternate cloud and fire, if the camp need that; light and darkness at the very self-same moment, if they need that.

And much more still. There is One who has made that cloud His dwelling-place, whose

look will prove the overthrow of all those who plot mischief against the camp. The flower of Egypt withers under it; Pharaoh's horses and chariots are drowned in the Red Sea before it. "The Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot-wheels, that they drave them heavily" (Exod. xiv. 24, 25).

What glories fill that wondrous place; what energies as well as virtues for Israel's use! And how do these disclose themselves as Israel needs them!

And further. It can express rebuke and resentment when this becomes healthful discipline for Israel. In the days of their murmurings again and again the glory in the cloud lets them know that its rest had been disturbed. It appears to them in the day of the manna, and of the spies, and of the rebellion of Korah; and they see it in the consciousness of the divine and righteous anger. It is like the resentment of the grieved Spirit which the saint of God is now conscious of. And all this shows that the cloud was not simply the companion, but the *interested* companion of the camp. It felt *with* as well as *for* their condition.

But again we find that if it thus rebuked and resented when discipline was called for, it was ready with all readiness to welcome and answer

the approaches of faith. When the tabernacle was reared up by the willing and obedient people, and in them faith had accepted the communications which the Lord had made to them by Moses touching the order and furniture and services of His house, how did the glory at once and with evident delight fill that house, and the cloud rest upon it! (Exod. xl.) With what wholeness of heart and soul did the Lord own the place where faith had met the rich provisions of His grace!

Oh, what various glory and virtue are thus seen in this mystic companion of the camp of Israel! It has light for its guidance, terror for its enemies, a shield as impenetrable as the thick darkness itself for its security; it has rebukes for its waywardness, and the richest, readiest encouragements and consolations for its faith; and, further still, it is unwearied even to the end, and will wait on Israel till they need it no more.

This we see in Deut. xxxi. There the patient, gracious, faithful pillar, as I may call it, is seen again, just as the journey of the wilderness is closing.

The camp had brought upon itself a pilgrimage of forty years, when they might have had but a journey of a few months. They are sent back from Kadesh-barnea to the Red Sea, because of their sin and provocation; but the pillar will surely go back with them. It will

compass one waste mountain after another, and take the road from one wilderness to another, if Israel have subjected themselves to these desert wanderings. And it is unwearied. We see it at the end, as we have said, in Deut. xxxi., as we saw it at the beginning in Exodus xiii.

And now the application of all this easily suggests itself. As we read in the blessed story of the evangelists, the disciples saw the doings of the Lord day by day; and yet, in spite of all that, they were at their wits' end again and again, when fresh difficulties arose. The hunger of the multitude on the shore was too much for them; the winds and the waves on the lake were too much for them. The Lord had to disclose again and again, like the pillar of the desert, the secret virtues which were in Him for their rebuke and illumination. His glories in grace and in power, His sovereignty over the forces of nature, and His resources in the face of the barrenness of nature, all were brought forth according to the demand of the moment.

And, like the pillar, He was unwearied. He went with the disciples from the beginning to the end. And it was surely patient, suffering unweariedness. He took them up as ignorant fishermen on the shores of the sea of Galilee, and He never left them, though at the end He found them pretty much the same ignorant

fishermen still. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" He had to say, just at the closing of His sojourn with them. But then, a fresh disclosure of Himself is made in answer to this; another ray of His glory is let out, and He adds, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John xiv.).

And so is it again, after this same manner, on the eminent occasion of the eleventh chapter of John. The Lord lets the sickness of Lazarus end in death. He stays where He was till He could say, "Lazarus sleepeth"; for then He could bring forth Himself in this form of divine glory: "I go that I may awake him out of sleep" (John xi.). It was at the *grave*, and not merely at the sick bed, that He was to be displayed or glorified. It was in the place of the full fruit, and apparent, temporary triumph of sin, that "the glory of God" was to be seen. No less spot could give occasion to the manifestation of that glory in its brightest form. And there, too, disciples were to learn the exhaustless stores which He carried in Himself for the meeting of all their need, and the consummation of all their blessing.

Much of the divine glory in the person and works of Christ had been already revealed to the family of Bethany, and to the disciples who are now gathered at the grave of Lazarus. Andrew and Philip had, long before this, left

the presence of the Lamb of God, satisfied and happy (John i.). Peter had owned Him as the One that had the words of eternal life (John vi.). John and James, as well as Peter, had seen the Transfiguration (Matt. xvii.). The dear household at Bethany had welcomed and entertained Him, served Him with their best, and heard His words as with ravished hearts (Luke x.) These are among the many witnesses that had already given in their several testimonies to what He was and who He was, in the presence of that people who were now around the grave of Lazarus. And yet they were, one and all of them, betraying their ignorance of the full glory that belonged to Him, and of the divine energies that had their springs in Him, and that were ready to exercise themselves at His good pleasure. None of them as yet knew that He could say of Himself, "I am the resurrection and the life." They were all talking of death. There was virtue in "the last day," they could acknowledge (v. 24); but none of them were in the secret "of the first resurrection" (Rev. xx. 5). They had known Him as the Christ, and gone to Him as sinners, seeing His glory (as I may take leave to express it) at the grave of their *souls*, but they had not as yet counted on seeing it at the grave of their *bodies* whenever it was His good pleasure to have it so.

There was a further treasure in Him, and in

Him for them, that hitherto they had not apprehended. The cloudy pillar where the glory dwelt had virtues in it for the use of Israel, which this New Testament Israel, like their brethren of old, had not reckoned on. For we are all in wealthier places than we are aware of. And the patient, gracious Master still goes on with us even to the banks of the Jordan. Peter had found out his death-stricken condition, without the Son of the living God, and he had said to Him therefore, "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life"; but Peter has still to learn that the sepulchre in the garden is empty, and that the sepulchre at Bethany shall be so (John xx.). For he shall be in the company of his Divine Master even to the end, though as yet he knows so imperfectly the glories and virtues that lie hid in that pillar of this desert, ruined world.

It is not heaven (though I shall be in heaven), it is CHRIST I am to get; the most blessed of all, CHRIST. Am I waiting for CHRIST?

He will find a people waiting for Him when He comes. How long the midnight cry goes forth we know not. It may do its work in a moment of rousing the hearts of the sleeping Church. "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!"

The Teaching of the Parable of the Talents.

READ MATTHEW xxv. 14-30.

IN this parable we have the responsibility of Christ's servants. It is not, as in the parable of the Ten Virgins, a question of profession or possession, but a present responsibility to the Lord during His absence, and His future dealing with the servants according to their having been faithful or unfaithful. It therefore most solemnly instructs us that, when the Lord returns, He will inquire into the practical conduct of those who have taken a place of service during His absence. This instruction is presented to us in a very homely, simple way, but is full of serious and searching questions for the heart and conscience.

In the Lord's prophecy of the sheep and goats which follows this parable the reference is to a *sessional* judgment; but it is not so here. It is true that each case will be entered into and dealt with according to the Lord's perfectness of wisdom and knowledge; but it does not follow that all cases will be disposed of *at the same time*. For instance, we expect the Lord's true servants to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, to be with the Lord, and to be manifested at His judgment-seat, before we come forth with Him in manifested glory

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(1 Thess. iv.; 2 Cor. v.; Col. iii.). The judgment of false people, such as those compared to tares, will not be till we appear with the Lord at His coming to judge, first the quick or living, then the dead. The Lord therefore speaks of His going away, committing certain talents to His servants, and when He returns making the most solemn inquiry as to the use they had made of them during His absence. He likens Himself therefore to a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

As to the talents, it is important to notice that the servants do not all receive the same number of talents. "Unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one" (v. 15). There was in the distribution of the talents regard had to the fitness, natural fitness of the vessel, to whom the talents were entrusted. He gave to every man "according to his several ability." This shows, not only the perfect wisdom of the distribution, but also assures us that the Lord never gives talents to people who have not the ability to use them. It is remarkable, too, that the persons who faithfully used the talents not only gained by trading, but the talents actually increased in number, the servant got "other talents." Nor should it be overlooked that it was not the person who had several talents committed to his trust that so grievously failed, but the

servant that had only "one talent." How few seem to consider what responsibility there is connected with the profession of the Lord's service! The Lord has been absent now for a long time. Nearly nineteen hundred years have passed since He rose from the dead, and sat down on the right hand of God; but "the night is far spent, and the day is at hand." The long-suffering of the Lord has been very great; the door of salvation by grace has long been wide open; but long-suffering must have an end, the door must be shut, and the Lord must judge those who have professed to be His servants. "After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them" (v. 19).

The judgment of the faithful servants is simple enough, and nothing could be happier. They knew the Master's loving heart; they proved His succour; they experienced His blessing. The joy of the Lord was their strength; His love constrained them; His worthiness enabled them to spend their talents in His service with alacrity and delight. They were conscious, too, of vast increase gained by trading. Thus the more they sowed, the more they reaped; the more they gave, the more to them was given. They therefore see their Master's face with joy, and render their account with confidence and cheerfulness. "So he that had received five talents came and

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brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more." The Lord commends and honours him. "His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (vv. 20, 21).

Nor is this all. The talent which the wicked servant did not use was also given to him. With this exception we find the same confidence and joyous confession to the Lord of the one who had used the two talents faithfully, and the same proportionate increase by its use. He has also precisely the same commendation from his lord: "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (v. 23).

This is very blessed, and shows that the Lord does not expect from us what He has not given us power to perform. While He loves a cheerful giver, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what a man hath not. The great instruction seems to be that the Lord expects us to use faithfully for Him during His absence what He has entrusted us with, and at His coming He will reward us accordingly.

The account of the servant who had but "one talent" reads to us the most solemn and serious lessons. The chief feature in his history is that, though professing the Lord's service, he has a bad opinion of Christ Himself. This is fatal. He believed not the record that God gave of His Son. He saw nothing attractive in Him. He received not the grace and truth that came by Him. He perceived not the inimitable beauty and worth of Jesus. He knew not the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich (2 Cor. viii. 9). This was the root of all his unfaithful conduct. How could he be faithful to one of whom he had such thoughts? "He that had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed" (v. 24).

With such thoughts of our adorable Lord, how could there be confidence? How could the heart be melted and sweetly drawn into willing, happy devotedness to such an austere man? No marvel, then, that the further confession of his heart, uncovered as it was in the presence of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, should be, "I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine" (v. 25).

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Not a word of faith, or love, or true knowledge of Christ in the whole confession! Like another king Saul, he might have had a splendid gift, but the vessel was unclean, unreconciled, unwashed, untaught by the Spirit of God as to his own guilt, and his need of the infinite suitability and perfectness of the atoning work of the Son of God; his heart was not right with God; there was no right motive in action in his soul. Hence the lord pronounces him to be "wicked," "slothful," and "unprofitable." He convicts him from his own lips, and shows his utter inconsistency with his own principles: "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury" (vv. 26, 27).

There is a point that must not be overlooked in the Lord's judgment of this wicked servant. It is this: the Lord permits men here to bear His name, and to be called His servants by others who manifestly know Him not; but it cannot be so in eternity. Everything now covered up is then to be thoroughly unmasked; men will be consigned to punishment as they really are. There will be no professors of the name of Christ in hell fire. If the "one talent" be but the bearing of the name

and truth of Christ, he must be entirely stripped of every shred of it, and go to the pit of everlasting torment as a wicked man; for such he really is.

There are those who in the holiness and brightness of the Lord's presence are declared worthy of that name which they have confessed before men, and Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren, or own them as His good and faithful servants. "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (vv. 28-30).

Can anything more solemnly admonish us to attach the deepest seriousness and reverence to the Lord's service; or more simply instruct us as to the grace of the Lord Jesus, and personal acquaintance with and enjoyment of Him, "who once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God," as the spring of all faithful service to Christ? Does it not also show how careful we should be not to urge any to the profession of the Lord's service who are not truly reconciled to God by the peace-making, peace-speaking power of the blood of the cross?

The Lord's Supper.

READ I CORINTHIANS XI. 23-31.

IN this passage of Scripture the apostle, guided by the Holy Ghost, seizes the opportunity to declare the nature and the importance of this ordinance. We may notice here that the Lord had taught it him by an especial revelation, proof of the interest that belongs to it, and that it is a part of the Lord's mind in the entire Christian walk, to which He attaches importance in view of our moral condition, and of the state of our spiritual affections individually, as well as those of the assembly.

In the joy of Christian liberty, amid the powerful effects of the presence of the Holy Ghost, of the gifts by which He manifested Himself in the assembly, the Lord's death, His broken body, was brought to mind, and, as it were, made present to faith as the basis and foundation of everything. This act of love, this simple and solemn deed, weak and empty in appearance, preserved all its importance. The Lord's body had been offered for us! to which the Holy Ghost Himself was to bear witness, and which was to maintain all its importance in the Christian's heart, and to be the foundation and centre of the edifice of the assembly. Whatever might be the power that shone forth in the assembly, the

heart was brought back to this. The body of the Lord Himself had been offered (I do not say "broken," the best MSS. omitting it; but it is the memorial of Christ slain, and His precious blood poured out), the lips of Jesus had claimed our remembrance.

This moral equilibrium is very important to saints. Power and the exercise of gifts do not necessarily act upon the conscience and the heart of those to whom they are committed, nor of those always who enjoy their display. And, although God is present (and when we are in a good state that is felt), still it is a man who speaks and who acts upon others; he is prominent. In the Lord's Supper the heart is brought back to a point in which it is entirely dependent, in which man is *nothing*, in which Christ and His love are everything, in which the heart is exercised, and the conscience remembers that it has needed cleansing, and that it has been cleansed by the work of Christ, that we depend absolutely on this grace. The affections also are in the fullest exercise.

It is important to remember this. The consequences that followed forgetfulness of the import of this ordinance confirmed its importance and the Lord's earnest desire that they should take heed to it. The apostle is going to speak of the power of the Holy Ghost manifested in His gifts, and of the regulations

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necessary to maintain order and provide for edification where they were exercised in the assembly; but, before doing so, he places the Lord's Supper as the moral centre, the object of the assembly. Let us remark some of the thoughts of the Spirit in connection with this ordinance.

He links the affections with it in the strongest way. It was the same night on which Jesus was betrayed that He left this memorial of His sufferings and of His love. As the paschal lamb brought to mind the deliverance which the sacrifice offered in Egypt had procured for Israel, thus the Lord's Supper called to mind the sacrifice of Christ. He is in the glory, the Spirit is given; but they were to remember Him. His offered body was the object before their hearts in this memorial. Take notice of this word "Remember." It is not a Christ as He now exists, it is not the realization of what *He is*: that is not a remembrance. His body is now glorified. It is a remembrance of what He was on the Cross. It is a body slain, and blood shed; not a glorified body. It is remembered, though by those who are now united to Him in the glory into which He is entered. As risen and associated with Him in glory they look back to that blessed work of love, and His love in it which gave them a place there. They drink also of the cup in remembrance of

Him. In a word, it is Christ looked at as dead: there is not such a Christ now.

It is the remembrance of Christ Himself. It is that which attaches to Himself; it is not only the value of His sacrifice, but attachment to Himself, the remembrance of Himself. The apostle then shows us, if it is a dead Christ, who it is that died. Impossible to find two words, the bringing together of which has so important a meaning, The DEATH of the LORD. How many things are comprised in that He who is called the Lord had died! What love! What purposes! What efficacy! What results! The Lord Himself gave Himself up for us. We celebrate His death.

At the same time it is the end of God's relations with the world on the ground of man's responsibility, except the judgment. This death has broken every link, has proved the impossibility of any. We show forth this death until the rejected Lord shall return to establish new bonds of association by receiving us to Himself to have part in them. It is this which we proclaim in the ordinance when we keep it. Besides this, it is in itself a declaration that the blood on which the new Covenant is founded has been already shed; it was established in this blood.

The Son of Man in Heaven.

READ ACTS I.—IX.

THE second of St. Luke's letters to his friend Theophilus does not stiffly and formally take up the inspired narrative where the first of them had left it. There is rather an easy and graceful intertwining or intervolving of the two; the second going back a little into the scenes and the seasons which closed the first, giving them the same general character with a few faint distinguishing features. But each of these letters, "the Gospel by Luke," and "the Acts of the Apostles," has of course, as I need not say, its own proper subject.

In the early chapters of the second of them, that is, of "the Acts of the Apostles," and to which I am now, for a little, addressing myself, we get an account of Jesus as *Man glorified in the heavens*; as in the early chapters of the first of them we got an account of *God manifest in flesh on the earth*. I mean, this is characteristic, severally, of each of them. The Person is, surely, one and the same in both; the God-Man.

We learn many things connected with the Son of Man in heaven, from the Evangelists, where that mystery is anticipated now and again. The Lord Himself tells us that He is to be seen there by faith all through this present age, seated at the right hand of power;

and that in due time He will come forth from thence in the clouds of heaven (Matt. xxvi. 64). He tells us also, that, when He has come forth, He will sit on the throne of His glory (Matt. xxv. 31). These are but mere samples of the way in which this great mystery was thus anticipated. But the Person seen in the Evangelists is God manifested in the flesh, and as such in action on the earth. In these chapters in the Acts, which succeeds the Evangelists, it is, on the other hand, Man glorified in heaven, and acting there.

In chapter i., Jesus of Nazareth, who was God manifest in flesh here, is seen ascending into the heavens.

In chapter ii., the promised Spirit is given, and Peter begins his preaching by taking this gift, according to the prophecy of Joel, as his text. And after reciting it, he says, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, *a Man* approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know : Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." And he then shows, from the sixteenth and one hundred and tenth Psalms, that this Man, thus approved of God on earth, was now raised from the dead, and glorified at the right hand of God in heaven.

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Thus the mystery is established, the mystery of the Son of Man, Jesus of Nazareth, exalted in the heavens. Then, as the Evangelists had already looked at Jesus as He walked, and ministered, and toiled, and suffered here on earth, so now in his preaching in this and in the following chapters, Peter gives us some of the ways and virtues of "this same Jesus" now ascended into heaven.

Thus, in this same chapter ii., with Joel still as his text, he tells us that He is the GOD mentioned in that prophecy, who has now sent down the Spirit. According to Joel, therefore, it is the God of Israel who does this great Pentecostal wonder; according to Peter, it is the Man now in heaven that does it.

This is surely a magnificent way in which to begin the story of the virtues and glories of Jesus of Nazareth, now glorified on high at God's right hand; where also Peter declares Him to be seated till the day come for making His foes His footstool, as the "My Lord," of the hundred and tenth Psalm. And then, on the authority of these things, he calls the whole house of Israel to own the once crucified Man to be "both Lord and Christ." And when a number of his hearers are aroused by this preaching, he publishes to them the virtue of "the Name" of this glorified One, that it can secure eternal life and the gift of the Spirit to all sinners who receive it.

Then, in chapter iii., this same apostle tells us several other great things of Jesus in the heavens: that it was His name, through faith in it, that had just healed the lame beggar at the gate of the temple; that He was the Prophet promised by Moses in Deuteronomy xviii.; that the heavens are now retaining Him, but that He is again to leave them in due season, and to bring "times of refreshing and the restitution of all things" with Him back to the earth.

Then, in chapter iv., he preaches through "this same Jesus" "the resurrection from the dead"; and further proclaims that He was "the Head of the corner," according to Psalm cxviii., and the only One set of God for salvation in this guilty world. And, toward the close of this chapter, he and his fellow-saints at Jerusalem lay the name of "this same Jesus" before the Lord God, the Maker of the heaven and the earth, as all their confidence and title to blessing.

Then, in chapter v., Peter and the other apostles testify, in the face of the Jewish council, that this same blessed One, whom they had slain and hanged on a tree, God had exalted with His right hand to be both a Prince and a Saviour, everything indeed to Israel, whether for blessing or government.

After these manners, in the course of this preaching, we get a large and varied testi-

mony to the Man in heaven. Well may it follow the ineffably weighty and blessed testimony of the Evangelists to "the Son of the Father," "God manifest in flesh," on earth. But here, with this fifth chapter, the apostolic *testimony* under the given Spirit ends. We pass from it to a *vision*. For, after this hearing about the glorified Man, we are given, for a little moment, a *sight* of Him. Peter had been preaching Him: Stephen is now to see Him. They are alike witnesses, though in different ways, to the same great mystery, that the Son of Man was in heaven at the right hand of God. Stephen is borne by wicked men outside the city to be stoned, while his face is shining like that of an angel; and his eye is opened, and he looks up to and within an opened heavens, and there sees the glory of God, and Jesus, "the Son of Man," standing at the right hand of God.

Thus is the Man in heaven testified to by the eye of Stephen as He had been by the lips of Peter. The Spirit fills the one with an inspired tale about Him, and God opens the eye of the other with a glorious sight of Him. But the object is the same, the glorified Man, the Son of Man in heaven, Jesus of Nazareth at the right hand of the Majesty on high; the One who, having been "God manifest in the flesh" *here*, humbled, serving, crucified, buried, and raised again, was now in His

Manhood exalted to the highest place of honour *there*.

One thing, however, still remains in the revelation of this great mystery. In chapter ix., this glorified Man comes down from heaven, and shows Himself, for a little moment, here on earth. In holy, peaceful glory, and in the attitude of one that was receiving him to Himself with a blissful and perfect welcome, He had just been seen, as in His due place in heaven, by *His suffering saint*. But now, in terrible majesty, in the burning brightness of judicial glory, He is seen by *the persecutor of His saint*, here on earth. He thus appears as One ready and all-powerful to avenge the blood of His slaughtered flock. Mercy indeed shall rejoice over judgment in the present case, and the persecutor shall become a *witness* and an *apostle*; but the vision tells us that the Man in heaven waits there, as in other characters, so in this, the Avenger, in due time, of the wrongs done in the earth.

This is so; and this is here pledged and foreshadowed. For we know that Jesus has ascended in various characters. He has ascended as to His native place, the glory He had with the Father before the world was. He has ascended to prepare mansions in the Father's house for the elect. He has ascended as their Forerunner. He has ascended to sit in the God-pitched Tabernacle as our High

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Priest. He has ascended as the Author and Finisher of faith, and as the Purger of sins. But He has ascended also to take His place as "*Adonai*" at the right hand of Jehovah, till He makes His foes His footstool (Ps.cx.1). And this last character He must return to earth to fulfil, as now He comes down to the road which lay between Jerusalem and Damascus, to give, as it were, a sample of this, and to put the sentence of death in this persecuting Saul of Tarsus.

Psalm ii. shows us the King set upon the holy hill of Zion, the Son of God, begotten in time (a truth apart from His relationship as Son, one with the Father, before the world was; a doctrine taught in John i., Heb. i., Col. i., and elsewhere), owned as such by the Lord, and the kings of the earth charged to submit to Him. Psalm viii. speaks of Him as the Son of Man, to whom ALL THINGS are subjected, according to the eternal purpose of God. In Psalm cx., He who had been despised and rejected, being seated at the right hand of God, is to rule in the midst of His enemies. Compare Psalm xxiv. and cii. In the former, He is acknowledged as the Lord of Hosts, the King of glory, after having conquered His enemies; in the latter as the Creator Himself.

The First and Second Comings of Christ.

READ HEBREWS IX.

THE way in which the Spirit of God, in the ninth and tenth of Hebrews, has brought out the effect of the atoning work of Christ, is very striking; and it refers the heart at the end to His coming *again* as that which makes perfect His *first* coming, in contrast with the natural condition of man, which closes in death and judgment.

I press first the purging of the conscience ONCE FOR ALL. From the moment this is known, the question of imputation of sin can never rise again. That is what is contrasted with the Jewish sacrifices, which were often offered. Another contrast, too, under the Jewish system, was that the veil was there: they could not go to God. He gave them promises, laws, ordinances, but they could not go direct to God. When Christ died, the veil was rent from top to bottom; this signifying that the way into the Holiest was made manifest. In chapter x. He applies it: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (x. 19, 20). The blow that rent the veil, and gave us possession of the Holiest, took away the sins which would have prevented our going in there.

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“Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared” (ix. 26). That was the end of the world morally. After that it was what Christ did for the LOST. If that one sacrifice did not complete the whole work of putting away sin, “then must He often have suffered.” You must have blood shed again if it is not all done already, and *that cannot be*. He has made “*eternal* redemption,” an “*eternal* inheritance”; and He has sat down, having finished His work, put away the sins of those who had believed on Him from all time, and of those who should believe in Him thereafter.

The intercession of Christ is founded on redemption. By the atoning work of Christ I have a place in the Holiest; but how can I reconcile that with the experiences of a poor failing creature down here? There the Intercessor comes in (Heb. vii. 25). Christ is always before God as a propitiation. He is there, and He is our righteousness.

Repentance is the *effect* of His advocacy (1 John ii. 1, 2). He says to Simon, “Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but *I have prayed* for thee, that thy *faith* fail not” (Luke xxii. 31, 32).

He prayed for him before the sin was committed. Then He looked on Peter at the right moment, and Peter repented, and went out, and wept bitterly. But He had prayed for him before he repented.

Intercession is founded on the double truth that He is my righteousness, and that He is ever there as my propitiation for every sin I could commit. I hate myself doubly for the sin, because I have sinned against grace as well as holiness. Peter wept bitterly, but our faith is not to fail. Christ did not pray that Peter might not be sifted, but that his faith might not fail. He needed the sifting, and it was good for him, but how it proves the value of the intercession !

I have (1) the good will of God to do it for me, (2) a divine work done; and then (3) the testimony of the Holy Ghost to it (x. 7-17). So it is all a divine thing throughout. Upon that the Holy Ghost is given; after we believe, we are sealed with the Spirit. It is a believer that is sealed. There is a three-fold character of the Holy Ghost: (1) that He has sealed them; (2) that the Holy Ghost is sent forth in their hearts; and (3) that He is the earnest of the glory (Eph. i. 13, 14; Gal. iv. 6).

The one only true hope of the saint of God is the coming of the Lord. Death is not our *hope*, though to go and be with the Lord is gain to us; but the proper hope is that He will come and receive us to Himself. There is a bright and blessed truth given to us, that death is gain. To the thief on the cross the Lord said, "This day shalt thou be *with Me* in paradise." "To depart and be with Christ is

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far better," says the apostle Paul. So Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And again, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." All those passages show it is blessed to drop this tabernacle, and know we are to be with Him; but it is not the proper hope of the Church. We look for "the Bright and Morning Star."

People take "the Sun of Righteousness" to mean "the gospel." It is judgment when "the Sun of Righteousness" arises, and the wicked are like ashes. "The Morning Star" is the heavenly hope of Christ before the day of glory comes. Prophecy tells me of "the Sun of Righteousness," but the saints who are waiting for Christ watch in the night, and they see the Morning Star.

You get the whole circuit of the Church's place in that one verse in Rev. xxii. 17, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The saints say to the Bridegroom, Come; press on the saints here to join in saying, Come; then they turn to those who are athirst, and say, We have got the water of life, come, and drink; and then to the world at large, to come and take of the water of life freely. This is the place of every Christian down here now.

There are two epistles only in which the

coming of the Lord is not spoken of. In GALATIANS, where they were getting off the right ground, and where he is writing to them in an agony, crying, "Who has bewitched you?" He does not even salute them; his whole soul is absorbed with their danger. In EPHESIANS you get the fullest blessings of the Church; but why you do not get the coming of the Lord in EPHESIANS is that they are looked at as with Christ already in heavenly places, and so he has no need to write to them of His coming. I might say that the one epistle is too high and the other too low to bring it in.

Everywhere else in the epistles it is mixed with every thought and feeling of the Christian; and with the giving up of this hope began the decay of the Church. It is said, How is it good men, years ago, were not waiting for Christ? Why, the wise virgins as well as the foolish all slumbered and slept. The difference was, the wise had oil in their vessels; they had grace, and the others had not; but they all slumbered and slept.

You get for service the inheritance, and for watching, the heavenly blessedness that Christ gives. When He went away He comforted them by telling them He would come again, and take them to Himself. When, in Acts i., the angels see them gazing up into heaven, they say, He shall come in like manner as ye

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have seen Him go into heaven. And this is no spiritual coming (see Acts iii. 19, 20). Spiritually He was with them, therefore it could be no spiritual coming that is meant here. The Holy Ghost being come, and speaking with divine power, says Jesus shall come. Therefore it is nonsense to say it means the Holy Ghost coming down (see Romans xi. 26; 1 Cor. xv. 23).

The coming of the Lord is intimately connected with the first resurrection of the saints. The value of resurrection in 1 Cor. xv. 21 is that it is the resurrection *from among* the dead. If all are raised together, what is the meaning of the resurrection of the *just*? And what is the meaning of "If so be that I may attain unto the resurrection from among the dead"? If all were to be raised together, what is there to attain unto? Paul coins a Greek word there to explain his meaning: *exanastasin*. There is not a trace of such a thing as a general resurrection in the Scriptures; but a resurrection of the saints, of which Christ is the first fruits, is everywhere clearly preached. "Recompensed at the resurrection of the just": what else can that mean? When Christ *appears* we shall appear with Him, because we shall have gone up to be with Him before He appears at all.

The Lord's coming again is mentioned in every chapter of 1 Thessalonians. They were

converted to wait for God's Son from heaven (i. 10). Have you been converted to wait for God's Son from heaven? Giving up idols, the idols of the heart, and just waiting. In ii. 19 they are to be Paul's hope, and joy, and crown, at the Lord's coming. Then, if it were a question of holiness, that too is referred to His coming (iii. 13). Then if death happened among them, it was just the same (iv. 13). In v. 23 he expresses the desire that they may be preserved wholly blameless till Jesus comes.

If I were to say of a saint in this town who had died in Christ, "Do not sorrow as one without hope; God will bring him with Him when He comes," they would think me mad, perhaps would turn me out of the house; and yet it is what the Holy Ghost gave as a comfort. How different are the thoughts of the Church now from then! That was given for a comfort, and if I used it to almost any now, they would call me a spiritualist. The dead saints will rise, the living be changed, and all go up in the same cloud of glory.

In 2 Thessalonians the coming of the Lord is referred to judgment on sinners; but whether it is holiness, or conversion, or the joy of the saints, or a person's dying, in everything, every thought and feeling, this coming of the Lord was mixed up.

Wherever the responsibility of a Christian is in question you get the *appearing* of the

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Lord Jesus Christ spoken of. Wherever you get positive blessing, it is to be "caught up" to be with Himself (1 Tim. vi. 13, 14; Titus ii. 12). In this latter scripture the apostle takes Christianity in these three elements: (1) it *has* appeared; and (2) it teaches us to walk soberly, self-restrained, righteously towards men; (3) with piety towards *God* (Hebrews ix., James v. 7, and 1 John iii. 1). When He appears we shall be like Him. I am looking to be like Christ glorified. When He appears we shall be like Him, never before; and then the practical effect on me here is: I am going to be like Him in glory, let me be as much like Him as possible down here; and to this end I purify myself. "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John iii. 3).

In 1 Peter i. 10-14 we get three steps. First, the prophets prophesying of the glory to come; secondly, the Holy Ghost sent down giving the report; and then, thirdly, the things they prophesy of brought to us at the appearing of Christ. Jude's epistle, again, is full of the coming. All the epistles and gospels are full of it, excepting the two epistles I have mentioned.

I get these four things in Scripture: (1) I get revealed that what made the Church go wrong was the thought that "My Lord delayeth His coming"; (2) that He has told us we

are to be "like men that wait for their Lord"; (3) that "while the Bridegroom tarried, they *all* slumbered and slept." They went out to meet the Bridegroom, but they turned in somewhere, and went comfortably to sleep. Any way, they had to be called out again; and then they are roused by the midnight cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh," rousing the Church at the midnight time, the time when He was least expected.

The Cross and the Conscience.

THE deepest sense of sin is by no means always found where there has been the greatest amount of transgression. The transition from a state almost of remorse on account of transgression, to peace with God through faith in Christ, may well lead the soul to put its "Amen" to the apostolic declaration, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15).

Now, when such are led on in exercise of conscience before God, to know sin as a principle, they find that the outward conduct has but too faithfully represented the inward principle. They find, too, the need of not trusting in the outward reformation; and that the heart, from whence all evil proceeds, has to be diligently watched.

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But when persons who have been happily kept free from gross vice, gentle, kind, and amiable, are awakened by the Spirit of God to a sense of sin, the judgment they form of sin is not so much by its injuriousness to themselves and others (which may, even apart from the quickening power of the Spirit of God, affect the conscience), but they measure sin by its contrariety to God; and instead of being able to rest complacently in the blamelessness or innocence of their lives, or in the praise bestowed on them by others, their very lives appear to them as one act of hypocrisy, the motives of action and conduct being now judged in the light of God's presence. And the result often is such self-loathing as betokens deep and steadfast conviction of sin, and needs the fullest application of all that Christ is to the conscience.

There may be a measure of loathing oneself on account of transgression committed, even from a generous impulse of nature; but to loathe self because we have discovered what it is before God, marks the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, and will be found a deepening work as we go on in the Christian life.

"Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Ps. xxxii. 2). How needed is this clause for the peace of an awakened soul! There is the consciousness of iniquity; and the announcement is, that

although the Lord knows iniquity to be there, He does not impute it. And wherefore? Surely, because God hath imputed it to Jesus. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. liii. 6). He has seen it there, and judged it there. The chastisement of our peace was upon Jesus, and by His stripes we are healed.

It is the greater wonder that God should have imputed iniquity where He only saw righteousness, than that He should not impute iniquity where He sees it to be. And I repeat again, that nothing short of the truth of the actual substitution of Christ for the sinner gives full relief to an awakened conscience.

The cross of Christ is to us the marked expression of the love of God towards sinners. "God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 8-10).

Further, the cross is the declaration to us of the righteousness of God. "Whom God hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness" (Rom. iii. 25).

Again, it shows the infinite hatefulness of sin in the judgment of God. The cup could

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not pass away from Jesus. He bowed His head, and drank it. And God hid His face from Him, and made Him to know on the cross, in bitterest experience, what sin was. God "made Him to be sin for us" (2 Cor. v. 21).

The cross is, on the one hand, the way for God to come nigh to man as a sinner without destroying him by His presence: "And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself"; and the cross is, on the other hand, the way for man as a sinner to come near to God: "Ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Col. i. 20, 21).

All these several aspects of the cross, deeply important and interesting as they are, would fail of giving settled peace to the soul if the truth of the actual substitution of Christ for the sinner were kept out of sight. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). Here we find such solid ground on which to rest our souls. The wonder of the Holy One of God being made sin on the cross, is far greater than the wonder that any measure of guilt should be answered by it to God.

But there is more than this. The idea of simple pardon is, at the best, negative; blessed indeed, even in that view, that iniquity, although committed, is not imputed. Speaking

humanly, we have the idea of a free pardon emanating from the grace of the Sovereign; we have the idea also of an amnesty; but we cannot get the idea of justification. It is the idea which God alone can present, because He alone can justify the ungodly; and this is the new and blessed idea presented in Romans iii., iv. David describeth the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, saying, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Rom. iv. 7, 8).

In these words we have not the actual statement of the imputation of righteousness. It could not be clearly and fully announced (although it was the only principle on which God had acted from the beginning), because the great groundwork, the cross, was not an accomplished fact. However, it may have been anticipated by faith; still there was all the difference as to perception, between a promise *made*, and a promise *accomplished*.

Every thing was suspended on the death and resurrection of Christ. "We," says the apostle, speaking to the natural heirs of promise and natural children of the kingdom, "declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same to us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again" (Acts xiii. 32, 33).

The Christian's Priestly Position.

READ LEVITICUS XXI., XXII.

THE sons of Aaron were, in virtue of their birth, priests to God. They all stood in this relationship, one as well as another. It was not a matter of attainment, a question of progress, something which one had, and another had not. All the sons of Aaron were priests. They were born into a priestly place.

Their capacity to understand and enjoy their position and its attendant privileges was obviously a different thing altogether. One might be a babe, and another might have reached the point of mature and vigorous manhood. The former would of necessity be unable to eat of the priestly food, being a babe for whom "milk," and not "strong meat," was adapted; but he was as truly a member of the priestly house as the man who could tread, with firm step, the courts of the Lord's house, and feed upon "the wave breast" and "heave shoulder" of the sacrifice.

This distinction is easily understood in the case of the sons of Aaron, and hence it will serve to illustrate, in a very simple manner, the truth as to the members of the true priestly house over which our Great High Priest presides, and to which all true believers belong (Heb. iii. 6).

The capacity to enjoy the privileges and to discharge the functions of a position must not

be confounded with the position itself. They must ever be kept distinct. Relationship is one thing; capacity is quite another.

Every child of God is a priest. He is enrolled as a member of Christ's priestly house. He may be very ignorant; but his position as a priest is not founded upon KNOWLEDGE, but upon LIFE. His experience may be very shallow; but his place as a priest does not depend upon experience, but upon life. His capacity may be very limited; but his relationship as a priest does not rest upon an enlarged capacity, but upon life. He was BORN into the position and relationship of a priest. He did not work himself thereinto. It was not by any efforts of his own that he became a priest. He became a priest by BIRTH. The spiritual priesthood, together with all the spiritual functions attaching thereto, is the necessary appendage to spiritual birth.

Furthermore, in looking at the family of Aaron, we see that nothing could break the relationship between him and his sons. There were many things which would interfere with the full enjoyment of the privileges attaching to the relationship. A son of Aaron might "defile himself by the dead." He might defile himself by forming an unholy alliance. He might have some bodily "blemish." He might be "blind or lame." He might be "a dwarf." Any of these things would have interfered

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very materially with his enjoyment of the privileges, and his discharge of the functions pertaining to his relationship, as we read, "No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire : he hath a blemish : he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God. He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy and the holy ; only he shall not go in unto the vail, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish ; that he profane not my sanctuaries : for I the Lord do sanctify them" (Lev. xxi. 21-23).

But none of these things could possibly touch the fact of a relationship founded upon the established principles of human nature. Though a son of Aaron were a dwarf, that dwarf was a son of Aaron. True, he was, as a dwarf, shorn of many precious privileges and lofty dignities pertaining to the priesthood ; but he was a son of Aaron all the while. He could neither enjoy the same measure or character of communion, nor yet discharge the same elevated functions of priestly service, as one who had reached to manhood's appointed stature ; but he was a member of the priestly house, and, as such, permitted to "eat the bread of his God." The relationship was genuine, though the development was so defective.

The spiritual application of all this is as

simple as it is practical. To be a child of God is one thing; to be in the enjoyment of priestly communion and priestly worship is quite another. The latter is, alas! interfered with by many things. Circumstances and associations are allowed to act upon us by their defiling influence. We are not to suppose that all Christians enjoy the same elevation of walk, the same intimacy of fellowship, the same felt nearness to Christ. Alas! alas! they do not. Many of us have to mourn over our spiritual defects. There is lameness of walk, defective vision, stunted growth; or we allow ourselves to be defiled by contact with evil, and to be weakened and hindered by unhallowed associations. In a word, as the sons of Aaron, though being priests by birth, were nevertheless deprived of many privileges through ceremonial defilement and physical defects; so we, though being priests to God by spiritual birth, are deprived of many of the high and holy privileges of our position by moral defilement and spiritual defects. We are shorn of many of our dignities through defective spiritual development. We lack singleness of eye, spiritual vigour, wholehearted devotedness. Saved we are, through the free grace of God, on the ground of Christ's perfect sacrifice. "We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"; but, then, salvation is one thing; communion is

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quite another. Sonship is one thing; obedience is quite another.

These things should be carefully distinguished. The chapters before us illustrate the distinction with great force and clearness. If one of the sons of Aaron happened to be "broken-footed, or broken-handed," was he deprived of his sonship? Assuredly not. Was he deprived of his priestly position? By no means. It was distinctly declared, "He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy and of the holy."

What, then, did he lose by his physical blemish? He was forbidden to tread some of the higher walks of priestly service and worship. "Only he shall not go in unto the vail, nor come nigh unto the altar." These were very serious privations; and though it may be objected that a man could not help many of these physical defects, that did not alter the matter. Jehovah could not have a blemished priest at His altar, or a blemished sacrifice thereon. Both the priest and the sacrifice should be perfect. "No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire" (Lev. xxi. 22). "But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer; for it shall not be acceptable for you" (Lev. xxii. 20).

Now, we have both the perfect Priest and

the perfect Sacrifice in the Person of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He, having "offered Himself without spot to God," passed into the heavens as our great High Priest, where He ever liveth to make intercession for us. The Epistle to the Hebrews dwells elaborately upon these two points. It throws into vivid contrast the sacrifice and priesthood of the Mosaic system and the *Sacrifice and Priesthood of Christ*. In Him we have divine perfectness, whether as the Victim or as the Priest. We have all that God could require, and all that man could need. His precious blood has put away all our sins; and His all-prevailing intercession ever maintains us in all the perfectness of the place into which His blood has introduced us. We are "complete in Him" (Col. ii. 10); and yet, so feeble and so faltering are we in ourselves; so full of failure and infirmity; so prone to err and stumble in our onward way, that we could not stand for a moment, were it not that "He ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. vii. 15).

Those who have anything like correct apprehensions of the grand foundation-truths of Christianity, and any measure of experience in the Christian life, will be able to understand how it is that, though "complete in Him who is the Head of all principality and power," they nevertheless need, while down here amid

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the infirmities, conflicts, and buffetings of earth, the powerful advocacy of their adorable and divine High Priest. The believer is "washed," "sanctified," and "justified" (1 Cor. vi. 11). He is "accepted in the beloved" (Eph. i. 6). He can never come into judgment as regards his person (John v. 24). Death and judgment are behind him, because he is united to Christ, who has passed through them both on his behalf and in his stead.

All these things are divinely true of the very weakest, most unlettered and inexperienced member of the family of God; but yet, inasmuch as he carries about with him a nature so incorrigibly bad, and so irremediably ruined, that no discipline can correct it, and no medicine cure it; inasmuch as he is the tenant of a body of sin and death; as he is surrounded on all sides by hostile influences; as he is called to cope perpetually with the combined forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil; he could never keep his ground, much less make progress, were he not upheld by the all-prevailing intercession of his great High Priest, who bears the names of His people upon His breast and upon His shoulders.

Some have found great difficulty in reconciling the idea of the believer's perfect standing in Christ with the need of priesthood. "If," it is argued, "he is perfect, what need has he of a priest?"

The two things are as distinctly taught in the Word as they are compatible one with another, and understood in the experience of every rightly instructed Christian. It is of the very last importance to apprehend, with clearness and accuracy, the perfect harmony between these two points. The believer is perfect in Christ; but in himself he is a poor, feeble creature, ever liable to fall. Hence the unspeakable blessedness of having One who can manage all his affairs for him, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; One who upholds him continually by the right hand of His righteousness; One who will never let him go; One who is able to save to the uttermost; One who is "the Same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever"; One who will bear him triumphantly through all the difficulties and dangers which surround him, and finally "present him faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). Blessed for ever be the grace that has made such ample provision for all our need in the blood of a spotless Victim and the intercession of a divine High Priest!

Dear Christian reader, let it be our care so to walk, so to "keep ourselves unspotted from the world," so to stand apart from all unhal-
lowed associations, that we may enjoy the highest privileges, and discharge the most elevated functions, of our position as members of

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the priestly house of which Christ is the Head. We have "boldness to enter into the holiest, through the blood of Jesus"; "we have a High Priest over the house of God" (Heb. x. 19, 21). Nothing can ever rob us of these privileges. But, then, our communion may be marred; our worship may be hindered; our holy functions may remain undischarged. Those ceremonial matters against which the sons of Aaron were warned, in the chapters before us, have their antitypes in the Christian economy.

Had they to be warned against unholy contact? So have we.

Had they to be warned against unholy alliance? So have we.

Had they to be warned against all manner of ceremonial uncleanness? So have we to be warned against "all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (1 Cor. vii.).

Were they shorn of many of their loftiest priestly privileges by bodily blemish and imperfect natural growth? So are we, by moral blemish and imperfect spiritual growth.

Will anyone venture to call in question the practical importance of such principles as these? Is it not obvious that the more highly we estimate the blessings which attach to that priestly house of which we have been constituted members, in virtue of our spiritual birth, the more carefully shall we guard against

everything which might tend in any wise to rob us of their enjoyment? Undoubtedly. And this it is which renders the close study of these chapters so pre-eminently practical. May we feel its power, through the application of God the Holy Ghost! Then shall we *enjoy* our priestly place, then shall we faithfully discharge our priestly functions. We shall be able "to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God" (Rom. xii. 1). We shall be able to "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Heb. xiii. 15). We shall be able, as members of the "spiritual house" and the "holy priesthood," to "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. ii. 5). We shall be able, in some small degree, to anticipate that blissful time when, from a redeemed creation, the hallelujahs of intelligent and fervent praise shall ascend to the throne of God and the Lamb throughout the everlasting ages.

In Christ I get, the full and blessed revelation of all my heart can live in and by; all the affections of the heart are drawn out. If a man has a strong imagination he goes to the poetry of ritualism; if he has a hard head he goes to the reasonings of rationalism. All that is "not after Christ" (Col. ii. 8).

The Christian in View of the Glory to Come.

THE apostle Peter, under the Holy Ghost, anticipates in his Second Epistle the moral corruption which was to overspread Christendom in the latter days. Striking language and figures are largely employed to set forth this awful anticipation or prophecy; and surely our own observation may well and fully vindicate the Spirit's forebodings. For what we know of such corruptions may lead us to say that language or figures borrowed from Balaam, or from Sodom, or from the fallen angels, from the dog, or from the sow, are not too awful for the reality.

But *pollution* suggests *judgment*. In a divine sense, in the reckoning of God, in righteousness or holiness, there is a necessary connection between them. Accordingly, this same epistle contemplates judgment as well as moral corruption. This we see in chapter iii., following, as of course it does, chapter ii.

These are the apostle's materials, or principal objects, in these chapters: moral corruption in chapter ii., judgment in chapter iii. Glory, or the dwelling-place of righteousness, is seen only in the distance; and I may therefore speak thus: Moral pollution occupies the foreground; divine judgments the mean or middle place; and glory shines faintly afar off.

But, this being so, the apostle has a practical

purpose. It is this, I doubt not: To set the saints to that cultivation of holiness, that living exercise of their souls in the power of godliness, which will keep them apart from this evil condition which he is foreboding. This is seen in chapter i.

He tells them, at the very beginning, that full provision was made to this end, full provision for this husbandry, to which he is about to set them.

He tells them that divine power had given and secured to them all that pertained to, or was needful for, not only "life," but "*godliness*," and that the promises, "exceeding great and precious" as they were, had a *purifying* virtue in them; that by them the saints would be made partakers of divine nature, as a people who had escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

All this he tells them at the outset, and this at once bespeaks his practical purpose in writing to them, setting forth their provisions in God, and His power and promises, not for salvation or joy (though that be true, as we know) but for "*godliness*." The promises are looked at in their *cleansing* virtue. It is, as I may say, the *washing* of water by the word that Peter here contemplates and speaks of, as Paul does in another place (Eph. v. 26).

And having thus declared our provisions in God and His word for the ends of godliness,

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he puts us upon the husbandry of godliness. He tells us of *fruitfulness*, fruitfulness which will be known in the cultivation and production of those graces and virtues which give real, intrinsic character to the saints; those habits and tempers and properties of the soul, the inner man, which we know with God are "of great price."

And there is a difference, we may observe, between *service* and *fruitfulness*. Service is something more manifested; fruitfulness may be very hidden. The hand, or the foot, or the tongue may serve; and so they should. Tipped with the blood and the oil (Exod. xxix. 20), they are to be instruments in the hand of the divine Master of the house, and to be as servants there; but it is in the deeper places of the affections, the secrets of the soul, that the husbandry of the saints, in the power of the Spirit and the truth, is to be yielding fruit to God. Herbs meet for Him by whom the soul is dressed are to spring and grow there, fragrant and beautiful, such as bespeak the virtue of that rain that has visited it from heaven (Heb. vi. 7).

But still further, in proof of how Peter is keeping practical godliness in view, he not only gives the promises, as we have seen, in connection with that, but other things and objects also. Thus, looking at the distant glory, he sees it under this character, THE DWELLING-

PLACE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (iii. 13). It is not its brightness or its joy he anticipates, but its *purity*. He calls the Mount of Transfiguration the *holy hill* (i. 18). And this being so, the place to which the saints are tending being *holy*, being the dwelling of righteousness, he tells them that if they be, as he exhorts them, cultivating godliness, if their husbandry be spent on virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, charity, and the like, then they will have an *abundant* entrance into that kingdom.

And this is a very simple and sure thought. If the place we are to enter, when the journey is over, be a clean place, a holy hill, a dwelling of righteousness; and if, while we are on the road, we be cherishing the holy, the clean, the righteous mind, surely our entrance will be *the more easy and natural*, and thus abundant. This will be so, because we have been already (in the spirit of our minds, or in character) in the place we are approaching. We know it already, in the great moral sense. We may not have had one ray of its brightness or glory along the road that has led us to it, but we have been exercised in its virtue, we have been in moral consistency with it. We have not had its *scenery* yet, but we have already breathed its *atmosphere*; and that ensures an easy, a natural, or an abundant entrance.

And I may add this : That as we see, in chap-

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ters ii. and iii., corruption ending in judgment, so in chapter i. we see the path of the saints, of those who walk in the practical power of their holy calling, ending in a happy, "abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom."

Yes; and this moral we may draw from this: How should the path savour of the place it leads to!

Are we on our way to One who was rejected here? How fit that we should not refuse to be rejected with Him.

Are we on our way to join the Conqueror of the world? How fit that we should cherish that faith that overcometh the world.

Are we soon to see Him who loved us so as to die for us? How right that we should cultivate love one to another.

And, according to the suggestions of this epistle, are we tending to the dwelling of righteousness? How does it become us to grow in grace, and to be adding to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and the like!

Thus and thus we may speak to ourselves; but if one may speak for others, we have to say, "My leanness! my leanness!"

The Christian's Joy in Heaven.

READ LUKE IX. 28-36.

LET us look a little at this scripture, as showing what our joy in the glory will consist of. We have the warrant of 2 Peter i. 16 for saying that the scene represents to us "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." And this is what we wait for. Our souls are not in a healthy state unless we are "waiting for God's Son from heaven" (1 Thess. i. 10). The Church is not regulated in its hopes by the Word and Spirit of God, unless it is looking for Him as Saviour from heaven (Phil. iii. 20). And this passage, as disclosing to us specially what will be our portion when He comes, is important to us in this respect.

There are many other things in the passage, such as the mutual relations of the earthly and the heavenly people in the kingdom. These it may be very instructive to consider; but this is not our present purpose, which is to consider what light is here afforded on the nature of that joy which we shall inherit at and from the coming of the Lord. Other scriptures, such as the promises to those who overcome in Revelation ii., iii., and the description of the heavenly city in Revelation xxi., xxii., give us instructions on the same subject; but let us now particularly look at the scene on "the holy mount."

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“ And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering.” It was when Jesus was in the acknowledgment of dependence, “ as He prayed,” that this change took place. This, then, is the first thing we have here : a change such as will pass upon the living saints when Jesus comes (1 Cor. xv. 51).

“ And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias.” They were “ with Him.” And this will be our joy ; we shall be *with* Jesus. In 1 Thessalonians iv., after stating the order in which the resurrection of the sleeping, and the change of the living, saints will take place, and that we shall both be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, all that the apostle says as to what shall ensue is, “ and so shall we ever be with the Lord ” (vv. 16, 17).

But in this passage there is not only the being with Christ ; there is also familiar intercourse with Him. “ There talked with Him two men.” It is not that *He* talked with *them*, though this was no doubt true ; but this might have been, and they be at a distance. But when we read that they “ talked with *Him*,” we get the idea of the most free and familiar intercourse. Peter and the others knew what

it was to have such intercourse with Jesus in humiliation; and what joy must it have been to have the proof that such intercourse with Him would be enjoyed in glory!

And then it is said by Luke that they "appeared in glory." But this is secondary to what we have been considering. We are told that they were with Him, and then that they appeared in glory. They share in the same glory as that in which He was manifested. And so as to us. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 4). "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me" (John xvii. 22, 23).

But there is another thing still. We are not only told that they were "with Him," that they "talked" with Him, and appeared in glory with Him, but we are also privileged to know the subject of their conversation. They "spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (v. 31). It was the cross which was the theme of their conversation in the glory, "the sufferings of Christ" which He had to accomplish at Jerusalem. And surely this will be our joy throughout

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eternity, when in glory with Christ, to dwell upon this theme, "His decease" accomplished at Jerusalem.

We next read that "Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep" (v. 32). It shows us what the flesh is in the presence of the glory of God. Peter made a great mistake; but I pass on.

"While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them; and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son; hear Him" (vv. 33, 34). Peter tells us that this voice "came from the excellent glory"! "For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (2 Peter i. 17).

Now, Peter and the others had "entered into the cloud"; and thus we get the wonderful fact that in the glory, from which the voice comes, saints are privileged to stand; and there, in that glory, share the delight of the Father in His beloved Son. Not only are we called to the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ, we are called to have fellowship with the Father (1 John i. 3). We are admitted of God the Father to partake of His satisfaction in His beloved Son.

"And when the voice was past, Jesus was

found alone" (v. 36). The vision was all gone: the cloud, the voice, the glory, Moses and Elias; but JESUS was left, and they were left to go on their way with Jesus, knowing Him now in the light of those scenes of glory which they had beheld.

And this is the use to us of those vivid apprehensions of spiritual things which we may sometimes realize. It is not that we can be always enjoying them, and nothing else. But when for the season they have passed away, like this vision on "the holy mount," they leave us alone with JESUS, to pursue the path of our pilgrimage with Him in spirit now, and with Him in the light and power of that deepened acquaintance with Him, and fellowship of the Father's joy in Him, that we have got on the mount; and thus to wait for the moment of His return, when all this, and more than our hearts can think of, shall be fulfilled to us for ever.

We have the "unction" of the Holy Ghost to understand all things; the "seal" of the Holy Spirit in order to enjoy communion with God, as knowing that we are His, and are assured of His favour; also the "earnest" of the Holy Spirit in order to rejoice in the expectation of those things that we know.