

# 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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## **The Lord's Restoring Grace, and the Believer's Abiding Responsibility.**

READ JOHN XXI. 1-22.

A CAREFUL study of these verses will enable us to trace in them three distinct kinds of restoration, namely, restoration of conscience, restoration of heart, and restoration of position.

I. The first of these, restoration of conscience, is of all importance. It would be utterly impossible to over-estimate the value of a sound, clear, uncondemning conscience. A Christian cannot get on if there is a single soil on his conscience. He must walk before God with a pure conscience, a conscience without stain or sting. Precious treasure! May my reader ever possess it.

It is very obvious that Peter possessed it in the touching scene "at the sea of Tiberias." And yet he had fallen, shamefully, grievously fallen. He had denied his Lord with an oath; but he was restored. One look from Jesus had broken up the deep fountains of his heart, and drawn forth floods of bitter tears. And yet it was not his tears, but the love that drew

them forth, which formed the ground of his thorough restoration of conscience. It was the changeless and everlasting love of the heart of Jesus; the divine efficacy of the blood of Jesus; and the all-prevailing power of the advocacy of Jesus that imparted to Peter's conscience the boldness and liberty so strikingly and beautifully exhibited on the memorable occasion before us.

The risen Saviour is seen in the closing chapters of John's Gospel, watching over His poor, foolish, feeble, erring disciples, hovering about their path, presenting Himself in various ways before them, taking occasion from their very necessities to make Himself known in perfect grace to their hearts. Was there a tear to be dried, a difficulty to be solved, a fear to be hushed, a bereaved heart to be soothed, an unbelieving mind to be corrected? Jesus was present, in all the fullness and variety of His grace, to meet all these things. So also when, under the guidance of the ever-forward Peter, they had gone forth to spend a night in fruitless toil, Jesus had His eye upon them. He knew all about the darkness and the toil and the empty net, and there He was on the shore, to kindle a fire, and prepare a dinner for them. Yes, the selfsame Jesus who had died on the cross to put away their sins, now stood on the shore to restore them from their wanderings, gather

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them round Himself, and minister to all their need. "Have ye any meat?" developed the fruitlessness of their night's toil. "Come and dine," was the touching expression of the tender, thoughtful, all-providing love of the risen Saviour.

But let us note particularly the evidences of a thoroughly restored conscience, as exhibited by Simon Peter. "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved, saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him (for he was naked), and did cast himself into the sea." He could not wait for the ships, or for his fellow-disciples, so eager was he to get to the feet of his risen Lord. In place of saying to John or to the others, "You know how shamefully I have fallen, and although I have since then seen the Lord, and heard Him speak peace to my soul, yet I think it more becoming in one that has so fallen to keep back, do you therefore go first and meet the blessed One, and I shall follow after," in place of aught in this style, he flings himself boldly into the sea, as much as to say, "I must be the very first to get to my risen Saviour; none has such a claim on Him as poor, stumbling, failing Peter."

Now, here was a perfectly restored conscience, a conscience without a single spot, a conscience basking in the sunlight of un-

changing love. Peter's confidence in Christ was unclouded, and this, we may boldly affirm, was grateful to the heart of Jesus. Love likes to be trusted. Let us ever remember this. No one need imagine that he is honouring Jesus by standing afar off on the plea of unworthiness; and yet it is very hard for one who has fallen or backslidden to recover his confidence in the love of Christ. Such a one can see clearly that a sinner is welcome to Jesus, no matter how great or manifold his sins may have been; but then he thinks the case of a backsliding or stumbling Christian is entirely different. Should these lines be scanned by one who has backslidden or fallen, we would press upon him most earnestly the importance of immediate return to Jesus. "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." What is the response to this pathetic appeal? "Behold, we come *unto thee*; for thou art the Lord our God." "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return *unto Me*" (Jer. iii. 22; iv. 1).

The love of the heart of Jesus knows no change. We change; but He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever"; and He delights to be trusted. The confidence of Peter's heart was a rich feast to the heart of Christ. No doubt it is sad to fall, to err, to backslide; but it is sadder still, when



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we have done so, to distrust the love of Jesus, or His gracious readiness to take us to His bosom again.

Beloved reader, have you fallen? Have you erred? Have you backslidden? Have you lost the sweet sense of divine favour, the happy consciousness of acceptance with God? If so, what are you to do? Simply this, "RETURN." This is God's own special word to the backslider. Return, in self-judgment, and in the fullest confidence in the boundless, changeless love of the heart of Christ. Do not, we beseech you, keep away in the distance of your own unbelief. Do not measure the heart of Jesus by your own thoughts. Let Him tell you what is in His heart toward you. You have sinned, you have failed, you have turned aside, and now, it may be, you are afraid or ashamed to turn your eyes toward the One whom you have grieved and dishonoured. Satan, too, is suggesting the darkest thoughts, for he would fain keep you at a chilling distance from that precious Saviour who loves you with an everlasting love. But you have only to fix your gaze upon the blood, the advocacy, the heart of Jesus, to get a triumphant answer to all the enemy's terrible suggestions, and to all the infidel reasonings of your own heart. Do not, therefore, go on another hour without seeking to get a thorough settlement of the question between

your soul and Christ. Remember, "His is an unchanging love, free and faithful, strong as death." Remember also His own words, "Return, ye backsliding children," "Return unto *Me*." And, finally, remember that Jesus LOVES TO BE TRUSTED.

II. But the heart has to be restored as well as the conscience. Let this not be forgotten. It often happens in the history of souls that, though the conscience may be perfectly clear as to certain *acts* which we have done, yet the *roots* whence those acts have sprung have not been reached. The acts appear on the surface of daily life, but the roots are hidden down deep in the heart, unknown, it may be, to ourselves and others, but thoroughly exposed to the eye of Him with whom we have to do.

Now, these roots must be reached, exposed, and judged, before the heart is in a right condition in the sight of God. Look at Abraham. He started on his course with a certain root in his heart, a root of unbelieving reserve, in reference to Sarah. This thing led him astray when he went down into Egypt, and although his conscience was restored, and he got back to his altar at Bethel, yet the root was not reached for years afterwards, in the affair of Abimelech, king of Gerar.

All this is deeply practical and most solemn. It finds its illustration in Peter as well as in Abraham. But only mark the exquisitely

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delicate way in which our blessed Lord proceeds to reach the roots in the heart of His dear and honoured servant. "So when they had dined." Not till then. There was no allusion to the past, nothing that might cause a chill to the heart, or bring a cloud over the spirit while a restored conscience was feasting in company with a love that knows no change.

This is a fine moral trait. It characterises the dealing of God with all His saints. The conscience is set at rest in the presence of infinite and everlasting love before there is the most distant allusion to the roots of things in the heart. When Simon Peter, in the full confidence of a restored conscience, flung himself at the feet of his risen Lord, he was called to listen to that gracious invitation, "Come and dine." But "when they had dined," Jesus, as it were, takes Peter apart in order to let in upon his soul the light of truth, so that by it he might discern the root whence all his failure had sprung. That root was self-confidence, which had led him to place himself in advance of his fellow-disciples, and say, "Though all should deny Thee, yet will not I."

This root had to be exposed, and, therefore, "When they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" This was a pointed and pungent question, and it went right to the very

bottom of Peter's heart. Three times Peter had denied his Lord, and three times his Lord now challenges the heart of Peter; *for the roots must be reached if any permanent good is to be done.* It will not do merely to have the conscience purged from the effects which have been produced in practical life, there must also be the moral judgment of that which produced them. This is not sufficiently understood and attended to, and hence it is that again and again the roots spring up, and bring forth fruit, and scatter their seed a thousand-fold around us, thus cutting out for us the most bitter and sorrowful work, which might all be avoided if the roots of things were thoroughly judged and kept under.

Christian reader, our object in this paper is entirely practical. Let us therefore exhort one another to judge our roots, whatever they may be.

DO WE KNOW OUR ROOTS? Doubtless, it is hard, very hard, to know them. They are deep and manifold; pride, personal vanity, covetousness, irritability, ambition: these are some of the roots of character, the motive springs of action, over which a rigid censorship must be exercised. We must let nature know that the eye of self-judgment is continually upon it. We have to carry on the struggle without cessation. We may have to lament over occasional failure; but we must

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maintain the struggle, for struggle bespeaks *life*. May God the Holy Ghost strengthen us for the ceaseless conflict.

III. We shall close this paper with a brief reference to restoration as bearing upon the soul's position or path. The conscience being thoroughly purged, and the heart with its varied roots judged, there is moral preparedness for our proper path. The perfect love of Jesus had expelled all fear from Peter's conscience; and His threefold question had opened up the roots in Peter's heart, and now He says to him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow Me.'

Here then we have, in two words, the path of the servant of Christ. "FOLLOW ME.' The Lord had just given Peter the sweetest pledges of His love and confidence. He had, notwithstanding all past failure, entrusted him with the care of all that was dear to His loving heart in this world, even the lambs and sheep of His flock. He had said to him, "If you have affection for Me, feed My lambs, shepherd My sheep," and now, in one brief but

comprehensive utterance, He opens before him his proper path : " FOLLOW ME."

This is enough. It includes all beside. If we want to follow Jesus, we must keep the eye continually upon Him ; we must mark His footprints and tread therein. Yes, mark them, and walk in them ; and when tempted, like Peter, to " turn about " in order to see what this one or that one has to do, or how he does it, we may hear the correcting words, " What is that to thee ? Follow thou Me."

This is to be our one grand and all-absorbing business, come what may. A thousand things may arise to distract and hinder. The devil will tempt us to look hither and thither, to look at this one and that one ; to imagine we could do better here than there, or there than here ; to be occupied with, and imitating the work of some fellow-servant. All this is met by those pointed words, " FOLLOW ME."

There is immense danger in the present day of following in the wake of others, of doing certain things because others do them, or doing things as others do them. All this has to be carefully guarded against. It will be sure to come to nothing. What we really want is a broken will, the true spirit of a servant that waits on the Master to know His mind. Service does not consist in doing this or that, or running hither and thither ; it is simply doing the Master's will, whatever that may be.

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"They also serve who only stand and wait."

It is easier to be busy than to be quiet. When Peter was young he went whither he would; but when he got old, he went whither he would not. What a contrast between the young, restless, ardent, energetic Peter, going whither he would, and the old, matured, subdued, experienced Peter, going whither he would not! What a mercy to have the will broken! To be able to say from the heart, "What Thou wilt; as Thou wilt; where Thou wilt; when Thou wilt." "Not my will, but Thine, O Lord, be done."

"FOLLOW ME." Precious words! May they be engraved on our hearts, beloved reader! Then shall we be steady in our course, and effective in our service. We shall not be distracted or unhinged by the thoughts and opinions of men. It may happen that we shall get very few to understand us or sympathise with us, few to approve or appreciate our work. It matters not. The Master knows all about it. Let us only be sure of what He has told us to do, and do it. If a master tells one of his servants distinctly to go and do a certain thing, or occupy a certain post, it is his business to go and do that thing, or occupy that post, no matter what his fellow-servants may think. They may tell him that he ought to be somewhere else, or to do something else. A proper servant will heed them

not; he knows his master's mind, and has to do his master's work.

Would it were more thus with all the Lord's servants! Would that we all knew more distinctly and carried out more decidedly, the Master's will respecting us! Peter had his path, and John had his. James had his work, and Paul had his.

So it was of old, the Gershonite had his work, and the Merarite had his; and if one had interfered with the other, the work could not have been done. The Tabernacle was carried forward or set up by each man doing his own proper work.

Thus it is in this our day. God has varied workmen in His house and in His vineyard. He has quarrymen, stone-squarers, masons, and decorators. Are all quarrymen? Surely not; but each has his work to do, and the building is carried forward by each one doing his own appointed work. Should a quarryman despise a decorator, or a decorator look down with contempt upon a quarryman? Assuredly not. The Master wants them both, and whenever the one would interfere with the other, as, alas! we so often do, the faithful correcting word falls on the ear, "*What is that to thee?*" FOLLOW THOU ME."

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## Faith discovering the House of God.

**I**N the progress of Scripture we see the blessed God adopting and entering, in a very striking way indeed, the house which the faith and service of His saints raise for Him. It is heartily He does this; or, in His own language, “assuredly with My whole heart and my whole soul” (Jer. xxxii. 41).

We begin to mark this in the wilderness, in the day of Exod. xl. The camp of Israel, in the obedience of faith, had fashioned and furnished the Tabernacle. Moses had sealed their work that all had been done according to God. As we read, “Moses did look upon all the work and, behold, they had done it as the Lord commanded, even so had they done it; and Moses blessed them.” And then the glory filled this curtained house so fully that none other for a time, not even Moses himself, could find place in it.

The same is seen when the house of hewn stone and cedar was raised by Solomon in the times of the kingdom in the day of 2 Chron. v. The glory enters this house of stone, as once it had entered the tent of curtains; was now with Israel *in the land*, as once it had been with Israel *in the wilderness*. There was no expression of reluctance or indisposedness; altogether the contrary. The God of heaven, whose dominions are only measured by the

creation in its limitless length and breadth, enters His house among "the children of men," in the midst of the earth's ruins, in a style which speaks this language, "Here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein."

It is edifying to see this willing and ready, as well as gracious, intimacy with us on the part of the blessed God. But we have other witnesses of the same in the New Testament.

When the temple, the living temple is raised, as we see in Acts ii., the glory again enters, and in its ancient style; for this style is (like "the Lord of glory" Himself) "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." The Holy Ghost enters the assembly of the saints, the living New Testament Temple, with a "sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind," while "cloven tongues, like as of fire, sat upon each of them." This was as the cloud covering the tent, and the glory filling the Tabernacle, in Exod. xl., and this was surely witnessing with what a full heart the Lord was again occupying Himself of the place which faith had prepared for Him.

This surely is so. The delight and heartiness with which this was done is as simply impressed on the inspired page as the deed itself.

And again, in Rev. xxi. "The tabernacle of God" is to be "with men." God is about to dwell with them, not simply to *visit* them

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now and again, as in patriarchal days, at the tent of Abraham, at Mamre, or to shut the door of the ark upon Noah; nor simply to *pitch His tent* among them, as in the days of the wilderness; but to  *dwell*  with them, and take up His abode with them, and to have His home there. And mark again that this is done, as the like had ever been done, in full earnestness and desire of His heart. A great voice from heaven exultingly announces the fact, and tells out the large and precious fruit that is to follow (Rev. xxi. 2-4).

This is one very happy sight to have of the house of God, one very sweet chapter to read in the story of that house: *the manner of the Lord's adoption of it, and entrance into it.*

But we will still look at this great object somewhat further; for it is indeed a great sight to see. God's house bespeaks Himself. It is the witness of what He is, for He there records His name (Deut. xii. xiv., etc.).

It is therefore FAITH which discovers His house, wherever it may be; for it is faith, and faith only, which knows Him. And if He be not known His house cannot be discovered.

After this manner, in early patriarchal days, Jacob discovered God's house. He was at that moment the representative of a generation that had destroyed themselves, a sinner. He was a ruined man, at least for the present; and this condition was the fruit of his own iniquity,

the end of the way he had taken. Instead of remaining at home, and in his father's house, the heir of the land, of the birthright, and of the blessing, he was then an exile, and was soon to be a drudge; then wandering, as it were, penniless, without friend or fellow, and soon to be as a hireling, at the mercy of an injurious master.

But the God of grace had appeared to him. Heaven's hand had just been wide opened to him, and the hosts of heaven had pledged him all providential care, let his wanderings and captivities be as wild and as hard as they may. And, to crown all this revelation of grace in behalf of this self-ruined sinner, the voice of the Lord had just assured him of final restoration and all its attendant blessings.

Now this was God. This was a full and rich witness of what God is. This was grace abounding over the judgment which man, the sinner, had incurred. This was the gospel; and the gospel is a revelation of God. This, therefore, again I say, was God.

Jacob discovers all this. He reads that mystic spot, and reads it rightly. "This is none other but the house of God," he says. God was revealed then; and faith understood the revelation, as it always does. In the eyes of faith the desert place called Luz had become Bethel. However barren and wild it may have been in itself, it was God's house,

for there God had just recorded His name. It is beautiful to see faith thus in clear-sightedness making discoveries of God, though much of human infirmity may at the same time be besetting the heart, as was the case with Jacob then. And faith still acts and speaks in him. He calls this house of God "the gate of heaven."

- . The simplicity and decision of this is something very fine. For it is indeed thus. If we are in God's house, though in the midst of man's ruins; if we have received the record of His name published in a world of sinners, a revolted, rebel world, we are standing at the gate of heaven. Once in "the kingdom of His dear Son," we are on the borders of "the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. i.). "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." (Rom. viii.). And so here in the faith of the patriarch. Jacob, having discovered that he was in God's house, knew that he was standing at the gate of heaven. He was that moment "meet" for glory, since he had known grace. God was thus pledging salvation to him, pardon and peace; and this was enough to assure him that he was to be at home with Him in His own heaven for ever.

Long after those patriarchal days of Jacob we find the same. I mean in David and in the days of the kingdom of Israel. Sin had again "abounded," but grace did again "much more

abound." David, like Jacob, had destroyed himself; but God had visited him with salvation. The Jebusite's threshing-floor now witnessed this, as once the desert, and stony Luz, had witnessed it (1 Chron. xxi.). God had published His house again, and it is the same house; time had not changed it; "The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." God was revealed then, as He had ever been, and still is; and David did not hesitate. "This is the house of the Lord God," says he, in the spirit of the patriarch. Each of those had had the same revelations of God, and faith dealt with that revelation in the same confidence, though centuries and centuries had rolled between them.

This is simple and blessed. And it is happy further to see with what a jealous, careful, undivided heart David cleaves to the spot. He was afraid to leave it; a good word for us all. Other places had their claims and their fascinations. The high place at Gibeon was the place of the Tabernacle and its Altar, and the tent which David himself had prepared on Mount Zion was then the dwelling of the Ark. But where God had frankly answered in grace the conditions of a self-ruined sinner, where the sword of judgment had just been sheathed, and the sacrifice had just been accepted by fire from heaven, there David must stay. God had gone on, in the revelation of Himself, as to

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“the place that is called Calvary,” to Mount Moriah, where He had provided Himself a Lamb; and David or faith must go on with Him. Faith must keep pace with revelation. The light had shone before; but if it had now reached its noon-day fulness, David must not walk as in the earlier twilight. “This is the house of the Lord God,” says he, “and this the altar of burnt offering for Israel.” At the threshing-floor of Ornan he must raise his Ebenezer. The priests of the tabernacle may say they know no such place; but God had known it, and faith must own it.

And let me just add that it is to be thus with us. We have discovered “the house of God”; for God has revealed Himself. He has recorded His name, and that for ever, in the Jebusite’s floor, on Mount Moriah, which is “the place that is called Calvary”; for there He shines as “the just God” and yet “a Saviour,” “the God of peace,” who provided a Lamb for His own altar there, and accepted the sacrifice again; rending the veil, and seating the Purger of sins in the highest heavens. Faith sits at the table in the house of God when His salvation is celebrated; and says again, as with the patriarch, and with the King of Israel, “This is the house of God, this is the gate of heaven”; “this is the altar of burnt offering.” There faith to this hour shows forth the death of the Lamb of God,

and shows it forth as with a burnt offering of praise; and shows it forth "until He come," consciously standing at "the gate of heaven," or upon the borders and confines of glory (I Cor. xi.)

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Two great truths are to be kept constantly in view: First, To love God, because He ought to be loved, and so to reflect His image in purity. This is what "THE LAW" requires; but man has failed in this. Second, GRACE presents "the LOVE OF GOD toward us," when we were unworthy of it. It places us, "IN CHRIST," on a new and immutable foundation of eternal joy; it presents to us God Himself under an aspect unknown to Adam, and impossible under "the LAW"; for "the LAW" necessarily requires perfect love IN US: it cannot, it ought not, to spare any sinner. But, by the regenerating power of the life of Christ, we are renewed in the image of God; but we are renewed entirely on the principle of an eternal gratitude, which ALONE puts God in His right place with regard to the creature; and which puts the creature, dead, and made alive again, in its place in relation to God.

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The soul which is full of the Holy Ghost thinks of the love which is IN GOD, and not of the love which we have FOR GOD; it consequently acts in love.



## 2 **“Loose Him, and Let Him Go.”**

JOHN XI. 44.

**T**HERE are many divinely quickened souls who need to know the power of those commanding words, “Loose him, and let him go” (John xi. 44). They have been quickened out of a state of death by the life-giving voice of the Son of God, but they “come forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes,” and their faces “bound about with a napkin.” That is to say, they have not as yet been able to shake off the trammels of their former condition, or go on their way in the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free. That they have received divine life is manifest from the very struggles, fluctuations, and conflicts of which they complain. Those that are “dead” know nothing of such things. So long as Lazarus lay in the silent tomb, in the cold grasp of death, he never felt his grave-clothes to be any hindrance to movement, or his napkin to be any hindrance to vision. All was dark, cold, and lifeless; and the grave-clothes were the suited trappings of such a condition. A man whose hands and feet were fast bound in the fetters of death could not possibly feel any inconvenience from grave-clothes; and one whose eyes were fast sealed by the stern hand of death could not feel any inconvenience from a napkin.

Thus it is with the unconverted, the unre-

generate, the unawakened. They are "dead," morally, spiritually "dead." Their feet are fast bound in the fetters of death; but they know it not. Their hands are confined by the handcuffs of death; but they feel it not. Their eyes are covered by the dark napkin of death; but they perceive it not. They are dead. The robes of death are around them; the grave-clothes are upon them, and suit their condition.

But, then, in some way or another, the persons for whom I write this paper have been acted upon by the mighty, quickening voice of the Son of God, "the Resurrection and the Life." A verse of Scripture, a sermon, a lecture, a tract, a hymn, a prayer, some passing event, has proved to them an awakening voice. It has sounded upon their ears, it has fallen upon their hearts, it has penetrated to the very depths of their being. They are aroused, they know not how. They wake up, they know not why. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John iii. 8). The life is there in all its reality. The new birth has taken place. The new nature has been communicated. Those who are standing by, who know what life is, see the movements, the struggles, the heavings and workings of life; but as yet the grave-clothes and napkin are there. I believe

there are many in this condition ; many quickened, many born, who know not the privileges which attach to their birth, or the source and object of the life which has been communicated to them. In a word, they need that the voice which has already said, “ Lazarus, come forth,” should also say, “ Loose him, and let him go.” They have been *quickened* ; they need to be emancipated.

Let us take an example or two from the word of God. The prodigal was quickened before he was emancipated. “ I will arise, and go to my father,” was the utterance of the new life, the aspiration of the new nature (Luke xv.). When he spoke thus, he was full of doubt and uncertainty as to the mode in which the father would receive him. He was full of legality, full of the thought of servitude, instead of the thought of sonship. The new life was there, but as yet it was connected with numerous doubts and fears within ; and the rags of his former condition were still upon him. He had been acted upon by a life-giving voice, and he only needed to be emancipated. The new nature, having been imparted, moved toward the source from which it had sprung ; but as yet its movement was cramped as it were by the grave-clothes, and its vision impeded by the napkin.

Now, who would think of maintaining the monstrous idea that the prodigal ought to have

continued in his rags, to have persisted in his doubts, fears, and uncertainty? Who would assert that for the rest of his days Lazarus ought to have worn his grave-clothes and napkin in order to prove that he was a living man? It will be said that the father's embrace dispelled the prodigal's fears, for how could he fear in the arms of paternal love? But was it not the father also who commanded the rags to be displaced by "the best robe"? And then as to Lazarus it may be urged that the voice that had quickened and raised him commanded him to be loosed and let go. Exactly so; and is it not just the same in reference to anyone who has obtained new life by believing in the name of the Son of God? Truly so. He should no longer wear the rags of the "far country," nor the trappings of the grave. His hands and feet should be unbound, so that he may serve the Lord Christ, and run in the way of His commandments. His face, too, should be uncovered; the napkin should be removed, so that he may gaze upon the One Whose voice has quickened him.

But let us take another example. In the seventh chapter of Romans we have a striking case of a quickened soul not yet emancipated. Here we see the earnest struggles of the new life, the fervent breathings of the new nature. Here we find one who can say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man," and yet

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he has to say, “ I am carnal, sold under sin.” Now, the believer is not “*sold*,” but “*bought*,” “redeemed with the precious blood of Christ”; “ransomed from the power of the grave”; “delivered from going down to the pit.”

Again, we find this quickened soul confessing, “ What I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I.” This is a condition of perpetual defeat; whereas the believer can say, “ We are more than *conquerors*,” and “ Thanks be to God, who *always* causeth us to *triumph* in Christ ” (see Rom. viii. 37; 2 Cor. ii. 14).

Lastly, we hear this quickened soul exclaiming, “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from this body of death ? ” But the believer, instead of being a “ *wretched* man,” seeking for deliverance, is really a *happy* man, rejoicing in being fully and eternally delivered.

In short, the seventh chapter of Romans, which has been so sadly misunderstood, is a simple picture of a soul divinely quickened but not yet divinely emancipated, a soul not yet able to say, “ The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus *hath made me free* from the law of sin and death ” (Rom. viii. 2). It is one who has been acted upon by the authoritative word, “ Lazarus, come forth,” but of whom it has yet to be said, “ Loose him, and let him go.” In other words, there is life, but not liberty.

There is sufficient light to see the wretched condition of "the old man," but not sufficient to see the position of the new. There is the just perception of the spirituality of the law without the knowledge of deliverance from its condemning power.

Should any rest satisfied with such a condition? Is this the true believer's proper standing? Assuredly not. As well might we maintain that Lazarus ought to have been quite satisfied to go on all his days, "bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and his face bound about with a napkin." This would never do. The Lord does not do His work by halves, either as to soul or body. He never says, "Come forth," without adding, "Loose him, and let him go." He could never lead *His* people in bondage, "sold under sin." How could He? Were He to do so, would it not argue either that He could not or would not deliver them? If He were to leave His people in doubt, would it not argue that His word was not sufficient to give certainty? Assuredly. But who would assert this? None that know the love of His heart, the value of His sacrifice, the authority of His word.

And be it remembered that it is the self-same voice that quickens and emancipates, that gives life and liberty, that delivers from the dominion of death, and leads forth in the liberty of life. It is well to see this. The

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life and the liberty are connected, as coming from the same source. The life which the believer has is not old Adam life improved, but new Adam life imparted; and the liberty in which the believer walks is not liberty for the old Adam to fulfil his horrible lusts, but liberty for the new man to walk with God, and tread in the holy footprints of Christ.

How does he get this life and liberty? By the word of God, received by faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost. The same voice that quickened Lazarus quickens the soul. And where is this voice heard? “ In the word of the truth of the gospel.” The soul that believes on the name of the Son of God has received new life. What life? The resurrection life of Christ. The simple word of the gospel is the seed by which this new life is produced.

And what does this gospel, this message of glad tidings, declare? That Christ died and rose again, that He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, that He is gone into heaven; that He has by Himself purged our sins; that He has met every claim, every demand, every objector, that justice is satisfied, conscience tranquillized, the enemy confounded. This gives life and liberty, new life, divine liberty. It carries the soul entirely out of the old creation and all its belongings, and introduces it into the new creation and all its privileges,

joys and glories. The death of Christ delivers the believer from the old Adam condition in which he was *born*; and His resurrection introduces him into the new Adam condition in which he is *born again*.'

Now, all this is by the word of God, the voice of Christ, the operation of the Holy Ghost. There is no human effort in the matter. The dead body of Lazarus was acted upon by the voice of Christ; and the soul, "dead in trespasses and sins," is acted upon by the voice of Christ. The one is as independent of man as the other. The quickening power for both soul and body is in "the voice of the Son of God" (see John v. 25, comp. with verses 28, 29). This takes all the glory out of man's hand, and places it where it ought to be, even in the hand of the Son of God. He must bear *all* the glory, for ever blessed be His name!

Oh! how ardently I long that those precious souls for whom I write may fully enter into what I have written. I write for quickened souls who are not yet emancipated; who have life, but not liberty; who have "come forth," but are not yet "loosed and let go." There are many such. There are many in the condition of the prodigal when he arose from the far country, but had not yet reached the father's arms, many in the seventh of Romans. I earnestly long for their full emancipation. I



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would affectionately remind them that the whole work is done, the sacrifice completed, the ransom paid. They have not to read another syllable in order to get settled peace. Christ has made peace. God is well pleased. The Holy Ghost bears witness. The word of God is plain. Where, then, is the foundation for a doubt?

The reader may exclaim, “Alas! it is in myself.” Yes; but, my dear friend, you have nothing to do in a matter which has already been done for you. The righteousness of God is “to him that worketh NOT.” If you had to do aught in order to get righteousness, then Rom. iv. 5 would not be true. Remember, oh! remember, and delight in that most glorious “NOT.” It will not suffer the weight of a feather of human doings, human feelings, or human anything, to be thrown into the scales in order to make Christ’s sacrifice available for *you*. Christ has done *all* for your present, personal, and perfect salvation.

May the Lord the Spirit emancipate precious souls from the grave-clothes in which they are entangled. May many hear and understand those thrilling accents, “ LOOSE HIM, AND LET HIM GO.”

## Some Examples of the Mind of Christ.

**I**F we meditate from the ninth verse of Luke xviii. down to the tenth verse of chapter xix., we see the mind of the Lord delivered out on various detached subjects. It is a blessed thing to hear the mind of Christ on any single matter. His verdict entitles me to say I know how God thinks in such a case. This is a wonderful privilege.

There is a difference between the Gospels and Epistles. The Gospels introduce your HEART to Christ, to find in Him its satisfaction; the Epistles introduce the CONSCIENCE to Christ, to find in Him its peace.

We find here, first, the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The Lord describes the condition of soul in both of these. The mind of the Pharisee was a mind of religious pride and self-satisfaction. The mind of the publican was the mind of a poor broken-hearted one that could not so much as lift his eyes to heaven.

Having these two objects before Him, the Lord lets us know His thoughts about them. And when He gives forth His mind, does not it make you happy to know that He approved the *publican* and not the *Pharisee*? It is a comfort to know that the mind of the Lord thus suits itself to your mind. I could not say that the publican was the expression of a fully

justified man. He was justified "rather" than the other. He would not, if fully justified, have cried out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Is that the proper condition of a believer? No. "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). *That* is not a poor publican howling out about his misery. He does not utter, again I say, the language of a consciously justified sinner. No doubt he was on the way to it; for "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke xiv. 11). Still there is comfort for us in this, when we see that the Lord values these first tremblings of the poor publican. Paul may have penetrated the inmost part of the sanctuary, and the poor publican be only at the brazen altar; but all these differences are very sweet to us who are conscious of our feebleness.

The next case is that of those who brought to Him young children, that He might touch them, "but when His disciples saw it they rebuked them" (v. 15).

Here we have to determine between the strangers and the disciples. Now, do not we know that oft-times those who are more familiar with the things of Christ are less intimate? I think we see it here. These strangers had a better understanding of the Lord's mind

than the disciples. *They* said, "Stand by." "No," said the Lord.

Would you *like* the Lord to have approved the disciples rather than the strangers? I will answer for it, you would not. Now, am I not right in saying that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have done a worthy and wondrous work for us in introducing our hearts to Christ? WHEN THE HEART IS SATISFIED, AND THE CONSCIENCE IS AT PEACE, YOU ARE CLOSE UPON HEAVEN.

You are pleased with the judgment of the Lord in this case. Some say, "The Lord is better to us than our fears." A poor thought! He is better to us than our *expectations*. The strangers had said "*touch* them"; but He took them up in His arms, and pressed them to His bosom (Mark x. 16). How He exceeds all our thoughts!

Next we have the case of the rich young ruler. He brought an uneasy conscience, and said, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He saw that the Lord was a *good* man, as we speak; and, uneasy, he saw the life of the Lord Jesus, and watched it, and had no doubt that He had the secret of peace; so he came and put the question which the Lord beautifully answers by another, "Why callest thou *Me* good?" Because you have no right to call even Jesus "good," if He is not "God over all" (Rom. ix. 5).

This man did not apprehend His glory; so the Lord would not accept the title from him. He knew how to answer every man. He did not say He was *not* good, but “*Why* callest thou Me good? You have no title to call Me good. You know the commandments.” “Well,” says the young man, “all these have I kept, what lack I yet?” “Yet lackest thou one thing,” saith the Lord; “sell all that thou hast, and come, follow me.”

What is the meaning of that? Why, that if I will put myself in the *track* of Christ, I must be *like* Christ. The Lord gave up everything, and came down as an emptied man to serve others. “Now, if you *will* be perfect, go, and do likewise.” And, when he heard this, he was very sorrowful, for he could not comply.

How would you like the kingdom of God characterized? by selfishness, or by unstinted benevolence? “Oh,” you will say, “let selfishness perish *here*.” The young man could not give up everything, so the Lord says that is a condition unfit for the kingdom. You may be ashamed of your own wretched, selfish heart every day, but I will answer for it you will justify the Lord’s answer. Worldliness and selfishness have no power to breathe the atmosphere of the kingdom of God.

Do not all these things please you? You have to carry on a warfare with the same mind

in you as was in the Pharisee, the disciples, and the young ruler. *Conflict* is your perfection here, as *sinlessness* will be in your glorified body. What a different Christ you would have if He had approved the Pharisee rather than the publican, kept the little children at a distance, or allowed the selfishness of the young ruler! I do not doubt that the young man was struggling after the kingdom, or that he got into it by-and-by. I do not doubt that there was a labouring of soul that was given of God.

In the thirty-first verse the Lord turns to speak of His going up to Jerusalem, and of all that He must suffer there; "but they understood none of these things."

We may observe that the Lord never speaks of His death without also speaking of His resurrection; as the prophets of the Old Testament never spoke of the judgments coming on their nation without the glories that should follow. So it should be with you and me. We may talk of death at times, but resurrection and glory should come rapidly in on our thoughts.

The Lord is still on the way, and I invite you again to look at the mind of Christ. Here is a collision between a blind beggar and the multitude, and the Lord comes in to decide between the two. Are you pleased with the decision He makes? I am sure you are. You

would have had a very different Christ if He had joined the multitude in telling the blind man to hold his peace.

Every stroke of the evangelist's pen is full of the beauty and perfection of Jesus. The blind man asked who passed by, hearing the multitude, and they say, "Jesus of Nazareth." Is *that* all you know of Him? "Jesus, *Son of David*, have mercy on me." What acquaintance, tell me, had this man with Christ? He knew Him (and so must you and I) in His *personal* glory, and in the boundlessness of His grace. He called Him "Son of David," and when they told him to hold his peace, he cried "so much the more."

That is how you and I must know Him. If He be not the *Person* He is, all He has done is worth nothing. If He be not *Man*, as *one* with the children (Heb. ii.), and GOD, as alone sufficient to put away sin by Himself, it is all in vain. If we do not recognise the glory of His Person, the grace of His work is worth nothing. We must connect His grace and His glory.

The confession of the blind beggar showed an apprehension of these two things. He did not take up *their* word, but called Him "Son of David"; and when they rebuked him, he cried all the more. Now, how did the Lord decide? "*What is it that you want?*" His dignity is beautiful as He stops on His way

at the bidding of a poor blind beggar. Joshua once bid the sun stand still in the heavens, but here the *Lord* of the sun, and the moon, and the heavens, stands still at the bidding of a blind beggar! That is the gospel, the glorious gracious One dispensing the grace of eternal healings to meet your degradation. We often admire Jacob, laying hold on the divine Stranger, but look at Bartimæus! He *would* not hold his tongue, but cried out till Jesus stood and said, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" "Lord, that I may receive my sight." "*Take it,*" said Jesus.

Now look at Zacchæus. He saw the Lord pass, and went through the crowd to get up into the sycamore-tree. In the narratives of the four Gospels there are two cases that distinguish themselves from each other. One is an exercised faith, as in Bartimæus. The other is a quickening of the spirit; this was Zacchæus. In John's Gospel the second class of these prevails most; as in Andrew, Nathanael, Philip, the Samaritan woman. These are all cases of quickening. In the two cases before us we get samples of what I mean. Bartimæus was exercising faith; Zacchæus was getting life. It is a very simple story. He had a desire to see Christ. Who gave the desire? The life-giving Spirit of Christ. How beautiful to see eternal life beginning in such a seed! The *power* that clothed the desire is



strongly manifest. Pressing through crowds to climb up trees was not the habit of this rich citizen. He made himself one of the rabble to gratify this commanding desire, and got up into a tree. The Lord called him down. He not only knew that there was a man in the tree, but He knew who he was: "Zacchæus, come down."

Is there intimacy in all this? Are you pleased with it? I will answer for it, you are. So we have the Lord delivering judgment in detached cases, and such a judgment as contributes to make us happy.

You can easily conceive with what haste Zacchæus came down. They spent the rest of the day together; and what is the fruit of their communion? "Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

His heart instinctively uttered itself; a very different thing from the boastfulness of a self-righteous mind. The simple force of communion with his Lord enabled Zacchæus thus to speak. There was power when he pressed through the crowd, and there was power when he closed that day, which had given him communion with Jesus.

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## He "Dwelt Among Us."

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"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt  
among us" (John i. 14).

He "dwelt among us," and we saw,  
Though veiled in human guise,  
The mighty God, the Prince of Peace,  
Omnipotent, All-Wise;  
He Who upholds the universe,  
And all its need supplies.

He "dwelt among us," and we saw  
His power to raise the dead;  
That mighty power of old displayed,  
At which the darkness fled:  
He spake, 'twas done! and death itself  
His high behest obeyed.

He "dwelt among us," and we saw  
His pity to the poor,  
His kindness to the fatherless,  
His help where sorrow bore;  
Dispensing freely, as He went,  
His precious, heavenly store.

He "dwelt among us," and we saw  
In Him the Man of Prayer;  
Upon His God and Father, too,  
He rolled His every care;  
Content, whatever was *His* will,  
To suffer and to bear.

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He "dwelt among us," and we saw  
 Perfection in His mien;  
 Yea, perfect grace, and truth, and love,  
 In Him were ever seen:  
 Unmoved and undismayed He passed  
 Through Calvary's tragic scene.

He "dwelt among us," and subdued  
 The powers of death and hell;  
 And now He's gone again to heaven,  
 And oh! with rapture tell,  
 He'll shortly come to take us home,  
 That WE WITH HIM may dwell.

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**The Object of the Holy Spirit's  
 Work in the Christian.**

THE great object, we believe, of the Holy Spirit's work in us is to make good in in our hearts the thoughts of God concerning Christ. This is the basis of the Christian's walking in the light as God is in the light, and of worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. Indeed, all hinges practically on this state of soul. Our consistency, spirituality, steadfastness, devotedness, and happiness, are intimately connected with it. When the heart is right with Christ both the judgment and the practice will be right. The

affections govern the judgment. God's way of delivering souls from all evil, both inwardly and outwardly, is Christ. Our only strength is in being filled with Him. Light on the path, and strength to walk therein, flow from this.

Is it not ignorance of Christ that leads the unconverted around us to act so contrary to Him? And, on the other hand, is it not the knowledge of Christ that leads to a life of holiness and practical godliness? And just in proportion as the Christian enjoys Christ does he live above self and the world. And, farther, it is only in being occupied with Christ, as He is before God, in all His loveliness, that we grow up into His likeness.

This is the principle : If we would love Him more, we must be more occupied with His love to us. If we would serve Him better, we must be more occupied with His devotedness to us. If we would get rid of our spiritual deformities, we must be more occupied with His loveliness. " But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians iii. 18).

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## **The Saviour, The Sufferer, and The Sanctifier.**

**B**UT we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. ii. 9-11).

In these verses we have our Lord Jesus presented to us in three distinct aspects; namely, first, as tasting death; secondly, as perfected through sufferings; thirdly, as the Firstborn among many brethren.

I. And, first, as tasting death for every man. In this character we see Jesus crowned with glory; and, in the crown which He wears, we behold the glorious proof that sin is put away and the sting of death gone. There never was such a thing seen as a man crowned in heaven until "the Man Christ Jesus" took His place on high, after having tasted death for every man. It is not an innocent man in Eden. It is not a man in a restored earth. It is not a man on the throne of Israel. No; it is a Man on the throne of God in heaven, and crowned with

glory in respect to a work which He accomplished on the earth. He *tasted death* for every man.

Now, if Jesus is crowned with glory in respect to my sins, what remains for me? Simply to walk in the holy and happy consciousness that all is settled. The One who was crucified for my sins is crowned without them. A single doubt or question on my part would be calling in question His right to wear the crown. A person may not see this; or he may imagine it is putting it in too strong a light; but the fact is, the two things go together. If the Sin-bearer is crowned, sin is put away; if the Taster of death is crowned, the sting of death is gone. Thus it is in God's view; and thus it is also in the view of faith. The crowned Man in glory settles the whole question as to sin and death.

II. But we see Jesus in another aspect, and that is as the Captain of our salvation, made perfect through "sufferings." This necessarily presents God's people in another aspect also. As *sinner*s, to be saved from sin and its consequences, we needed One who could taste death for us; but as *sons* to be brought to glory we needed a Captain of salvation, perfected through sufferings. The reader will carefully note the difference between "suffering" and "sufferings." The former had respect to His office and work as a Sin-bearer;

the latter to His office and work as the Captain of our salvation. When, with the eye of faith, we look up into heaven, "we see Jesus crowned" in respect to the complete putting away of sin. But we see more; we see in Him a perfect Captain, One who has gone through every possible form of suffering, and that in order that He might bring "many sons to glory." Jesus has passed through this sin-stricken world, Himself all pure and spotless. He was "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." It is thus He can sympathise with and succour His people in all their afflictions and temptations.

What an unspeakable consolation for the "many sons" to know that there is a Man in glory, One who, when down here, passed through every kind of sorrow and pressure, sin excepted, in order that He might, as a perfect Captain, take each "son" by the hand and conduct him home to glory! How sweet to remember, as we pursue our appointed path across the desert, that our Captain has gone before us, and that His footprints can be discerned by the eye of faith all the way through! He knows all our trials and difficulties. He has felt them all. An angel knows nothing about such things; but our blessed Lord Jesus came down into all our circumstances, so that we might taste His perfect sympathy. There is a heart now beating on the throne of God

in heaven that has felt everything that a perfect human heart could feel.

“Touched with a sympathy within,  
He knows our feeble frame;  
He knows what sore temptations mean,  
For He has felt the same.

He, in the days of feeble flesh,  
Poured out His cries and tears,  
And, though ascended, feels afresh  
What every member bears.”

III. And now one word as to the third aspect in which our Lord is seen in this profound passage. He is here seen as “the Firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. viii. 29). This clearly could only be in resurrection. Union with Christ could only be on this ground. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and *die*, it abideth *alone*” (John xii. 24). He was a pure, untainted grain, and could not coalesce with that which was impure. He had to die in order to link us with Him, and call us “brethren.”

The reader cannot be too distinct as to this vital point. Union with Christ could only be through His *death*. It is a cardinal error to suppose that Christ took fallen human nature into union with Himself at His incarnation. Impossible! Between Him and us there could be no union save on the ground of death.



How could there be union, and sin not put away? If souls could be united to Christ in incarnation, then what need was there of His sacrificial death? Assuredly, we could want nothing more than union with Christ; but, be it carefully noted by the reader, this union could only be on the ground of death. Indeed, we see that the atoning death of Christ is the foundation of every spiritual, heavenly blessing; consequently, if that be touched, we have really nothing left.

It is well to be very clear and very firm as to this grand mystery. Christendom is setting it aside in various ways; but the Church of God must hold it fast, and confess it in the face of everything. We owe every privilege to the death of Christ: union, life, righteousness, peace, glory. We have all through death, nothing without it. If our Lord had not died He would have remained eternally "alone," and we should have been eternally damned. Incarnation could not save us. Indeed, the effect of the life of Christ in this world was to make manifest how utterly lost we were. It put man perfectly to the test, and proved him to be utterly corrupt and astray from God.

But "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; He was buried; and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." And here lies the foundation of the

accomplishment of all God's counsels; whether it be with respect to the Church, to Israel, or to "the vast universe of bliss," of which a dead and risen Christ is the centre. All is founded on death. Jesus met all the power of the enemy; He met it alone. He was alone in the pit; alone in the miry clay; alone on the cursed tree. But having done all, He rose from the grave; and now, as "the Firstborn among many brethren," the Firstbegotten from the dead, He associates His people with Himself, and calls them "brethren." "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto *My* Father, and *your* Father; and to *My* God, and *your* God" (John xx.).

This was after His resurrection. Such words could not have been used until the corn of wheat had fallen into the ground and died.

Matthew xii. 49, 50, may present a difficulty to the mind of the reader; but it is not there a question of relationship at all, as is evident from verse 50, "The same is My brother, and sister, and mother." In fact, our Lord, in this passage, is setting aside the idea of anything like relationship after the flesh, and proving that those who did the will of His Father were morally nearer to Him than His brethren after the flesh. The contrast between John xx. 17 and Matthew xii. 49, 50, must be evident to the intelligent reader.

## **Judgment ; Grace ; Glory.**

READ ACTS XII. 1-11.

**I**T will greatly enhance the grace of this lovely passage of Scripture to bear in mind what it was that rendered the cloven tongues necessary. In the eleventh chapter of Genesis we have the inspired record of the first grand effort of the children of men to establish themselves in the earth, to form a great association, and make themselves a name. And all this, be it remembered, without God. His name is never mentioned. He was not to form any part of this proud and popular scheme. He was entirely shut out. It was not a dwelling-place for God that was to be erected on the plain of Shinar. It was a city for man, a centre round which men were to gather.

Such was the object of the children of men, as they stood together on the plain of Shinar. It was not, as some have imagined, to escape another deluge. There is not a shadow of foundation in the passage for any such idea. Here are their words : “ And they said, Go to, let us build a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven ; *and let us make us a name*, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”

There is no thought here of escaping another flood. It is sheer imagination, without any scripture basis. The object is as plain

as possible. It is precisely similar to all those great confederacies, associations, or masses of flesh, that have been formed on the earth from that day to this. The Shinar Association could vie with any association of modern times, both in its principle and object.

But it proved to be a Babel. Jehovah wrote and scattered them abroad, whether they would or not. In a word, divided tongues were sent as the expression of divine judgment upon this first great human association.

An association without God, no matter what its object, is really nothing but a mass of flesh, based on pride, and ending in hopeless confusion. "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces." (Isa. viii. 9.) So much for all human associations. May we learn to keep clear of them. May we adhere to that one divine association, namely, the Church of the living God, of which a risen Christ in glory is the living Head, the Holy Ghost the living Guide, and the Word of God the living Charter.

It was to gather this blessed Assembly that the cloven tongues were sent in grace on the day of Pentecost. No sooner had the Lord Jesus Christ taken His seat at the right hand of power, amid the brightness of heaven's majesty, that He sent down the Holy Ghost to publish the glad tidings of salvation in the

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ears of His very murderers. And, inasmuch as that message of pardon and peace was intended for men of various tongues, so the divine messenger came down prepared to address each "in his own tongue wherein he was born." The God of all grace made it plain, so plain that it cannot be mistaken, that He desired to make His way to each heart with the sweet story of grace.

Man, on the plain of Shinar, did not want God; but God, on the day of Pentecost, proved that He wanted man. Blessed for ever be His holy Name! God had sent His Son, and man had just murdered Him; and now He sends the Holy Ghost to tell man that there is pardon through that very blood which he had shed, for his guilt in shedding it. Matchless, marvellous, overwhelming grace! Oh! that it may subdue our hearts, and bind us to Him who is at once its source, its channel, and the power of enjoyment! The grace of God has far out-topped all the enmity of man. It has proved itself victorious over all the opposition of the human heart and all the rage of hell.

Thus, then, in Genesis xi. divided tongues were sent in *judgment*. In Acts ii. divided tongues were sent in *grace*. The blessed God of all grace would cause each one to hear of full salvation, and hear of it in those very accents in which his infant ears had hearkened

to the earliest whisperings of a mother's love !  
 " His own tongue wherein he was born." It mattered not whether the tongue were soft or harsh, refined or barbarous ; the Holy Ghost would use it as the vehicle for conveying the precious message of salvation right home to the human heart. If divided tongues had once been given to scatter in judgment, they were again given to gather in grace ; not now round an earthly tower, but round a heavenly Christ ; not for the exaltation of man, but for the glory of God.

Now, it is well worthy of notice that when God was giving the law from Mount Sinai, He spoke only in one tongue and to one people. The law was carefully wrapped up in one language, and deposited in the midst of one nation. Not so the gospel. When that was the burden, God the Holy Ghost Himself descended from heaven, in cloven tongues, to waft the soul-stirring tidings far and wide over the whole world, and convey them " to every creature under heaven " in the very dialect wherein he was born.

This is a great moral fact. It comes down upon the heart with uncommon weight and power. When God was speaking in terms of requirement and prohibition He confined Himself to one language ; but when He was publishing the message of life and salvation, pardon and peace, through the blood of the

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Lamb, He spoke in every language under heaven.

This, surely, tells a tale. It declares plainly which is more in harmony with the divine mind, LAW or GRACE. Blessed be His Name, He delights in grace. Law and judgment are His strange work. He has pronounced the feet of those that publish the gospel to be beautiful ; whereas, of those who desired to be teachers of the law, He has said, "I would they were even cut off that trouble you." Thus His acts and His words discover the bent of His loving heart towards unworthy sinners. He has left nothing undone, nothing unsaid, to prove His perfect willingness to save and bless ; and therefore all who die in their sins will perish without excuse, and those awful words will for ever echo through the regions of eternal gloom, "*I would, but ye would not.*"

In conclusion, it may be remarked that Gen. xi., Acts ii., and Rev. vii. 9-17 form a very lovely group of scriptures. In the first we see divided tongues sent in *judgment* ; in the second, divided tongues given in *grace* ; and in the third, divided tongues gathered in *glory*. Well may we say, "Thy testimonies are wonderful : therefore doth my soul keep them." (Ps. cxix. 129.).

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## Outline of the Epistle of James.

THE selection of the apostle James to write this epistle is marked and evident.

“The Lord’s brother” (Gal. i. 10), he takes the place the Lord Jesus occupied whilst upon the earth (Matt. v.-vii.) in enforcing *practical godliness* upon the remnant who in the midst of the nation believed.

In the Lord’s days the nation was still recognized: here the “twelve tribes” are addressed. Parts, therefore, of this epistle apply to the unbelieving Jews, parts to the disciples who had faith.

The study of Acts vi. 7, xxi. 20, helps one to understand the mixture of Christianity and Judaism that prevailed in the apostles’ days; a condition of things that came to its end when the Romans (about A.D. 66) destroyed Jerusalem. Then the temple worship ceased, and Christianity became more decidedly heavenly in its tone.

Godly walk *in the midst of Israel*, then, is the subject of this epistle, until the call came in Heb. xiii. to go “without the camp” ere the judgment of Jerusalem should come. ~~It is~~ an epistle of much use in the present day, seeing that Christendom is very like what Judaism was, and is likewise on the eve of its judgment. We do not get here the full unfolding of the privileges of the Christian, though some of them are touched upon. This is suitable to



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an epistle leading us out of Judaism into Christianity.

"The Lord Jesus Christ" is spoken of (ch. i. 1); "the crown of life" (ch. i. 12); "the new birth" (ch. i. 18); "the salvation of the soul," "the law of liberty," "the Father" (ch. i. 21, 25, 27); "the kingdom" (ch. ii. 5); "the presence of the Holy Ghost in the church" (ch. iii. 1); "in the Christian" (ch. iv. 5); "the Lord's death and coming"; "the church" (ch. v. 6, 7, 14). But beyond these there would be little to make us suppose that Christianity had come in, or that Judaism was passing away. We are then on transitional ground, the Jews still recognized as a nation, and the exhortation embracing both them and the Christians amongst them, though the latter are primarily before the apostle's heart.

V. 1. The apostle, though the Lord's brother, does not take that place, but styles himself "a servant." Like Paul (Acts xxvi. 7), he has the twelve tribes before him, and assures them that trial is now a cause for joy, and not depression. Had they been in the land, and perfect in their obedience, they would have needed none; but now trials are sent to detach them from earth, and therefore are to be valued. Under these trials patience was to have her perfect work, and if they knew not how to act, reference could be made to God

for wisdom; but faith must characterize the asker; if not, he could receive no answer, but would be a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Christianity might improve the circumstances of some, lower those of others; but, whatever the result, it should, like the trials, be a cause for praise, and trial would not last for ever, but for those who endured through it, there would be the crown of life in the coming kingdom.

V. 13 speaks, not of trials which come from God, but of temptations that spring from the natural heart. These result in death, which is the wages of sin to those who pass away without repentance. From God comes every good and perfect gift; He is the Father of lights, unchangeable. We are the fruit of His love (the first of the new creation), and should be ever attentive to His voice, slow to use our own; slow to anger, seeing His righteousness, His ways, are not affected by it. The salvation of the soul is His object, as the Father of lights, and this He accomplishes by the Word. We are begotten. Let those who are not so judge themselves, and receive the Word of Life, and see to it that their practice is according to the truth received. Some might be stony-ground hearers; others, by looking to the law of Christ (which is liberty to the new nature, and perfect as containing all the will of God), would be blessed in their deed. The

fruits would be seen in attending to those whose earthly props are gone, and walking apart from all that would defile in the world.

Chapter ii. Under the law, riches were a mark of the divine favour (Deut. xxvi.); but now that Jesus is the Lord of *glory*, pure religion and undefiled would consist in recognizing the rich *in faith*, and the heirs of the *kingdom* in the *synagogue* (not "assembly"). Therefore there should now be no such distinctions as heretofore. Even the royal or *excellent* law, the law of Moses, conveyed this thought. It still retained its place, though the law of liberty is the standard of obedience to the Christian. God in His mercy rejoices against judgment (judgment is His "strange act"); those who are unlike Him in this towards their brethren can expect no mercy (see Matt. xviii. 23-35). "The royal law" teaches us to love our neighbour as ourselves; "the law of liberty," that we should lay down our lives for the brethren.

"Pure religion and undefiled" would be also seen, not in the mere hollow profession of faith, but in the practice of it. Abraham gave up his son, Rahab her country. In both, Jew and Gentile, faith was evidenced by works, and these works were exactly the opposite to those of the natural man. We are justified before God by faith (Rom. iv. 2), before man by works. It does not say "show God," but

“show me.” The absence of fruits betrays a soul no better off than the devils. The study of GENESIS will show that righteousness was counted to Abraham some thirty years before he was justified by works.

Chapter iii. The *assembly* is here contemplated, as the *synagogue* was in chapter ii. Both were thus at the same time owned of God. The sins of the tongue are in this chapter first spoken of collectively, then individually. “Be not many *teachers*” tells us that the liberty of the Holy Ghost had become licence amongst them, as in 1 Cor. xiv.; for “in many things we offend all” (we should read, “for we all often offend”). The language of this chapter shows us that the apostle has both believers and unbelievers before him. It searches the heart, and traces things to their source, distinguishing earthly from heavenly wisdom. The order of God’s wisdom shows us that peace can never be at the expense of purity. It begins with what He is, just as “pure religion” contained unspottedness from the world; and thus the pure in heart would be peacemakers, and would peaceably sow their fruits of righteousness. (Compare Matt. v. 3-9).

Chapter iv. Here the unbelieving are evidently before us. *Disciples* would not be addressed as “adulterers,” etc. Lusts are exposed as the source of all that is evil; but

separation to God is insisted on, as in ch. i. 27, iii. 17. V. 5 reads more simply: "Do ye think that the Scripture speaketh in vain? Does the Spirit that dwelleth in us lust to envy?" That is, that the Scripture shows the sources of things truly, and the indwelling Holy Ghost never produces the envy that was amongst them. They should approach God in a due sense of their humiliation, receive suited grace from Him, and live in daily dependence upon Him.

Chapter v. Riches were a snare to many. He shows their uselessness in the last days, when the Judge was at the door. Covetousness was not their only sin: the death of Jesus, "the Just" One, lay at their door. He had never resisted them. Patience is to characterize the remnant; for them the Lord would come. Job had been patient, though sorely tried, and had seen the end of the Lord. In these trials they were not to "curse God, and die." Need I say an oath before a court of justice is not here alluded to? The Lord *answered* when adjured (Matt. xxvi. 63, 64). In affliction we should pray; in joy, sing the psalms of the Holy Ghost's leading; in sickness call for the elders, and, as in Mark vi. 13, get them to anoint us. This command is of course obsolete now, seeing we have no elders in the absence of their proper appointment through apostles or their delegates. Sickness

is here seen as an instrument of God's government of His children.

The accuracy of the Word is seen in the following exhortations. It does not say, "Confess your faults to the elders," but to "one another." Help is often derived by saints talking individually together over their temptations, and learning from one another the way to avoid them. There is no such thought as a priest here, or even a class-leader.

Job gives us the example of patience, Elias of prayerfulness. It is interesting to read about the latter in 1 Kings, the confidence of his testimony to Ahab, and the ground of this confidence as here explained. We must get power in the sanctuary ere we can stand in the presence of the world.

It is comforting, in the absence of elders, to notice how far one person's faith will prevail. Practice should prevail, as well as prayer, and this with reference to one another; not the saint, but the sinner (and a saint is never in Scripture called a sinner) is before us; he is saved from death, and *his* sins removed out of God's sight for ever. The saint's sins were spoken of in verse 15, the sinner's in verse 20.

The allusion to Elias and Job is striking. The former represents the faithful at all times who stand alone for God, and especially at the time of the Tribulation, and the allusion to the

## SONG OF THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIM. 59

three-and-a-half years carries on our thoughts to the time of the end. Job gives us the experience of saints at all times, and especially that of the Jews at the time of the Tribulation, thus showing that this epistle may, like HEBREWS, have a double application, both to a heavenly and an earthly people.

It is not a *church* but a *remnant* epistle, and the only one addressed to the saints. It occupies the place of Jonah in the Old Testament; he addressed Gentiles when Jews were the subjects of God's favour; James addresses Jews when Christians are nearest to the Lord. It holds thus an interesting and remarkable place in the Book of God.

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SONG OF THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIM.

Up! yes, upward to thy gladness,  
 Rise, my heart, and soul, and mind!  
 Cast, oh cast away thy sadness,  
 Rise where thou thy Lord canst find.  
 He is thy home,  
 And thy life alone is He;  
 Hath the world no place for thee?  
 With Him is room.  
 On, still onward, mounting higher,  
 On the wings of faith to Him!  
 On, still onward, ever higher,  
 Till the mournful earth grows dim.  
 God is thy Rock;  
 Christ thy Champion cannot fail thee;  
 Howsoe'er thy foes assail thee,  
 Fear not their shock.

WORDS OF TRUTH.

Firm, yes, firmly, ever cleaving  
 Unto Christ, the strong and true;  
 All, yes, all, to God still leaving,  
**For His love is daily new.**

Be steadfast here;  
 Soon thy foes shall be o'erthrown;  
 Since He wills thy good alone,  
 Be of good cheer.

Hide thee, in His chamber hide thee;  
 Christ hath opened now the door;  
 Tell Him all that doth betide thee;  
 All thy sorrows there outpour.

He hears thy cry;  
 Men may hate thee, and deceive thee;  
 But He cannot, will not leave thee;  
 He still is nigh.

High, oh! high, o'er all things earthly,  
 Raise thy thoughts, my soul, to heaven;  
 One alone of thee is worthy,  
 All thou hast to Him be given.

Thy Lord He is  
 Who so truly pleads to have thee,  
 Who in love hath died to save thee;  
**Then thou art His.**

Up! then, upwards! Seek thou only  
 For the things that are above;  
 Sin thou hatest; earth is lonely;  
 Rise to Him whom thou dost love.  
 There thou art blest;  
 All things here must change and die;  
 Only with our Lord on high  
 Is perfect rest.



## **David's Three Attitudes before God.**

### **I.**

**I**N the course of David's most eventful and deeply instructive history we find him presented by the pen of inspiration in three remarkable attitudes, namely, *lying* as a penitent; *sitting* as a worshipper; *standing* as a servant. Not only do we see him in these attitudes, but we hear his utterances therein; and we may truly say that the seeing and hearing are full of deep moral instruction for our souls.

May the Holy Spirit enable us to profit by it! May He guide our thoughts as we look at, and hearken to, King David, as a penitent, a worshipper, and a servant!

First, then we have him

### **LYING AS A PENITENT.**

“And David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.” (2 Sam. xii. 16.) Here we have David in the attitude of a true penitent. The arrow of conviction had entered his conscience. Nathan's pungent, pointed word, “Thou art the man,” had fallen, with divine power, upon his heart, and he takes his place, conscience-smitten and heart-broken, in the dust before God.

Such is the attitude. Let us now hearken to the utterance. The latter we shall find in

the fifty-first Psalm. And oh ! what an utterance it is ! How fully in keeping with the attitude ! " Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness ; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions."

This is real work. The penitent places his sins side by side with the loving-kindness and tender mercy of God. This was the very best thing for him to do. The best place for a convicted conscience is the presence of divine mercy. When a convicted sinner and divine love meet, there is a speedy settlement of the question of sin. It is the joy of God to pardon sins. He delights in mercy. Judgment is His strange work. He will cause us to feel the sinfulness of sin, to judge it, to hate it. He will never daub with untempered mortar, or cry " Peace, peace," when there is no peace. He will send the arrow home. But (blessed be His name !) the arrow from His quiver is sure to be followed by the love of His heart, and the wound which His arrow inflicts will be healed by the precious balm which His love ever applies. This is the order—" Thou art the man " ; " I have sinned against the Lord " ; " The Lord hath put away thy sin."

Yes, beloved reader, sin must be judged in the conscience, and the more thoroughly it is judged the better. We greatly dread a super-

ficial work of conscience, a false peace. We like to see the conscience probed to its deepest depths, by the action of the Word and the Spirit of God; the grand question of sin and righteousness fully discussed and finally settled in the heart. We have to bear in mind that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and, in this dangerous character, it is quite possible he may endeavour to lead souls into a kind of false peace and happiness, not founded upon the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ as the divine provision for the sinner's deepest necessities.

We should deeply ponder those weighty words in the parable of the Sower. "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon *with joy* receiveth it; yet hath he *no root in himself*, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." (Matt xiii. 20, 21.)

Mark the words, "Anon with joy receiveth it." There is no deep work of conscience, no moral judgment of self or of sin; and, as a consequence, no depth of root, no power of endurance. This is peculiarly solemn, and worthy of the most profound consideration, at the present moment. We cannot too carefully ponder the connection between the expressions, "Anon with joy," "No root,"

“Withered away.” There is great danger of a merely intellectual reception of the plan of salvation, apart from any spiritual work in the conscience. This is frequently attended with the most joyous emotions. The natural feelings are wrought upon, but the truth has not penetrated the heart; there has been no furrow made by the action of the word; and hence, when the time of trial comes, there is no power of continuance. It is found to be mere surface work, which cannot stand the action of the sun’s scorching rays.

Now, let not the reader suppose that we attach undue importance to conscience-work in the matter of conversion. We are fully persuaded that it is *the Christ we reach*, and not *the way we reach Him*, that saves our souls; and moreover, the true foundation of the soul’s peace is not a certain process or exercise of any kind, whether of the heart, the conscience, or the understanding. It is the divinely efficacious sacrifice of the Son of God that purges the conscience and imparts peace to the convicted soul. It is the assurance, on God’s authority, received by the grace of the Holy Ghost, that the momentous question of sin was settled once and for ever by Christ on the cross, that liberates the soul and gives a peace which nothing can ever disturb.

All this is so plain that if any one

## DAVID'S THREE ATTITUDES.

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were to say to us, "I have peace because I have passed through such deep exercises of conscience," we should, without hesitation, tell him he was self-deceived. It was not an exercise of conscience that ever satisfied the claims of God, and therefore it is not an exercise of conscience that can ever satisfy the earnest cravings of a convicted soul. Christ is all, and having Him, we want no more. We deem it a thorough mistake for persons to build anything on the mode of their conversion. It is, in point of fact, affording the enemy an advantage over them, which he is sure to use in shaking their confidence. The ground of the believer's peace is not that he was converted in such and such a manner, that he felt so deeply, and wept so much, or struggled so hard, or prayed so fervently. All these things have their place and their value. We do not suppose that Paul ever forgot, or ever will forget, the moment between Jerusalem and Damascus; but we are perfectly sure he never built his peace upon the remarkable circumstances of his conversion. Luther could never forget his two years in the cloister; but Luther never built his peace upon the profound exercises of those years. Bunyan could never forget the slough of despond; but Bunyan never built his peace upon the mental anguish which he tasted therein.

No doubt the exercises through which these three remarkable men passed exerted a very important influence on their after course and character, both as Christians and ministers; but the ground of their peace was not aught that they had felt or passed through, but simply what Christ had done for them on the cross. Thus it must ever be; Christ is all, and in all. It is not Christ *and* a process, but Christ *alone*. Let souls ever remember this; and let it be well understood that, while we press upon our readers the immense importance of a deep and thorough work of conscience, we do not want them to build upon the work in their conscience, but upon CHRIST'S WORK ON THE CROSS. "It is the work wrought *for* us, and not the work wrought *in* us, that saves our souls." True, they are intimately connected; and therefore must not be separated; but they are perfectly distinct; and therefore must not be confounded. We can know nothing of the work wrought *for* us except by the work wrought *in* us; but just in proportion to the depth and intensity of the work wrought *in* us, will be the clearness and fixedness of our rest in the work wrought *for* us.

(To be concluded, if the Lord will).

## **The Lord Jesus Dealing with Different Conditions of Conscience.**

SEE JOHN I.—IX.

**I**N St. John's Gospel we see the Lord coming forth to *sinners*. He is not so much the Healer of Israel, doing wonders of goodness in the bodies of men, cleansing the lepers, or restoring to health all manner of sickness and disease among the people; but it is rather *the soul* He seeks, and, therefore, it is the *conscience* He deals with. If the conscience be not before Him, He has not His subject or His material before Him. He has nothing to deal with, or operate upon, according to the character He is filling or sustaining.

This gives us to know what He is, and what are His purpose and His business in every scene. It may be a happy conscience, an awakened, uneasy conscience, a sleepy, unbroken conscience, or a bad conscience. He deals with all this variety, but in it all we see conscience in some condition or another before Him.

In Andrew we have a simple picture of a *happy* conscience, or a happy sinner. He had gone to Jesus as a sinner, for he had gone to Him as "the Lamb of God," and been therefore accepted and welcomed and entertained by Jesus; and he leaves Him happy. His heart is free; and he can there-

fore think of others, and make it his business to bring Jesus and other sinners like himself together. He preaches, as a happy sinner would preach. He tells the first fellow-sinner he meets, and that is his brother Simon, that he has *found* "the Christ," language that bespeaks the satisfaction of his soul; and then, in full, consistent benevolence, he invites Simon to come and share the Christ of God with him. Here we see a conscience at *liberty*, because the sinner has found Jesus.

But we have other conditions of it.

In Nathanael the conscience had been *already awakened*. Under the fig tree, I believe, he had been confessing himself a sinner meditating on his condition before God; for it is the spirit of confession which, in divine reckoning, makes us "guileless"; and that is the character in which the Lord recognizes Nathanael. And the confessions of the lips are the utterances of the judgments of the heart. They are not real if they be not this.

Nathanael was thus a broken-hearted man. The Lord therefore had been in spirit already in company with him, before Philip called him; for the yearnings of an awakened soul are ever dear to Him. He tells him so, as He had afore announced by His prophet: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I



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dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." (Isa. lvii. 15.)

And on His gracious salutation, and letting him know that He had thus known him, Nathanael's soul is amazed. " Rabbi," says he, " thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." This was revival to his heart. The high and lofty One thus made good another portion of that same oracle of the prophet : " To revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Now, this case shows us the Lord's blessed dealings with an *awakened* conscience, reviving and gladdening it, or making it a *relieved, delivered conscience*.

In the Samaritan woman, the conscience was still *asleep*. It had to be roused, brought into God's presence with all its burden and guilt upon it. The Lord accordingly forces her to discover herself. All the guilty secrets of her soul were dragged forth to the light. But she stands. Though overwhelmed, and though nature for a moment set itself to weave a veil between herself and her sin, she remains, as in the light that had detected and exposed her, *and that is the spring of her future blessedness*; for the Lord quickly fills that place with the tokens of His grace, and no longer allows it to be merely the witness of her guilt and shame.

There is something in this mysterious Stranger that works on her spirit, and she names the name of "Messias" in His ear, as One that in some sense she was looking for. Then, the conscience having been already stirred, and now the vessel opened, the Saviour reveals Himself; the Stranger proves to be the Messias she had named, and she is blest and satisfied.

Here we see what the Lord will do with a conscience that needs to be aroused, if the sinner, in spite of shame and exposure, will still abide His presence. For it is surely the way of blessedness to value *Christ* more than *character*. We may say, in a sense, all depends on that. She no longer hid herself, but told her neighbours that she had been thoroughly exposed.

In the case of the Pharisees, or the accusers of the adulteress, the conscience is *bad*. A wicked purpose was filling their hearts all the time they were in the presence of Christ. What must He do with such a people? His presence shall be found intolerable to them. "Being convicted by their own conscience, they went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last."

What less could be done with such a shocking material? And so will it be by and by. All the wicked must perish from the presence of the Lord. Like smoke shall they be driven

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away. This was not the common way of Jesus, for He came not to judge, but to save. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." But when these accusers of the sinner would fain have her at the fiery hill, and deal in law with her, then the Lord can turn the heat of that place against them, and give in them a sample of the day of doom, when the wicked shall perish from the presence of the Lord. Unlike the poor Samaritan, they valued their character. Being exposed, they would not stand it.

They would rather hide their sin than have it published and borne away. For such Christ died in vain. They frustrate the grace of God. They sin against their own souls.

Thus the Lord Jesus is seen to deal with the conscience in different conditions.

With the awakened conscience He deals in all grace, giving it, as the contrite heart, to know that He revives it, and dwells from on high with it.

With the sinner who will still abide with Him, though under the pain of being exposed and made naked to his shame, He will deal till He relieve and satisfy him.

With the wicked who practise their wickedness, and when exposed will leave Him, and rather keep their place and character among men than reach the virtue of His

presence, He shows that presence to be intolerable.

These are Nathanael, the Samaritan, and the Pharisees. He dwells in the high and holy place, and also with the contrite; leads the poor convicted one who will still tarry with Him along the path of light and life; consigns to the fiery hill, and to separation from Himself, the wicked who rather practise their wickedness than seek His presence, and value their character more than interest in Christ.

In these simple, unpretending narratives we get these precious secrets of the ways of God in Christ thus discovered to us.

There remains however another, which I must not pass.

I allude to the blind beggar of chapter ix. In him we see an *honest* conscience. It is not a happy, or an awakened, or a sleepy, or a bad conscience. We do not see in him any uneasiness about his soul. He had not been under a fig tree with Nathanael, nor did the arrow of conviction enter him, through the word of Christ, as it penetrated to the deepest secrets of the Samaritan. It is not in such quickened conditions we see him. But he is honest. He is true to the light he has, and he will hold to the facts he knows. He suffers, rather than yield his integrity; and the Pharisees cast him out. Religiousness

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persecutes truthfulness. A common case.

Could Jesus leave such a one alone? Could He be indifferent to him? We know He could not. He heard that they had cast him out; and we may conclude that He at once sought him out; for we read, "When Jesus had *found* him." He made him His object; and the sight of Jesus and this beggar meeting for the second time is full of blessing and comfort.

As yet this poor man knew Him only in His power to heal him. There had been no exercise of *soul as a sinner*, though there was an *honest conscience*. But on seeing Jesus now the second time, outside the camp, his soul is exercised.

Jesus calls him into this exercise. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

And the poor man is at once made ready to take anything from Jesus. "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?"

And Jesus reveals Himself to him as the One who had given him sight when he was blind, and now takes him up when all were casting him out. "Thou hast both seen Him," says the Lord, "and it is He that talketh with thee."

The soul then discovers Jesus. Love and power thus combined, and thus acting in divine virtue, was enough. "Lord, I believe," he answered; and then "he wor-

shipped Him."

Thus He reached his soul, and dealt with him. And we are conscious that, while he was only an honest man before, he is now a quickened soul. *For an honest conscience is not a saved soul.*

But, in addition to all this, let me notice Paul's dealing with the conscience, in his Epistles. He sees none of these varieties. He sees the sinner just as he is, a sinner. He instructs the conscience how it should deal with God and His gospel, rather than shows us, as in the Gospel, how Christ deals with it. He tells the conscience that it may enjoy a *purged* condition; not merely an awakened or convicted or honest condition, but a purged condition.

This argument is found in Hebrews ix. x. The apostle there teaches that we may have a good or a purged conscience by faith in Christ, because after He had made His one offering, He entered the holiest place, never more to leave it as the priests under the law left it, His offering being effectual to put away sins, and this because of the admirableness of such a sacrifice as that rendered "without spot," and "through the eternal Spirit," and because this sacrifice met and satisfied God touching sin, answering and fulfilling "His will." The Holy Ghost Himself, in revealing the new covenant, or

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God's covenant, has established also the fact that sins and iniquities are remembered no more.

Thus, under the teaching of the apostle, the conscience is taught to deal with God, and the sinner exhorted to be happy in His love, and satisfied with His provisions; thus to enter the kingdom as a little child; not *reasoning*, but *receiving*.

In JOHN, we see living cases in which the Lord was dealing with the conscience; in HEBREWS, we are taught in what way the conscience is to deal with the Lord, and how it is to reach the condition in which the conscience of Andrew, Nathanael, the Samaritan, the adulteress, and the beggar, were left by Jesus.

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The word of God is a two-edged sword. It has no handle; all is blade. It is the word that judges people, and they cannot judge it. "It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." A man comes and tells me about various readings and the like. I reply, "How do you like a man that tells you all things that ever you did?" The word of God does not talk about all sorts of fine bits of learning, but it deals with a man's conscience. That is the way that the word of God is known.

## **The Christian's Power for Spiritual Conflict.**

READ JOSHUA III.

### **I.**

**T**HE books of the Old Testament bring before our souls certain features or characters of the dealings of God with us. In Genesis we have all the great fundamental principles brought out, such as the first Adam, the type of the last Adam; Abraham, the father of the faithful; Isaac, the son in a figure risen from the dead; and we get these types and figures of God's thoughts all through the book. In Exodus we have the priesthood brought out, and in Leviticus all that is connected with their service. Numbers is the path of faith through the wilderness, though we often see failure in it because of unbelief. In Joshua it is Christ in the energy of the Spirit leading His people through conflicts with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. Here too failure came in through human weakness and folly. And in Judges the failure and break-down of Israel when in possession of their privileges.

In Joshua we see the way Christ acts in the power of the Spirit in them, in obtaining their privileges. Saints are now under the leading and guidance of Christ by the Spirit; so in this book (v. 14) Christ comes as Cap-



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tain of the Lord's host, because the Canaanite was still in the land. As Jesus was led up of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil, so the conflicts of the saints are under the guidance of Christ by the Spirit in us, therefore there are many things, as regards the conflicts we are now in, which it will be of much blessing to our souls to notice, as they teach us our entire dependence on God in every step of the way.

The first thing we find here is Jordan standing in the way. This doubtless refers primarily to Israel in the latter day, when the power of evil will overflow its banks, and Israel will have to be restored as through death by divine power. In Numbers it is patience in going through the world. In Joshua spiritual energy in taking possession by conquest of that which is in the enemy's hand, thus enabling us to realize those things which we should never have known but through this divine power in our souls. Thus Joshua is the energy of the Spirit, and not the patience of the Spirit as in Numbers.

Redemption brings us out of Egypt into the wilderness through the Red Sea; that is, through death and resurrection. Then, being brought home to God, they have the knowledge of being a people with Him; for "the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day ye shall see them no more for ever." And

they sing the song of triumph and deliverance from Egypt, as brought home to God, before they begin their journey as a redeemed people through the wilderness.

There are two points connected with this. First, the Lord declares Himself holy, as in the "burning bush," and the bush not consumed. Second. Besides the holiness of His nature, He takes a covenant relationship in the ark of the covenant of the Lord. The proper place of the ark was in the centre of Israel, with all Israel around it, "to keep the charge of the Lord." And this is what we are called to do, to watch for the Lord's honour. But when Israel are taking a journey, then the ark quits its place of being kept by Israel, and goes before to seek out a resting-place for them. God thus takes His place as going before them on their journey.

God is not a consuming fire *out* of His people till the day of judgment, but He is now a consuming fire *in* His people. (Heb. xii. 29.) The patience of grace is going on with the world now, though "*everyone* shall be salted with fire," His people and the world too. (Mark ix. 14.) *Now* in the midst of His people His fire is working. His people are offered up to God in Christ first, and then they are salted with fire. The spiritual energy of divine grace is not absent, but the holiness of God in judgment is now in His

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house, not out of it. God's fire, although burning in the bush, did not consume it, neither does the fire with which the saint is salted consume the saint. The Lord presents Himself in the burning bush as the Holy One, but as come to redeem; and they were to come back to the bush (the place where He was) and serve Him on that mountain. God started from the bush, and everything contrary to His will must be consumed. The Father judges every man sojourning here in the wilderness state; therefore we ought to judge ourselves first, in divine intelligence.

Redemption was not by the ark, but by the rod on the sea; but when they started from Sinai, where God had made them His people, then the ark of the covenant of the Lord goes before them. So when we have been brought to God and made His people, we are afterwards brought to the place His hands have made. We have come to God, but not yet to the place His hands have made, for we are not yet come to our Father's house; but being brought to God we start from the place of His presence to go through the wilderness.

All the dealings of God are centred round the work of Christ. The God of holiness having brought them to Himself, His ark goes before them a three days' journey, seeking rest for them, and they follow on as the people of His choice, enjoying the know-

ledge of His presence with them, He going before and leading them on, and giving them patience in the way. "For ye have need of patience" to go round this wilderness. We have not got the world, neither have we got Canaan; so if we are not contented with the manna we have nothing.

At the end of Numbers we see the Lord declaring, when Satan sought to curse Israel by the mouth of Balaam, that He beheld no iniquity in Jacob, nor saw perverseness in Israel; still they do not come into the land yet. Numbers ends in failure, but in an unqualified determination to bring them into Canaan. Acceptance is past, but getting into Canaan is another thing. Moses could not take them into Canaan, and the Book of Joshua goes on practically where Numbers ceased. In Joshua is the fact that they get into Canaan; for in the details of this book we get in figure the heavenly condition of the saints now, as in Ephesians, "sitting in heavenly places in Christ," but having our conflicts there, too, with wicked spirits.

*(To be concluded, if the Lord will).*

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## Examples of Divine Wisdom in Dealing with Souls.

**T**HOUGH a profound Stranger among men, meeting nothing to attract Him, but everything to force His spirit continually to retire, yet was the Lord Jesus most accessible and full of activity; and this glorifies His life, or sets it off in great moral beauty, that, though forced, through purity, to be a *lonely* One, He was ever, in grace, an *active* One.

These activities of His were spent on all kinds of persons, and therefore assumed all kinds of forms. He was brought into contact with adversaries of different characters, with the fickle multitude, with a body of disciples who (in a sense separated from the people) companied with Him, with the Twelve, and with individuals. This kept Him, not only in constant, but in very various activity, and He had to know (as I need not say He did to perfection) "how to answer every man."

*Individuals*, who either claimed Him and sought Him, or were sought and found by Him, give us the most precious view of His activity, for they show us His dealing *with the soul*. It is the question of life and eternity that is discussed and settled on such occasions. It is something more than answering adversaries with fitting wisdom, or meeting

the multitude in their need, or warning disciples who followed Him, or talking in the intimacy of friendship with the Twelve. It is the soul that is concerned immediately and personally. Andrew and his companion seek Him; Philip is found of Him; and so is the Samaritan; and so the blind beggar outside the camp; Zaccheus seeks Him; Matthew is called by Him; but in all these individual cases it is the soul in its quickening for eternity we see. And this gives these cases the dearest, deepest character. We hang over them with an interest which tells us we ourselves have part in them.

At Bethany we see the Lord *adopting a family scene*. There He admitted such fellowship as would not have been consistent with a disallowance of the scene. He could not have been at Bethany, as we see He was, had He disallowed the affection that suits a family circle. He was as a well-known friend there, finding, as we still say among ourselves, a home in that loved house. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." These are words which bespeak this. He was not there merely as an invited guest; nay, nor merely as a Saviour; nor as one that had won for Himself a welcome by His sweet and profitable words. Such was seen in the house of Simon the Pharisee, in the village of the Samaritans, and at the table

at Emmaus; but here, at Bethany, Jesus was as one well known, a loved and honoured visitor, whose title to all that was there was understood and felt.

But, though it were thus, Jesus did not interfere with the arrangements of the house. As having the title of an intimate friend, He knew His welcome at all times; yet the order of the family was not at His discretion. Martha may still be the busy one, the house-keeper. Jesus leaves things as He finds them. It was not for Him to meddle. As He could not enter the house of another unbidden, so, having entered, He would not interfere with the order He finds there. All this is perfection in its place. But if one of the family, instead of carrying herself in her family place, will step out and be a teacher in His presence, He will then resume His higher character, and set things *divinely* right, though He would not touch them, as I may speak, *domestically*.

What various and exquisite beauty! What an archetype of all moral perfectness may be traced in this Son of man!

It is, however, happy to see kindredness in the personal beauty of the Lord and in the inwrought beauty of the saints. It is indeed true that this moral perfectness belongs to Him. It is His own, His personally; while it is theirs in and by the Spirit only. This

gives, in one sense, an infinite distance between Him and them, the distance that there is between the Sanctifier and the sanctified, which is infinite. Still it is blessed to see how the workmanship of the Spirit, or the fruit of the renewed mind in a saint, is after the model or original of a mind that was in Christ; and we may see a sample of this in the apostle Paul, according to that which we have now been looking at in the Lord.

Paul, in his ministry, like his Master, had to do with a great variety of persons. In his preaching, he was debtor, as he tells us, "both to the Greeks and to the barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise," and he was "willing to be all things to all men, that he might by all means save some." In his care of the churches he had to watch all the devices of the enemy in corrupting the truth or in ensnaring the saints; to feed the soul; to warn and to exhort; to rejoice and to be sorry, according to the condition of things he found among them; and to meet all this in the grace of Him who had gone before him in this extended experience of what man was, and what the ways of the great enemy.

And Paul had his narrower circle, as Jesus had before him. He had his dear son Timothy, whose tears he called to mind, and in recollection of whom, and of his dear family, his heart could indulge itself; and he



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had also his loved Philippians, for whom he could "thank God upon every remembrance of them."

And, further, like his Lord, he had his disappointments where he might have expected comforts, his discouragements when he might have looked for supports. They of Asia deserted him, and "at his first answer" in the presence of the power, "no man stood" with him. All this was a large field of ministerial experience, among men or in the world, among disciples or in the churches, from false brethren, or at least unfaithful ones, from the deep and various subtleties of Satan, as well as from the personal grace and fellowship of a few who were his comfort to the end.

Beyond all this, however, we see the apostle in a certain connection with a family scene, as we have already looked at the Lord at Bethany. I mean in his intercourse with Philemon; and we see him ordering himself in that intercourse in a way which may still remind us of his Master.

In his epistle to that beloved fellow-disciple we listen to the voice of an *apostle*, a *suitor*, and a *brother in Christ*. Paul had to sustain all these characters; and he does so, not sacrificing one of them to another of them; and his is beautiful, the workmanship of the Spirit in him, as it were, after the model of Jesus at Bethany.

In the first ten verses of this lovely epistle, we hear the voice of an *apostle*. Paul addresses Philemon in conscious authority, as having a higher relationship to him in the faith or in the order of the house of God. He salutes him, thanks God for him, and then prays for him (as he does, ordinarily, in all his epistles, for the churches), expressing likewise his joy in the grace that was in him, as he would rejoice in the grace that was in them, as, for instance, in his dear Philippians.

Then, to the nineteenth verse, we hear the *suitor*; and in such a character Paul stands in the acknowledgment of Philemon's rights, as a master in his own house and owner of his own possessions, as simply and as fully as if he were not an apostle. His desire as a suitor is not allowed to take advantage of his apostleship; and this is beautiful. He who charges servants not to despise their masters because they are brethren, will not presume on the worldly rights of a brother because he is an apostle (see 1 Tim. vi.). Paul makes his requests of Philemon touching Philemon's servant Onesimus, under the sense of his title as a master, as much as any stranger, any citizen of the world could have done. And again I say, this is beautiful. As Jesus would not interfere with family order, His servant would not trespass on family rights and possessions.

He knows when to be an apostle and when to be a suitor, and how to be both in season, in the spirit of his Lord, who knew when to be the Teacher, the divine authoritative Teacher, and when to be the family Friend. The Spirit of the Master guided the servant in the steps of the Master, and we may follow Paul as he followed Christ. There is something lovely in this. The character of a suitor is not lost in that of the apostle. Apostleship is not allowed to trespass on civil rights. Paul skilfully uses his materials, and plies his reasons. That is so; but that is just what an interested suitor would do; and every suitor should be interested. This is only the perfection of the new character in which he was now speaking. He also lets Philemon know that his *compliance* would be *obedience*. This was but the *integrity* of a suitor to a Christian like Philemon. Paul's skill or art in plying his reasons would have been but cunning had it not been accompanied by such integrity as this. I may therefore say his way as a suitor is beautiful.

And then, to the end, we listen to the words of a *brother*, the breathings of one who knew the grace that was in a fellow-disciple, and with confidence could count upon it and use it. "But withal," says he, "prepare me also a lodging, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you." Here it

is Philemon's love in the Spirit - that he reckons upon, as before it had been his rights in the world he was acknowledging.

Surely there is something excellent in all this. And one other thought on the whole epistle I would suggest: that Paul, the prisoner, in no measure grudges Philemon, the master, his comforts and possessions and liberty. No. What he had in Christ was too paramount in his heart, too commanding and occupying there, to leave room for such a feeling. But it is blessed to see this. Nay, he knew the dignity of suffering for Christ. To him it was "given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. i. 29).

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In John xviii., when Judas and the band of men and officers came to take Jesus, He said, "Whom seek ye?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth"; and as soon as He said unto them "I am He," they went backward and fell to the ground, thus manifesting the superiority of divine life in a man over the whole power of evil. Therefore we do not get the scene in Gethsemane in John's Gospel, because it is the Son of God passing onward in divine energy; consequently the whole power of evil falls down before Him.

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## David's Three Attitudes before God.

### II.

**B**UT there is another point in reference to which we are anxious to avoid misunderstanding. Some might suppose that the object of our remarks on David, as a penitent, is to prove that unless we have passed through precisely the same exercises, we have no just ground for believing that we are really regenerated. This would be a grave mistake. For, in the first place, David had been a child of God for many a day before that solemn moment on which we have been meditating.\* And, further, we believe that David found his relief, not in any exercises *within*, but in communications from *without*, even the precious promises and assurances of God to his soul. He rested not on the fact that the arrow had entered his heart, in these words, "Thou art the man," and drawn forth the penitential cry, "I have sinned against the Lord." No; but upon the precious truth conveyed to him in the words, "The Lord hath put away thy sin."

Finally, let not a damp be cast upon any

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\*The reader will bear in mind that, in speaking of "David's three attitudes," we do not present them in their historical order, but simply view them as illustrating three grand points in the spiritual history of God's people.

souls because the earliest moments of their spiritual history were characterized, not by profound penitential exercises, but rather by the most peaceful and happy emotions. It is impossible that the "*glad tidings*" of salvation can do aught else but gladden the believing soul. There was "great joy" in Samaria when Philip preached Christ to them; and the eunuch went on his way "rejoicing" when he learnt that Jesus had died for his sins. How could it be otherwise? How could anyone "believe in the forgiveness of sins" and not be made happy by the belief? Impossible. "*Glad tidings of great joy*" *must* make the poor heart glad.

"Forgiveness, 'twas a joyful sound;  
To sinners lost, and doomed to die."

Surely it was. But does this fact interfere in the smallest degree with the value of a deep and thorough work of the Spirit of God in the conscience? By no means. A hungry man values bread, and although he will not think of feeding upon the pangs of hunger, yet the pangs of hunger make him value the bread. So it is with the soul; it is not saved by penitential exercises; but the deeper its exercises the more solid its grasp of Christ, and the more steady and vigorous its practical Christianity.

The simple fact, beloved reader, is this.

We see in the present day a fearful amount of flippant, easy-going, airy Christianity, so called, which we greatly dread. We meet with many who seem to have attained a kind of false peace and frothy happiness, without any real exercise of conscience, or any application of the power of the cross to nature and its ways. These are stony-ground hearers. There is no root, no depth, no power, no permanency. And not only are such persons self-deceived, but the tone and aspect of their profession are, amongst other influences, forming the channel along which the tide of infidelity shall, ere long, roll its poisonous and desolating waters. We believe that cold, uninfluential orthodoxy, and flippant, formal, airy profession are paving the way, just as thoroughly as dark and degrading superstition, for that infidelity which shall yet cast its mantle over the whole civilized world.

This is a deeply solemn thought; but we are impressed with it, and we dare not withhold it from our readers. We long to see a more effective testimony for Christ, a more earnest discipleship, a more thorough self-surrender and whole-hearted consecration to the name and cause of Christ. For this we sigh, for this we pray; and we certainly do not expect to find it amid the ranks of those who have never known much exercise of conscience, or tasted the power of the cross of Christ.

However, we must not anticipate a line of thought which may come before us as we proceed with our subject. We shall, with God's blessing, see in David, ere we close, a noble illustration of personal devotedness. Meanwhile, let us contemplate him in the second of his remarkable attitudes, namely,

### SITTING AS A WORSHIPPER.

In the opening of the seventh chapter of the Second Book of Samuel we find David sitting in his house of cedar, and surveying the many and varied mercies with which the hand of Jehovah had surrounded him. "And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies, that the king said unto Nathan the prophet, 'See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.' And Nathan said to the king, 'Go, do all that is in thine heart, for the Lord is with thee.'"

In a word, David *would* build a house for God. But he was not the man, nor was his the time for that. Nathan is at once dispatched to correct the mistake. The service was well meant; but that was not sufficient. It must be well timed as well as well meant. David had shed much blood; and, moreover, there were enemies and evil occurrent. There were also deeper lessons of grace in which



David had to be instructed. God had done much for him; but all that had been done in the past was as nothing compared with what was yet to be done in the future. If a house of cedar was a great thing, how much greater was an everlasting house and kingdom? The Lord telleth thee that "he will make thee an house." This was reversing the matter altogether. The doings of the past were full of grace; the doings of the future would be full of glory. The hand of electing love had lifted David from the sheepcote to place him on the throne of Israel. "And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord God, but Thou hast also spoken of Thy servant's house for a great while to come." The past and the future are both brought, in brilliant array, before the vision of King David, and he has only to bow his head, and worship.

"Then went King David in, and *sat* before the Lord, and he said, '*Who am I, O Lord God?*'" Here, then, we have David's second attitude. Instead of going out to build for the Lord, he went in, and sat before the Lord. There is great moral beauty and power in this. To an unintelligent eye, he might have seemed to be in a very useless attitude; but, oh! we may rest assured of this, that no one can ever stand as a servant, who has not sat as a worshipper. We must

have to do *with* the Lord, before we can act *for* the Lord. Show us a man who has really occupied the place of a worshipper, and we will show you one who, when he rises to his feet, will prove an effective servant.

And be it noted, it is one thing to sit before the Lord, and another thing to sit before *our* work, *our* service, *our* preaching, *our* circumstances, *our* experiences, *our* anything. How often are we tempted to sit down, and gaze at, or think over, our various exploits, even though these may be ostensibly in the Lord's work? This is sure to super-induce weakness. Nothing can be more miserable than self-occupation. It is right enough to feel thankful if the Lord has used us in any department of work; but oh! let us beware of keeping self before our eyes, in any shape or form, directly or indirectly. Let us not be found self-complacently surveying the various things in which we are engaged, the different interests we have set on foot, or the varied spheres of action in which we take part. All this tends to puff up nature, while it leaves the soul barren and impoverished.

Mark the difference! "Then went King David in and sat before the Lord, and said, '*Who am I?*'" "I" is sure to fall into obscurity and oblivion when we sit before the Lord. We hardly know which to admire

## DAVID'S THREE ATTITUDES.

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most, the attitude or the utterance. "*He sat,*" and said, "*Who am I?*" Both are lovely, both in exquisite moral order. May we know more of their deep, deep meaning and immense practical power! May we prove what it is to sit in the divine presence, and there lose sight of self and all its belongings!

We do not attempt to enter upon an exposition of the fifty-first Psalm, which, as we have said, is David's utterance as a penitent; nor yet of the seventh chapter of Second Samuel, which gives us his utterance as a worshipper; we merely introduce these precious scriptures to the notice of the reader, and pass on, in the third and last place, to look at David

## STANDING AS A SERVANT.

"Then David the King stood up upon his feet." (1 Ch. xxviii. 2.) This completes the picture of this lovely character. We have seen him lying on the earth, with the arrow of conviction piercing his conscience, and the chastening rod of God held over him. We have seen him seated in the sanctuary, surveying the actings of grace in the past, and anticipating the bright beams of glory in the future. And now we see him rising into the attitude of a real, true-hearted servant, to lay himself and his resources at Jehovah's feet.

All is intensely real. The penitential cry,

the aspirations of the worshipper, the accents of devotedness and consecration, all is deep, fervent and genuine. "I have prepared with *all my might* for the house of my God." "Moreover, because *I have set my affection* to the house of God."

What self-forgetting devotedness is here! David was not to have the honour of building the house; but what was that to one who had found his place in the sanctuary, and learnt to say, "Who am I?" It was all the same to David who was to build the house. It was the house of his God, and that was enough. The strength of his hand, the love of his heart, and the resources of his treasury were all willingly devoted to such an object.

We would fain pause here to expatiate; but we must close. May the Holy Ghost by His mighty power, apply these things to our hearts. Christian reader, dost thou not long for more whole-hearted devotedness? Dost thou not sigh after a more lofty consecration of thyself and all that thou hast to Christ and His cause in the earth? Well then, just get a little nearer to Him. Seek to be more in His presence. You have risen up from the attitude of a penitent; go, now, and sit, and gaze, and worship; and then, when the fitting occasion offers, you will be ready to occupy the position of an effective servant.

## **The Christian's Power for Spiritual Conflict.**

READ JOSHUA III.

### II.

**T**HE Book of Joshua, then, shows the heavenly path of the saint's life now, while the Book of Numbers is the earthly path. The Red Sea was death and resurrection, by which Israel was brought to God, whereas Jordan is the saint's moral death, death and resurrection in spiritual power. As such the saint is under the Captain of our salvation, the warrior Christ in spiritual energy. The more the saint realizes what it is to go through Jordan, the great power of evil overflowing its banks so that there is no fordable place to put one's foot upon, the deeper will be the sense of the conflict; but it is all swept away so that there is no passing through the water at all. To have a heavenly life here, or enjoy a heavenly life hereafter, nature must pass through death. When *flesh* came to deal with Satan then there were giants, and the Israelites were but as grasshoppers, and they could not go up; so God has to take them round another way.

The ark takes the first place on the journey of death to lead God's people into it, because through death and resurrection is "the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed

this way heretofore" ; that is, nature or flesh had never passed that way before. But now ye must go through this Jordan with the whole power of death overflowing all its banks. Therefore, when ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God *remove*, "ye shall remove from your place and go *after it*" ; that is, seeing Christ passing through the very same circumstances first, we must remove from our place of fleshly ease and follow *after Him*.

But there is another thing true to us, that the power of spiritual life can only be enjoyed so far as we are dead to the world, and entering with spiritual energy into the conflict. Therefore the apostle, having the sentence of death in himself, could go into the conflict saying, "I am a dead man trusting the living God." You cannot pass through Jordan without going into it; you cannot fly over it. It must be passed through by the *feet*; but then Christ passed through before us. We do not learn to pass through Jordan when in it; we learn it before. It will not do to enter Jordan by natural effort; it must be by the power of Christ's presence in the place of death. When we have courage to follow Christ, then we find Christ, and there is no Jordan at all. Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego were raised in the world by being in Nebuchadnezzar's court, and therefore got

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into the fire; but being faithful they found the Lord there, and no fire at all. The moment the priests' feet touch the waters, the waters cease. Were we to attempt to go through Jordan in our own power, we should be drowned; but when in the power of Christ, when we "behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passing over before into Jordan," then we find the water all gone. We are called to take the place in resurrection which Christ has taken, and death has no more dominion over Him. Nearness to God in the place of death is divine power in the saint. The flesh would be drowned by the water overflowing its banks unless there be the manifestation of the superior power of Christ over it. When we find our feet touching the waters of death, it is the power of the divine life of Christ over the waters of Jordan exhibited in us, for the priests were to "stand still in Jordan." To the people Joshua said, "Hereby shall ye know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out before you the Canaanites . . . from the land." It was but enumerating the catalogue of things which were to be the occasion of manifesting the divine power. "The priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm *on dry ground* in the midst of Jordan until all the people were

passed clean over Jordan ” ; so the power of Christ is there until every one is gone over. If our souls are occupied about going through Jordan, we shall never be able to venture into it; but if we see Christ there, and follow Him without thinking about Jordan, but only about Him, we shall pass right through, and find no Jordan at all.

The Lord does not bring them immediately into conflict, but first gives them the *corn of the land*, the natural growth of the country, and the manna ceases; for they are now at home. Thus we have not merely the strength we need to get through the evil, but the enjoyment of feeding on that which is the fruit of the land itself, feeding on Christ in heaven. They are circumcised, keep the passover, and eat the corn of the land; the reproach of Egypt is rolled away. When we have the taste for heavenly things, we disrelish that which savours of the reproach of Egypt; but there must always be the getting back to Gilgal. From thence begin their conflicts. Then there is the Captain of the Lord's host; for if we enter into conflict without the spirit of dependence we shall fail; there may be undetected sin, which dependence and nearness to God would have brought to light and put away. There was more trouble in conquering Ai by stratagem than if they had gone up trusting the Lord.



## "The last Words of David."

### I.

**T**HERE is a remarkable contrast between the two songs in 2 Sam. xxii-xxiii. 1-7 :

The song of David after he had done with *all his enemies* (that is, after his trials by Saul), and the song of David after he had done *with himself*; here brought together by the Spirit of God.

1. At the end of his *trials* when looking back at his enemies, he sings of joy and triumph; all is exultation.

2. After his experience of the *blessing*, it is, "Although my house be not so with God."

The end of all the sorrow and trial with Saul is rejoicing, exultation, and strength. The waves of death had compassed him, the floods of ungodly men made him afraid, the sorrows of hell compassed him about, and the snares of death prevented him; yet the result of all of which he thus went through, in deep and bitter exercise of soul, is triumph, thanksgiving and praise, in *the first instance*, when he recounts God's deliverance; while in the *second*, the result of the place of honour, blessing, and triumph, is deep and bitter sorrow; the confession, "My house is not so with God."

Not that he was without something to sustain his heart under it all; for he adds, "Yet He hath made with me an everlasting coven-

ant, ordered in all things, and sure." For this he waited until the "morning without clouds"; but the end of all his blessing here is, *My house is not so with God.*

This contrast makes trouble precious, and is a check to any desire to get out of it.

So practically it is with us. We need to guard against the effects of success. The pressure of circumstances which keep me down, produces nothing but joy and praise, in the experience of God's goodness; the effect of circumstances which lift me up, is sorrow. How often has a saint, when in trial and conscious weakness, cast therein *upon the Lord*, cried unto Him, and as a faithful servant been sustained, had blessing, and acquired influence, godly influence too; but how often, satisfied with the blessing and the influence thus acquired, and losing the sense of his weakness, has he stopped suddenly short in his course, been arrested in the point of influence obtained, and become comparatively useless in the Church of God!

This should lead us to desire conformity in suffering to Jesus. The path of grace is, like Him, to be getting on nearer and nearer to the Father, but to be getting nothing here.

There are three things brought before us in these chapters; one of them intended to give us solemn warning:

First, the result of all David's trials at the

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hand of Saul. Secondly, when set upon the throne, the consequence of his being surrounded with all the earthly blessings. And, thirdly, the joy at the end, of "the sweet psalmist of Israel," in anticipation of the "morning without clouds."

Whilst the heart receives the warning against the effect of success, or anything in present blessing, are we looking out for, and resting on, the full, distinct, and perfect blessing which will be in that day when the Lord Jesus comes?

We see here the way in which the Spirit of Christ gathers up the history of Israel into Himself as a centre, and makes the harp of David that on which it should be played. There is perhaps nothing of deeper interest than to see how God takes up the history of David in the Psalms, writing as it were upon the tablets of David's heart the history of the Lord Jesus.

In the first song there is a remarkable allusion to the whole history of Israel, to dealings of God with them, of which David felt the moral power in himself. We have a wonderful variety of circumstances, backward, forward, and around, gathering up all the history of David, and the triumphs of David; unfolding the sympathies of Christ with the heart of David in sorrow, until he is made

head of the heathen, his own people being blessed under him.

In chapter xxiii. we read "the last words of David." And here we learn where his eye and heart rested, amidst consciousness of his own failure, and the failure of his house. He was looking for the "morning without clouds," for the One who should rule over men in the fear of the Lord, who should build God's house, and in whom the glory should be manifested.

As to these men of Belial, too, there must come One in the sternness of judgment to set them aside; then they "shall all of them be as thorns thrust away."

There is the deep consciousness of all the ruin, but the effect of the coming morning shining into it, the effect of the coming of the Son of David on David's heart, and the failure of everything around, leading him to reach forward in spirit to the full triumph of that day when all should be full of blessing.

We thus, in the two chapters, have the unfolding of the sympathies of Christ with the heart of David, gathering up all the sorrows of the history of Israel; and also the heart of David resting in the consciousness of what the "morning without clouds" would be.

We should seek so to get the power of the Spirit in the sympathies of Christ, and at the same time to reach out to the hope which the

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Spirit of God sets before us, as by the way to be thrown upon the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

Let us now trace a little what David was, up to the time of this success.

It is ever just the very thing that seems hopeless in the eyes of man, which is taken up of God. See Sarah, Rebekah, Zacharias and Elisabeth. So too here with David. In him there was everything contrary to the thoughts of the flesh. Contrast him with Saul. Saul was the comeliest man in Israel, taller than them all by the head, “from the shoulders and upwards he was higher than any of the people.” (It was strength in the flesh.)

But all this is passed by, and it is the *lad keeping the sheep* that is taken up. Saul is unfaithful, rejected from being king, and then God sets His eye upon David.

Samuel, by the Spirit of prophecy (1 Sam. xvi.), goes down to Bethlehem, to select from among the sons of Jesse one who should be king in the room of Saul. He causes them to pass before him. Seven come in. Samuel asks, “Is there not another?” Yes, a lad keeping the sheep. “Send and fetch him.” David comes, and is designated by the Spirit of prophecy as the anointed of the Lord. All that is *great* in Jesse's eyes is suffered to pass unnoticed; the seven were personable men,

but it is the *lad keeping the sheep*, the eighth, the weak one, that is preferred and taken up.

From that time the Spirit of God departs from Saul, and an evil spirit falls upon him. David is brought into his company as one who could play upon the harp. Here we find him of no importance; so that afterwards, when he had killed the giant Goliath, on Saul's inquiring of Abner, "Whose son is this youth?" Abner says, "I cannot tell." His brethren too ask him "with whom he has left the few sheep in the wilderness."

But what traits do we find in David? Deep consciousness of having God's strength, and forgetfulness of self in all the difficulties which come in the way of duty. He keeps his father's sheep; a lion and a bear come to take a lamb of the flock; it is his business to guard the sheep, and he goes at once against the lion and the bear, and slays them. These energetic works are done with simple reference to duty, therefore the difficulties are as nothing.

Here we see faith in operation. Faith recognises God, and duty to God, and then the thing is a matter of course. Put a child to raise up a stone, and it is all effort; put a strong man, and it is easily accomplished. Faith realises the strength of God without any reckoning on self, so does that which comes in the way, and thinks nothing about it.

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David here in the path of duty gathers up the consciousness of having God's strength with him, to be used in after trial. The secret of strength, thus learnt in retirement, prepares him for that which the Lord has subsequently for him to do.

Blessing still followed the career of Saul; we read, “Whithersoever he turned himself he vexed his enemies.” Though evil, seeking his own, and rejected from being king, there is blessing to Israel through him. But the Lord in secret had set His eye on David.

The Philistines are gathered together to battle against Israel (chap. xvii.) David goes up to the camp, sent by his father, with provisions for his brethren, where he hears Goliath challenging Israel. Having learnt in the simplicity of the path of duty with the God of Israel, when no eye was upon him, that He was a faithful God, now that he comes to see the people of God, and Goliath against them, he is astonished at finding them all afraid, and asks, “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” Why, he is an *uncircumcised* Philistine, and he is defying the armies of the *living God*!

Bad motives are imputed to him by his brother for coming to the camp; but there is in him that simplicity of heart in recognising God, that the path of duty is straightforward,

and in power. Whether as a shepherd, whose business it was to guard the sheep (if the lion came, he took him by the beard, and slew him; or the bear in like manner, he slew it, without display and without boast), they were simply matters of duty, and are untold until there is a needed occasion for mentioning them; or, if afterwards it be this uncircumcised Philistine, it is the same thing: "He shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God."

Onwards he moves in the energy of faith; he looks not to Israel for help; he rejects the proffered armour of Saul; he thinks not of the spear like a weaver's beam: is this *uncircumcised* Philistine to defy the God of Israel? That is the question; and he says, "This day will *the Lord* deliver thee into my hands." His heart is on Israel; he takes up the relationship of God with Israel. Although the exercise of faith depend on a single individual, "*the battle is the Lord's*," he identifies the glory of God with Israel, and then "the uncircumcised Philistine" can have no power at all. With a sling and a stone from the brook he destroys the Philistine, and cuts off his head with his own sword; as it is said of Jesus, that He destroyed *through* death him that had the power of death; by the very weapon of him who had the power (Heb. ii.).

His heart rested on the faithfulness of the



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God of saints. This was the secret of his strength, learnt by himself, to be acted upon in any circumstance. And this is always the character of faith. Faith, when acting, brings in God; makes God everything, circumstances nothing. Whether it be the lion and the bear, or the uncircumcised Philistine, it is the same thing. The secret of God's strength learnt *when alone*, is that by which faith looks upon every circumstance as the same, making God the great circumstance that governs all else.

After this they begin to sing, “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands”; and then David becomes the object of Saul's hatred. “Saul eyed David from that day and forward.”

Subsequently we find in the character of David, when in the midst of mighty enemies, the consciousness of weakness and infirmity, and the absence of all thought of avenging himself against Saul. He never takes a single step without consulting God, except in one instance, and then he gets chastened for it. Everything is against him; he is conscious of being in the midst of subtle enemies, and of conflicting with a power which he cannot set aside. Saul seeks his life (xviii. 10, 11), but he has no right to set aside the power of Saul.\*

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\* It was righteous power, for God had set him in it; but not rightly used.

The enemy cannot be got rid of, and therefore he is forced to go to the Lord for guidance as to every step he takes.

So it was with the saints. And this is just what they need now; the consciousness of conflicting with a power which they cannot set aside; and the sense of their own utter weakness, so as to be forced into direct reference to God in every circumstance; to be thrown into dependence upon Him for every step.

At last Saul drives him completely away, and full hostility is manifested, and he becomes an outcast. All this is necessary for the exercise of his faith, and he gets practised thereby in waiting on the Lord: "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God."

He escapes to the cave of Adullam, is separate from all that God is about to judge, and gathers together his mighty men.

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The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of holiness. If truth (the form of it) comes to me without holiness, I cannot receive it as of the Spirit of God; and, *vice versâ*, if there be apparent holiness without truth. Thus, for the humble believer, there is always a corrective or countercheck, whereby he may detect the evil—Satan's imitation.

## Confession of Sins.

READ I JOHN I.

**I**T is not God's will that His creatures should be left in uncertainty about anything which concerns their spiritual welfare. In clear and simple terms He has defined the moral condition of every man by nature; he is a child of wrath, dead in trespasses and sins. Equally clear and simple is His language when in His grace He sets before us the way of salvation. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 8, 9.) And this salvation is immediate and complete; for "He that heareth my word," says the Lord Jesus, "and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24.) He has been brought out of that sphere where death reigns, and in which judgment will be executed.

But the knowledge of salvation is not all that we should desire. God would have His redeemed people to hold communion with Himself. For any of the fallen children of Adam to have fellowship with God two things are requisite: the ground must be prepared on

which it can be based; the capacity must be imparted by which it can be enjoyed. By the atonement, the ground has been prepared; by the new birth, the being begotten of God, the capacity is imparted. The ground once laid, nothing can change it; the new nature once bestowed, none can deprive us of it.

Yet, in point of fact, every saint does not experimentally enjoy unbroken communion with God. Set before God, in grace, as a child, the relationship remains unchanged; but the enjoyment of it is another thing. Defective teaching as to the work of Christ and the place of nearness into which all who believe on Him are brought may, and often does, hinder it. But communion is often interrupted by failure in walk. For He with whom we are allowed this intercourse is a holy God. He is light. He cannot act contrary to His nature by having fellowship with evil, so neither can He admit to communion with Him those who do. "In Him is no darkness at all."

At the same time John could write, "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." It was not with him possibility, but a reality. And knowing what it was, he desired for all believers that they also should enter into it. "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." "These

things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John i. 3, 4.)

Then follows the condition of walk needful for the desire of the evangelist, and surely of God also, for those to whom he wrote to be fulfilled. The nature of God, what He is, being concisely stated (v. 5), the walk of the saint must be in accordance with it. Pretension here will not avail. However others may be deceived, God sees all and judges all. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

At this juncture another question comes up. If we have sinned, what are we to do? How can we be restored to communion? To the Word we must go to learn this, for it is God's prerogative to prescribe the terms; it is our part to observe the conditions.

Here what grace meets us! We find He has already anticipated our failure. He cannot allow it; yet He has foreseen it. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not" (chap. ii. 1), is the word of God to every pardoned sinner. Possessed of a nature which cannot sin, because born of God, indwelt by the same Holy Ghost who descended and rested on the Lord when here

on earth ; there is no excuse and should be no license for sin.

Yet we do sin. So in language as clear and simple as that which tells us of our condition by nature, and the way of salvation by faith through grace, the Word sets forth the provision God has made for our failure, and the directions He has laid down for our observance. The *provision* is the advocacy of His Son, Jesus Christ, the righteous One, the propitiation for our sins ; the *direction* for His saints is to confess their sins (1 John ii. 1, 2 ; i. 9). It is the blood of Christ which procures the complete forgiveness of sins. It is by the advocacy of the righteous One that the failing saint is restored to the privileges of communion. But the child must acknowledge his fault ; for the holiness of God must be maintained. How simple are God's ways ; and yet how grossly perverted have been His directions about confession ! What confusion still prevails in the Church of God on this point ! How have men by their misunderstanding and misuse of His simple directions clouded the truth, till the way of salvation by faith in Christ has been forgotten, and the finished character of His work practically denied.

Confession, it is clear, is God's own institution. The children of Israel were commanded to practise it (Lev. v. 5 ; Num. v. 7.)

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The godly in Israel were baptised of John, confessing their sins. The believer in the Lord Jesus is told to confess. But for what are we to confess? What should we confess? To whom must we confess?

These questions answered from God's Word will set the matter clear, and will help souls in a day when doctrinal error abounds, and the teaching of so many is sadly confused.

1. *Confession is not for salvation.* It is for those who have been saved. For remark, the apostle includes himself among the number of those who might need it: "If we confess." Yet he wrote when in actual enjoyment of communion with the Father and with the Son. He knew he had eternal life himself, and wrote to assure others of it (v. 13); and because their sins were forgiven for Christ's sake (chap. ii. 12.) It is for the saint who has fallen, not for the sinner yet unconverted, that he here speaks. It is for the restoration of fellowship with God, not for salvation, that he thus writes. Did not David know something of the difference here pointed out when, in Psalm xxxii., after describing the result of his confession to the Lord, he adds, "For this shall everyone that is godly make his prayer unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found"? His experience would encourage them.

2. *What should we confess?* Our sins. Before God in Christ, new creatures, we are

told not to sin. From the old nature we never can be free till death, or the change which takes place at the coming of the Lord into the air for His saints. But the "old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. vi. 6.) It is the yielding to this nature we have to confess. "If we confess our sins." It is one thing to speak of ourselves as sinful creatures, the common condition by nature of all the human race; it is another thing to confess acts of sin, when the efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ has been known, a new nature has been received, and the individual has become a temple of the Holy Ghost. If I confess myself a sinner, I am only speaking of what I cannot help. If I confess my sins, I speak of what I ought to abstain from. I have yielded to that to which I had no right to yield; I have done that which I ought not to have done.

3. *To whom must we confess?* Though not here expressly stated, it is plain it is to God. For against Him have we offended. Acting according to His nature, He must make us feel that the link of communion has been sundered. To Him we must confess, that He may righteously, when the acts have been judged by us according to His judgment of them, receive us again into fellowship with Himself. Saved once and for ever, we have



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not to ask for an atonement to be made, or to be washed in the blood of Christ. Our standing before Him is perfect. His children before we failed, we are still His children when we have failed. Our relations will remain unaltered and unalterable. We need not then an earthly priest to come between us and God. That implies imperfection of standing. It assumes that the person acting as priest has a nearer place with God than we have. This was the case dispensationally with Israel; there the people could not go where the priest could; they had no place of service at the altar, no ministry in the sanctuary. Our relationship with God is the closest that can be; children of the Father (the undoubted position of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ) our standing too is in Him before God.

If this is forgotten, the thought of confession to an official person is easily taken up, to the grievous dishonour of the Lord, and the great loss of the soul; for confession to an official, call him priest or anything else, is really a relinquishment of the right of access, for the saint who has sinned, to the presence of the Father; a denial of the all-sufficiency of the advocacy of our blessed Lord; and practically an affirmation that man must supply a link which he has not, between the soul and God. It is a return to the position of Israel before the death of the Lord; it is

Jewish, not Christian ground. We have only to look around to see the darkness, ignorance, want of peace and intelligence in the things of God which characterise the professing Church, where this is practised, to learn its true tendency, and to understand its real origin. The Christian standing has been well nigh forgotten, and that in the Church of God.

On the other hand, confession to our fellow-creatures we may practise. When we have sinned against them, we must confess it to them, ere looking for restoration from God. Have we not this expressed in principle in Matthew v. 23, 24; Luke xvii. 4? If we have not injured them, we may confess our faults to them, according to James v. 16, that prayer being made by them, for us who have sinned, we may be healed. To be anointed with oil, the elders were to be called; for confession of our faults, it is to one another we may resort. How carefully does the word of God guard us against the introduction of an elder, or priest, or any other official, when confession is spoken of!

Confession made, forgiveness follows. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Need we any man to assure us of it when God has so graciously promised it us in His word? Will any word of man make the word of God more sure?

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Can man's announcement of it give greater confidence to the heart of God's children? His own character is pledged to accord it; He is faithful, He cannot deny Himself; He is just; He cannot act unjustly. What He is, as here set forth, should surely give confidence to the heart, which no word of man can strengthen, no authoritative declaration of a priest can make more sure. On His word we may surely rely. When we confess our sins, He forgives.

If we would rest here God would not. He not only forgives, but cleanses from all unrighteousness. Pure Himself, He cleanses His saints from all unrighteousness, that the joy of fellowship with Himself may be restored, and we again be before Him as happy, free, rejoicing children.

Mark how God here does it all. We confess: He forgives and He cleanses. What room then is there for man to come in? Who needs an official person on earth to re-admit his soul to communion with God? There is indeed the power of binding and loosing, but the sphere for its exercise is earth. It is given to the assembly to put away from their midst a wicked person, to forgive him, and to receive him again to fellowship at the Lord's table when assured of his repentance. (Compare 1 Cor. v. 1-5 with 2 Cor. ii. 6, 7.) Discipline in the Church of God must be

maintained; yet even in this the word of God lays the responsibility of action on the local assembly, not any person or persons of it.

But the subject in John is not discipline on earth, but the restoration of the soul to individual fellowship with God. This is God's own work. Often may we need it where no case for the exercise of discipline by the assembly has arisen. But as often as we need it we find God ready to do it, if only we confess our sins before Him.

How unfailing is His grace! How inexhaustible His love!

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The world could not understand Christ; but He knew the world thoroughly. He was ever mixing with everybody, but always *Himself*, and never of the world; and we are by rights as much strangers in it as He was. Flesh, and Satan; and the world always go together; but Christ was ever drawing round Him everything that was of God, and judging all that was not. If you were a great man you would get a good place in an inn; if you were a little man you would get a little place; but He got *no place at all*. Have your souls got the thorough conviction that you have none either; and that all that you have got to do in it is to *overcome*?

## **The Grapes of Eshcol.**

READ NUMBERS XIII.

**T**HE grand principle of the divine life is faith, simple, earnest, whole-hearted faith, faith that just takes and enjoys all that God has given, faith that puts the soul in possession of eternal realities, and maintains it therein habitually. This is true in reference to the people of God in all ages. "According to your faith, be it unto you," is ever the divine motto. There is no limit. All that God reveals, faith may have; and all that faith can grasp, the soul may abidingly enjoy.

It is well to remember this. We all live far, very far below our privileges. We are satisfied, many of us, to move at a great distance from the blessed centre of all our joys. We are content with merely knowing salvation, while, at the same time, we taste but little of holy communion with our Lord and Saviour. We are satisfied with merely knowing that a relationship exists, without earnestly and jealously cultivating the affections belonging thereto. This is the cause of much of our coldness and barrenness. As, in the solar system, the farther a planet is from the sun the colder its climate and the slower its movement; so in the spiritual system, the farther one moves from Christ the colder will be the state of his heart toward Christ, and the slower his movement for Christ. On the con-

trary, fervour and rapidity will ever be the result of felt nearness to that central Sun, the great Fountain of heat and light.

The more we enter into the power of the love of Christ, and the more we realize His abiding presence with us, the more intolerable we shall feel it to be one moment away from Him. Everything will be dreaded and avoided which would tend to withdraw our hearts from Him, or hide from our souls the light of His blessed countenance. The heart that has really learnt aught of the love of Christ cannot live without it; yea, it can part with all for it. When away from Him naught is felt save the gloom of midnight and the chilling breath of winter; but in His presence the soul can mount upward like the lark, as he rises into the bright blue heavens to salute, with his cheerful song, the sun's morning beams.

Nothing exhibits more the deep-seated unbelief of our hearts than the fact that, while our God would have us enjoying communion with the very highest truths, few of us ever think of aspiring beyond the mere alphabet. Our hearts do not sigh as they should after the higher walks of spiritual scholarship. We are satisfied with having the foundation laid, and are not as anxious as we should be to add layer after layer to the spiritual superstructure. Not that we can ever do without the

alphabet or the foundation. This would obviously be impossible. The most advanced scholar must carry the alphabet along with him; and the higher the building is raised, the more the need of a solid foundation is felt.

But let us look at Israel's case. Their history is full of rich instruction for us. It is "written for our admonition" (I Cor. x. 11). We must contemplate them in three distinct positions, namely, as sheltered by the blood; as victorious over Amalek; and as introduced into the land of Canaan.

Now, clearly, an Israelite in the land of Canaan had lost nothing of the value of the first two points. He was not the less shielded from judgment, or delivered from the sword of Amalek, because he was in the land of Canaan. Nay, the milk and honey, the grapes, figs, and pomegranates of that goodly land would but enhance the value of that precious blood which had preserved him from the sword of the destroyer, and afford the most unquestionable evidence of his having passed beyond the cruel grasp of Amalek.

Still, surely no one would say that an Israelite ought to have sought nothing beyond the blood-stained lintel. It is plain he ought to have fixed his steady gaze on the vine-clad hills of the promised land, and said, "There lies my destined inheritance, and by the grace of Abraham's God, I shall never rest satisfied

until I plant my foot triumphantly thereon." The blood-stained lintel was the starting-post; the land of promise the goal. It was Israel's high privilege not only to have the assurance of full deliverance from the hand of Pharaoh and the sword of Amalek, but also to cross the Jordan, and pluck the mellow grapes of Eshcol. It was their sin and their shame that, with the clusters of Eshcol before them, they could ever long after "the leeks, the onions, and the garlicks" of Egypt.

But how was this? What kept them back? Just that hateful thing which, from day to day, and hour to hour, robs us of the precious privilege of treading the very highest stages of the divine life. And what is that? UNBELIEF! "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. iii. 19). This it was which caused Israel to wander in the desert for forty tedious years. Instead of looking at Jehovah's power to bring them into the land, they looked at the enemy's power to keep them out of it.

Thus they failed. In vain did the spies, whom they themselves proposed to send (Deut. i. 22) bring back a most attractive report of the character of the land. In vain did they display in the people's view a cluster of the grapes of Eshcol, so luxuriant that two men had to bear it upon a staff. All was useless. The spirit of unbelief had taken posses-



sion of their hearts. It was one thing to admire the grapes of Eshcol when brought to their tent doors by the energy of others; and quite another to move onward, in the energy of personal faith, and pluck those grapes for themselves.

And if "twelve men" could get to Eshcol, why not six hundred thousand? Could not the same hand that shielded the one, shield the other likewise? Faith says, "Yes." But unbelief shrinks from responsibility, and quails before difficulty. The people were no more willing to advance after the spies returned than before they set out. They were in a state of unbelief first and last. And what was the issue? Why, that out of six hundred thousand, who came up out of Egypt, only *two* had sufficient energy to plant their feet in the land of Canaan.

This tells a tale. It utters a voice. It teaches a lesson. May we have ears to hear, and hearts to understand.

It may perhaps be said by some that the time had not yet arrived for Israel's entrance into the land of Canaan, inasmuch as "the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full" (Gen. xv. 16). This is but a one-sided view of the subject, and we must look at both sides. The apostle expressly declares that Israel "could not enter in because of unbelief." He does not assign as a reason "the iniquity of

the Amorites," or any secret counsel of God with respect to the Amorites. He simply gives as a reason the unbelief of the people. They might have got in if they would.

Nothing can be more unwarrantable than to make use of the unsearchable counsels and decrees of God in order to throw overboard man's solemn responsibility. It will never do. Are we to fold our arms, and lie back in the culpable indolence of unbelief, because of God's eternal decrees about which we know nothing? To say so can only be viewed as a piece of monstrous extravagance, the sure result of pushing one truth to such an extreme as to interfere with the range and action of some other truth equally important. We must give each and every truth its due place. We should not run one truth to seed while some other truth is not even allowed to take root. We know that unless God bless the labours of the husbandman there will be no crop at the time of harvest; does this prohibit the diligent use of the plough and the harrow? Surely not, for the same God Who has appointed the crop as the *end* has appointed patient labour as the *means*.

Thus it is also in the spiritual world. God's appointed end must never be separated from God's appointed means. Had Israel trusted God and gone up, the whole assembly might have regaled themselves on Eshcol's luxuriant

clusters. This they did not do. The grapes were lovely, no doubt. This was obvious to all. The spies were constrained to admit that the land flowed with milk and honey. But there was sure to be a "nevertheless." Why? Because they were not trusting in God. He had already declared to Moses the character of the land, and His testimony ought to have been amply sufficient. He had said, in the most unqualified manner, "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exod. iii. 8).

Should not this have sufficed? Was not Jehovah's description much more trustworthy than man's? Yes, to *faith*; but not to unbelief. This latter can never be satisfied with divine testimony, it must have the testimony of the senses. God had said it was "a land flowing with milk and honey." This the spies admitted. But, then, hearken to the additions. "*Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great; and, moreover, we saw the children of Anak there . . . . and there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight*" (Num. xiv. 28).

Thus it was with them. They only "saw"

the frowning walls and towering giants. They did not see Jehovah, because they looked with the eye of sense and not with the eye of faith. God was shut out. He never gets a place in the calculations of unbelief. It can see walls and giants, but it cannot see God. It is only faith that can "endure as seeing Him Who is invisible." The spies could declare what they were in their own sight, and in the sight of the giants, but not a word about what they were in God's sight. They never thought of this. The land was all that could be desired; but the difficulties were too great for *them*, and they had not faith to trust God. The mission of the spies proved a failure. Israel "despised the pleasant land," and, "in their hearts turned back again into Egypt" (Ps. cvi. 24).

This is the sum of the matter. Unbelief kept Israel from plucking the grapes of Eshcol, and sent them back to wander for forty years in the wilderness; and these things, be it remembered, "were written for our admonition." May we deeply and prayerfully ponder the lesson! Out of six hundred thousand that came up out of Egypt, only two planted their foot on the fruitful hills of Palestine. They passed the Red Sea, triumphed over Amalek, but quailed and retreated before "the sons of Anak," though these latter were no more to Jehovah than the former.

Now, let the Christian reader ponder all this. The special object of this paper is to encourage him to arise, and, in the energy of a full, unqualified trust in Christ, tread the very highest stages of the life of faith. Having our solid foundation laid in the blood of the Cross, it is our privilege not only to be victorious over Amalek, or indwelling sin, but also to taste of the old corn of the land of Canaan, to pluck the grapes of Eshcol, and delight ourselves in its flowing tide of milk and honey; or, in other words, to enter into the living and elevated experiences which flow from habitual fellowship with a risen Christ, with Whom we are linked in the power of an endless life.

It is one thing to know that our sins are cancelled by the blood of Christ; it is another thing to know that Christ has destroyed the power of indwelling sin; and it is a still higher thing to live in unbroken fellowship with Himself. It is not that we lose the sense of the two former when living in the power of the latter. Quite the opposite. The more closely I walk with Christ, the more I have Him dwelling in my heart by faith, the more I shall value all He has done for me, both in the putting away of my sins, and in the entire subjugation of my evil nature. The higher the super-structure rises the more I shall value the solid foundation beneath.

It is a great mistake to suppose that those who move in the higher spheres of spiritual life could ever undervalue the title by which they do so. Oh! no; the language of those who have passed into the innermost circle of the upper sanctuary is, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood . . . . to Him be glory" (Rev. i. 5-6). They talk of the love of Christ's heart and the blood of His Cross. The nearer they approach to the throne, the more they enter into the value of that which placed them on such a sublime elevation. And so with us; the more we breathe the air of the divine presence, the more we tread, in spirit, the courts of the heavenly sanctuary, the more highly shall we estimate the riches of redeeming love. It is as we pluck the grapes of Eshcol in the heavenly Canaan that we have the deepest sense of the value of that precious blood which shielded us from the sword of the destroyer.

Let us not, therefore, be deterred from aiming after a higher consecration of heart to Christ by a false fear of undervaluing those precious truths which filled our hearts with heavenly peace when first we started on our Christian career. The enemy will use any thing and every thing to keep the spiritual Israel from planting the foot of faith in the spiritual Canaan. He will seek to keep them occupied with themselves and with the difficul-

ties which attend upon their upward and onward course. He knows that when one has really eaten of the grapes of Eshcol it is no longer a question of escaping from Pharaoh or Amalek, and hence he sets before them the walls and the giants, and their own nothingness, weakness, and unworthiness.

But the answer is simple and conclusive. It is this: *Trust! Trust! Trust!* Yes, from the blood-stained lintel in Egypt to the rare and exquisite clusters of Eshcol it is all simple, unqualified, unquestioning trust in Christ. "By faith they kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood"; and, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down" (Heb. xi.). From the starting-post to the goal, and at every intermediate stage, "The just shall live by faith" (Heb. x. 38).

But let us never forget that this faith involves the full surrender of the heart to Christ, as well as the full acceptance of Christ for the heart. Reader, let us ponder this deeply. It must be wholly Christ for the heart and the heart wholly for Christ. To separate these things is, as someone has remarked, to be "like a boat with one side oar, which goes round and round, but makes no progress, only drifts with the stream, whirling as it drifts. Or like a bird with a broken wing, whirling over and over, and falling as it whirls."

This is too much lost sight of, and hence

the uncertain course and fluctuating experience. There is no progress. People cannot expect to get on with Christ in one hand and the world in the other. We can never feast on "the grapes of Eshcol" while our hearts are longing after "the flesh-pots of Egypt."

May the Lord grant us a whole heart, a single eye, an upright mind. May the one commanding object of our souls be to mount upward and onward. Having all divinely and eternally settled by the blood of the Cross, may we press forward, with holy energy and decision, "towards the mark, for the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 14).

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Those who dwell in spirit in the heavenly country take the tone of it, and grow in the things wherein they find themselves. They can be in relation with God. They enjoy all that God has given, which is doubtless very precious; but, above all, they can enjoy God Himself. There is the immensity of the grace of Him who desires that we should always dwell near Him, and that we should know His thoughts and intentions. Yes, it is they who understand best what is "worthy of the Lord"; and this is what we have to desire (Col. i. 10).



## "The last Words of David."

### II.

**T**HIS chapter (1 Sam. xxii.) opens with a most miserable scene. "Every one in distress, and every one in debt, and every one that is discontented," gather themselves unto David into the cave of Adullam; but it is there with these outcasts that we find God's prophet,\* God's priest, and God's king. All that God really owned was there.

Let us follow David in his course. Through all the scene we find him in constant dependence on God's strength, not avenging himself, but ever gracious to Saul when in his power (See 1 Sam. xxiv. and xxvi.). Such is his constant dependence on the strength of God *that, no matter what the consciousness of weakness, however reproach may break his heart, the moment he is in the power of ungodliness, he confesses unworthiness of self, but still can take the place of superiority.* Just as Jacob, recounting all the misery of the days of the years of his pilgrimage, and yet blessing Pharaoh there. This poor, weak man, because identified with God, could stand in conscious superiority in the presence of the power and glory of the world, as faith always

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\*Saul had slain the priests; but Abiathar, one of the sons of Ahimelech, escaped, and fled after David; and in verse 5 we find **Gad**, the prophet of the Lord, mentioned as also being there.

does; and thus in the very confession of weakness, take the place of the better: "The less is blessed of the better."

David had led a miserable, sorrowful life because of Saul; but when Abishai says, "God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day," he answers, "The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed."

Again, when pleading with Saul, "The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee; but mine hand shall not be upon thee." "The Lord deliver me out of thine hand." So was it with the Lord Jesus, "Who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed His cause to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. ii. 23).

And this is what the Church is called upon to do amidst enemies whom it cannot set aside. If seeking God's glory, we shall not want to justify ourselves. There may be entreaty ("being defamed, we entreat"), but not haughty self-vindication. Peter says, "If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Peter ii. 20).

This is a strange principle for anything but faith. But as a saint I cannot, whilst the usurper is in power, take my portion; just as David could not touch the Lord's

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anointed. There is “a morning without clouds” coming, when the true King will be set up. *Then* I shall have it; *now* it is doing well, suffering for it, and taking it patiently; just what the Lord Jesus did, but with this comfort, the consciousness that “this is acceptable with God.”

At last Saul is in the sad, terrible condition that the Lord has departed from him. The day comes when he has to sink down with the consciousness of not having the answer of the Lord, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets. All depart from him, and are with the suffering man who had nothing here (chap. xxviii.).

Then Saul falls, Jonathan falls, and David takes the kingdom.

And now we come to a sad picture; we see a different line of conduct in David. How fearful!

What marks his confidence as king in his own house? He trusts in his own power. “I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.” He is going to build the temple when he had no word from the Lord to do it. The thing itself is not bad which he purposes, but he has not the perception of the mind of the Lord about it, because he has not consulted, he has not waited upon Him. We find in Him now the want of that direct reference to the Lord which had so

marked his previous course;\* he trusts in his own strength, lives in self-indulgence, and then falls into gross sin.

Self-will having come in, self-indulgence follows; then there is the breaking out of positive sin in adultery with Bathsheba, and the murder of Uriah, and afterwards distrust of the Lord in the numbering of the people.

The end of all this is the word of the Lord by the Prophet Nathan, that the sword should never depart from his house. David is chastened, repentance given, and the sin put away; but the sword departs not from his house.

In this latter part of the history of David we see the consequence of blessing, the result of faith, when used in the flesh and for himself. It is not that he was like Saul, beginning in the flesh, ending in the flesh, and not blessed at all. It is a lovely picture of faith and of a humble, gracious walk, up to the time of his being king in his own house. The Lord had said, "I have found a man after mine own heart"; not that his conduct was so, but "a *man* after mine own heart." He was a godly man with grace shining in a lovely way, and in the end there is rich blessing.

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\*When about to bring back the ark, in the desire to build the Lord's house, we see him going to the Philistine (the world) for help.

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But we see the godly man blessed, and the results of his fidelity too much for the faith that brought him there. Grace shines through, and there is lovely humbleness afterwards, most precious grace; but at the same time we have in his history solemn warning as to the result in blessing of faith being too strong for the faith through which it came.

The only safety for us is in the word in Philippians ii.: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"; the going down, down, down, always humbling one's self. David was blessed as much when king, whilst humble, as when an outcast he was hunted by Saul like a partridge in the mountains.

In these "last words of David," as we have seen, there is deep consciousness of the failure and ruin: "My house is not so with God." Where did the heart of David find rest amidst it all? In this: "Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although He make it not to grow."

Where does the Church find its comfort, resource, and joy upon the perception of ruin, when, in looking upon its present state, it has to say, "Not so with God"? And is there a single heart, having the Spirit of Christ in it, that does not feel thus, as not satisfied with

any honour *now*, resting upon the house of Christ? Is there one not bowed down at the condition of Christ's house, looked at in what way you please? Is it such as can give joy and gladness, or has not one to say, "Not so with God"?

Well, we should have sorrow and humiliation at this, though all turns to practical comfort as to the end; for David's house shall yet be glorified in the person of Christ, in the midst of the *nation* now "scattered and peeled"; and *we* shall be united with Him in His glory, as the Head of His body, the Church. There is a "covenant, ordered in all things, and sure," in which we stand; an everlasting covenant; a covenant established before the foundation of the world: and this we need to sustain our souls.

But is it the effect of having the assurance of that covenant to make us content with the ruin, satisfied with the want of honour *now* given to Christ's house? When David felt all the ruin of his own house, although he could still say, "*I* have a covenant ordered in all things and sure," could he be content and happy? Impossible! It was David feeling about David's house. So should it be with us. If we have the Spirit of Christ, there will be grief and sorrow of heart, because the house is "not so with God"; we shall say, after all Christ's honour and glory in the day

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of His appearing is revealed to us as an assured thing, What I have to seek is His glory *now*; so will there be sorrow of heart at His present dishonour.

It is a most terrible thing to say the covenant makes all things secure for me *for ever*, and therefore I do not care for Christ's glory *now*. It is just saying, Christ's glory may go for nothing. This is practically as much antinomianism in the Church, as the making the grace of God a cloak for licentiousness is antinomianism in an individual, though not so tangible.

Still, amidst all the ruin around us, it is a comfort to know that that which is before us is blessing. We need, for the sustainment of our souls, what is presented to us as our hope, the coming of the Lord. This it is which really brightens up our hearts. It is most important for us practically to have that upon which our hearts can rest as a sphere and scene of blessing amidst our present trial. Where will you find the manifestation of happy affection in an individual? It will be in the one who can turn to a home where those happy affections are in exercise. And so with us as Christians, it is most important that we should have a full, unhindered sphere where our affections may be called forth, and all our association be pure and happy. Where is there the man who, being always occupied

in cleaning that which is dirty, does not get a little dirty himself? I want to have my soul sometimes undividedly occupied with what is good; it must centre in God. But He has not shut Himself up. Being love, He has, as it were, come out of Himself, and flowed forth in the communication of love. We should seek to have our associations in that sphere where God becomes the centre of communicated blessing.

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It is important and very needful to observe that, when the apostle declares that he was "made all things to all," it was entirely a matter of self-denial, and not of self-indulgence. He neither indulged himself, nor surrendered a single iota of the truth of God; but made himself servant to all for their good and God's glory. This is *our* model. May the Lord endow us with grace to imitate it. We are called to surrender, not only our points and angles, prejudices and predilections, but also our personal rights for the profit of others. This is the Christian's daily business; and it is as he is enabled to discharge it that he will walk in the footsteps of Jesus, and "get on comfortably to heaven."

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## **Watchers.**

**A**S those who have known the Grace of God in delivering us from death and judgment, and bringing us nigh through the blood of Jesus to Himself, our Father, we have been set as watchers in this world, and as such have responsibilities as well as privileges.

(1) In Ezekiel xxxiii. 7-11, we find the prophet sent by God to warn the wicked to turn from their evil ways, and not die. God in grace urges them through the message He gave to Ezekiel, "Turn ye, turn ye," etc. If he failed to warn the wicked, God would hold him responsible for their blood.

We are likewise watchers, and are each responsible as to those we come in contact with to warn them of the judgment to come, and beseech them to turn now to God, and be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. v. 20). Paul could say he was clear from the blood of all men; for he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts xx. 26, 27).

(2) In Isaiah lxii. 6-7, God's heart purposes the blessing of Jerusalem, and to make it a "praise in the earth" to His glory. With this in view He sets Isaiah and others of His servants, amidst all the ruin and departure of Judah from their God, to be watchmen on its walls.

They were privileged to enter into His mind and counsels concerning Jerusalem, and were

responsible to care for the good of the beloved city, and to plead with God as His remembrancers, and to give Him no rest till He fulfilled the desires of His own heart, in establishing it, and making it a praise.

So in this day the Lord has got that which is even nearer and dearer to His heart—the Church, which He loved and gave Himself for. His purpose is to present it to Himself without spot or wrinkle—a glorious Church. He has left His own here in it to seek its good and edification and to plead for it.

Some doubtless might say the Church is broken up and ruined—all wrinkles and spots—and the watchmen see so differently one to another, is it of any avail to seek to edify it? Is not Christianity now more an individual matter?

Alas! the ruin and wrinkles! Diverse thoughts and teachings are only too evident; but so long as Christ loves His Church, and cares for it, sanctifying and cleansing it, let us, beloved fellow-watchers, be found of one mind and heart with Him, and that in measure at least it may be with us, as, in greater measure, it was with Paul (upon whom came daily the care of all the churches) till the day of glorious presentation arrives.

(3) Isaiah lii. 2-8 gives deep encouragement to the watchmen of Judah, who watched, and pleaded with God in days of ruin and depar-

ture. The day of God's answer of glory would come, when the earnest, often sad tones of unceasing supplication, would give place to the voice of united praise. "With the voice *together* shall they sing, for they shall see eye to eye."

So with us, the voice of prayer will be needed no longer, but will be replaced by the new song of praise in the lips of all the redeemed ones, "Worthy is the Lamb." Then discordant notes and differing views will cease, and we shall see JESUS, the altogether lovely One, and look upon His Church as He sees it, resplendent in all His glory. We, too shall then "see eye to eye."

(4) Matt. xxv. 1-13. In this scripture, though there is responsibility on the part of those who go to meet the Bridegroom, to have their lights burning, their feet shod, and to be like unto those that wait for their Lord; still it is rather the affections that are appealed to in the words, "Behold the bridegroom." It is Himself; not even the fact of His coming as such, but Himself, Who engages the thoughts and heart, and for Whom we should not only wait but *watch*, that when He comes we may answer to Him immediately. Meanwhile, He says, "Surely I come quickly," and waits to hear the answer of love on the part of the watchers, "Amen. Even so; come Lord Jesus."  
(Contributed).

## **"The last Words of David."**

### **III.**

**I**T is when God shall have put all things under the Lord Jesus Christ, as the One that is just, ruling in the fear of the Lord, when the power of evil shall be set aside, the men of Belial be all of them as thorns thrust away at the revelation of Jesus Christ, that the thoughts of the Lord's mind will be exhibited.

Then, too, man is set as the head and centre of all this blessing, man as the executor, the Lord Jesus Christ. Man has failed in every dispensation of blessing from the hand of God; he, left to himself after he has seen the glory, will fail; but God's heart rests on the manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the unfailing Man, as the centre of all the blessing. It is when He, the great Melchisedec Priest, comes down out of heaven from God, that the fulness of the blessing will shine forth. There is that which is from heaven now, but it is the life which makes us cry, as conscious of all the disorder here, "Not so with God"! Then there will be an ordered state of blessing in this world, a time when the order of blessing, and the communicator of blessing, comes down from God. This is the great character of that day, namely, blessing according to God's mind coming down from heaven in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every thing takes its place then in reference to its relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. If the Church is the bride of Christ, the Church takes its place in its proper relationship to Him as such.

Israel the same. "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain." "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is the name whereby He shall be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. xxiii. 5, 6). But if He shall reign, we shall reign with Him, as the wife, associated in His glory. Israel will be blessed under Him as their King; but still He is "the Head of His body, the Church," "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

So too the Gentiles. Israel will then be the centre of the blessing on earth, yet "in Him shall the Gentiles trust." "*In that day* there shall be a *Root of Jesse*, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the *Gentiles* seek: and His rest shall be glorious" (Isa. xi. 10; Ps. lxxii. 17).

And further : " All things were created by Him and for Him " (Col. i. 16). As a " faithful Creator," this too is a sphere of blessing which He is to reconcile to Himself, in which His power is to be *manifested*. Dominion is already put into His hands : " All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth " : but the power is not as yet applied. " We see not yet all things put under Him " (Matt. xxviii. 18; Heb. ii. 8).

It is not for us to be looking for blessing here, apart from the *future manifestation* of Him in whom the blessing comes in the " morning without clouds." Until the power of evil is set aside, the effect of the energy of the Spirit is to make us groan and suffer in proportion to it. Our groaning, *as saints*, should ever be that of spirit, because of holiness of mind as amidst the evil, and not on account of our own evil. So was it with Jesus : He groaned because of *holy* affections, and not because of *unholy*. Until the power of evil is set aside, the greater the energy of the Spirit, the more is the individual in whom it is manifested exposed to the fury of Satan.

These " men of Belial," too, the saint has to do with them. The soft hand of grace cannot touch them. They " shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands; but the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the

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staff of a spear: and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place." Tares have sprung up among the wheat. Grace cannot take the tares out of the field; grace cannot turn the tares into wheat. They must be "let alone until the harvest." Then are they to be "gathered together in bundles to be burned" (Matt. xiii.).

There was no reckoning in David of setting the house in order again when it had failed. He was looking for the "morning without clouds," when there would be full blessing. So should it be with us. Take Israel, the Church, David, whatever it may be, all have failed; the "house is not so with God." Man has failed, must fail. Paul had to say, "No man stood with me; all men forsook me. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me" (1 Tim. iv. 16-17). God must be the centre of our blessing. We feel that we need something; the bright energy of faith realizes God. Not the increased outpouring of the Spirit because of our faithfulness, but God's faithfulness in spite of our failure. "If we believe not, He remaineth faithful: He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. ii. 13). But it is a good thing for us, not only to be able to say, "God is faithful," but to have our affections unfolded and exercised in a sphere where all is perfect blessing; to have them engaged with those things

which satisfy His own heart (1 Cor. ii. 9-10). That which the Holy Ghost reveals to us is the display and character of the glory in heaven and earth, which the Lord Jesus Christ will be the centre and displayer of by and by, when He comes again. This is a sphere of joy, comfort, and rest for us. Affections raised by the Spirit of God never can get their rest until they find it where His own heart rests. Here is their centre, their sphere, and their rest—the glory of Jesus.

The practical effect of all this upon our hearts and conscience is to throw us into the first part of the history of David. Be it in what respect it may, if we are faithful in singleness of eye in the camp of Saul we shall soon find ourselves in the cave of Adullam, taking as the portion of our souls fellowship in Christ's sufferings. It is there we shall have all the unfoldings of those internal affections, those secret affections of heart, which were developed in David when humble. It was when David was a partaker beforehand of the sufferings and afflictions of Christ in the cave of Adullam, hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, that he was compassed about with songs of deliverance.

The Lord give us singleness of eye, and in "the power of His resurrection," to have "fellowship with His sufferings."



## **The Precious Ointment and the Person of Christ.**

READ MATTHEW XXVI. 6-13.

**I**T is very needful to bear in mind, in this day of busy doing and restless activity, that God looks at everything from one standpoint, measures everything by one rule, tries everything by one touchstone, and that touchstone, that rule, that standpoint, is **CHRIST**. He values things just so far as they stand connected with the Son of His love, and no farther. Whatever is done *to* Christ, whatever is done *for* Him, is precious to God. All beside is valueless. A large amount of work may be done, and a great deal of praise drawn forth thereby, from human lips; but when God comes to examine it, He will simply look for one thing, and that is, the measure in which it stands connected with Christ. His great question will be: Has it been done in, and to, the Name of Jesus? If it has, it will stand approved, and be rewarded; if not, it will be rejected and burnt up. It does not matter in the least what men's thoughts may be about any particular piece of work. They may laud a person to the skies, for something he is doing; they may parade his name in the public journals of the day; they may make him the subject of discourse in their drawing-room circle; he may have a great name as a preacher, a teacher, a writer,

a philanthropist, a moral reformer; but if he cannot connect his work with the name of Jesus, if it is not done to Him and to His glory, if it is not the fruit of the constraining love of Christ, it will all be blown away like the chaff of the summer threshing floor, and sunk into eternal oblivion.

On the contrary, a man may pursue a quiet, humble, lowly path of service, unknown and unnoticed. His name may never be heard, his work may never be thought of; but what has been done, has been done in simple love to Christ. He has wrought, in obscurity, with his eye on his Master. The smile of his Lord has been quite enough for him. He has never thought, for one moment, of seeking man's approval; he has never sought to catch his smile or shun his frown; he has pursued the even tenor of his way, simply looking to Christ, and acting for Him. His work will stand. It will be remembered and rewarded, though he did not do it for remembrance or reward, but from simple love to Jesus. It is work of the right stamp, genuine coin which will abide the fire of the day of the Lord.

The thought of all this is very solemn, yet very consolatory; solemn for those who are working, in any measure, under the eye of their fellows; consolatory for all those who are working beneath the eye of their Lord. It is an unspeakable mercy to be delivered

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from the time-serving, men-pleasing spirit of the present day; and to be enabled to walk, ever and only, before the Lord, to have "all our works begun, continued, and ended in Him."

Let us look, for a few moments, at the lovely and most touching illustration of this, presented to us in "the house of Simon, the leper," and recorded in Matthew xxvi.

"Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat."

Now, if we inquire as to this woman's object, as she bent her steps to Simon's house, what was it? Was it to display the exquisite perfume of her ointment, or the material and form of her alabaster box? Was it to obtain the praise of men for her act? Was it to get a name for extraordinary devotedness to Christ, in the midst of a little knot of personal friends of the Saviour? No, reader, it was none of these things. How do we know? Because the Most High God, the Creator of all things, Who knows the deepest secrets of all hearts, and the true motive-spring of every action, was there; He was there in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth; He, the God of knowledge, by Whom actions are weighed, was present; and He weighed her

action in the balances of the sanctuary, and affixed to it the seal of His approval. He sent it forth as genuine coin of the realm. He would not, He could not, have done this, if there had been any alloy, any admixture of base metal, any false motive, any under-current. His holy and all-penetrating eye went right down into the very depths of this woman's soul. He knew, not only what she had done, but how and why she had done it; and He declared, "*She hath wrought a good work upon Me.*"

In a word, then, Christ Himself was the immediate object of this woman's soul; and it was this which gave value to her act, and sent the odour of her ointment straight up to the throne of God. Little did she know or think that untold millions would read the record of her deep-toned, personal devotedness. Little did she imagine that her act would be stereotyped, by the Master's hand, on the very pages of eternity, and never be obliterated. She thought not of this. She sought not, nor dreamed of, such marvellous celebrity. Had she done so, it would have robbed her act of all its charms, and deprived her sacrifice of all its fragrance.

But the blessed Lord, to Whom the act was done, took care that it should not be forgotten. He not only vindicated it at the moment, but handed it down into the future.

This was quite enough for the heart of this woman. Having the approval of her Lord, she could well afford to bear the "indignation" even of "the disciples," and to hear her act pronounced "waste." It was sufficient for her that His heart had been refreshed. All the rest might go for what it was worth. She had never thought of securing man's praise, or of avoiding his scorn. Her one undivided object, from first to last, was Christ. From the moment she laid her hand upon that alabaster box, until she broke it, and poured its contents upon His sacred Person, it was of Himself alone she thought. She had a kind of intuitive perception of what would be suitable and grateful to her Lord, in the solemn circumstances in which He was placed at the moment, and with exquisite tact she did that thing. She had never thought of what the ointment might fetch; or, if she had, she felt that He was worth ten thousand times as much. As to "the poor," they had their place, no doubt, and their claims also; but she felt that JESUS was more to her than all the poor in the world.

In short, the woman's heart was filled with Christ, and it was this that gave character to her action. Others might pronounce it "waste"; but we may rest assured that nothing is wasted which is spent for Christ. So the woman judged: and she was right.

To put honour upon Him, at the very moment when earth and hell were rising up against Him, was the very highest act of service that man or angel could perform. He was going to be offered up. The shadows were lengthening, the gloom was deepening, the darkness thickening. The cross, with all its horrors, was at hand; and this woman anticipated it all, and came beforehand to anoint the body of her adorable Lord.

And mark the result. See how immediately the blessed Lord enters upon her defence, and shields her from the indignation and scorn of those who ought to have known better. "When Jesus understood it, He said unto them: Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me. For ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on My body, she did it for My burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

Here was a glorious vindication, in the presence of which all human indignation, scorn, and misunderstanding must pass away, like the vapour of the morning before the beams of the rising sun. "Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought *a good work upon Me.*"

It was this that stamped the act: "A good work upon Me." This marked it off from all beside. Everything must be valued according to its connection with Christ. A man may traverse the wide world in order to carry out the noble objects of philanthropy; he may scatter, with a princely hand, the fruits of a large-hearted benevolence; he may give all his goods to feed the poor; he may go to the utmost possible length in the wide range of religiousness and morality, and yet he may never have done one single thing of which Christ can say, "It is a good work upon Me."

Reader, whoever you are, or however you are engaged, ponder this. See that you keep your eye directly upon the Master, in all you do. Make JESUS the immediate object of every little act of service, no matter what. Seek so to do your every work as that He may be able to say, "It is a good work upon Me." Do not be occupied with the thoughts of men as to your path or as to your work. Do not mind their indignation or their misunderstanding, but pour your alabaster box of ointment upon the Person of your Lord. See that your every act of service is the fruit of your heart's appreciation of Him; and be assured He will appreciate your work, and vindicate you before assembled myriads.

Thus it was with the woman of whom we

have been reading. She took her alabaster box, and made her way to the house of Simon the leper, with one object in her heart, namely, Jesus and what was before Him. She was absorbed with Him. She thought of none beside, but poured her precious ointment on His head.

And note the blessed issue. Her act has come down to us, in the gospel record, coupled with His blessed Name. No one can read the gospel without reading also the memorial of her personal devotedness. Empires have risen, flourished, and passed away into the region of silence and oblivion. Monuments have been erected to commemorate human genius, greatness, and philanthropy, and these monuments have crumbled into dust; but the act of this woman still lives, and shall live for ever. The hand of the Master has erected a monument to her, which shall never, no never, perish. May we have grace to imitate her; and, in this day, when there is so much of human effort in the way of philanthropy, may our works, whatever they are, be the fruit of our heart's appreciation of an absent, rejected, crucified Lord.

There is nothing which so thoroughly tests the heart as the doctrine of the cross, the path of the rejected, crucified Jesus of Nazareth. This probes man's heart to its deepest depths. If it be merely a question of religiousness,



man can go an amazing length ; but religiousness is not Christ.

We need not travel farther than the opening lines of our chapter in order to see a striking proof of this. Look, for a moment, at the palace of the High Priest, and what do you see? A special meeting of the heads and leaders of the people. "Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the High Priest, who was called Caiaphas."

Here, assuredly, you have religion, and that, too, in a very imposing form. We must remember that these priests, scribes, and elders were looked up to, by the professed people of God, as the great depositaries of sacred learning, as the sole authority in all matters of religion, and as holding office under God, in that system which had been set up of God in the days of Moses. The assembly in the palace of Caiaphas was not composed of the pagan priests and augurs of Greece and Rome, but of the professed leaders and guides of the Jewish nation. And what were they doing in their solemn conclave? They were "consulting that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill Him."

Reader, ponder this. Here were religious men, and men of learning, no doubt, men of weight and influence among the people; and yet these men hated Jesus, and they were met

in council, in order to plot His death, to take Him craftily and kill Him. Now, these men could have talked to you about God and His worship, about Moses and the law, about the Sabbath and all the great ordinances and solemnities of the Jewish religion. But they hated Christ. Remember this most solemn fact. Men may be very religious; they may be the religious guides and teachers of others, and yet hate the Christ of God. This is one grand lesson to be learnt in the palace of Caiaphas the High Priest. Religiousness is not Christ; on the contrary, the most zealous religionists have often been the most bitter and vehement haters of that blessed One.

But it may be said, "Times are changed. Religion is now so intimately associated with the Name of Jesus that to be a religious man is of necessity to be a lover of Jesus. You could not now find aught answering to the palace of Caiaphas."

Is this really so? We cannot believe it for a moment. The Name of Jesus is as thoroughly hated in Christendom now as it was in the palace of Caiaphas. And those who seek to follow Jesus will be hated, too. We need not go far to prove this. Jesus is still a rejected One in this world. Where, let us ask, will you hear His Name? Where is He a welcome theme? Speak of Him where you will, in the drawing-rooms of the wealthy

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and the fashionable, in the railway carriage, in the saloon of a steamboat, in the coffee-room or the dining-hall, in short, in any of the resorts of men, and you will in almost every case be told that such a theme is out of place. You may speak of anything else: politics, money, business, pleasure, nonsense. These things are always in place everywhere; Jesus is never in place anywhere. We have seen in our streets, times without number, the public thoroughfares interrupted by brass bands, ballad-singers, and puppet-shows, and they have never been molested, reproved, or told to move on; but let a man stand in such places to speak of Jesus, and he will be insulted, or told to move on, and not stop a thoroughfare. In plain language, there is room everywhere in this world for the devil, but no room for the Christ of God. The world's motto as to Christ is, "Oh! breathe not His Name."

But, thank God, if we see around us much that answers to the palace of the High Priest, we can also see, here and there, that which corresponds with the house of Simon the leper. There are, blessed be God, those who love the Name of Jesus, and who count Him worthy of the precious ointment. There are those who are not ashamed of His precious cross, those who find their absorbing object in Him, and who count it their chief joy and

highest honour to spend and be spent for Him in any little way. It is not with them a question of work, of religious machinery, of running hither and thither, of doing this or that. No; it is Christ, it is being near Him, and being occupied with Him; it is sitting at His feet, and pouring the precious ointment of the heart's true devotion upon Him.

Reader, be thou well assured that this is the true secret of power both in service and testimony. A just appreciation of a crucified Christ is the living spring of all that is acceptable to God, whether in the life and conduct of an individual Christian, or in all that goes on in our public assemblies. Genuine attachment to Christ and occupation with Him must characterize us personally and congregationally; else our life and history will prove of little worth in the judgment of heaven, however it may be in the judgment of earth. We know of nothing which imparts such moral power to the individual walk and character as intense devotion to the Person of Christ. It is not merely being a man of great faith, a man of prayer, a deeply taught student of Scripture, or a scholar, a gifted preacher or a powerful writer. No; it is being a lover of Christ.

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## **“Mercy, and not Sacrifice.”**

**T**HIS blessed expression of the mind of God occurs twice in the Gospel by Matthew. It is a quotation from the prophet Hosea: “I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” (vi. 6.) What He looked for, what He had a right to look for, in a people brought so near to Him was the exercise of a quality so eminently dear to Himself, so befitting a people called by His name: the exercise of mercy.

“He delighteth in mercy.” (Micah vii. 18.) It is the spring of His dealings with Israel, with man. There would be no hope for man without it. And, therefore, when Jesus came into His ministry on earth this was the keynote, the characteristic of His acts, His words, His ways toward men. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy,” was among the earliest sentences in what is called “The Sermon on the Mount”; and mercy is the only suited thing for man.

The mission of the Son, who is “the wisdom of God,” as well as “the power of God,” declares it. And if suited to man because so deeply needed by him, surely it was infinitely worthy of the ever-blessed God, the only fountain of true, real mercy, to show it. Mercy never shone so brightly, so sweetly, as in the person, the mission of the Son, the

Lord Jesus Christ, "God manifest in the flesh." The proud, legal mind of the Pharisees in His day could not see this; and this came out on the first occasion I have referred to, the ninth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew.

"Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" is the question put to the disciples.

Jesus answers it: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Wondrous and blessed declaration of the Son of God, the Son in the bosom of the Father, the Word of God! What majesty what dignity is in it! He takes up the words of Jehovah by His prophet, His own words, and spoke them *as His own*: "*I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*"

Sinners *all* were. Righteous there were *none* to call. The Lord knew this, and justifies His ways of grace to sinners. He will have *mercy*. Who dare be offended at this? Who has the right to be offended? Blessed indeed for us that mercy reigns, reigns in the bosom of our Lord, that mercy is the spring

of all His dealings now with this poor lost and ruined world.

"His mercy endureth for ever" will be the song of Israel by and by, when they are brought to see the need of it, and taste its sweetness in their souls. But sinners now are called, called to repentance, called to turn from evil unto God, to lift the eye to Jesus crucified, to look, to trust, to live. *Now* is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Heb. iii. 7, 8.)

But if we look on to the second occasion when these words appear, we find the legal mind at work again, and met again by rebuke from Jesus. (xii. 1-8.) He, the Lord of Israel, the Lord of all, is passing through the corn, the harvest that His bounteous hand had given. His followers were hungry, and began to eat. Was there not provision for the poor and needy in the law of God? (Lev. xxiii. 22; Deut. xxiii. 25.) Did not He, the Master, take the lowest place, the Son of Man, who had not where to lay His head? The poor disciples, authorised by the word of divine truth, freely take what divine grace had provided, provided by the hand of creative power. Provision for the needy is written on the works and in the word of God.

Pharisees cannot see this; or if they do they must bind it in some legal wrappings

to obscure the grace, to hinder the free flow of God's unbounded love and goodness. One greater than the temple, greater than the universe, is there, and marks it all. The blessed One, the holy One pleads, as He ever does, the cause of His disciples: "If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have *mercy*, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless."

Oh, how blessed is this word, "the *guiltless!*" Jesus speaks it, speaks it of His own loved ones.

"Who now accuses them

For whom the Surety died?"

The Law-giver has been the Law-fulfiller; for jot or tittle of it could not pass away till all had been fulfilled. He magnified the law, and made it honourable; it never shone so brightly as when Jesus took it, came under it, died beneath its curse, blotted out the transgressions that were under it in His most precious blood. (Heb. ix. 15.) I say again,

"Who now accuseth them

For whom the Surety died?

Or who shall those condemn

Whom God hath justified?

Captivity is captive led,

Since Jesus liveth, who was dead."

"The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day." In the dignity and glory of His person He is above all, has right and



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title to remove all, set aside all that would hinder the full blessing, the full joy and endless liberty of His redeemed ones. For it is redemption title He acts upon, as well as creation title, when He says, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." This is the rule, the order of the dispensation, of every dispensation in which God is known, and acts *as God*, towards man upon earth. I speak now of what is past and present, this long-suffering time. It is the rule, I say. Judgment is His "strange work," only resorted to when grace has been finally resisted and despised.

God will have mercy, and not sacrifice. Sacrifice man cannot offer. Blood of bulls and goats were all in vain. God gave His only Son, His well-beloved, to be a sacrifice for sin. That "one offering" once offered has for ever perfected them that are sanctified. (Heb. x. 14.) The blood of atonement shed upon the cross at Calvary avails for ever for the sinner's need.

"I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." The sacrifice was on God's part; mercy flowed through that to ruined man, mercy, and peace, and grace, and life eternal. This is the rule then for the Christian, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." (Luke vi. 36.) It is the rule for the servants of God.

A Jeremiah in his day might have commission "to root out, to pull down, and to destroy" (Jer. i. 10); but the Christian servant, the preacher of the Gospel, must not even root the tares up, lest he root the wheat up with them. (Matt. xiii. 29.) Patience and long-suffering become us. If there is one thing more than another that would bring sweet alleviation into the trials of the people of God it is this, the *practice of forbearing forgiving, active mercy*. (1 Peter iii. 8.)

The more we know of God the more we shall desire to be like Him, to be imitators of Him, as dear children, even in this vale of tears. (Eph. v. 1.) I say the rule, because God is always God, and never can be any other. Many of the provisions of the law show His tenderness, as to the touching appeals of the prophets. The blessed Jesus might well say of these Scriptures, "Search"; they testify of Me.

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When brought to God I am brought to grace. What HE is is the spring and source of the whole matter. We are in Christ. It could not be otherwise. We stand there now, by virtue of the atonement, in that position which makes the sin the very necessity for God to bless. Christ died for my sins, and God "is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

## **"Drive, and go Forward."**

"And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died."—(2 Kings iv. 18-20.)

**A** BELIEVER in Christ is the only man upon earth who can look all his enemies in the face; and, moreover, in the presence of their greatest power, can say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Any other man will be afraid to look upon these giant powers; sin, and death, and the grave. For who will dare to challenge either of these? Or where is the man who will measure swords with them? "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, that he should live for ever, and not see corruption." (Psalm xlix. 6, 7.)

The fact of man's impotence is more than admitted by the way in which he seeks to hide the terror of these things from his eyes, and

to cover over their monster forms and hideousness; that, thus disguised in plumes and pageantry, he may cheat himself into the belief that death is not "the wages of sin," but "a debt of nature," which he pays, and pays handsomely, too. There may be sorrow and grief, and even tears, over the departed, but where is *the shame and disgrace of death*? Where, in the midst of the long line of this funeral pomp, is there any record that death is the *penalty* which God inflicted upon man for his disobedience and sin? And so they cover it up; changing the very fact of a grave-yard into a cemetery, with its flowers, and evergreens, and walks, and dignifying all by the name of a necropolis.

It was not upon such a path as this, however, that the Shunammite of our chapter walked. She looked at the reality of death, and measured it, not by any power in herself, or what was around her, but by Elisha, the man of God, Jehovah's witness upon the earth in that day. To own the prophet Elisha was to own God; and to come straight to him was to use the appointed channel for grace and blessing. So "she called to her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again."

The urgency of the case, and the simplicity of her faith and confidence in Elisha, will

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not brook the least delay, no, not even if her husband cross her path, and say as he did: "Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day? it is neither new moon, nor sabbath."

The only reply she will make, in the calm repose of her soul, is, "It shall be well"; for she trusted in the power and grace of the man of God of that day, the link between the heavens and earth. And should Gehazi afterwards meet her, and challenge her, as he does, with, "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?" she will only repeat what faith will delight to say, from the first step it takes with God to the last, "It is well."

"Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward; slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee."

How precious the speed of her faith, that will not be separated from its resource; and how sinner and saint need this assurance for to-day, not merely upon the matter of death to the body, but upon that far graver subject of what the Lord speaks, "I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him." (Luke xii. 5.)

The God-man of to-day, Jesus the Christ, the greater than Elisha, has long ago taken His place on the cross between God in the

height of His holiness, and a hell-deserving sinner in the depth of his ruin and misery. Do I think of my sins? "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." (1 Peter ii. 24.) Do I think of God, as well I may? It is the very God who has "laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah liii. 6.) Do I fear being brought into judgment? He has suffered in our stead, "the Just for the unjust, *to bring us to God.*" (1 Peter iii. 18.) Yea, it is God who says, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Heb. x. 17.) So the psalmist declares, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath *He* removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm ciii. 12.) And so the apostle exclaims, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." (Rom. i. 16.)

And now further observe the Shunammite's faith. When she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away.

And the man of God said, "Let her alone."

And she tells her tale of sorrow and death in his ear, and leaves it with Elisha to take up, and make it his own concern with Jehovah. He may put her to the test, by bidding Gehazi take the staff and lay it upon the face of the child; but nothing shall separ-

ate her from the person of Elisha; to him she is come, and with him she will stay. "And the mother of the child said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee."

Elisha must not only interest himself about her and her troubles, but make them his own concern. And so he does. "And he arose, and followed her."

How like (may we not say?) to the greater than Elisha, "whom God anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him." (Acts x. 38.) He was the true Servant of man's necessities, till He went into the deeper place at the cross, as the Lamb of God for sinners slain, the author of eternal salvation.

"And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord."

The man of God has now made the whole case his own business, and he is shut in with the Lord. The mother is nowhere in this scene; her faith leaves what she brought with the one to whom she brought it. She came about *death*, and who can take this up but Elisha? She will wait at the door till she can

get her answer *in life*, by taking up her son in her arms, and bearing him away in triumph.

Surely we may say this is what our Jesus did to perfection, when His hour was come, and He trod His solitary but victorious path, and went in alone to "offer Himself without spot to God," and say to all else, "Thou canst not follow Me now." "And from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour; and about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou *forsaken Me?*" (Matt. xxvii. 46.)

He is alone, shut in alone upon the matter of our sins and their judgment; He drinks that cup of wrath for us, which none else could drink; and in the darkness and sufferings of that hour, cries with a loud voice, and gives up the ghost. He has made the righteousness of God His business as well as our salvation.

Let us turn again, and see the ways and methods to which Elisha was directed. "And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon



him : and the child sneezed seven times, and opened his eyes."

The power and virtue in the prophet served under the hand of God to accomplish all that was needed in bringing the child back to a life which had been overcome by death. But it is not such a life as this that our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord gives to us. Ours is a life out of death, and is on the other side of death and the grave, and of the whole power of Satan. The first man's defeat and disgrace was in death; the Second Man's triumph and renown are out of death. "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death," are now His titles by resurrection. (Rev. i. 18.) The errand which brought Jesus, the God-man, down from above, to "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," so that He might at last say, "*I have glorified Thee upon earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do,*" was to be wrought out single-handed and alone; and when at length He stood in our place as the Substitute and Sin-bearer, He had to know what it was to be forsaken of God, to pour out His soul unto death, to be wounded for our transgressions, to be bruised for our iniquities, and purchase our pardon and redemption by the shedding of His own blood.

And Elisha sent Gehazi, and said, "Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out."

And now let us ask ourselves, Shall this confidence and faith of the Shunammite in the power of Elisha in his day, when she put him to the proof by nothing less than the death of her child, say but little to us, who are called and entreated to place our confidence and faith upon a far greater One, Elisha's Lord, and Saviour too, in that work which He came to do, and which He did upon the cross? Have you, in faith, had to do with God about your state as a self-ruined, condemned, and guilty sinner; and have you looked to the only name given under heaven among men, whereby they must be saved? Have you heard Jesus say, "It is finished," when He went in alone with God, and made your salvation His own business? Have you, in the energy of faith, and in the pressing need of a guilty conscience, said, "Drive, and go forward," and left all your sins and guilt and cares with Jesus?

Then listen to His voice, as He comes out of the silent and secluded chamber of His own sepulchre; come, and take a blood-bought pardon; come in for the best robe in the

Father's house; come in your sins, and be freed from them; come in your rags, and at the Father's bidding be clothed with the best robe; come like the Shunammite, on a matter of sin and death, and receive life and righteousness and glory. She came only upon one of the many things which are against us; but every believer *now* can by faith see "all our enemies dead upon the sea shore."

Do we look steadily at sin, and death, and the grave, and corruption? Yes, without a quiver or a throb; for our Saviour Jesus Christ has abolished death, and brought life and incorruptibility to light. He has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them, who through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage.

Do we look steadily at life and righteousness and glory and the heavens? Yes, without a misgiving or a fear; for our Lord Jesus is at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Man is in a new place, and that place is ours; nor can we accept a lower as the purchase of Christ's sufferings and death, and the gift of the Father's love. Oh! fall down before this Saviour on the throne of God above! Like the Shunammite before Elisha, bow yourself to the very ground, and take up the spoils of Christ's death, and that with rejoicing.

Is there a doubt or an unbelief in your heart to plague you, and dishonour Him? He will not do as Elisha did, stretch Himself upon the child a *second* time, nor put His eyes upon your eyes; but this He will do, He will come, the doors being shut, and stand in the midst, and say, "Peace be unto you." (John xx. 19.)

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## **The Christian's Proper Warfare.**

Read EPHESIANS vi. 10-18.

### I.

**I**N this epistle we find the fullest unfoldings of our position, and we get the walk of the Christian drawn from these; but here also it is that especially we are found to be in conflict, and are called upon to take to us "the whole armour of God."

Indeed, such a conflict as this is never got into until we know our privileges.

In the Epistle to the Galatians conflict is spoken of, but not the privileges of the Church. It is not the same thing as we find here. Of course "the flesh" is not the same thing as "wicked spirits." Take the saints out of the world, make them vessels meet for the Master's service, and that is the very reason they get into the conflict. If we

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stand in the place of privilege (every Christian *stands* in it, of course) if we have *got hold* of this place we must get into the conflict. In fact, as the apostle says, If you cross the Jordan you *must* meet the Canaanite and the Perizzite. Wilderness exercise, means of discovering what is in our hearts, all of us know something of; but it is when we have got into the *land* that we get into the conflict.

We have "died with Him," which is just what Jordan is, and are "made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ." It is the place of every Christian, but many a one does not realize it. Many a one is thinking whether he is not yet in Egypt, and is looking at the blood. But in the Red Sea I get the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The judgment which has fallen upon the Egyptians has saved me. By Him I believe in God, who has raised Him up from the dead, and given Him glory. (1 Peter.) Just as I was driven out of an earthly Paradise because of sin (of course, by "I," I mean every poor sinner in Adam) so I am raised up, and put into an heavenly Paradise because of righteousness.

Passing through the wilderness we have exercises of heart; we have the manna, Christ come down from heaven to feed us; we have the water from the rock; all most useful; that

He may do us good in our latter end. Well, then, we come to Jordan, and then we pass death, so to say, and the land is ours; we eat "the old corn of the land." (Josh. v. 10-12.)

You get the two places, the wilderness and the land, all through this epistle. He sets us there in our place (of course, we are here in our bodies); but, you come to the *fact*, the *Canaanite* is there. We have our place in Christ; but His enemies are not yet put under His feet. The effect is to put us into conflict. You will hear people talk of Jordan being death, and Canaan being heaven; but it never strikes them when they thus talk of Canaan and death that what characterizes the land is *conflict*.

Now, as to those who enter the land, they are so completely the Lord's that He uses them for conflict against *His* enemies. How can they fight the Lord's battles if they are in the flesh? So if we are to have some one successful in these battles we must have some one who is *practically dead*.

See how the Apostle fought them; he kept all that was of Paul completely down, so that nothing of Paul appeared; he always bore about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in his mortal body. A man that is dead, and risen again, what has he to do with this world? Associated with the Lord in

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those heavenly places we are the witness and testimony of what He is there.

Now, if you are seeking to maintain the saints in this place, do you think Satan will let you alone? So we get this instruction about putting on the whole armour of God. The moment we get into this place He says to us, You will not get through this in the flesh; you will have to put on the whole armour of God, for you "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth."

In looking at these parts of the armour we may notice that we get first the *subjective* parts; that is to say, our *state* comes first, and then comes the *activity*. There is no divine activity until God has been divinely active with us. The loins must be girded up; the power of truth applied to everything in the heart.

God has sent into the midst of this world all the thoughts that can bless man. Christ was the Light of the world, and He exposed everything that was in it. He comes and brings all that is divine and heavenly in

a man right into contact with all that is wrong in man.

Some people think now that the world is a very fine thing! People fancy that in the cross Satan has been done away with! Why he was never called "the prince of this world" until after the cross. (See John xiv. 30.) The truth came into the world, that is, Christ Himself; the truth of God now revealed in the Testament is brought right into men's hearts. Well, when it is effectually applied I get the girdle of truth about my loins, my heart well tucked up. In this kind of conflict, in order to be able to meet Satan, the first thing of all is that my heart be entirely subject to a heavenly word. He has brought this heavenly truth to bear upon me, it says, Is this heavenly in your heart? I get in this revelation of Christ, my loins girt about with truth; I get my heart into a strengthened, steadfast state; and whenever I get into this state there is conflict. But the soul goes *naturally* on; the man's condition is the effect of truth; the affections are right; the heart is in the truth.

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The Christian stands with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; looks back at the sufferings of Christ, resting in the efficacy of His accomplished work; and looks forward to the glory of God.



## **"The Vision of the Almighty."**

Read Numbers xxiii. and xxiv.

**I**N these remarkable chapters we are called, as it were, to pause and hearken while God tells out, in the ear of the enemy, what He thinks about His people. Balak, the king of Moab, terrified by the sight of "all that Israel had done to the Amorites," hires Balaam to curse them, but the Lord makes use of the tongue of the covetous prophet in order to tell out His thoughts about Israel. He will not allow anyone to curse His people. He may have to deal with them in secret about many things; but He will not suffer another to move his tongue against them.

This is a grand point. It matters not what the enemy may think about God's people, or what they may think about themselves, or what they may think about one another; the real question is, What does God think about them?

He knows exactly all that concerns them, all that they are, all that they have done, all that is in them. Everything stands clearly revealed to His *all*-penetrating eye. The deepest secrets of the heart, of the nature, and of the life, are all known to Him. Neither angels, men, nor devils, know us as God knows us. Hence, it is not with "the vision" of angels, or "the vision" of men, or "the

vision " of devils, we have to do, but with "the vision of the Almighty."

This gives sweet peace to the heart. God sees us, thinks of us, speaks of us, and acts towards us, according to what He Himself has made us and wrought for us, according to the perfection of His own work. Thus it is we appear "in the vision of the Almighty"; thus are we seen "from the top of the rocks." When God looks at His people, He beholds in them His own workmanship; and it is to the glory of His holy name, and to the praise of His salvation, that not a blemish should be seen on those who are His, those whom He, in sovereign grace, has made His own. His character, His name, and the perfection of His work, are all involved in the condition and standing of those with whom He has linked Himself.

Hence, the moment any enemy or accuser enters the scene, God places Himself in front, to receive and answer the accusation; and His answer is always founded, not upon what His people are in themselves, but upon what He has made them, through the perfection of His own work. His glory is linked with them, and, in vindicating them, He maintains His own glory. He places Himself between them and every accusing tongue. His glory demands that they should be presented in all the comeliness which He has

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put upon them. If the enemy comes to curse and accuse, God answers him by pouring forth the rich current of His everlasting complacency in those whom He has chosen for Himself, and whom He has made fit to be before Him for ever.

It is upon this ground that, in the Song of Solomon, the bridegroom, in contemplating the bride, declares to her: “*Thou art all fair*, my love; there is no spot in thee” (iv. 7). She, in looking at herself, could only exclaim, “*I am black*” (i. 5, 6). So, also, in John xiii., the Lord Jesus looks at His disciples, and pronounces them “*clean every whit*”; although, in a few hours afterwards, one of them would curse and swear that he did not know Him. The bride in the song, and the disciples in John xiii. are both viewed “in the vision of the Almighty”; both beheld “from the top of the rocks.” This accounts for the beauteous words “all fair,” “clean every whit.” Were they to be looked at from any other point of view, the words should have been “all foul,” “clean never a whit.” So vast is the difference between what we are in ourselves and what we are in Christ!

This tranquillizing, purifying, and elevating truth shines with uncommon lustre in Balaam's four parables. Humanly speaking, we never should have had such a glorious

view of Israel as seen in "the vision of the Almighty," "from the top of the rocks," by one "having his eyes open," had not Balak sought to curse them. God can very speedily open a man's eyes to the true state of the case in reference to the condition of His people. He claims the privilege of setting forth *His* thoughts about them. Balak and Balaam, with "all the princes of Moab," may assemble to hear Israel cursed and defied; they may "build seven altars"; they may "offer a bullock and a lamb on every altar"; Balak's gold and silver may glitter before the covetous gaze of the false prophet; but not all the powers of earth and hell combined, in their dark and terrible array, can evoke a single breath of curse or accusation against the Israel of God. As well might the enemy have sought to point out a single flaw in that fair creation which the Lord God had pronounced "very good," as fasten an accusation upon the redeemed of the Lord. Oh! no; they shine in all the comeliness which He has put upon them, and all that is needed, in order to see them thus, is to mount to "the top of the rocks," to have "the eyes open," so that we may see them "in the vision of the Almighty."

Having given thus a general view of the contents of these remarkable chapters, I will briefly present to my reader the special point

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contained in each of the four parables. He will find a rich mine of instruction in the entire subject.

1. In the first of Balaam's parables we have the absolute separation of Israel distinctly set forth. “How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his” (xxiii. 8, 10).

Here, we have Israel singled out to be a separated and peculiar people, a people who, according to the divine thought about them, were never, at any time, on any ground, or for any object whatsoever, to be mingled with or reckoned amongst the nations. “The people shall dwell *alone*.” Let the reader ponder this deeply, both in its application to the literal seed of Abraham, and also to the true Israel of God. Immense practical results flow out of this great principle, results which we do not attempt to unfold in an article like the present. We merely ask the intelligent reader to follow this point as it is traced for him in the word: “*The people shall dwell alone.*”

2. But if Jehovah in His great grace be pleased to link Himself with a people, if He call them out to be a separate people in the world—to “dwell alone,” and shine for Him in the midst of those who are still “sitting in darkness and the shadow of death,” He can only have them in such a condition as suits Himself. He must make them such as He would have them to be, such as shall be to the praise of His great and glorious name. Hence, in the second parable, the prophet is made to tell out, not merely the negative, but the positive condition of the people. “And he took up his parable, and said: Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor. God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless, *and He hath blessed*; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them. God brought them out of Egypt: he hath as it were the strength of a unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God

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WROUGHT! Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain” (Numb. xxiii. 19-24).

Here we find ourselves on truly elevated ground. This is in truth “the top of the rocks,” the pure air of “the hills,” where the people of God are seen only in “the vision of the Almighty.” In this parable Israel’s blessedness and security are made to depend, not on themselves, but upon the truth and faithfulness of Jehovah. “God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent.” This puts Israel upon safe ground. God must be true to Himself. Is there any power that can possibly prevent Him from fulfilling His word and oath? Surely not. “*He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.*” In the previous parable, it was, “God hath *not* cursed.” Here, it is, “*He hath blessed.*” There is very manifest advance.

As Balak conducts the money-loving prophet from place to place, Jehovah takes occasion to bring out fresh features of beauty in His people. Thus it is not merely that they are a separated people, dwelling alone; but they are a justified people, having the Lord their God *with* them, and the shout of a King *among* them. “He hath not beheld

iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." The enemy may say: "There is iniquity there all the while." Yes; but who can make Jehovah behold it, when He Himself has been pleased to blot it all out, as a thick cloud, for His name's sake? If He has cast it behind His back, who can bring it before His face? "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. viii. 33, 34). God sees His people so thoroughly delivered from all that could be against them, that He can take up His abode in their midst, and cause His voice to be heard amongst them. Well, therefore, may we exclaim, "What hath *God* wrought?" It is not "What hath *Israel* wrought?" Balak and Balaam would have found plenty to do in the way of cursing had Israel's work been in question. The Lord be praised, it is on what He hath wrought that His people stand, and therefore their foundation is as imperishable as the very throne of God.

3. In the third parable we have another step in advance. The Lord's people are not merely separated and justified; they are actually "comely" and "goodly" in His sight. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the



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waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn; he shall *eat up the nations* his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee” (xxiv. 5-9).

Thus it was better and better for Israel, worse and worse for Balak. He had not merely to stand by, and hear Israel “blessed,” but to hear himself “cursed,” for seeking to curse them. But let my reader specially mark the rich grace which shines in this parable. “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” If one had gone down to examine those tents and tabernacles in “the vision” of man, they would have appeared “black as the tents of Kedar.” But as looked at in “the vision of the Almighty” they were “goodly,” and whoever did not see them as such needed to have “*his eyes open.*” If I am looking at the people of God “from the top of the rocks” I shall see them as God sees them, and that is as clothed with all the comeliness of Christ, “complete, in Him,” “accepted in the Be-

loved" (Col. ii. 10; Eph. i. 6). This is what will enable me to get on with them, to walk with them, to have fellowship with them, to rise above their points and angles, blots and blemishes, failures and infirmities. If I do not contemplate them from this lofty ground, I shall be sure to fix my eye on some little point or other which will completely mar my communion, and alienate my affections.

In Israel's case we see, in the very next chapter, what terrible evil they fell into. Did this alter Jéhovah's judgment? Surely not. He is not "the son of man, that He should repent." He judged and chastened them for their evil, because He is holy, and can never sanction in His people aught that is contrary to His nature; but He could never reverse His judgment. He knew all about them. He knew what they were, and what they would do, but yet He said, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob!"

Was this making light of their evil? The thought were blasphemy. He could chasten them for their sins; but when an enemy comes forth to curse or accuse, He stands in front of His people, and says: "I see no iniquity"; "How goodly are their tents!" Precious, adorable grace! May we drink more deeply of it, and manifest its purifying, elevating influence!

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4. In the fourth and last parable we reach as it were the very loftiest crag of “the rocks,” from whence we can discern the beams of the glory gilding the horizon. “And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man *whose eyes are open* hath said; he hath said, which heard *the words of God*, and knew *the knowledge of the Most High*, which saw *the vision of the Almighty*. . . . I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh; there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth” (xxiv. 15-17).

This gives great completeness to the entire scene. The top-stone is here laid upon the magnificent superstructure. The thoughtful reader of these sublime parables must be very sensible that, as he reads, he is mounting upwards. In the opening parable, the people are seen in separation, “dwelling alone”; and then as Balak continues to shift the corrupt and covetous prophet from place to place, with the fond hope that the glittering pile may yet evoke the desired curse, we find ourselves conducted from height to height, until at length we stand upon the very summit, and survey the plains of glory in all their length and breadth, stretching away far beyond the limits of mortal vision. We

hear the lion's roar. We see him pouncing in crushing power upon all his enemies. The Star of Jacob rises to set no more. The true David seizes the sceptre, and ascends the throne. Israel is pre-eminent in the earth, and all his enemies are covered with shame and everlasting contempt.

Christian reader, may we abide, in spirit, on "the top of the rocks"; may we ever have "our eyes open"; may we "hear the words of God, and know the knowledge of the Most High," and may we only see "THE VISION OF THE ALMIGHTY"!

## **The Parable of the Two Sons.**

Luke xv. 11-32.

EQUAL RELATIONSHIP AFFIRMED.

**A** certain man had two sons.

I.—*The Younger Son.*

SELF-WILL AND SELF-INTEREST.

And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.

PATERNAL LIBERALITY DISPLAYED.

And he divided unto them his living.

SELF-INDULGENCE (Privileges of Relationship Rejected).

And not many days after the younger son

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gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

SELF-EXPERIENCE.

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

SELF-RESOURCE.

And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

CONSEQUENT SEVERER SELF-EXPERIENCE.

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.

SELF-DISCOVERY.

And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

SELF-JUDGMENT (True Repentance).

I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father.

PATERNAL LOVE MANIFESTED (Relationship  
Acknowledged).

But what he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

CONFESSION OF SIN.

And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

RESTORATION (Instantaneous and Complete on  
the Principle of Grace).

But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.

SATISFACTION AND REJOICING (General and  
Unending).

And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.

And they began to be merry.

II.—*The Elder Son.*

OUTSIDE THE FATHER'S HOUSE (Principle of  
Law).

Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.

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PROUD DISPLEASURE.

And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

SCORNFUL SELF-EXCLUSION IN SELF-WILL.

And he was angry, and would not go in; therefore came his father out, and entreated him.

HAUGHTY SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SELF-IGNORANCE (Principle of Works).

And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment.

OUT OF FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER.

And yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.

RASH ACCUSATIONS (Ignoring Brotherly Relationship).

But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

PATERNAL LOVE MAGNIFIED (Impartial, Unupbraiding, Everlasting).

And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

## THE EXCEEDING RICHES OF GRACE (of Eternal Duration).

It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

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## The Christian's Proper Warfare.

Read Ephesians vi. 10-18.

### II.

“**A**ND having on the breast-plate of righteousness.” Beloved friends, all this is *practical*. It is not righteousness with *God*. I do not want armour against *God*. But if I am going to preach Christ, and one can say of me, “Why, here is a man preaching who is worse than his neighbours,” Satan will take hold of it immediately. We must have on the breast-plate of righteousness, the soul and walk all right.

Next, my feet are to be “shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” Selfishness will always be a *contending* thing; it says, I must maintain my rights. But the Christian carries *peace*, because he has peace within; he carries through the world the spirit and character of Christ. *He* had His loins girt about with truth, of course, *perfectly*; He had on the breast-plate of right-



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eousness *perfectly*; so He could walk through this world, through every thing, passing on in *perfect peace*. A man can thus walk untouched through everything that they can bring against him; his *feet* are shod.

Now that I have got all subjectively right, as they say, I can take up "the shield of faith." The existence of a sinful nature does not give a bad conscience, but it is when we yield to it that we get a bad conscience, and that is why we are told to confess our *sins*, not our *sin*. When the heart is right in the first three pieces we can take up "the shield of faith." When we "walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John i. 7.) There is blessed confidence in God. Satan may do what he can; he may lurk in secret places; he cannot break through my "shield of faith." He has done his best to seduce, his worst to dismay: a Man in His standing for us has completely overcome him. Therefore it is, "*Resist* the devil, and he will flee from you," not *overcome* him; if he is once honestly resisted he has met Christ in us, and at once he runs away; he can never get through confidence in God; "the shield of faith" is up, and he can do *nothing*.

So, beloved friends, you find it is the defensive armour that comes first, and the *state*

of the *soul*. Many a one has got into activity without knowing himself; but with the "helmet of salvation" on he can hold his head up, he knows that salvation is his, and that on to the glory is his portion. He is a man in Christ; all that is a settled thing; and now he takes "the sword of the Spirit," he can set about the fight.

The first great thing, if we are to be active in the service of the Lord, is that we are to be perfectly right with the Lord. The apostle was always self-judging. It is the man who has the *secret* of the Lord in power in his own soul who can go out in service. He will not be amazed and distracted with half a dozen thoughts; he has the secret of the Lord.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." These two have always been running through together, ever since the time of Mary. She sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His words; the word of God and prayer. The moment I get to apprehend that the conflict is against Satan and the wiles of Satan, I find that half the battle has to be carried on with God. Look at the Lord Himself. We find Him in Gethsemane *earnestly praying*; and then, when it came, He was perfectly calm. Whilst Peter, who was sleeping, cursed and swore he did not know Him, the Lord wit-

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nessed a good confession. This earnestness and supplication is from being in God's interests in the world. People have a fancy that an apostle would go sailing over everything. When Paul was at Corinth he was there "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."

The blessed Lord went down to where we were; made sin for ourselves in the lower parts of the earth; all Satan's power against Him; then, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive. He takes us so entirely out of the hands of the enemy that He sets us in a place where we have the same interests as Himself, *the same interests as Christ's*; a most blessed place, if we only have the power to hold it. But the more you are in the fore-front of the battle, the more you are exposed to the fiery darts; if anyone lags behind he will keep out of it.

There is no place calls for more dependence on Christ than when we are in the fore-front of the battle. This leads us to this constant, unceasing dependence, when the apostle leaves the use of figurative language altogether; it is "praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

Now let me ask you this, Do you find you can intercede much for all saints? I find

nothing tests the state of my own soul more than this. Of course, I can pray for *myself*; if not I shall have a fall. But am I so walking in fellowship with God that I can be in continued intercession for all saints? If I get into God's presence, and find myself not right in the light, of course I begin to think about myself, and rightly, too, and there is an end to intercession.

Well, beloved, it is so far this armour of God that I am to keep on while I am here. When I have passed the Jordan, and the *reproach* of this *world* is rolled away, I can be in the Lord's host. It is the *wiles* of Satan that we have to fear; it is not learning; it is not human wisdom. Satan is a great deal more clever than that; he will let a person be as orthodox as you like; but the moment *redemption* is believed in, the power of superstition is gone.

People often say, How can such learned and wise men as these give in to ritualism, infidelity, and such like things? Why, they forget that Satan is behind it all. Men speak of the incarnation, of the person of the Lord, very beautifully; but it is never redemption; never that Christ has gone before God, and settled that question of sin for me.

Hold fast, beloved friends, the precious truth that Christ has *done* the work.

## **One Body: One Spirit: One Hope.**

READ EPHESIANS ii. 8-22; iv. 1-21.

*(Notes of an Address, revised.)*

THE central thought of the remarks that I may make to-night, as God in His grace shall enable me, in looking at these Scriptures, is expressed in the first clause of the fourth verse of chapter iv.:

“THERE IS ONE BODY.”

There was a time when it could not be said, “There is One Body.” During all those ages which preceded the coming of the Saviour into the world; during all the pathway of that Blessed One through this world, in which He walked to the perfect glorifying and delight of God, there was not One Body. It was not until He Who came down here expressly to do the will of God, to overcome the power of Satan, deliver poor sinners from their lost estate, and raise them out of their condition—“dead in trespasses and sins”—by His own death on Calvary’s Cross; not till Christ had “died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures”; and then, after forty days’ converse with His loved ones, had ascended to heaven, and taken His seat on the right hand of the Majesty on High, and thence sent down, in fulfilment of His promise, the Comforter to

His disciples, baptizing them thus with the Holy Ghost: not till then could it be said, "THERE IS ONE BODY."

John the Baptist had testified of Jesus, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." And now this prophecy became an actual fact. The Lord Jesus Christ, on the day of Pentecost, baptized the disciples with the Holy Ghost: by one Spirit they were all baptized into One Body (1 Cor.- xii. 13.). From that moment there has ever been the presence of a divine Person on the earth; unseen but indisputably here, dwelling in the entire company of believers, who are thus constituted, not only a "habitation of God through the Spirit," but constituted also the body of Christ, united in the power of the Holy Ghost to Christ its glorified Head, in heaven: "The Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23.).

That Body is here to-day; not merely in its original elements, which were chiefly, if not exclusively, Jewish, but (as the Scriptures which we have read together show us) there were soon after some from among the Gentiles around brought in to share the privileges of the One Body. Previous to the descent of the Holy Ghost, there had always existed a barrier between the Jews and the nations around, a barrier raised by God Himself. That barrier would still have been maintained but

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for the special operation of the grace and power of God, Who, in pursuance of His glorious purpose with respect to the One Body, sent forth His servant Peter with the message of the Gospel to persons who were Gentiles. Being at the town of Joppa, this apostle on a certain day retired to pray, when he became very hungry, and would have eaten. God in His wisdom made use of these circumstances, and caused His servant to see a most significant vision. Peter "fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth; wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, 'Rise, Peter, kill and eat.'

"But Peter said, 'Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.'

"And the voice spake unto him again the second time, 'What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.'

"This was done thrice; and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

"Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's

house, and stood before the gate, and called and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

“ While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, ‘ Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.’

“ Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, ‘ Behold I am he whom ye seek; what is the cause wherefore ye are come? ’

“ And they said, ‘ Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by a holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.’

“ Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And on the morrow after they entered into Cæsarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends ” (Acts x.).

And Peter preached unto them Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth. He is Lord of all. While Peter was speaking, He Who baptized the company of Jewish believers at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, baptized also this company of believing Gentiles. “ The Holy Ghost



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fell on all those that heard the word." And now they were no longer mere Gentiles, as the believing Jews were no longer mere Jews. Gentiles and Jews had become "fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promise in Christ by the Gospel" (Eph. iii. 6.). The Gentiles who believed on that day ceased to be "strangers and foreigners"; they were now "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God," and linked with Christ their Head in heaven.

Thus we have seen the origin of the One Body of which we have been reading to-night. That One Body has never since been dissolved. How Satan has endeavoured to destroy every member of that Body! But God is dwelling there. "It is an habitation of God through the Spirit," and God is the preserving power; God the Holy Spirit is the assurance of the permanency and the unbreakable unity of that One Body; it has intimate and everlasting union with its Head, the glorified Man in heaven.

Now I desire to ask a question: Does each one in this room look upon himself merely as an individual believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, without necessarily any divinely formed link of union with other Christians on earth? Does anyone in this room suppose that it is enough to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his or her

sins? Are you satisfied that such a thought is sufficient in the sight of God, and up to the height of the revelation He has given in His word? Well, if such has been your thought in the past, it should not continue to be your thought after pondering the Scriptures we have read together to-night.

We see here that God had been doing a new work on the earth. And I was going to ask further whether you think your connection with a company of Christians should be a connection of your own choice. Do you think that? But this Scripture shows us that God has created a bond, and that He has constituted a unity to which every Christian belongs. "There is One Body"; not two, much less twenty bodies. Are you a member of that One Body? I have endeavoured to explain to you how believers first became members of that One Body. They were believing Jews. And I have endeavoured to show you how believing Gentiles came into the unity of the One Body; and these Gentiles are samples of our being brought into it. You are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? That is what these Gentiles were. Perhaps the majority in this room were converted to God without having any acquaintance with the truth of the One Body; but many of us have learnt it since. It is one of the most precious and wonderful of truths.

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You know there was once an active enemy of Christ, a violent persecutor. His name was Saul of Tarsus. He has told us something of his own character. He took upon himself to be a ringleader in persecuting those who were members of this One Body. He was as to his personal character outwardly blameless, but as to his actual spirit, the spirit in which he went about persecuting the Christians, he was an insolent, overbearing man, and a blasphemer. That spirit is characteristic of all who at any time act in antagonism to the members of the body of Christ. Well, this man was so exceedingly mad against them that "he persecuted them even unto strange cities." And thus he was on his way to the city of Damascus, when in bright day a light greater than that of the sun shone down upon him, and a mysterious voice spoke to him in these words: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou"—the Christians? those who follow Christ? No—"Why persecutest thou ME?"; "ME."

If I only injure my little finger, I say, "I am hurt." And these poor Christians had been persecuted, haled and committed to prison; and the Voice from heaven puts this startling question to the persecutor: "Why persecutest thou ME?"

In that divinely searching question there was the expression of the truth of the One

Body by Him who is the Head of it. He claimed those poor Christians, whom Saul was persecuting and seeking to exterminate, as forming part of Himself. But how was it that this could be? What was the foundation of the existence of such a marvellous, inconceivable fact (as it must be to the natural man) that there should be on the earth a Divine Person, who is not visible, but is the unseen Indweller of a certain body of people in this world, being in them an unfailing source of joy, of hope, of grace, of love, of all that is good; the fruit of the Spirit manifested in them: "Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance"; every virtue of a heavenly character produced in these people by the in-dwelling Person of the Spirit of God?

I ask, How was it possible that there should be this holy, Divine Person dwelling thus in these men and women, and even children? It was because of redemption accomplished; it was because of the sacrifice of Christ; because of the shedding of His precious blood; because He had become the propitiation for the sins of these very people, and had wrought a work which entitled them to take the place before God of being justified from all things. "By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justi-

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fied by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii. 39.). Because the work of redemption was wrought, God the Holy Ghost could take up His dwelling in believers.

It could not possibly have been so before the death and resurrection of Christ. This fact was typically presented in the history of Israel. Before the Exodus there was no thought of such a thing as God having a dwelling-place on earth. But when He had delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt, having first placed them under the shelter of the blood of the Passover lamb, and when He had brought them as a redeemed people through the Red Sea, then He said to them, "Prepare Me a habitation."

God had not dwelt with such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac or Jacob, true saints though they were. He visited them, and spoke to them; but He did not *dwell* with them. It was only after He had redeemed His entire people from the enemy's power, and brought them to Himself as a purchased people, that He could in His holiness take up His abode in their midst. So it was not till after the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, His resurrection, and ascension to heaven again, that God could take up His abode in His saints on earth, a habitation of God through the Spirit, as well as baptized by one Spirit into One Body.

Now then do you understand that the Holy Ghost is the one bond that unites every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to the Head in heaven, and the one power to reproduce in them His holy and gracious ways when down here in devoted service to His Father? All that expresses the character of God upon the earth; all that the Lord Jesus manifested (and He was perfect in every step He took, every word He spoke; every act He performed; He acted just as God would have acted in every circumstance, for He was God manifested in the flesh) will now, by the power of the Holy Spirit of God be manifested by Christians in their proper activities, in their normal condition, in what is true of them as being brought into the One Body.

How then is it that I do not always see these precious qualities coming out in those I believe to be true Christians, assured that they are members of the Body of Christ? How is it that I see coming out from them that which is not "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"? Because, dear brethren (we know it in our own souls), we have in some way lost the exercise of faith, so that He no longer is the source by His Spirit of our activities in word or deed. We have practically broken away from the Head (I say *practically*, because it cannot be *absolutely* so),

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when we show that which is not of the Spirit. In such a state we show the works of the flesh, and the Scripture gives a very sorrowful list of such works. But it is not by being occupied with the evil qualities which are manifested by others, or by myself, that I shall return to enjoy my privileges as a member of the Body of Christ, to manifest the virtues of Him Who is the Head of the Body, and to be an imitator of God as His dear children. No, it is not by being occupied with the evil that others manifest, or that I myself might fall into, but by being occupied with Him Who is the Head, that I shall be able to resume my proper activities as a member of Christ's Body. As to what I may see amiss in others, it is for me to exercise long-suffering towards them (I do not say to the wrong-doings of such); and as for my own sins, I confess them for myself, and I have the word from the Lord, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9.).

A very suited word for us is given in the Epistle to the Philippians, an epistle which presents an assembly of believers walking in a manner well pleasing to God; an epistle in which you do not get the word *sin* even, and in which the apostle exhorts believers to think of "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever

things are just, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." "If," he says, "there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." And surely we see all things that are *lovely* in the Lord Jesus Christ as He walks before us in the four Gospels. It is for us to seek, in studying this blessed Book of God (the Epistles especially) to be taught in the truth as it is in Jesus.

So the apostle says here, "I beseech you." "I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you." He who was once "an insolent, overbearing man," says here, "I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you." What a change between Saul and Paul; between Saul the persecutor and Paul the prisoner; between the man who had striven to stamp out the name of Jesus from the earth, and "the chosen vessel" who had learnt to know Jesus as his glorified Saviour and Lord! So he says here, "I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

What a beautiful, marvellous picture this is! How one recognizes that it is a divinely drawn picture! Could a man of the world, one who is under the power of Satan, one



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who is in the service of "the prince of this world," could he have drawn such a picture as this? It could not have entered into his mind. "Lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another in love": the very atmosphere of these expressions is peace, is power, is holy, is divine. What law is there against such things as these? Everything that is pleasing to God, yea, that was manifested by God Himself when a Man down here upon the earth, is now to be reproduced in believers, the members of that One Body of which the ascended Christ is the glorious Head.

The One Body is to be manifested too in a corporate way. Christians in any one locality can only fully manifest this unity by being all together. How is it that Christians in one locality are not all together? We read in Acts ii., "And all that believed were together." What was it that bound them together? It was the indwelling Spirit of God. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine"; not strange doctrine, of which we read "that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive," but in "the apostles' doctrine."

Do we all know what the apostles' doctrine

is? It is the teaching that was given them by God, and which they impart to us. This is a specimen of that which was divinely and specially taught to the apostle Paul: "There is One Body." "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." So these early Christians "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." And in another passage relating to the same persons, we read: "Then had the Churches rest throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied" (Acts ix. 31.).

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." How are we to do it? By continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine; by walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. That is the way in which "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"; and if all the Christians of any one locality were doing this they would manifest it by "the breaking of bread." For He Who is the Head of the Body, the Church, before He departed out of this world unto the Father, gathered His loved ones around Him at what we call the Last Supper; and at the same time He instituted another Supper, His own

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Supper, in connection with which He took bread, and gave thanks, and said, "Take eat, this is My Body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of Me." And in like manner also He took the cup, saying: "Drink ye all of it. This is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

And, again, the apostle Paul writes in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (chapter xi.): "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you; that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is My Body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in My Blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." And the apostle adds, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (xi. vv. 23-26.).

Are we all showing the Lord's death? And how long are we to do this in remembrance of Him, if we are doing it at all? "Till He come." You say, He comes at death. No, He does not come at death, I go at death. If I die, I "depart to be with Christ, which is far better." "Absent from the body, present

with the Lord." But when He *comes* there will be no Christians left to show the Lord's death in His own appointed way. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.). There will be no Christians left on earth from that moment. No longer will there be "One Body" on the earth. It will be gone. No longer will there be a Divine Person dwelling in men and women on the earth. He will be gone with the Church. If you belong to the One Body, you will go too.

This is the hope of our calling. "There is One Body, and One Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." Christ is our hope. This is the circle of richest, fullest, deepest, divine blessing. I do not say how large this circle is; but I do say this, that even if some Christians in any given locality are not manifesting the truth of the One Body in the breaking of bread, they are nevertheless members of the Body of Christ, and when He comes He will take them up; they must go, or the Body would not be complete.

*But there is another circle: "One Lord,*

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one faith, one baptism." Peter, in preaching to the centurion and his friends, insisted on the fact that Christ "is Lord of all." If you cannot say that Christ is your Head, you are bound to say "He is Lord of all." Then there is one faith, the Christian faith. Well, you profess it. The Lord is your Lord, and you profess the Christian faith. But do you *possess* faith? How many there are in every locality who *profess* to be Christians, and who would feel insulted to have it suggested that they are not really Christians! Yet in many, many a case, alas! it is mere profession, it is only nominal Christianity. They are not members of the One Body.

When the Jewish priests were consecrated for their sacred service they were first of all sprinkled with blood. The blood was placed on the right ear, hand and foot, pointing to the truth that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins"; and that "we have redemption through Christ's blood, the forgiveness of sins." Then, in order to be fully prepared for their service in the tabernacle of God, oil was sprinkled where the blood was. You see the connection. Blood (or redemption) first, then the Holy Spirit of God can come and dwell in those who are thus redeemed. This is true, since the day of Pentecost, only of those who are members of the One Body, the Body of Christ, and who

have Christ as their hope. Can you say, Christ is my hope? He is indeed such for you if you believe in Him; and it is God's will that you should know you are truly His, and that you should, so to speak, consciously feel, or rather realise by faith, that there is a connection between you and that blessed One in the glory of God.

There is a still larger circle! "One God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all." That is to say, God is the originator and upholder of all created beings, and all persons as His creatures have a relation to Him. His presence too pervades all creation. But of believers only can it be said, "In you all." The apostle writing to the Corinthians, says, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which ye have of God" (1 Cor. i. 19.).

Well, the work of Christ goes on. He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. These gifts, the apostle tells us, are "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ." The blessed Head in heaven is interested in the welfare of His members here below, and He gives His word, He gives His Spirit, He gives His gifts, that those members should be comforted, should be strengthened, should be built up, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge

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of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." In the fifteenth verse he says : "Holding the truth in love" (that is, the truth which God has revealed in His "Scripture of truth,") "we may grow up into Him in all things which is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

The Lord Jesus would have the saints joined together practically, in all the blessedness of the position they are brought into by the power of the Spirit of God, and above all, that there may be the manifestation to the world that "there is One Body."

I do beseech any Christian who has not hitherto acted upon the Scriptures we have been looking at, I do beseech such a one that he will re-read them, ponder them, pray over them, and ask God to make them good to him, first for his own individual needs inwardly, and next in respect to a due corporate and public testimony to that divinely revealed, divinely maintained, and eternally enduring truth, "There is One Body."

## **A Hymn of Consecration.**

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And art Thou, gracious Master, gone  
For us a mansion to prepare?  
Shall we behold Thee on Thy throne,  
And sit for ever with Thee there?  
Then let the world approve or blame,  
We'll triumph in Thy glorious name.  
Should we, to gain the world's applause,  
Or to escape its harmless frown,  
Refuse to countenance Thy cause,  
And make Thy people's lot our own,  
What shame would fill us in that day,  
When Thou Thy glory wilt display.  
No, let the world cast out our name,  
And vile account us if it will;  
If to confess our Lord be shame,  
Oh, then would we be viler still;  
For Thee, O Lord, we all resign,  
Content that Thou dost call us Thine.  
What transports then will fill our heart,  
When Thou our worthless names wilt own;  
When we shall see Thee as Thou art,  
And know as we ourselves are known,  
And then, from sin and sorrow free,  
Find our eternal rest with Thee.

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## **Two Lessons which the Apostle Peter needed to learn.**

(LUKE v. 1-11 ; JOHN xxi. 1-14.)

**T**HERE was a day in the Lord's life on earth when people seemed in earnest to hear Him. They pressed upon Him, not to hear from idle curiosity, like the Athenians, we may surely believe, for "they pressed on Him to hear the word of God."

Of the heads of that discourse, or even of a word He uttered, we have no account ; not a single syllable of all He said on that occasion has the Spirit thought fit to place on record. What impression it made on the multitude we shall never know till the light of eternity reveals it.

We learn that they were desirous to hear, and He as ready, nay more ready, to teach ; so He entered into Simon's ship, and taught the people thence. Whether, or not, like the sea on which He was, the hearts of the multitude were stirred for a time, and then regained their wonted composure, leaving no trace of any emotion, we cannot say ; but we read of one, and only one, who received something that day ; yet he did not receive it from that discourse.

He heard the words of the Lord, for he sat in his ship, but the discourse terminated without Peter having learnt what he was, and who it was that taught the multitude. It was

from his ship the Lord taught the people, it was in his ship Peter learnt his lesson. But he has to be brought into other circumstances ere he apprehends it. He had seen Jesus before. Andrew had first introduced Him in Judea to the Jews as the Messiah. From Him he received a new name, Cephas. He had not however, on that occasion, discovered that He was God. This he now learns.

To forsake all, and follow Christ, and to labour for Him, was the future before Peter ; and the Lord, to give him confidence, works the miracle which shows how He could provide for His own, having all resources at His command, and how He could make them useful to Him. The discourse ended, the Lord tells Peter to launch out into the deep, and to let down the nets for a draught. The nets, washed and mended, were again put into requisition, and they enclosed a great multitude of fishes, too great for the strength of the nets and the capacity of the ships, for the nets brake, and the ships began to sink.

Whence this draught of fishes ? Where had they been all night ? How came they to be ready to hand at the overhaul, a draught beyond their expectation, for the nets fitted for their ordinary work were insufficient for this ? He who directed the casting of the nets must be more than a teacher. He who filled them, must be more than Messiah,

Peter finds this out, and now a sense of His deity dawns on him, and he has to make the expression of unfitness for His presence: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

"A sinful man." That discourse so lately heard had not produced this expression. It let no such light into his heart; yet He, who could speak as never man spake, must have adapted His teaching to the capacity of all who heard Him. He, who could find the fish deep in the waters of the lake, could fathom each heart before Him, and discover the thoughts of all men, though concealed from the cognizance of their fellows. To reach Peter's heart, and reveal to him what he was, it needed the sense of God's presence, and consciousness of who was the director in the fishing.

Some of our readers will understand this. There is a wide difference between hearing, and hearing gladly, the gospel of the grace of God (which tells of a Saviour just suited to the sinner) and the knowledge of one's self as learnt in God's presence. How often may souls go away from the preaching of the gospel delighted, cheered, edified, nay rejoicing; and rightly so, because hearing and receiving the proclamation of forgiveness of sins through the precious blood of Christ, but who have yet to learn that they are sinful

creatures ! It is a glorious thing to learn about God's grace, but it is a needful thing to learn about one's self, and to make the humiliating discovery as Peter did, of utter unfitness for the presence of God.

He does not stand alone in this. Isaiah surely was in a similar school when he cried out in the presence of the glory of the Lord, "Woe is me ! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips : for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." (Isa. vi.)

Job also got some insight into this, for, after reading of God's estimate of him, as His servant, whom there was "none like in all the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil," we find him saying, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee." He had heard of God, he served God, yet he would not let go his own righteousness. (Job, xxvii. 6.) He saw God, he learnt himself, and found he had no righteousness to retain. "I abhor myself," was his estimate now ; and to "repent in dust and ashes," was what he felt befitted him.

So Peter, conscious before whom it was he stood, found he could not stand before Him. "Depart from me," is the ready

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utterance of his mouth, "for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Had Peter lived an outwardly immoral life? He does not say so. Had he in a spirit of rebellion refused compliance with the precepts of the law? He does not charge himself with any such conduct. Had he never offered up a sin-offering? Probably he often had, and was able to leave the altar assured of God's forgiveness of his sin. But all that would not avail him now, nor reach him where he consciously was. It was his state that troubled him now, not his deeds. It is his nature, and not merely the actings of his nature, as to which he here makes confession: "I am a sinful man." Had it been only the remembrance of past sins that troubled him he might have hoped by a more careful attention to the law, and a more strict surveillance over himself, to keep from them in future; but nothing that he could do could change his nature. He saw that his state so far as it depended on him, was a hopeless one. He could not free himself from it. Hope of amendment there could be none. By the light of revelation we can add that there can be none, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." Therefore he can but say, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

If he judged himself thus, he judged himself before One, and the only One, who

could act in grace. Had he made this discovery, and confessed it to the high priest, it could only have ended in despair. But he made it to One who could set his heart at rest even in the presence of God. When Peter confessed what he was in himself, the Lord replied by saying what he should be for Him. "A sinful man" he was in his own eyes; a future "fisher of men" he was in the eyes of the Lord. What wonderful grace in all this. "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men." The Lord could use the sinful man; and this comes out after Peter's judgment of himself. How suited was the time of this announcement on the part of the Lord! When the soul is thoroughly broken down, seeing itself to be thoroughly bad, beyond the reach of amendment of its evil nature, then to be told of service it can perform for God, this is grace indeed.

And here we find the same One was in Simon's ship who before was seated on the throne of glory, and who had at an earlier period answered Job out of the whirlwind. Job, brought down in the sense of his vileness, is for his friends an interceder whom God chose, and would accept. Isaiah, overwhelmed with a sense of his uncleanness, receives a commission direct from the Lord Jehovah.

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If the heart is thus made thoroughly sensible of its real state, if God's judgment of it has been wrought in it by the Holy Ghost, it is the vessel He will use ; for, emptied of self, it can be filled with His Spirit. "Fear not," says the Lord, "from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

This lesson learnt, it may nevertheless at times be forgotten. This, too, the history of Peter shows us, and then we see another lesson that he learns.

Three years afterwards, on the same lake, the disciples are found in their boats in the early morning, having toiled all night (as before), and as unsuccessfully as on the first occasion. But whilst the sea is the same, and their occupation the same, the attendant circumstances vary.

This time the Lord is on the shore. In Luke v. He was with Simon on the sea, for He had not died ; now in John xxi. He is seen, not with them, but on the shore, and they on the sea. John, too, who in Luke v., was in the partnership, is now in the same ship with Peter.

At the word of the Lord, from the shore, they cast on the right side of the ship, and were not able to draw for the multitude of the fishes. John now discerns who it is, and tells Peter, "It is the Lord." Peter, between these epochs, that of Luke v. and this of

John xxi. had forgotten the lesson then learnt. He went in his own strength, and though forewarned by the Lord, had grievously fallen, for he denied Him. When all the disciples had forsaken Jesus, and fled, Peter and John entered the hall of the high priest. John did not deny Him, Peter did ; and John is found afterwards where none of the others ventured to show themselves, at the cross, and there received the distinguished proof of the Lord's confidence, by having consigned to him the guardianship of His mother.

Of these two, which of them should we have expected to go to meet the Lord ? Peter might have busied himself about the affairs of the fishing, done anything not to meet his Master ; yet he it is who is in haste to get to Him. Hearing who it is, he girt his fisher's coat about him, and jumped into the sea to go to Christ.

Why this haste after he had openly denied Him ? In Luke he asked Him to depart ; in John he goes forward in haste to meet Him. The secret is this : he had learnt the grace of the Lord. If he thought of himself, he was unfit for His presence ; if he thought of Jesus, he could not reach Him soon enough. GRACE ATTRACTS. Peter felt this, and that after he had denied Christ.

But when did he learn about that grace ?



## TWO LESSONS.

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We read of the occasion in Luke xxiv. The two disciples, who had met with the Lord on the road to Emmaus, returned to Jerusalem to find He had appeared to Simon before He showed Himself to any others, except the women. This was grace to Peter, the Lord desires to show him he was forgiven, and that on the earliest opportunity that could present itself.

What passed at the interview we are not told ; the effect of it on Peter we plainly see. Conscious now, not only of the evil of his nature, but of the evil of the act of that nature, he rushes forward to meet Christ, and can be so at home before Him, so divested of all fear with reference to his sin, that he alone drew the net to shore. He could give his whole energies now to that service.

He has, indeed, to be restored openly to his position among his colleagues ; and this the Lord proceeds to do, in order to show He can still use him, and make him shepherd His sheep and lambs. But prior to that, grace had reached him, and he, in the consciousness of it, can, with proper confidence, meet his Master. As Luke v. shows what Peter could be for the Lord, so John xxi. what the Lord was to him.

And what Peter learnt he would teach to others ; and now that the Holy Ghost has come to make all things clear, and to guide

into all the truth, he can set forth the reason of all this. He learnt that the Lord had forgiven him his sin, so he could happily meet Him. He tells us how this could be : Christ has borne our sins in His own body on the tree. (1 Peter ii. 23.) He learnt too, that he, a sinner, could stand before God, and he tells us how this is accomplished : " Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (1 Peter iii. 18.)

Truly these are two precious lessons for souls to learn ; namely, THE JUDGMENT OF SELF, and THE GRACE OF GOD.

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How instructive for the soul which, like a sentinel, pays attention to that which God is going to do in His government of the earth ! Men are of no value and know nothing at all. All their wisdom and their prudence only contribute to bring about the result that God has prepared for the manifestation of His glory in the Person of Jesus, in the midst of the Jewish people. Prophecy makes us understand that all is judged in the world, and that all the world's course is but " the desert of the sea." (Isa. xxi.)

## **A Purged Conscience and a Rejoicing Heart.**

**T**HERE is a striking moral advance in the order of the thirty-second and thirty-third Psalms, and yet a very necessary connection. Indeed the ability to "rejoice in the Lord," and to "praise the Lord," can only be known by the man whose conscience and heart have first been led through Psalm xxxii., and set in conscious blessedness with God by the knowledge of transgressions forgiven, and sins covered. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity ; and in whose spirit there is no guile," become, then, the upper and lower chords (so to speak) of the sweet psalmist of Israel's melody.

How beautifully note follows note, as he tells us of our security, and "that the floods of great waters shall not come nigh unto us," yea, that in trouble the Lord is our hiding-place, and *we* "compassed about with songs of deliverance" ! Our psalmist sweeps his hand across the harp, according to this range, and bids us wake up the chorus for ourselves, to be glad in the Lord, and rejoice : yea, to shout for joy.

The conscience and heart, as we have said, must needs pass through this thirty-second Psalm, that the confidence of the soul may

take up these assurances to itself ; and having done this, be free to get into another and a new place ; and praise the Lord for WHAT HE IS IN HIMSELF. THIS is the theme of Psalm xxxiii., where we are told that "praise is comely for the upright." We learn the notes of our new song : and then are bidden to play skilfully, and with a loud noise.

He bases our new strains upon the fact that "the word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done in truth" ; that "He loveth righteousness and judgment : the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. Let all the earth fear the Lord : let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spake, and it was done ; He commanded, and it stood fast."

Such are the ascending scales in these psalms of the man after God's own heart ; and the descending ones, though of another character, are necessarily equally exact. "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought : He maketh the devices of the people of none effect. For the counsel of the Lord standeth sure, the thoughts of His heart to all generations."

In jealousy for the Lord, he looks round on the right and on the left, and sees the foremost man of the world, but only to refuse him. "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host."

He glances at the pretensions of a mighty man, but only to say that he "is not delivered by much strength." And "A horse is a vain thing for safety," says our psalmist. Without reserve he thus blots out such notes as the king, the man of might, and the high-mettled horse ; for they have no place in the melodies of faith and of God.

Again, he turns his hand upwards, and says, "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, to deliver them, and keep them alive." His last notes of confidence and repose of soul under such protection are, "Our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name" ; and, "Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in Thee." The Lord, in all that He is, thus overtops every fear of the conscience about sin, and brings the heart that knows Him to repose upon His sufficiency and love.

May God keep His saints so near Himself that they may make melody in their hearts to Him, singing with the Spirit, and with the understanding also. Conscious blessedness in the creature can only find its proper expression in rejoicings and thanksgivings to the BLESSED ONE, and in the celebration of who and what He is !

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## **Christ Our Prophet.**

**I**N John iii. the Lord Jesus speaks of earthly and heavenly things (v. 12).

He puts the doctrine of the new birth among the earthly things, but quite owns that without it there is no entrance for any soul into God's kingdom at all, whether in its earthly or heavenly places. But still that doctrine was earthly, inasmuch as it was common in this way to all believers, and not needed only for the heavenly people.

There are, however, heavenly things in distinction from earthly, and He speaks of Himself as the Prophet or Revealer of such (v. 13), in which character John also speaks of Him, contrasting Him with the former prophets of Israel : " He that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth. He that cometh from heaven is above all. And what He hath seen and heard that He testifieth" (vv. 31, 32).

In this way both the Lord and the Baptist in this chapter distinguish between things earthly and heavenly, and speak of Jesus as the great distinct Prophet of the things heavenly. So that we are by this prepared for two conclusions, that in the old prophets we must expect to find *earthly* things, and in the teaching of Jesus to His apostles, *heavenly* things.

There may be notices of the heavenly things scattered or shining through the prophets ;

there may be also notices of earthly or Jewish hopes and calling in the apostles ; but the main purpose of the Spirit by the prophets is to tell of the earth's interests, and the main purpose of the same Spirit by the apostles is to tell of the Church's heavenly interests.

Moses was the type of our Lord as *our* Prophet, or the Prophet of heavenly things (Deut. xviii. 15 ; xxxiv. 10). He was distinguished from the ordinary prophets. For God speaks to them by visions and dreams, but to Moses "face to face," or apparently. Moses had access to *all* God's house. His place was in the holiest, as well as in the courts of the tabernacle. (Num. xii.)

So the Son. He has access to *all* that is of God, according to Moses who was His type. He has fellowship with God Himself, being the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person. And He has fellowship with Him in all His works and counsels ; His ways which were before the world, and His ways which will be after the world ; His ways in all ages or dispensations or worlds ; His ways in providence or in upholding of all things ; and His thoughts and counsels at the two extreme points ; the cross of Calvary (when He purged our sins), and the right hand of highest majesty, where He is now sitting down. (Heb. i. 1—3).

Thus, as Moses had access to *all* God's

house, and was spoken to "face to face," so the SON is in the fullest and deepest intimacies with *all* of God ; His glory, His person, His counsels, and ways, and works, at all times and in all places.

And our interests flow from this, in contrast with the interests of "the fathers." For "the fathers" were spoken to by the prophets, by those who had but visions and dreams. We are now spoken to by the Son, by Him who sees face to face, who has access to *all* that is of God. And this lets us into things *heavenly* as well as earthly. This discloses to our view the *holiest* as well as the courts ; because our prophet is there, while the prophets of "the fathers" were more in the distance, in the place of visions and dreams.

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What is Jehovah's "strange work" and "act" ? It is the judgment of His people, towards whom His goodness has no bounds. This "act," strange to the heart of God, which made the Lord Jesus weep, is the execution of judgment on His people, then apostate. It is a thing God does only when He is forced to it by their extreme iniquity. The Jews have rejected the Christ, and they will have the Anti-Christ,