

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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ERRATA, PAGE 169.

It is profoundly interesting to notice, in the third chapter of the Book of Genesis, that the first man who was called to stand amid the ruins of the old creation, was also the first to hear of, and rejoice in, the glories of the new.

At first, like millions of his posterity, Adam tried what the old creation could do for him in the way of finding a hiding-place and a covering.

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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).

The Christian : His Position and His Work.

WHAT is the true position of a Christian?
and what has he got to do? are questions
of the very deepest practical importance.

It is assumed, of course, that he has eternal life :
without this one cannot be a Christian at all.

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting
life." (John iii. 36.) This is the common portion
of all believers. It is not a matter of attainment,
a matter of progress, a thing which some Chris-
tians have and others have not. It belongs to the
very feeblest babe in the family of God, as well
as to the most matured and experienced servant
of Christ. All are possessed of eternal life, and
can never, by any possibility, lose it. (John x. 28.)

But our present theme is not life, but position

and work; and, in briefly handling it, we shall ask the reader to turn for a moment to a passage in Hebrews xiii. Perhaps we cannot do better than quote it for him. There is nothing like the plain and solid word of Holy Scripture.

“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come ” (vv. 9-14).

Here, then, we have one grand aspect of the Christian's position. It is defined by the position of His Lord. This makes it divinely simple; and, we may add, divinely settled. The Christian is identified with Christ. Amazing fact! “As He is so *are* we in this world. (1 John iv. 17.) It is not said, “As He is, so *shall* we be in the world to come.” No; this would not come up to the divine idea. It is, “So are we *in this world*.” The position of Christ defines the position of the Christian.

But this glorious fact tells in a double way; it tells upon the Christian's place before God; and it tells on his place as regards this present world. It is upon the latter that Hebrews xiii. instructs us so blessedly, and it is that which is now more especially before us.

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Jesus "suffered without the gate." This fact is the basis on which the apostle grounds his exhortation to the Hebrew believers to go forth without the camp. The cross of Christ closed His connection with the camp of Judaism; and all who desire to follow Him must go outside to where He is. The final breach with Israel is presented, *morally*, in the death of Christ; *doctrinally*, in the Epistle to the Hebrews; *historically*, in the destruction of Jerusalem. In the judgment of faith, Jerusalem was as thoroughly rejected when the Messiah was nailed to the cross, as it was when the army of Titus left it a smouldering ruin. The instincts of the divine nature, and the inspired teachings of Scripture, go before the actual facts of history.

Jesus "suffered without the gate." For what end? "That He might sanctify (or set apart) the people with His own blood." What follows? What is the necessary practical result? "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."

But what is "the camp"? Primarily, Judaism; but, most unquestionably, it has a moral application to every organized system of religion under the sun. If that system of ordinances and ceremonies which God Himself had set up; if Judaism, with its imposing ritual, its splendid temple, its priesthood and its sacrifices, has been found fault with, condemned, and set aside, what shall be said of any or all of those organisations framed by a human hand? If our Lord Christ is outside of that, how much more is He outside of these?

Yes, Christian reader, we may rest assured that the outside place, the place of rejection and reproach, is that to which we are called, if indeed we would know aught of true fellowship with our

Lord Jesus Christ. Mark the words : "Let us go forth."

Will any Christian say, "No; I cannot go forth. My place is inside the camp. I must work there " ?

If so, then your place is clearly not with Jesus, for He is as surely "outside the camp " as He is on the throne of God. (Heb. xii. 2.) If your sphere of work lies inside the camp, when your Master tells you to go forth, what shall we say for your work? Can it be worth much? Can it have your Lord's approving smile? It may exhibit His overruling hand, and illustrate His sovereign goodness, but can it possibly have His unqualified approval while carried on in a sphere from which He peremptorily commands you to go forth?

The all-important thing for every true servant is to be found exactly where his Master would have him. The question is not, "Am I doing a great deal of work? but am I pleasing my Master? " I may seem to be doing wonders in the way of work; my name may be heralded to the ends of the earth, as a most laborious, devoted, and successful workman; and all the while I may be in an utterly false position, indulging my own unbroken will, pleasing myself, and seeking some personal end or object.

All this is very solemn indeed, and demands the consideration of all who really desire to be found in the current of God's thoughts. We live in a day of much wilfulness. The commandments of Christ do not govern us. We think for ourselves, in place of submitting ourselves absolutely to the authority of the word. When our Lord tells us to go forth "without the camp," we, instead of yielding a ready obedience, begin to reason as to the results which we can reach by remaining within. Scrip-

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ture seems to have little or no power over our souls. We do not aim at simply pleasing Christ. Provided we can make great show of work, we think all is right. We are more occupied with results which, after all, may only tend to magnify ourselves, than with the earnest purpose to do what is agreeable to the mind of Christ.

But are we to be idle? Is there nothing for us to do in the outside place to which we are called? Is Christian life to be made up of a series of negations? Is there nothing positive? Let Hebrews xiii. furnish the clear and forcible answer to all these inquiries. We shall find it quite as distinct in reference to our *work* as it is in reference to our *position*.

What, then, have we got to do? Two things; and these two in their comprehensive range take in the whole of a Christian's life in its two grand aspects. They give us the inner and the outer life of the true believer. In the first place, we read, "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."

Is not this something? Have we not here a very elevated character of work? Yes, verily; the most elevated that can possibly engage the energies of our renewed being. It is our privilege to be occupied, morning, noon, eventide, and midnight, in presenting the sacrifice of praise to God, a sacrifice which, He assures us, is ever most acceptable to Him. "Whoso offereth praise," He says, "glorifieth me." (Ps. 1. 23.)

Let us carefully note this. Praise is to be the primary and continual occupation of the believer. We, in our fancied wisdom, would put work in the first place. We are disposed to attach chief

importance to bustling activity. We have such an overweening sense of the value of *doing*, that we lose sight of the place which *worship* occupies in the thoughts of God.

Again, there are some who vainly imagine that they can please God by punishing their bodies. They think that He delights in their vigils, fastings, and floggings. Miserable, soul-destroying, God-dishonouring delusion! Will not those who harbour it and act upon it bend their ears and their hearts to those gracious words which we have just penned, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me"? True it is that those words are immediately followed by that grand practical statement, "And to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." But still, here, as everywhere, the highest place is assigned to praise, not to work. And most assuredly no man can be said to be ordering his conversation aright who abuses his body, and renders it unfit to be the vessel or instrument by which he can serve God.

No, reader, if we really desire to please God, to gratify His heart, and to glorify His name, we shall give our heart's attention to Hebrews xiii. 15, and seek to offer the sacrifice of praise *continually*. Yes, "continually." Not merely now and then, when all goes on smoothly and pleasantly. Come what may, it is our high and holy privilege to offer the sacrifice of praise to God.

And oh! how delightful it is to cultivate a spirit of praise and thankfulness! To be always ready to cry, "Hallelujah!" It does so glorify God when His people live in an atmosphere of praise. It imparts a heavenly tone to their character, and speaks more powerfully to the hearts of those around them than if they were preaching to them

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from morning till night. A Christian should always be happy, always bright with the spirit of praise, always reflecting back upon this dark world the blessed beams of His Father's countenance.

Thus it should ever be. Nothing is so unworthy of a Christian as a fretful spirit, a gloomy temper, a sour, morose-looking face. And not only is it unworthy of a Christian, but it is dishonouring to God, and it causes the enemies of truth to speak reproachfully. No doubt, tempers and dispositions vary; and much allowance must be made in cases of weak bodily health. It is not easy to look pleasant when the body is racked with gout, neuralgia, or rheumatism; and, further, we should be very far indeed from commending anything like levity, or the everlasting smile of mere unsubdued nature.

But Scripture is clear and explicit. It tells us to "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." How simple! "*The fruit of lips!*" Is this all? Yes; this is what our God delights in. It is His joy to be surrounded with the praises of hearts filled to overflowing with His abounding goodness. Thus it will be throughout eternity, in that bright home of love and glory to which we are so rapidly hastening.

And let the reader specially note the words, "BY HIM." We are to offer our sacrifice of praise by the hand of our Great High Priest, who is ever in the presence of God for us. This is most consolatory and assuring to our hearts. Jesus presents our sacrifice of praise to God. It must therefore be ever acceptable. We may safely believe that we should not know our sacrifice if we could see it laid on the altar by the priestly

hand of the Great Minister of the sanctuary. It goes up to God, not as it proceeds from us, but as it is presented by Him. Divested of all the imperfection and failure attaching to us, it ascends to God in all the fragrance and acceptancy belonging to Him. The feeblest note of praise, the simple "Thank God!" is perfumed with the incense of Christ's infinite preciousness. This is unspeakably precious; and it should greatly encourage us to cultivate a spirit of praise. We should be "continually" praising and blessing God. A murmuring or fretful word should never cross the lips of one who has Christ for his portion, and who stands identified with that blessed One in his position and his destiny.

But we must draw this paper to a close by a rapid glance at the other side of the Christian's work. If it is our privilege to be continually praising and blessing God, it is also our privilege to be doing good to man. "But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." We are passing through a world of misery, of sin, and death, and sorrow. We are surrounded by broken hearts and crushed spirits, if we would only look them out.

Yes; this is the point; *if only we would look them out.* It is easy for us to close our eyes to such things, to turn away from, to "forget" that there are such things always within reach of us. We can sit in our easy chair, and speculate about truth, doctrines, and the letter of Scripture; we can discuss the theories of Christianity, and split hairs about prophecy and dispensational truth, and all the while be shamefully failing in the discharge of our grand responsibilities as Christians. We are in imminent danger of forgetting that

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Christianity is a living reality. It is not a set of dogmas, a number of principles strung together on a thread of systematised divinity, which unconverted people can have at their fingers' ends. Neither is it a set of ordinances to be gone through, in dreary formality, by lifeless, heartless professors. No; it is life, life eternal, life implanted by the Holy Ghost, and expressing itself in those two lovely forms on which we have been dwelling, namely, praise to God and doing good to man. Such was the life of Jesus when He trod this earth of ours. He lived in the atmosphere of praise; and He went about doing good.

And He is our life, and He is our model on which the life is to be formed. The Christian should be the living expression of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not a mere question of leading what is called "a religious life," which very often resolves itself into a tiresome round of duties which neither yield "praise" to God nor one atom of "good" to man. There must be *life*, or it is all perfectly worthless. "The kingdom of God is not meat or drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men." (Rom. xiv. 17, 18.)

Beloved Christian reader, let us earnestly apply our hearts to the consideration of these great practical truths. Let us seek to be Christians not merely in name, but in reality.

The Ordinance of the Atonement-Money.

(Exodus xxx. 11-16.)

THE simpler our apprehension of reconciliation as set forth in the Scriptures, the happier.

Reconciliation implies a change of condition toward God. Instead of being at a distance from Him, we are brought nigh; instead of being in a state of enmity, we are at peace with Him.

Such is our standing. Whatever experience we may have of it, when we have received the reconciliation which has been accomplished by the blood of the cross, our standing is that of peace with God. (Rom. v. 1, 2.)

But this reconciliation, this rectifying of our relation to God, rests on the fact that God finds His satisfaction in what Christ has done on the cross for us. My peace with God depends on faith in His satisfaction in Christ. If God did not rest in Him and His work for me, how could I rest in God? If God's demand in righteousness against me had not been answered, I could have had no warrant for talking of reconciliation, or taking my place in peace before God. I was God's debtor, debtor to die under the penalty that He had righteously put upon sin. Christ acted as my Surety with Him; for He undertook my cause as a sinner. If God had not been quite satisfied as to my responsibilities, I should still be at a distance from Him, and He would still have a question with me, a demand upon me and against me.

Therefore I ask, Has God been satisfied with what Christ has done for me?

He answers that He has; and He has let me

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know this by the most wondrous, glorious, magnificent testimonies that can be conceived. He has published His satisfaction in the cross of Christ, in Christ as the Purger of sins, by the mouth of the most unimpeachable witnesses that were ever heard in a court where justice or righteousness presided to try a matter.

He tells me that all His demands against me as a sinner are fully and righteously discharged. The rent vail declares it; the empty sepulchre declares it; the ascension of Christ declares it; the presence of the Holy Ghost (gift as He is, and fruit of the glorification of our Surety) declares it.

Were ever such august testimonies delivered on the debating of a cause? Were witnesses of higher dignity or of such unchallengeable credit ever brought forward to give in their depositions? Were depositions ever rendered in such convincing style?

The sequel is well weighed. Peace with God is ours, settled by God Himself. For we plead the cross of Christ as a very title to peace, God having declared that He and all His demands against us are satisfied in and by that cross. God rests in Christ, and so do we. My *experience* may be cold and feeble, and is so, surely; it may be blotted by doubts and fears and other affections of which I ought to be ashamed. But my *standing* is sure and strong, just as the throne of God itself.

The Purger of sins has been raised from the death by which He answered for sins, and has been taken up to that throne as such a Purger; and if He can be moved, so must the throne where He sits. If He be disallowed there, the word and call and voice of God that summoned Him there must be gainsaid and disallowed also.

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God," is to be read as setting out our standing on that stable basis. By faith in the death and resurrection of the Lamb of God we are justified and have acceptance with Him, standing in divine righteousness, on what God owed to His work. This is our standing before Him, our relationship to Him. Our experience may not measure it, but such it is; though surely our experience should be true to our standing.

But let me look a little particularly at Exodus xxx. The ordinance of the atonement-money tells us that God appropriates His elect to Himself only as a ransomed people. And surely we know this to be so. If we be not ransomed, we are not His. If we be not in the value of the blood of Christ, we are not numbered to Him as belonging to Him. The act of numbering is the symbol of appropriation. To number things expresses ownership of them. (Psalm cxlvii. 4.)

Before the institution of the ordinance, this had been a recognized truth. It was the first-born, whether of man or beast, that was His in the land of Egypt, though it was the first-born who had been ransomed. (Exod. xii., xiii.) And afterwards in the day of the New Testament we learn the same. And surely again I may say that we know it is so. Only we have it here, among a thousand others, in the mouth of these three witnesses: by the testimony of the Passover, by that of the atonement-money, and by the word of the Lord Jesus.

But this testimony not only tells us that we are there to find ourselves in relationship with God by being ransomed, people who make mention before Him of Christ's blood, and of that only,

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bringing with them into His presence the atonement-money, and that only; but it tells us that He has fixed and settled what the ransom or atonement-money shall be.

This is full of consolation when we think of it. We learn all about the way of coming to God from Himself. We have not to reason about it, but to accept His account of the matter in all its characters. Every Israelite had to present himself to God with his half-shekel, which was called "the atonement-money." Whether he was rich or poor made no difference. He had not to measure his offering himself: Jehovah had prescribed and settled what it was to be. And each and all appeared in virtue of one and the same ransom.

We gather these conclusions in all clearness and decision and simplicity. It is the divine good-pleasure, and the sure revelation of God, that He should have His people with Him and before Him only as a favoured people. The price and quality and measure of the ransom were settled by Himself, so that they have not to object or to question, be they who they may. And it is in this way all His people are not only then reconciled and brought home to Him, but linked in one and the same salvation, and animated by one and the same spring of triumph and exultation.

The conscience of a sinner, instructed by Scripture, may therefore indulge itself in these thoughts and assurances. The true half-shekel, the real atonement-money (that is, the blood of the Lamb), is the consideration, the full, adequate, settled consideration, on which the covenant of peace rests. It is a righteous ransom: God is just while He justifies the sinners who trust in it. The Lord Himself says of it, "This is the blood of the new

covenant in my blood." (Matt. xxvi. 28.) It is called "the blood of the everlasting covenant"; and it is preached to us that by the virtue of it God, as "the God of peace," has "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep," a Saviour-Shepherd for those that believe. (Heb. xiii. 20.)

And I might add to this, and to what I have already said, that the adequacy of this mystic half-shekel, this precious blood of atonement, is finely set forth in contrast with the insufficiency of all other sacrifices in Hebrews x. 1-18. The insufficiency of all the Levitical offerings is there concluded from the testimony which they bear themselves. Out of their own mouth they are judged; and no judgment can be of a higher quality than that.

Take the fact that he who made these offerings, the priest in the Levitical sanctuary, only stood before God, having to go out again from the divine presence in order to repeat the same sacrifice in the appointed time; the fact that such repetition was made year by year thus kept sins, not the remission of them, in remembrance. How solemn the recognition of insufficiency in these sacrifice-offerings by Christ Himself, when according to the volume of the book He comes to present Himself as ready in the cause of sinners to do God's will by His own death! For indeed it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. (Heb. x. 4.)

In contrast with this, we have the adequacy of the blood of Christ strikingly testified and concluded, in the fact that He is SEATED in the heavenly sanctuary, as having satisfied God by the sacrifice He has offered, and accordingly was

greeted and welcomed and made to take His place for ever before God as the Purger of sins. (Heb. x. 11, 12.) The fact is also that He is now occupied with thoughts and expectations of His coming kingdom, needing no more to think about sin and the atonement for it, as He did in the volume of *the book or in the day of settling the terms of the everlasting covenant*. And the further fact is that the Holy Ghost, in the new covenant which is sealed by the blood of Christ, tells of *remission* of sins, not as did the Levitical priests over the sacrifices they offered of their remembrance. (Heb. x. 17, 18.)

This is all encouraging and assuring. But I note another thing. The inadequacy of the true half-shekel, the true atonement-money, is not to be rested simply on the fact of its being appointed by God, but on its own nature. It is appointed by God because of its efficacy, because of *its intrinsic adequacy*. It is a half-shekel "of the sanctuary," having been weighed in the balances of the holy of holies, and found of full value before the throne of God. We are not to say that the blood of the Lamb is the appointed way, as though God might have chosen or taken some other. We are rather to say that it is the only way; for in that sacrifice, but in that only, God is just and the justifier of the believer. (Rom. iii. 24, 25.) It is the price, the only price, which satisfies the balances of the sanctuary, and which gives the sinner an answer to the throne of righteousness.

Blessed truth! It does all this; so that the apostle loses himself in admiration as he gazes at this great sight, and meditates on the sacrifice which had the virtue of "spotlessness" and of the "eternal Spirit" in it. We see him treating with

some scorn and indignity the thought of the blood of bulls and goats, saying, "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." But with fervency of spirit, as one who was losing himself in wonder, love, and praise, looking at the cross of Christ, he says, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. ix. 14; x. 4.)

Observe two important things at the close of John v. First, the clear testimony which Jesus bears to the writings of Moses. The writings were the writings of Moses; he had written concerning Christ; that which he had written was the word of God; one must believe what he wrote. Secondly, that which is written is authority pre-eminently; as Peter says, "No prophecy of the Scripture" (2 Pet. i. 20); and Paul, "Every Scripture is inspired of God" (1 Tim. iii. 16). Besides, it is evident that if men ought to believe in what Moses had written of Christ so many centuries before His coming, that which Moses wrote was divinely inspired. It is evident that what the Lord Jesus said had divine authority; but, as to the form of communication, He attaches more importance to that which was written than to that which was communicated by the living voice: God had deposited His truth there for all times. This is a very important testimony for these days of infidelity.

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of truth" (Eccles. xii. 10).

Peace for the Heart and Peace for the Walk.

JOHN XX. 19-21.

IN the passage which is referred to at the head of this paper we have the word "peace"; in a twofold sense first, as applied to the inner life; and, secondly, to the outer life of the Christian disciple. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and said unto them, PEACE UNTO YOU. And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side."

1. Here we have peace in its blessed application to the inner life. All redemption's work was finished. The battle was fought, the victory gained. The Conqueror was in their midst; the

true David, with the head of the Philistine in His hand. All possible ground of anxiety was for ever removed. Peace was made, and established on a basis which could never be moved. It was utterly impossible that any power of earth or hell could ever touch the foundation of that peace which a risen Saviour was now breathing into the souls of His gathered disciples. He had made peace by the blood of His cross. (Col. i. 20.) He had defeated every foe. He had encountered the marshalled hosts of hell, and made a show of them openly. The full tide of Jehovah's righteous wrath against sin had rolled over Him. He had taken the sting from death, and spoiled the grave of its victory. In a word, the triumph was gloriously complete; and the blessed Victim at once presents Himself to the eyes and to the hearts of His beloved people, and sounds in their ears the precious word "PEACE."

And then mark the significant action. "He shewed unto them His hands and His side." He brings them into immediate contact with Himself. He reveals His Person to their souls, and shows them the unequivocal tokens of His cross and passion, the wondrous marks of accomplished atonement. It is a risen Saviour, bearing in His body the marks of that death through which He had passed for His people.

Now, this is the secret of peace. It is a great deal more than knowing that our sins are forgiven, and that we are justified from all things, blessed as all this assuredly is. It is having before our souls, before the eye of our faith, the Person of a risen Christ, and receiving from His lips the sweet message of "peace." It is having in our hearts that holy sense of deliverance which springs

from having the Person of the Deliverer distinctly presented to our faith. It is not merely that we know we are forgiven and delivered, but our hearts are livingly engaged with the One who has done it all, and we gaze by faith upon the mysterious marks of His accomplished work.

This is peace for the inner life.

2. But this is not all. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace unto you. As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you."

Here we have the outer life of the Christian. It is all, from first to last, wrapped up in this one grand fact, that he is sent into the world as Jesus was sent by the Father. It is not a question of what he has to do, or where he has to go. He is one sent by Jesus, even as Jesus was sent by the Father; and before he starts on this high and holy mission his risen Lord ensures him perfect peace as to every scene and circumstance of his whole career.

What a mission! What a view of the life of a Christian! Do we at all enter into it? Let no one suppose for a moment that all this applies only to apostles. This would be a grand mistake. The passage on which we are dwelling does not speak of apostles. It speaks of "disciples," a term which surely applies to all the children of God. The very feeblest disciple is privileged to know himself as one sent into this world as Jesus was sent of the Father.

What a model to study! What a place it gives us! What an object to live for! How it settles everything! It is not a question of "views," of opinions, dogmas, or principles, of ordinances or ceremonies. No, thank God; it is something quite

different. It is life and peace; life in a risen Saviour, and peace for that life, both inward and outward. It is gazing upon a risen Saviour, and starting from His feet to serve Him in this world, as He served the Father.

And be it remembered that all this has a direct bearing upon the very youngest disciple in all the Church of God. We earnestly press this upon the reader, because some would have us to believe that it is something official, something which applied only to the apostles.

Those who urge this idea build much on verse 23. But the fact is, the apostles never undertook to forgive sins in an official way. This passage has no such bearing; it refers to the discipline of an assembly of disciples, acting by the Holy Ghost, in the name and on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, when the assembly at Corinth put away from among them the evil-doer, it was a retaining of sins. And when they received him back, on the ground of his repentance, it was a remitting of sins.

Such is the simple meaning of John xx. 23. It does not touch the soul's eternal relation to God, but only its present relation to the assembly. Hence we should not allow ourselves to be robbed of the precious teaching of the entire passage through any false application of a particular clause.

All spiritual blessing must now flow down to us through Christ dead and risen, and be received by faith according to the word of the Lord.

Jacob Blessed and Jacob Blessing.

READ GENESIS XLVIII.

IT is interesting to mark the comment of the Holy Spirit Himself on the history which He Himself inspired: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4).

As the Holy Spirit knew what particulars were to be recorded in the lives of those of old, so He can best fix our souls on the special points of instruction which their histories are designed to afford. In the enumeration of the saints of old, borne witness to for their faith, we find our attention called to circumstances which we might hardly have noticed. The notice in Heb. xi. of the eventful life of Jacob, refers to this chapter of Genesis: "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff" (v. 21). We see here that the Holy Spirit fastens on those instances in the lives of the saints of old which especially evinced faith. He characterises "faith" as being precious. "By *faith* Jacob . . . blessed."

There is great force in that expression, "rich in faith" (James ii. 5). The soul which knows the God with whom it has to do is very "rich." It has pleased God to reveal Himself in all the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus, and these riches can only be possessed and appreciated by faith. The Holy Spirit reveals them to those whom He has quickened to believe in Jesus. These are the riches that faith can call its own; they are inalienable.

On this ground we find the apostle Paul taking

the standing of one who was able to confer more than he had received, at the very moment he is thanking the Philippians for their liberality towards him: "*My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*" (Phil. iv. 19.) The apostle had been well trained in that school which makes its scholars "rich in faith." For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, he had stripped himself of everything that might have been reckoned either a natural or an acquired advantage. (Phil. iii. 7, 8.) But he had learned the difficult lesson, "in whatsoever state" he was "to be content." The Philippians had lovingly supplied his want; but he, in his eager pursuit of winning Christ, was "rich in faith." He knew what riches he had in Christ, and what riches were still to be had in Him; and therefore could confidently return the Philippians a far greater blessing than that which he had received from them. "My God," says he (that is, he reckons upon having God for *his* God, for *his* portion, and, therefore, he can say, *my* God), "shall supply all *your* need." Surely this same ground is open to ourselves to take; but we have made little progress in that school wherein the apostle was so great a proficient. In order to become "rich in faith," many of us have to be beaten out of confidence in our own advantages, as Jacob was, rather than to learn their worthlessness by faith, as Paul did.

It was when Jacob fled from his brother Esau, when his "staff" was his only portion, his all (as he says to the Lord, "With my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands"); it was when "the stones of the place" were his pillows that Jacob had his most won-

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drous vision, the "ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it." (xxviii. 11, 12; xxxii. 10.) Then it was that the Lord stood above it, and revealed Himself to Jacob as the God of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac; and He engaged also to be his God. Jacob had his "staff" as a pilgrim wanderer, but Jacob had the God of Abraham and Isaac for his God.

And how rich he was, had he only known it! He was never richer all his life through than at this moment. He started then, not to seek his fortune, but with his fortune already made. He had God for his portion. And if Jacob is to take the higher place of the *blessor* ("without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better") it must be by learning the riches he was in possession of when he had only his "staff" in his hand, and the stones of Luz for his pillow: he must learn to be "rich in faith," in having the Lord for his God. (Heb. vii. 7.)

Is it not hard, beloved, for us to realise that, as poor, ruined sinners in ourselves, the moment we are, by the grace of God, brought to receive Christ, we are rich indeed; and not only rich, but, like Jacob with his "staff," poor, yet making many rich? (2 Cor. vi. 10.) It is hard to realise that our fortune is already made. We start on our Christian career as blessed of God, and as having Him for our exceeding great reward, as well as for our shield. (Gen. xv. 1.) And we become "rich in faith" when we experimentally know this, and can attach more value to the blessing of a poor saint than to the gift of a great man.

Here, in this chapter of Genesis, we have Jacob presented to us after all his many wanderings from place to place. He had proved the God with whom he had to do. How manifestly had God shown His faithfulness to Jacob, in all the engagements He had made to him, when, on leaving his father's house, he was a houseless, homeless pilgrim at Luz. God had graciously provided for him, in giving him "meat to eat, and raiment to put on." (v. 20.) We find him here (not in Canaan, but in Egypt,) on his death-bed, and, as we are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "leaning on the top of his staff."

Behold every thing in keeping with the character of a dying pilgrim. He is a stranger in a strange place. He has his staff to lean on. But he has God for his portion. Surely Jacob now realised that he had been substantially blessed at Luz, that he was really enriched then; and never, at any period of his life, was he so fully enriched as when he had only his "staff" in his hand, and heaven opened over him to bless him. He had been well stripped of all his confidence by the way, and now is about to close his career with no more than that with which he had set out, namely, "his staff" in his hand. The only mention made in the chapter of any temporal thing, is that of the portion he had taken out of the hand of the Amorite, with his sword and his bow (v. 22); but Jacob is not now in the land of the Amorite, he is not in actual possession. Doubtless, his "staff" had been with him in all his wanderings; it now brought the early scene of Luz vividly to his recollection. And, when weighed down with weakness in the full confession of his pilgrim character, he takes the high

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place of the blesser. He can now, with far greater confidence, bless "both the sons of Joseph," than he could have done when possessed of temporal riches. "*By faith* he blessed both the sons of Joseph." He had an insight into the divine counsels; and he had learnt the divine order. Without any thing but his "staff," in the attitude of a worshipper, he could say, with an intensity of meaning, "I know whom I have believed." (2 Tim. i. 12.) He had learnt the God with whom he had to do. "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." (vv. 15, 16.)

It was "*by faith*" that Jacob blessed both the sons of Joseph. The retrospect of faith leads the soul to rest on the proved faithfulness of God, and to reckon on all the fulness of God. And "God is faithful"; that is enough. (1 Cor. i. 9.) "He is faithful that promised." (Heb. x. 23.) Such is the portion of *faith*. "Leaning on the top of his staff"; destitute of outward means; but able to speak very confidently because faith leads to God, and brings in God. "My God shall supply all your need," says the apostle. "The God who *fed* me all my life," says the patriarch, "bless the lads."

And if we, beloved in the Lord, were on our death-bed, what should we find? We, in God's mercy, may have proved, as Jacob did, our own riches; but we shall not find ourselves a bit richer than when first we started on our pilgrim course. We were then only sinners saved by grace. But what riches are ours as such? The highest riches, even "riches of glory"; as it is written, "That

He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory." (Rom. ix. 23.) We have much, very much, to learn by the way, deeply humbling to ourselves, yet redounding to the praise of the glory of His grace. But that which a Christian dies with is not the experience gathered by the way, but the faith which led him at the first, as a ruined sinner, to the cross of Christ. The first truth is the last truth. The grace of God, as revealed in the cross of His Son, is the truth to live by, and to die with.

Jacob was a dying. He says boldly, "Behold I die; but God shall be with you." He speaks of death, "leaning on the top of his staff," as if still pursuing his pilgrim career, and about to remove from one place to another. He desired only to take possession of the land of Canaan, by death, as Abraham and Isaac had done. (Gen. xlvii. 29-31.) This is all. God is the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac. He is still in covenant with them. He has never dissolved His relationship with them, but is unchangeable towards them in it. Jacob had faith in God. Death would not dissolve his relationship to God, "the God of Bethel."

Jacob like his fathers, "died in faith, not having received the promises," but having so "embraced them," that he could reckon on God making all good in resurrection. (Heb. xi. 13.) Yes, "He is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him." (Luke xx. 38.) Here was the confidence of Jacob. Here were the riches of Jacob. Here the expectation of Jacob. It was what God was to him, even the living God: "Behold, I die: but God shall be with you."

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Happy pilgrim! The "staff" on which he leaned led his soul back to Luz. And what was Jacob at Luz? Nothing but a houseless, homeless, destitute wanderer; but to him, in these circumstances, Luz is changed into Bethel, the house of God. There God found Jacob, and God blessed him as a pilgrim, having nothing but his "staff." And, as Jacob received the blessing, so now he gives it to both the sons of Joseph. Jacob had *no claim* on God for a blessing. He was a fugitive from his elder brother Esau, to whom by *natural right* the blessing belonged.

But God allows of no rights. He acts according to the counsels of His own will. He can challenge the assertion of man's rights: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob." (Mal. i. 2.) And now Jacob, blessing in the name of God by faith, has such intelligence in the mind and ways of God as to bless "both the sons of Joseph"; and, in doing so, again to traverse the order of nature. He could look at his grand-children, and see the blessing of God coming on them as freely, from the grace of God, as it had come on himself.

Surely the thoughts of Jacob were fully occupied with God. His own life would have afforded him but a sorry retrospect. He had tried to get the blessing in his own way, but it had only led him into trouble; and he had learned, by bitter experience, that the ways of God were both higher and better than his own. How faithful had God been to His "worm Jacob"! And what must be the thoughts of every dying saint? Surely not of themselves, but thoughts of God; of original grace taking them up when dead in trespasses and sins, and making them sons and heirs of God.

Such are the thoughts of the soul, if it be in a healthy tone, at such a season. It will pass in solemn review all its failures. This will indeed humble it; but will, at the same time, lead the soul to see all these blotted out by the God with whom we have to do.

“ Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see.” (v. 10). Never, it may be, since he had received the name, by having the hollow of his thigh put out of joint (chap. xxxii.), did he so fully realize that he had power with God and man as on his dying bed. He had now “no confidence in the flesh.” Dim as to his natural eye, but clear-sighted by faith, he guided his hands “wittingly.” Jacob had exercised his own natural shrewdness in many ways in his past life; but now, in the fading away of his natural powers, faith is very keen in the discernment of the ways of God.

“ And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the first-born. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which *fed me all my life long, unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.*” (vv. 14-16.)

Joseph, the interpreter of God’s ways to Pharaoh, could not in this instance see as clearly as Jacob. (vv. 17, 18.) It needs an exercised soul, as well as a spiritual gift, to see clearly the way of grace. Pre-eminent indeed does Joseph stand, both as to gift and moral worth, above his father Jacob. But Jacob had been well sifted, and had learnt experimentally his need of grace. Parental fondness, the right of primogeniture, or other

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things, may preoccupy the mind where there is distinct gift, and that from God; but the soul well exercised in grace knows that one great truth, "No flesh should glory in His presence." Faith in Jacob could see clearly into God's ways. Jacob had learnt that it must be all of grace. "I know it, my son, I know it." (v. 19.) He knew it was not the elder, and he did it "wittingly."

And where have we often found the wisest counsel? In the gifted teacher, or in the ungifted, experienced saint? Where have we found real spiritual discernment? Has it not been among the simple-minded believers who have been learning their need of Christ in their own souls? How "wittingly" have we found the hands guided, where there has been faith in God, in the very case where even the possessor of a real gift might mislead us! Joseph thought his father was making a great mistake; and we often, when walking by sight, and not by faith, do the same, calculating upon some human claim or other, whereas God has ever shown that His ways are not our ways. (Isa. lv. 8.) "The elder shall serve the younger." Jacob was sent forth in life to learn this lesson, and having learnt it experimentally, at the close he is able to guide his hands "wittingly."

Have we yet learnt this lesson, the entire setting aside of the flesh, and the *all-sufficiency* of God? Were we to live and learn for a hundred years, it could only be to get this lesson by heart. Jacob's history is written for our admonition; but we ought to learn the lesson more quickly, and more deeply too, because we know the risen One, and our union with Him. Our very axiom is, "The flesh profiteth nothing."

What a blessed testimony does Jacob bear to the faithfulness of God: "The God which fed me all my life long, unto this day." When Jacob

walked by sight, he did not so clearly see God feeding him, and caring for him; but, "leaning on the top of his staff," he retraces all God's ways by faith.

If any one character could have set aside the faithfulness of God, it is that of Jacob. It was marked by low cunning, and crookedness of policy, from the outset, with regard to his brother Esau. But this did not at all interfere with God's fidelity to him. Looking back, he sees, and I doubt not sees with joy, the failure of all his scheming and policy. Jacob is absorbed in one single thought, namely, the grace and faithfulness of the God with whom he has to do. He was never saved from a single danger by his own policy; but Jacob can pass over all his own failures, in the overwhelming thought of God's grace towards him.

And, beloved, will not our souls be able to rejoice in seeing the failure of every work of our own, in which we might have confidence at the time we did it? Shall we not be glad to see all that we have done in the flesh burnt up, that that alone which was of the Spirit, and done to the glory of the Lord, might remain? And if we are "wise after the flesh," the penalty is sure; God will take us in our craftiness; for neither by strength nor by wisdom shall man prevail (1 Sam. ii. 9; Jer. ix. 23).

And what a blessing the lads got from the dying pilgrim! There was great faith in Jacob, to be able, in holy confidence of soul, to transfer the blessing from himself to them. He was "rich in faith" himself, and bequeathed his riches to Joseph and his sons. "Behold, I die: but GOD shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers." Even as another pilgrim "rich in faith" said to the elders of Ephesus,

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"Ye shall see my face no more"; but, "I commend you to GOD." (Acts xx.)

Jacob did not say, "Because I have not *dwelt* in the land, I have not got the blessing." No! he had it by faith. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, *and embraced them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Heb. xi. 13.) God is always the same to faith. Faith raises us above all human thoughts, and gives us to rest in God. Surely, surely, it is blessed when, stripped of every confidence here, we are able to look above circumstances, and trust in God Himself.

And is not this the way in which God is now leading our souls? He is not only showing us the emptiness of everything here, in order to prove His all-sufficiency, by leading us to the fulness which is in Christ Jesus; but He is also showing us how prone we are to misuse the very blessings, which He has given to us, by resting in them, instead of living by faith in God. The process of stripping is indeed painful, under all circumstances, but it is peculiarly so when even what we have is taken away from us because of our misuse of the blessing. Surely the experience of many of our souls is that we have been entrusted with blessing and did not know how to use it aright. It has pleased God to strip us of all our ornaments, that He may know what to do with us. And having thus made room for Himself to come in, His grace has abounded again over our sins, in leading us more practically to live the life we now live in the flesh, by the faith of the Son of God, bringing us to know the immense blessing of His presence by the way, in reviving our faith in the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost

the Comforter, when every thing entrusted to man's responsibility has failed. (Gal. ii. 20; John xiv. 16.)

"Blessed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help; whose hope is in the Lord his God . . . which keepeth truth for ever . . . which giveth food to the hungry. . . . The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous: the Lord preserveth the strangers; the Lord shall reign for ever and ever." (Ps. cxlvi.)

May we know more and more of "the God of Jacob." And then, if the Lord delay His coming, and we have to gather up ourselves on our beds, we shall be able to say with Jacob, "Behold, I die"; "but GOD liveth."

CHRIST OUR STRENGTH.

HELD by that hand of strongest strength,
 Wrapped in a robe of love,
 Across the desert dark and wild,
 We're led by Him above.

The vaults of heaven soon shall ring
 With songs of richest praise,
 While now the desert places breathe
 Of prayer the pilgrims raise.

'Tis heaven below, like heaven above;
 We chant the same sweet strain;
 We breathe the fragrance of His love,
 And praise the Lamb once slain.

We feast upon the Living Bread,
 E'en heaven's eternal store;
 While oft with weary step we walk
 This sterile desert o'er.

We drink from that sweet stream of love,
 Which downward richly flows,
 And see the hedge of piercing thorns
 Oft blossom like the rose.

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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).

Divine Grace and Divine Glory.

WHEN we think of grace, we think of our interests IN Christ; when we think of glory, we think of our interests WITH Christ. The first subject is really the deeper, the more personal and affectionate. It takes us to the heart of the Lord; the second takes us to His circumstances.

And yet it may be a symptom of weakness, if we too fondly and too exclusively hang over the subject of grace. And it is a symptom of strength and simplicity, if we find ourselves attracted by the thought of glory, and feel ourselves at home in it. Because if we can in such a spirit deal with glory, and ponder it with ease and delight, it shows that our souls have already dealt with grace, and are established therein.

These are true notices of the state of the soul,

I judge. Still, as I said, grace is really a deeper, more wondrous subject than glory.

When the glory is reached it will be the grace that will be abstracted, and be the animating subject of everlasting songs and recollections. (Eph. ii.) And so even now. The soul that makes glory its theme, without affectionate glances at grace, will but weary us; while he who can affectionately triumph in grace, and makes that his theme, unequal perhaps to go beyond it, will still be grateful to the heart.

Thoughts of grace may dwell alone in the soul, but thoughts of glory may not. Moses and the congregation in their song triumph in both grace and glory. Miriam and her maidens echo the thought of grace only. And yet Miriam's gentler strain is very welcome to the ear. (Exodus xv.)

The strongest, richest, happiest condition is when the soul can use all the arguments, all the incentives, all the attractions which grace and glory alike minister to it. This is Paul's state, characteristically I may say, in 2 Timothy. He urges his dear son to "be strong in the grace," disclosing some of the riches of it, and also holds out to him "the crown of righteousness." And this 2 Timothy was Paul's last word, his "swan's song."

Those histories in the Old Testament which illustrate grace are more our constant delight than such as exhibit glory; though this, in its measure, will depend on the state of the soul, and in some cases, as I said, may betray our weakness.

One is too disposed to walk in company with the watchful spirit, the self-judging spirit, the spirit which is full of care that a good conscience

be kept. But our company should also be the recollection of the boundless grace of God. That should rise and gladden the heart abidingly. Our journey to glory should be taken in the sunshine that the conscious grace of God imparts to the wayfaring man.

It is then we honour Him, and answer the expectations of His heart, and the purpose of His plans and counsels. For nothing can He value like His grace.

Why does He promise that His eye and His heart shall be toward the temple perpetually? (2 Chron. vii. 16.) Is it not because in the temple there was the witness of His grace? The place of angels did not afford His eye that object. And yet angels as creatures were more beautiful, and heaven as a place far more magnificent, than the priests and the temple at Jerusalem. But angels and heaven did not tell Him of His grace in the way that the temple did. And there lay the attraction. That was the secret why His eye and His heart affected that spot so intently.

The revelation of this grace of God, the style of the revelation of it, is as wonderful and different from all beside, just as is the grace itself. The love of God disclosed in the gospel is a love which passes knowledge. And yet the story of it is told without glowing expressions to give it effect, or any help, as from language or description, to set it off to the heart. This is a wondrous thing. Attempts are not made in Scripture to carry the sense of this love to the soul beyond the simple telling of the tale of it. It is told, but told artlessly. This is the style, the general style or method, of the Book of God.

Take one instance of this from the house of

God, to which I have already referred. Take Exodus xxviii., where we get the dress of the servants of that house. These garments of the high priest, who was the mystic Christ, the Son of God serving in the sanctuary, are full of deep and precious mysteries. They express to the intelligence of faith a love that passes knowledge. And yet throughout the chapter there is not the slightest effort to produce an impression correspondent with that; none whatever. The dress of Aaron is simply hung up before our eye, without any description to attract attention to it or command the heart.

Is this human? Indeed it is not. This style is as much above man's as the grace it unfolds. And this grace in the sanctuary of old was the very way of Christ in the day of His personal ministry. He never used *language*, if I may so speak. His style had nothing of a glowing, eloquent declaration of His love about it. There was nothing of ardour either in manner or word to enforce on the disciples the conviction of His affection. But there was ample material for the heart to assure itself of that precious truth. All His way (passed in calmness, and, as far as could be, in silence,) was a material which one, who could appreciate it, would have used for the demonstration of a love that thoroughly passed all description.

Wondrous method of the God of all grace and all perfections! It is the office, the covenant business, of the Holy Ghost, to interpret all this mysterious love. It is for Him to take Jesus, and show Him unto us. Christ made no effort to persuade us of His love. That was not His way. The Lord of the old sanctuary, as we have

also seen, made no such effort. Each of these passed before the eye of faith calmly, and, as it were, silently; but the Spirit and the renewed mind find ample matter to discover, and to feed upon, a love that passes all knowledge.

And happy and profitable it is to have it vividly impressed on the soul, that it is in company with the God of grace we pursue our journey day by day, or take its successive and changeful stages. The twenty-third Psalm would witness this. There the saint addresses himself to his journey, not knowing what may betide him; but in the assurance that, be it what it may, want, sorrow, failure in righteousness, or conflict, nay, death-like circumstances and conditions, still God in grace is ever near to supply the strength, the comfort, or the restoration.

We get the same doctrinally, or as taught us by the apostle. Being justified by the death of Christ, we shall be saved by His life. (Rom. v.) It is not merely the grace of God at the cross that is to be remembered, but the grace of God in Christ's life in heaven, that is to be used and enjoyed every day. The life of Christ in heaven for us measures and accompanies the life of a needy and defiled saint on earth. The hidden thing is as real as the manifested; the doings of the Lord in discipline of us are open; His pleadings for us are secret; one on earth, the other in heaven, but both equally real.

So in Hebrews iv. If the two-edged sword make inquiry, and disclose the corruptions in us, the high priesthood of Jesus is ever at hand to answer for them. As under the law, the ashes of the red heifer were laid up in a clean place, outside the camp, for the constant use of the one

defiled by the touch of death. (Num. xix.) The relief was ever at hand, relief provided by grace. Let what judge or accuser may raise his voice to condemn, he is always met by the intercession of Him who is seated at the right hand of God. (Rom. viii.) The accuser is heard comparatively at a distance; but the Intercessor is seated in the place of dearest intimacy and highest dignity. And thus, in another form, grace displays itself and accompanies us all along the way.

Here, however, I am drawn aside a little. I have just said that the voice of the accuser or judge is heard comparatively at a distance, and not from that place of nearness and dignity from whence the voice of the Intercessor comes. But I do not, when I say this, forget that the accuser of the brethren is in heaven. I know it; but still I say he is at a comparative distance.

The vision of Micaiah in 1 Kings xxii., the opening scenes in Job, the Lord's word in Luke x. 18, the teaching of the apostle in Ephesians vi. and the action in Revelation xii., all tell us that our adversary, our accuser, is in the heavenly places; but those heavens are a lower heavens than the Father's house, or the place of the excellent glory. There is a region to which "the prince of the power of the air" has title and access now, as of old he had title of access to the garden of Eden; to carry on his accusings there, as once he conducted his temptations in the garden. This region is called heaven, or the heavenly places, where spiritual wickednesses are. (Eph. vi.) This, however, is a lower heaven. This is not the Father's house. This is not the residence of the excellent glory. It may be the seat of power or of government; but it is not the place of the

excellent glory. And I understand this to be the place to which the holy Jerusalem descends, to take her connection with, and government of, the millennial earth. (Rev. xxi.)

She has, however, descended ere she reaches that spot, a witness that she belongs to a higher place. And so she does. She is more properly or personally an inmate of the Father's house, which is in higher regions, for the place of the family is higher than that of the government. The marriage of the Lamb takes place in the Father's house. (Rev. xix.) A marriage is a family action and suits a family dwelling. But when the marriage is celebrated there, the Bride is introduced to the place of dominion, which is a lower place, because she is seen as descending to it.

Now, it is this lower place, this lower place of government, or of connection with the earth, this region occupied by the Lamb's wife in the day of her manifested glory, which constitutes the heaven or the heavenly places of the principalities and powers of darkness in the present time. (Eph. vi. 12.) From that heaven they will be cast down; and then, in due season at last, that place will be occupied by the redeemed and glorified Church, the Lamb's wife, which is to have the government of "the world to come." (Heb. ii. 5.)

And I may add, the scene eyed by Peter, James, and John, on the holy hill, was a scene laid rather in the place of power or of government than in the Father's house. And this I say for two reasons. First, the excellent glory, or the place of the Father, was separated from that hill (2 Pet. i. 17); secondly, the place of that scene was within the ken or vision of the earthly people; and so will

the place of the holy Jerusalem or the Church in government be, but so will not be the Father's house, or "the excellent glory." (Matt. xvii.; Mark ix.; Luke ix.)

All this has value for us. It witnesses to us that the family scene is above courtly scene; that the place of affection is higher than the place of power. But all is grace.

Grace, like everything of freedom, delights to use its freedom. This we may see in such a scene as that of the eunuch in Acts viii. Grace also delights in displaying the variousness of its ways: this we may see in such a history as that of David. The soul that is established in grace, as another once said, will be found rather reasoning from what God is, than from what we ourselves are. Oh, precious occupation of the heart, to be going over and over again the grace and glory we receive from Him!

God our Refuge, our Resource, and our Stay.

Read Psalm xlvii.

IT is impossible to apply this psalm *literally* to Christians, whose calling is to be with Christ above. No doubt, like many other psalms, it gives us precious lessons of spiritual instruction; but it contemplates a people on the earth conscious of Jehovah having shaken the earth, wrought desolations in it, and brought a time of peace and blessing into it, having made wars to cease unto the end of the earth, broken the bow and spear, and burnt the chariot in the fire.

GOD OUR REFUGE.

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The faithful here are on the earth; and knowing that this time of peace and blessing has been brought about by judgments, they are conscious of the presence of Jehovah of hosts with them, and that the God of Jacob is their refuge. There can be no question, then, that the people here referred to are Jews, the faithful remnant so often spoken of by the prophets, brought through the time of Jacob's trouble, and celebrating their glorious deliverance. It is clearly a glance at millennial days, with the realised presence of Jehovah of hosts with them, which still, we know, awaits fulfilment.

As I have said, this psalm reads us profitable lessons, not only as setting forth the goodness and faithfulness of Jehovah to His earthly people, but also because it brings God before us as the refuge, the resource, and the stay of the hearts of His faithful ones in time of trouble. This has always been true. Dispensations have varied; but Jehovah changeth not. Both to His earthly people Israel, and to His heavenly people, the Church, God has ever been the sole source of blessing and deliverance; so that the word abides immutably true, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." (Psalm ii. 12.)

Let us now look a little, as the Lord may help, at the precious lessons suggested to us in the three practical points; namely, God our Refuge, God our Resource, and God the Stay of our hearts.

1. GOD OUR REFUGE. In time of trouble the heart is often ready to turn anywhere for help rather than to God; but faith always looks to God, and to God only. The heart that has thus to do with God finds that His love attracts, His

faithfulness encourages, and His power to usward in Christ emboldens us to count upon Him, and that too when all is dark and hopeless on every hand. When God is really our refuge, the triumphant utterance of the soul is, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.) Happy indeed are those who thus in unfeigned faith make God their refuge!

We read that when Asa, King of Judah, relied on Jehovah, he was delivered from a great host of the Ethiopians; but when he relied on the King of Syria, and relied not on the Lord his God, he was rebuked by the prophet for it, and had constant wars in consequence of his folly. (2 Chron. xvi. 7-9.)

When Jehoshaphat trusted in God he had great success, and God gave him rest round about; but when he sought to strengthen himself by making affinity with the wicked king of Israel, we are expressly told that the Lord broke his works. (2 Chron. xx. 37.)

Again, while David trusted in God, the strongest fleshly foe fell before him in the great Goliath; but when, in unbelief and self-occupation, he "said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul," he pursued a course very dishonouring to God and disastrous to himself; but it is beautiful to perceive in the divine record, that when he again "encouraged himself in the Lord his God," the result was most prosperous, and he became more than conqueror. (1 Sam. xviii.; xxvii. 1; xxx. 6.)

And so, in a later day, an inspired apostle marks out the Christian's path as calling for

constant exercise of faith, when he says, "We walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Cor. v. 7.) And when his heart was well-nigh fainting because of the trouble which came upon him in Asia, he writes: "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us." (2 Cor. i. 9, 10.)

But such as really know God as their refuge find Him also their strength, and a very present help in time of trouble. And how blessed for such as are conscious of their own weakness to know where to turn to find real strength; for it is not less true now than in Isaiah's day, that "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." (Isa. xl. 29.)

To rely on self, or friends, or any other arm of flesh, is sure to bring forth, sooner or later, its bitter fruits. To be strong in self-confidence is only the exhibition of thorough weakness; but to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might"; "strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus"; "strong in faith, giving glory to God," is strength indeed, though always accompanied with the deepest sense of creature weakness. (Eph. vi. 10; 2 Tim. ii. 1; Rom. iv. 20.) It is also the path in which the Spirit leads us, the sure way of present blessing. Difficulties thus become bread to faith, and faith grows by being exercised.

When the energy and contrivances of nature are called into action in divine things, it will need such trying but salutary lessons of correc-

tion from the Father of spirits as shall produce in us the sense of utter helplessness, and compel us to cling to God for strength. In this way we learn the vastly important lesson that God's strength is made perfect in weakness; so that when we are weak, and then only, are we really strong in the Lord. (2 Cor. xii. 10.) God then is our refuge, not man. Men should know our moderation (or yieldingness); but we should tell God our need. "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil iv. 5, 6.)

Is it not well, dear Christian reader, to deal closely with our hearts, in the presence of God, on this deeply practical and momentous subject? It is easy to speak of our own weakness; but do we so feel it day by day and continually, that we are compelled to look to God for strength? Is it a realised fact with us, that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing; and because of this, are we cast upon the power and goodness of God? Surely it is a precious reality to have God for our refuge and strength, waiting *on* and *for* Him, because He has been, and is, and will be, "a very present help in trouble"; and such always prove that "blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee." (Ps. lxxxiv. 5.) If God is our refuge, we shall find either that He will give us deliverance *from* the trouble, or help *in* the trouble; but blessing it will be, present blessing, in some way or other. It may be painful to find every other refuge fail us, all other springs dry, every cistern broken, and lover and friend stand aloof; but God being really our refuge, we shall find Him our strength, and a very present help. Trials, more or less, we must

all have; but what unspeakable blessing there is in making God our refuge! What relief! What rest!

To have the sentence of death in ourselves so thoroughly as to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and to be alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ, will necessarily produce such exercise of soul as to cast us upon God, His power and goodness, and prove that He is our "strength, and a very present help in trouble." Surely policy is not faith, nor are human contrivances the Spirit's work. Faith casts each care upon Him who careth for us, though pride and unbelief may take it up again. (1 Pet. v. 7.)

2. GOD OUR RESOURCE. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God," etc. (v. 4.) It may be that many who have proved the blessedness of making God their *refuge* have little acquaintance with Him as their *resource*. It is when barrenness and disappointment are seen stamped on every thing around us, that the heart is fairly tested as to what it is really living upon. The life of faith is upon the Son of God. He has so made known God, that we now know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent. (John xvii. 3.) God is love, and He has manifested His love in sending "His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John iv. 9, 10.) "God is light," and every thing is naked and open before His eyes; and He has set forth His infinite hatred to sin in forsaking His own Son when bearing our sins, and in condemning sin in the flesh in that spotless One. (Rom. viii. 3.)

Thus it is that God is now known; so that, instead of being dreaded by us, He is really our hiding-place; and instead of seeking to be away from His presence, we know that He has reconciled us to Himself, made us stand in His holy presence complete and accepted in the Beloved; and that He abounds in thoughts and purposes of love and grace to us, so that His perfect love not only dismisses all terror from our hearts, but gives us access with confidence. Thus it is that a believer is never so happy as in the conscious enjoyment of God's presence; for God is our resource, "the fountain of living waters" to our souls. (Jer. ii. 13; xvii. 13.) As the apostle expresses it, "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation." (Rom. v. 11.) We know God as having sent His Son, spoken to us by His Son, given His Son to be a propitiation for our sins; and we know that He came to do the will of God: "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God!" He said, and this will was that we should be sanctified and perfected for ever by the one offering of Himself. (Heb. x. 14.) This is God's love, and this love He commends to us; and thus it is that we have peace with God, and, as we have seen, can now joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is not joy in self, or creatures, or circumstances, but in God, who never disappoints those who thus look to Him. If a prophet, with his poor and feeble knowledge of God, could say, when there was no blossom or fruit on the vines, the fields and olive-yards barren, and no herd in the stalls, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," how much more does it become us to "rejoice in the Lord

always," and find all our springs of consolation and gladness in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Hab. iii. 17.) When we thus trust in God as our resource, we rise above every circumstance, painful or pleasant, and can heartily sing,

" My God, the spring of all my joys,
The life of my delights;
The glory of my brightest days,
The comfort of my nights."

If then a remnant of God's earthly people will know God, and His rich blessings to them, so that they can say, " There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High," how much more can we triumphantly rejoice in the aboundings of divine grace to us! As a river becomes wider and deeper the further it flows, so surely does the rich and marvellous grace and goodness of God to us in Christ Jesus become more vast and wondrous to our souls. " I saw," said John, " a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Rev. xxii. 1.) And if another has said, when contemplating the future,

" There from the river of His grace
Drink endless pleasures in,"

why not now by faith delight our souls in the unutterable goodness and blessing of God to us in Christ?

Beloved, what do we know of God as a resource? Are we happy in the Lord, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, worshipping God in the Spirit, having no confidence in the flesh? (Phil. iii. 3.) Do we know the blessedness of dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, and abiding under the

shadow of the Almighty? (Ps. xci. 1.) Are we happier in God's presence than in the presence of any one else?

3. GOD OUR STAY. "Be still, and know that I am God." It is a great thing for the heart to be steadily looking to God, and quietly waiting on and hoping in Him. We read, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." (Isa. xxvi. 4.) When the people of Israel were well-nigh overwhelmed by the enemy at Pi-hahiroth, they were told to "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." (Exodus xiv. 13.) Faith is quiet before God; and casts all care upon Him; but unbelief is restless and plodding. Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, heard His word, and obtained strength for service. Martha's service was well meant, and prompted no doubt by love to the Lord; but her busy activity soon broke down. A prophet of Israel told the people that "their strength is to sit still." (Isa. xxxi. 7.) What an unspeakable privilege is it thus to be quietly stayed upon God, remembering His word, "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." (Exodus. xiv. 14.) A careless walk with unjudged sin cannot know this. The lofty workings of an unsubdued imagination knows not this blessed place. But to those who know God to be their refuge and strength, and who find their springs of joy in Him, it seems only natural to be quietly stayed upon Him. They wait only on and for God, for their expectation is from Him. Such know that God will be exalted, and that our happy privilege is to give unto Him the glory due unto His name.

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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).

Shelter and Satisfaction.

"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." (Song of Solomon ii. 3, 4.)

THE attitude of soul set forth in this lovely passage is one of perfect repose and complacency. It is not the attitude of one who has found a partial rest, rest for a day, a month, a year. The soul that has really found rest in Christ, has found a rest which is divine in its character, and eternal in its duration.

"I sat down." Precious attitude! There is no more toil for the sinner. Plenty of toil for the saint; plenty of toil for the servant. There is no

more labour in the brick kilns of Pharaoh, but abundance of labour in the vineyard of Christ. The believer's labour comes after soul-rest, not before it.

And, observe, it is "under *His* shadow." It is not under the shadow of my doings, my feelings, my frames, my experiences. Neither is it the shadow of ordinances, however valuable; nor of doctrines, however true; nor of institutions, however important. All these things have their proper place and their proper value; but we had better not venture to sit down under their shadow; for, if we do, they will prove no better than Jonah's gourd, which sprang up in a night, and perished in a night. No, my reader, it must be Christ Himself; Christ only; Christ always. It must be "I," my very self, "sat down," found my sweet repose and resting place, my shade and satisfaction, "under *His* shadow." Then all is right; right now; right for ever.

And let me ask, How much shade does a soul enjoy that is resting simply in Christ? Just as much as Christ can afford. If I sit down under the shadow of a tree or a rock, I enjoy just that amount of shade which the tree or the rock can yield me. So when the soul reposes by faith in the shadow of Christ, the whole question is, How much shade can He furnish? Faith knows the answer.

Christ's Person and Work.

“ Who loved me, and *gave* HIMSELF for me.”—
(Galatians ii. 20.)

THERE are three things which show the riches of divine grace and the magnitude of the work of the cross; the infinite glory and eternal qualities of the Person who accomplished it, the unfathomable suffering it necessitated, and the everlasting blessedness resulting from it to the praise and glory of God.

With the Son of God it was the dignity of His Person which gave eternal value to His work; whereas, among men, it is the offices they fill which confer dignity upon the persons. God sent forth His Son. He came down from heaven. He was here, not in the nature of angels, but in fashion as a man, in a servant's form, in the likeness of sinful flesh, come of woman, and born into the world Son of God. Thus He is both the eternal God and perfect Man in one blessed Person; Man, yet the Fellow of the Lord of hosts; born of Mary, yet God manifested in flesh. He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death; for man had sinned, and the righteousness of God required that man must taste death under divine judgment of sin, and rise triumphantly out of it, for any to be blessed. Thus, in surpassing and unfathomable grace, “the Son of God” was “the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world,” and accomplished eternal redemption for us.

It is not God here speaking by prophets and promise as formerly, but in these last days He has spoken to us in the person of the Son, who, being the effulgence of God's glory, and the ex-

pression of His substance, Heir of all things, Maker of the worlds, and upholding all things by the word of His power, having made, by Himself, purification of sins in the death of the cross, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. There He still sits on the Father's throne, as that to which He is righteously entitled as having accomplished redemption for the glory of God, before He comes again and takes His rightful place throughout the universe as "Lord of all."

In the first chapter of the gospel by John we read, not only that "the Word was with God," which shows distinction of Person, but that "the Word was God," thus setting before us His Deity, His almightiness, in that "all things were made by Him." He was also Life and Light—the Light of the world. Men may be blind, and not discern the Light; yet was He (being incarnate) the true Light, which, coming into the world lighteth (not enlighteneth, but sheds its lights upon) every man. As to this, we are told that "the people which sat in darkness *saw great light*; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death *light is sprung up*." (Matt. iv. 16.) "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us," and in Him, "the Son of the living God," faith and the spiritual eye could see and trace a glory which was unutterable; so that some speaking of Him could say, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father," thus identifying the Word with the Son of God, "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." (John i. 1-14; 1 John i. 2.)

The Baptist announced the Person of the Son of God, because he was our Lord's forerunner; and he delighted to declare the glory of the One

he announced. He repeatedly said, "After me cometh a Man which is preferred [takes a place] before me; for He was before me." (John i. 30.) He informs us of his being sent to baptise in order that Jesus might "be made manifest to Israel." But who could this mysterious Person be, of whom John could thus speak as being both "before" him and "after" him? He was *before* John as Creator of everything, and *after* John as to birth and testimony.

Though John was the prophet of the Highest, yet Jesus was the Son of the Highest; and the Baptist, when thinking of His greatness and glory, could only speak of himself as a "voice," and confess that he was unworthy to unloose the latchet of His shoe. John was divinely instructed, "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." (v. 33.) This we know was literally fulfilled, when, as the heavens were opened to Jesus, the Spirit, in bodily shape as a dove, descended and abode upon Him, and a voice from heaven declared, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

John knew, therefore, unquestionably, the Deity of the Person he thus baptized, so that he adds, "And I saw, and bare record, that this is the Son of God." (v. 34.) It is a marvellous fact that "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father," and who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," was found here "in fashion as a Man"; but how immeasurably deeper was the step He took when He freely became a sacrifice for sin upon the cross! Yet such was His path of unfathomable grace.

Hence we find in this chapter, immediately after John had declared Him to be "the Son of God," he proclaimed Him also to be "the Lamb of God." "Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" (vv. 35, 36.) John had previously announced Him as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," because He will yet, in virtue of His death and blood-shedding on the cross, so entirely blot out every trace of sin from earth and heaven, that in the new heaven and new earth, instead of sin reigning unto death, righteousness will be dwelling.

Thus the sphere of blessing to be introduced by "the Lamb of God" will extend far beyond the range of Israel, to whom God's gracious dealings had heretofore been principally confined. It is important to notice that it does *not* say, "which taketh away the *sins* of the world," as is sometimes wrongly quoted, for had that been true, then every one must be saved; but He is "the Lamb of God which taketh away the *sin* of the world." (v. 29.) Though He "died for all," He was not a Substitute for all—"Christ was once offered to bear [not the sins of all, but] the *sins of many*." (Heb. ix. 28.)

Those who heard John thus speak must have been familiar with the truth of a lamb for a sacrifice. From the beginning of sin's entrance into the world, God had shown that the only way in which He could bring in blessing to man as a sinner in righteousness and grace for His own glory was by sacrifice. Hence we read that His first act in meeting the need of His fallen creatures was through death: "Unto Adam also, and to his

wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." (Gen. iii. 21.) The wickedness of the first offspring of Adam's race was to approach God without blood; thus ignoring the Fall, and all God's testimony to the sin and judgment of man. The next of Adam's race was saved, because he brought to God, by faith, of the firstlings of his flock—lambs, or goats, in sacrifice; and, by this more excellent sacrifice, "he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts," etc. (Gen. iv. 4; Heb. xi. 4.) After this, when Abraham was journeying to Mount Moriah to offer up Isaac according to the command of God, the young man said to his father, "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." (Gen. xxi. 8.) From that time the true-hearted were taught to look for the Lamb which God would provide—"the Lamb of God."

Long after that, when the children of Israel were sheltered from the judgment of the destroying angel in the land of Egypt, their only safety was in the blood of the lamb. By that blood sprinkled on the lintel and door-posts of their houses, they were assured by God of such perfect safety, that they could quietly remain that night in their dwellings, and feed upon the flesh of the lamb roast with fire, and that at a time when God's judgment of death was in every house round about them. How strikingly this reminds us of "the Lamb of God," and the perfect safety of all who are, by faith, now under the shelter of His precious blood! Afterward, in another way, the children of Israel were taught that no one could approach God, and live in His holy presence, but

on account of the value of the blood of the sacrifice. (Lev. xvi. 2.)

An instructed Israelite would also be familiar with the fact, that every day the morning and evening sacrifice of a lamb was to be offered; also a weekly sacrifice of two lambs on the sabbath day; also seven lambs in the beginning of every month, besides the passover and other occasions. (Ex. xxix. 38, 39; Num. xxviii. 9-11.) All these were typical shadows of "the Lamb of God." Hence when Jesus was manifested to Israel and known to John as the Son of God, he, looking upon Jesus as He walked, said, in the presence of two of his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God." It is in these special characters of "Son of God," and "Lamb of God," that God now presents Him to us in the gospel, and He is thus blessedly made known to every one that believeth.

What a sacrifice of infinite value must be "the Lamb of God," who is also "the Son of God"! The two disciples heard the word of God's messenger saying, "Behold the Lamb of God!" and their eyes were fastened on Him at once; and so captivating was He to their hearts that they went after Him. Oh the marvellous attractiveness and suitability of Christ! "The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." (v. 37.) Does the reader know what this is? Have you heard God's testimony to "the Lamb of God"? Has the awakening word "Behold!" fallen upon your heart with such power as to turn your whole soul to Him as the only Saviour? The word was not "Do," nor "Give," nor "Be this," nor "Try that"; oh, no, it was "Behold!" His word by a prophet was, "Look unto Me [only look] and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God,

and there is none else." His word by an apostle was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." His word from His own gracious lips was "Come!" Thus the drawings of divine grace are expressed by such words as "Behold," "Look," "Believe," "Come." Does the reader truly say, I do *behold*, I have *come*; I do *believe*, I can *look*? Then to such He becomes the attractive Object of the soul. He not only satisfies our need, but He also wins our hearts.

Since the testimony of John, the Lamb has been slain, sins have been borne, and redemption has been accomplished; after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, He for ever (in perpetuity) sat down on the right hand of God. Soon Jesus will be known "a Lamb as it had been slain" "in the midst of the throne" (Rev. v.); and, in millennial times, it will be then known that "The glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof"; while "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it," and living blessings flow like a river out of "the throne of God and the Lamb." Happy indeed will those be who are then manifested as "the bride, the Lamb's wife."

There He now sits on the Father's throne. The Son of man is glorified, and the believer knows that peace has been made through the blood of the cross. He is not now on the cross, not now in the sepulchre, but He is on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, crowned with glory and honour. To Him *there* the Spirit directs the eye of faith.

The divine order is peace, communion, and testimony; and this order remains always the same. The blessed Lamb of God now on the Father's throne must be first known as the Object of faith,

through whose blood we have remission of sins, and in whom we are accepted. Then follow communion with Him by His word and Spirit, abiding in Him, participating in His own thoughts, His own delights, His own purposes, service, and ways; and then, as we are vessels filled with heavenly treasure, and overflowing with the grace of God to us in Christ, we seek to spread the savour of His name, and to bring others to the same precious Saviour. God grant we may know this better.

The Holy Spirit as Seal and Earnest.

“Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are *sealed* unto the day of redemption.” (Eph. iv. 30.)

“In whom also, *after that ye believed*, ye were *sealed* with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest* of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.” (Eph. i. 13, 14.)

IN these verses we have the Spirit of God presented to us in two distinct ways, namely, first, as the *seal* which God puts upon all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, secondly, as the *earnest* of the inheritance which the sealed heirs shall possess before long.

All true believers are sealed with the Holy Ghost. We must, of course, distinguish between being quickened and being sealed. The Holy Spirit quickens dead souls: He seals living be-

lievers; that is, He is Himself the seal. God does not seal sinners dead in trespasses and sins: He quickens them; leads them to repentance; and when, through grace, they believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ as crucified, risen, and glorified at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, then He seals them by giving the Holy Spirit to dwell in them. Thus He set His blessed mark on them, until "the day of redemption."

It is very important to be clear as to the difference, between quickening and sealing. Many persons find difficulty here; but Scripture is as plain as possible on the subject:

Take, for example, the opening paragraph of Acts xix. : "It came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper coast, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost " (or rather, "We did not even hear if the Holy Spirit was come.") "And he said unto them, Unto what, then, were ye baptised? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on Him who should come after, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

Here, then, we have, with great clearness and force, the distinction between quickening and sealing. Here were twelve men, who evidently were disciples, and who had received a measure

of truth, but not the full truth of accomplished redemption, of a risen and glorified Saviour, and of the Holy Ghost as the witness of these grand and glorious facts.

We are not to suppose that these disciples had never heard of the existence of the Holy Ghost. In this our Authorized Version is manifestly defective. What they had not heard was whether the Holy Ghost had come down as the witness and proof of the exaltation and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist, whose disciples they were, knew and spoke of the Holy Spirit, so that they must have known of that divine Person; but he did not, could not, know, and therefore could not speak, of Him as the seal put upon all true believers.

And yet they were true disciples, really quickened souls, but not sealed. They were practically in the condition of Old Testament believers, or of the disciples during our Lord's life on earth. There was this difference, that the Holy Ghost had come on the day of Pentecost, and had been working for years, not only in quickening, but in sealing. Thousands of Jews at Jerusalem, many of the Samaritans, the household of Cornelius, had all received the Holy Ghost; and yet the twelve disciples at Ephesus had not even heard of His descent from heaven.

Hence, then, it is plain that persons may be quickened, and not sealed. What was true of those Ephesians, years after the day of Pentecost, may be equally true of souls now. How many of the Lord's beloved people, throughout the wide field of Christian profession, are in this condition! They do not know what it is to be linked by the indwelling Spirit to a risen and glorified Head in

heaven. They are virtually under the law; they do not know the blessedness of settled peace with God; they enjoy not the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free; they are in bondage, filled with doubts and fears.

Many go on in this sad condition all their days, and perhaps on their death-bed, for the first time, they get a full view of a risen and glorified Christ, and, believing on Him, are there and then sealed, and brought into the glorious liberty of the gospel of God. They have been robbed all their lifetime of their precious privilege. Through legality, bad teaching, or some other cause, they have been kept in ignorance of "the things which are freely given to us of God"; and thus they have been groping on in darkness and distance, instead of enjoying that blessed nearness to God which is the portion of all those who simply believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.

However, we shall not dwell further just now on the important and interesting distinction between quickening and sealing (the former being the work of the Spirit, the latter His personal indwelling), but shall, before closing this very brief article, call the serious attention of the Christian reader to the weighty word of exhortation quoted above: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

This injunction assumes that the Christian knows himself to be a sealed one. All Christian exhortation is based on the fact of our being in the enjoyment of Christian position and privilege. We could not grieve the Holy Spirit if He were not in us; but when we know what it is to have such a One as the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in

us, making our body His temple, what a powerful motive is this to holy living! How careful we should be not to grieve Him! How we should watch against every thought and every word and act that would be offensive to the divine Guest who has taken up His abode in us! All lightness and frivolity; all unhallowed conversation; all evil speaking; all unkindness, moroseness, and irritability; all selfish ways; all worldly mindedness, must be judged according to the standard of the Holy One by whom we are sealed to the day of redemption. It is no longer a question of what is suitable or consistent for *us*, but of what is so for Him. This makes all the difference. Many a thing might be suitable for us which would be very grievous to Him. Our constant inquiry should be, "Will this thing grieve the Holy Spirit who dwells in me?" If so, let us, by the grace of God, judge and reject it with holy decision.

May the Lord enable us to bend our earnest attention to His most precious word of exhortation, that so His holy name may be more fully glorified in our daily life!

And now a very few words on the subject of "the earnest." This is a most precious aspect of the Spirit's office and work. He is "the earnest of the inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." The inheritance is *purchased*. The price has been paid. But it is not yet *redeemed*. For this latter we wait; and while we are waiting, our God has most graciously given us the earnest of His Spirit, so that we are as sure of the inheritance as though we were already in possession of it. The earnest is a part of what we are to get. "Now He which stab-

lisheth us *with you in Christ*" (most precious words!) "and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." (2 Cor. i. 21, 22.)

We must carefully distinguish between purchase and redemption. Many confound them, and thus suffer serious loss. Our Lord Christ has purchased the whole universe. He has paid the redemption price for the inheritance; but He has not yet laid His mighty hand, in redeeming power, thereupon. Redemption by *price* is one thing; redemption by *power* quite another. In the year 1834, the British Legislature voted twenty millions of money to redeem the slaves in the British Colonies. This was redemption by price. But then, notwithstanding the payment of this redemption price, some poor slaves might be found huddled together in a slave ship. What was needed in their case? Redemption by power in virtue of the price. A British warship might seize the slave ship and let go all the poor captives. This may, in some feeble manner, illustrate the difference between purchase and redemption.

In Romans viii. we have a splendid passage which we must quote for the reader. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be

revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only it, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, *waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*"

As regards the body of the believer, in respect to the inheritance, the redemption price has been paid, but it is not yet redeemed: "We groan within ourselves." We sigh for the redemption. We wait for the moment of deliverance. "We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." (Phil. iii. 20, 21.)

Glorious prospect! How precious for the weary, suffering pilgrim who feels the burden of his poor crumbling tabernacle! "The Lord is at hand." The voice of the archangel and the trump of God will soon be heard, and then mortality shall be swallowed up of life. (1 Thes. iv. 16.) Till then we are sealed with that blessed Spirit of God, who is the earnest, not of His love (which we possess), but of the inheritance for which we wait.

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WORDS OF TRUTH

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

## Thoughts on Matthew XIV.

**T**HEY need not depart." Jesus having preached to the multitudes, was able to meet their temporal needs, according to the prophecy, "I will satisfy her poor with bread." (Ps. cxxxii. 15; Matt. xiv. 15-36.)

The disciples, looking at their resources, "five loaves and two fishes," instead of to Christ, would have sent the multitude away empty. The Lord graciously multiplies the loaves and fishes, privileging His disciples to administer them; and "they did all eat and were filled." Moreover, instead of being losers thereby, they gathered up twelve baskets full of fragments. So will there be abundance when Christ administers the blessings of His kingdom in the coming day.

The multitude, although willing to eat of the loaves and fishes provided by their Messiah,

nevertheless would not receive Him, and ere long cried out, "Away with Him; crucify Him." Consequently Israel, as a nation, had for the time to be set on one side, till the day comes when they will repent, looking on Him whom they pierced. (Zech. xii. 10.)

The Lord does not tell His disciples to send away the multitudes. He Himself does that, though His loving heart would rather have gathered them even "as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings"; but they would not. (Matt. xxiii. 37.)

The incident that follows appears to have a two-fold application.

During the time of Israel's setting aside, the Lord has His own loved Church going through a scene where it meets with the strong opposition of men (the waves), stirred up against them by Satan, the prince of the power of the air (the wind). Christ, Himself rejected by man, has gone back to heaven, and thus is lost to the sight of His people (except to faith's vision), just as on the mountain top He was unseen by His disciples. But His eyes saw them in their danger and distress; and He was praying for them. So now He ever liveth to make intercession for us. (Heb. vii. 25.)

If in the disciples in the ship we have a picture of our Lord's people collectively, in Peter walking on the water we have brought before us the individual walk of faith—a walk distinct and apart from all natural principles, and one only to be maintained by the eye of faith being fixed on Christ, the blessed Object and Sustainer of faith.

The moment Peter's eye wandered from Christ to that which encompassed and threatened to engulf him, that moment he began to sink. But the

cry of need, "Lord, save me," found the Saviour near him, and the Saviour's hand stretched forth to lift him above the waves.

Soon the Lord will come for His Church, and we shall be on the other side with Him, the wind and waves of this world exchanged for the unruffled peace and fulness of joy of the Father's house. (John xiv. 2, 3.)

But we may also view the disciples in the ship as a type of the godly remnant of Israel, who believe in Christ during the time of His rejection by the mass of the nation. That remnant, after the rapture of the Church, will be called upon to endure the terrible opposition of Satan and man during the great tribulation; but at the darkest moment, when all seems hopeless, Christ will come to them with words of good cheer: "It is I; be not afraid."

Just as "the wind ceased" when He came into the ship, so will the power of Satan be stilled when the Lord comes to deliver Israel, and take His kingdom, and reign; for the devil shall be bound, and cast into the bottomless pit for the thousand years of the glorious millennial reign of Messiah, the King of kings and Lord of lords. (Rev. xx. 1-5).

In the end of Matthew xiv. we read that when they were come over to the other side, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and as many as touched Him were made perfectly whole.

If Israel now finds no balm in Gilead to heal their sorrows, because of their continued rejection of the Great Physician, in that day they will turn to Him, and He, the "Sun of Righteousness," will rise "with healing in His wings." (Mal. iv. 2.)

W. H. S. F.

## Jesus in Gethsemane.

“Being in an agony He prayed more earnestly : and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” (Luke xxii. 44.)

**T**HE agony of Gethsemane preceded the death of the cross. The darkness of night had set in, and the hour was at hand. The supper (never to be forgotten) was ended, and a hymn had been sung. It was a profoundly awful moment. The betrayer, into whom Satan had entered, was near. The trampling of the feet of the multitude armed with swords and staves, headed by the traitor, to take the Lord, might almost be heard in the distance, while the light of their lanterns and torches would soon be discerned; for that which had long been written concerning sacrifice and offering must shortly be fulfilled.

The passover which Jesus had so lovingly desired to eat with His disciples had been kept, so that “the suffering of death ” for which He had come into the world had been most pointedly before His tender heart. (Heb. ii. 9.) His deeply felt utterance had been, “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you *before I suffer.*” (Luke xxii. 15.) It must have been a most affecting time, for He knew that He Himself was the paschal Lamb, the Redeemer of His people. And yet, after fulfilling the scripture in eating the passover, His death, “even the death of the cross,” was still more strikingly set forth in the institution of His own Supper. How touching is the divine record ! “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



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is for you : this do in remembrance of Me." (1 Cor. xi. 24.) Yes, those very hands which were so soon to be cruelly nailed to the tree by wicked men, took the loaf, and brake it, to set forth the symbol of His own body, which, in a few hours, would be actually offered to God as a sacrifice for sin.

"After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped [after supper], saying, This cup is the New Testament in My blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." (1 Cor. xi. 25.) For this, Jesus, the Lamb of God was about to offer Himself, and His blood would be shed for many for the remission of sins. How vividly and affectingly must this have brought before the Holy Sufferer the unutterable sorrow and pain so immediately before Him, when He would once suffer for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God! (1 Pet. iii. 18.) But what lessons of infinite love all this teaches our hearts!

Soon after this, Jesus and His disciples crossed the brook Cedron, and entered into the quiet garden of Gethsemane. This place was well known to Judas, for Jesus had oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples. There, after saying to them, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder," He took Peter, and James, and John aside, and, in sore amazement and trouble, said unto them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with Me." (Matt. xxvi. 38). Then withdrawing from them about a stone's cast, "He fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me : nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (v. 39.) Again He said, "O My Father,

if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." (v. 42.) Again He "prayed the third time, saying the same words." (v. 44.)

What human language could possibly portray the exceeding solemnity of this scene? When we think that this blessed One could have prayed to His Father, and He would have presently given Him twelve legions of angels, how it bows our hearts in worship; when, instead of asking deliverance for Himself, we hear Him saying, "Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name!" (John xii. 27, 28.)

And yet, with this most blessed and complete surrender of Himself to the Father's will, what unutterable sorrow and agony pressed upon His heart! We are told that "there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke xxii. 43, 44.) Can we conceive trouble and anguish so terrible, or so heavy as to be connected with such effects? And yet, though the cup was before the Holy Sufferer, it was not to be drunk there. We find from John xviii., after the conflict in the garden was over, after His betrayers and murderers had come upon Him, after Peter had cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, that He had not then drunk the cup; for He said, "The cup which my Father hath given Me, *shall I not drink it?*" (v. 11.) If Luke records that which presents Jesus more as Son of Man, John views Him especially as the eternal Son of God, and

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therefore does not bring before us the Saviour's agony and conflict in the garden. Of course in every case He is the same blessed One, God and Man in one Person.

But let us contemplate a little further this astounding scene in Gethsemane, in that dark and memorable night. Why is the Holy One prostrate on the ground? Why such agony? Why that sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground? Why those earnest prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears? Why the thrice-repeated cry to the Father? Why such bitter grief? For neither the hand of God nor of man was upon Him. Was not Satan there? Was not THE CUP there presented to Him? What a cup! Who can describe its unmingled bitterness? And why did Jesus so dread the drinking of that cup? How could it be otherwise? Did not the Saviour say to the cruel multitude, *"This is your hour, and the power of darkness"*? (Luke xxii. 53.)

Yes, it was their hour; for those who had hated Jesus without a cause, and had sought to destroy Him, should no longer be restrained, but, according to the divine counsel, He would be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and "the prince of this world," who had "the power of death," would put forth his power against Him. In this way Jesus, by wicked hands, would be crucified and slain. Again it may be asked, Was not Satan there? Did not this wicked one seek to devour the Man-child, soon after His birth in Bethlehem, through Herod's sword? Afterwards did he not endeavour by repeated temptation to overcome, if possible, the blessed Lord on His entrance on His public ministry? And did not our Saviour say almost

immediately before He entered Gethsemane, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me"? (John xiv. 30.) No doubt he came, and pressed the weight and terror of death upon Him, but found in Him calm submission and perfect obedience to the Father's will. As another has said, "*For Him obedience, however terrible the suffering, was the joy and breathing of His soul.*"

How the contemplation of Him bows our hearts in adoration! Did not the cup clearly set forth that the righteous Sufferer must be given into the hands of His betrayers; that He must bear our sins in His own body on the tree, and be made sin for us; that death, as Satan's power, and God's just judgment of sin, must be suffered by Him; and, more than all, that, as suffering for our sins, He must be forsaken of God? Thus to be betrayed by one apostle, thrice denied by another, forsaken of all; to be the Sin-bearer, and made sin for us; to be forsaken of God, and given up to "the death of the cross," were immediately before Him. Could it be otherwise, then, that He who was perfect in love, in holiness, and in every sensibility of purity and truth, should have earnestly cried, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me! nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt"?

According to the divine counsels and ways of grace to us, and the glory of God, it was not possible; *therefore, after the thrice-repeated prayer*, we see Him rising up in perfect submission to the Father's will, and, looking away from secondary causes, He goes forth in obedience, taking the cup from His Father's hand, and, at Calvary finishes the work which the Father gave Him to do. He said, "Rise, let us be going; behold, he

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is at hand that doth betray Me. And while He yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves from the chief priests and elders of the people." (Matt. xxvi. 46, 47.) Soon the traitor's kiss with Satanic foulness was imprinted on the Saviour's cheek (*how hateful and distressing to Jesus!*); for the betrayer's sign was, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; hold him fast!" (v. 48.) How thoroughly Satanic is this work!

Thus we see the sufferings of the loving Saviour in Gethsemane were great beyond the largest powers of our comprehension; but *the sufferings there were not atoning*. Jesus was not there bearing sins; consequently He was not suffering divine judgment for sin there; He was not then forsaken of God; there was no death in the garden; the cup was not drunk then. How could there be therefore atonement? No doubt Gethsemane's sufferings, though unutterably great, were from the anticipation of what He must so soon pass through. In the garden, instead of being forsaken of God, He was in uninterrupted communion with the Father; instead of having to say, "Lover and friend hast Thou put far from Me," He had disciples with Him, and He said unto them, "Watch with Me." True, instead of watching they slept; but they were companions with Him in the suffering. When on the cross making atonement for sins He was alone. He did "by Himself" purge our sins. But in the garden, in testimony to His perfect purity before God, an angel was sent to strengthen Him. The contrast, then, between the Saviour's sufferings in the garden and those on the cross is very striking.

Among other precious lessons which we may

learn from the contemplation of our Saviour in Gethsemane, we may observe,

First. If the *anticipation* of the suffering of the death of the cross produced in the garden such unutterable distress, what must have been the magnitude and the reality of His suffering on the cross, when He was bruised and put to grief by Jehovah, and His soul was made an offering for sin?

Second. When we consider for a moment what drinking the cup involved, it becomes evident that only One who was equal with God could have drunk it, and have risen triumphantly out of it all to the praise and glory of God.

Third. Although only He could drink that cup, yet we may learn that earnest cryings and prayers, and supplications, and repeated, too, in time of trouble, are perfectly consistent with entire submission to our Father's will, and desire for His glory. "Being in an agony He prayed more earnestly." "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." (Heb. v. 8.)

Fourth. That in time of distress and sorrow, whether, instrumentally, it come to us from Satan or man, or both, it becomes us to be so satisfied that it is God's will, as to take the distress, whatever it may be, from His hands. Though Satan's and man's hatred, sin, the grave, death under judgment of sin, and forsaking, were involved in our Saviour's drinking the cup, yet He so discerned His Father's will, as to rise above all secondary causes, and say, "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" To see God in everything is surely the activity of a divinely wrought faith; but can this be till the soul

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has taken the ground before Him of "nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt"?

Fifth. It is scarcely possible for us to meditate on the cup of unmingled sorrow which He drank for us without a lively sense in our souls of divine grace, and the amazing contrast of it with the cup of perfect love and peace which He bids us drink in remembrance of Him. (1 Cor. xi. 23-26.) Is it any wonder that some should say, "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation" ? (Rom. v. 11.)

Sixth. The more we are in company with our adorable Lord in Gethsemane, the more the work of the cross will stand pre-eminently before our souls in its perfectness; the more, too, will the magnitude and infinite value of the finished work take hold on us, and we shall enter increasingly into that which forms the solid and immovable basis in divine righteousness on which all our hopes and blessings are for ever founded.

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Hark ! what sounds of bitter weeping,  
 From yon lonesome garden sweep !  
 'Tis the Lord His vigil keeping,  
 Whilst His followers sink in sleep.  
 Ah, my soul, He loved thee,  
 Yes, He gave Himself for me.

He is speaking to His Father,  
 Tasting deep that bitter cup,  
 Yet He takes it, willing rather  
 For our sakes to drink it up.  
 Oh, what love ! He loved me;  
 Gave Himself, my soul, for thee.

## **The Earlier Days of Moses.**

(Read Exodus ii.-iv.)

**T**HERE are two scenes in the early life of Moses which may afford us profitable admonition.

In Exodus ii. we see him under all external disadvantages. His soul has no help from without. He is in Pharaoh's court, and, as the apostle says, in the midst of "the pleasures of sin." (Heb. xi. 25.)

He is, however, as true a Nazarite there as Daniel was in the court of Babylon. The scene around casts him on his resources in God. He has to drink all alone and in secret of the waters at the fountain; for the land is dry and thirsty, with no grateful streams at all. But he flourishes; he is strong in faith, and stands in victory over the world. (1 John v. 4.)

This victory at first displays itself in him by his telling the courtiers not to treat him as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. (Heb. xi. 24.) This is an exceedingly beautiful notice of his faith. It lets us very much into the intimacies of his mind and daily walk among men. He was not ashamed to own his origin and early history, the loathing of his person, as it were, in the day that he was born, and that all his goodly estate was through the adoption of a foundling by the king's daughter. And this passage from Hebrews gives us to say that he may have checked the servants and officers of the palace in their disposition to flatter him with his titles and distinctions.

This was indeed beautiful. This was above nature. This was victory over "the pride of life."



(1 John ii. 16.) This was a lovely instance of self-emptying, of making oneself of no reputation. This was precious moral virtue in the soul of one who is said to have "esteemed the reproach of Christ." (Heb. xi. 26.)

Then he went out from the palace, and looked, amid the brick kilns, on the burdens of his brethren. (Exodus ii. 11.) This was the second stage in his life of devotedness and single-heartedness, while he was yet in Egypt, and all external things were against him. "It came into his heart" to do this, we are told. (Acts vii. 23.) And it is well, and the fruit is pleasant, when affection is the parent of service.

Such was the man Moses in the midst of Egypt and Egypt's temptations and hindrances. The place was barren of all help for a soul that walked with God. Moses flourished there. In affection and in service, in sympathy with the saints, and in triumph over the world, his standing and his course were beautiful.

But in process of time he is driven thence, and the outward scene entirely changes. In Exodus iii. we find him in the bosom of a happy, godly household. He has his venerable father-in-law, a worshipper of God, his wife and his children, and he tends a flock at the borders of the mount of God. This was retirement in Midian to Moses, the contrast of the late scenery around him in Egypt. It was rather the Church than the world. He was now helped from without.

This is what we all experience at this time. Our external condition is for us. We are in the bosom of a family at the mount of God. We have got into brotherhood. But all this is not necessarily good. It is either good for us or evil for us,

according as it is used by us. Such atmosphere is either healthful or relaxing, according as we walk in it.

Moses so used it as to find it relaxing. He is not the man in Exodus iii. that he had been in Exodus ii. The contrast is very exact. He is invited to look on the afflictions of his brethren a second time. But he is full of reserve and reluctance, hard to be moved. And why this? His brethren are the same, his own flesh and blood still, his father's children; and their burdens and griefs are just as heavy and sharp as ever. And, besides, he has greater encouragement to work now than he had then; he has the sympathy of the LORD now with those afflictions of Israel; expressed, too, or conveyed to him, in the affecting vision of the burning bush. And he is invited into this holy service by the voice of the Lord from the midst of it.

Why, then, this reserve or reluctance? The atmosphere of Midian had proved relaxing. Egypt had presented external difficulties, and he was wakeful, spiritual, and energetic in the midst of them. Midian had afforded external religious advantages, and he had, insensibly perhaps, become easy and slumbering over an unfed lamp. The shifts and reasonings of unbelief, as well as the patient and unupbraiding grace of God, may be strikingly marked in the communion of the Lord and His servant.

The first argument of the reluctant heart of Moses is drawn from himself. "Who am I," says he, "that I should go unto Pharaoh?"

The insignificance and feebleness of his person, he assumes, must plead to have him excused.

God answers this without a rebuke; but tells

him that he may forget himself altogether, for that He will be with him.

Unbelief then draws its plea from the Lord, assuming, as it were, that there had been some indistinctness in the present divine manifestation; like, "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly," in John x. 24. Gideon was in this mind in Judges vi. 17; and the Baptist, in his measure, in Matthew xi. 3.

But the Lord answers this likewise without a rebuke, brightly revealing to His servant all the strength and goodness that awaited him in the path He was now setting before him.

Moses is still slow of heart, and in the shifts of unbelief draws his third objection from the people, saying to the Lord, "They will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice."

Still does the Lord wait, unupbraiding, and giving signs and wonders, which will constrain the people to receive him.

Can Moses be reluctant still? Yes. Unbelief has resources still. He insinuates that all his present communion with the Lord had not profited him, but left him just the man it had found him. "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant."

Can the Lord be unupbraiding still? Yes. This personal slight and indignity, as we may call it, awakens no rebuke. "I will be with thy mouth" is the divine answer.

But now unbelief has no more arguments. The weapons of its warfare have been foiled, the arrows of its quiver all spent. Naked, undisguised, unsheltered, inexcusable unbelief, the deep departure of the heart from the service of God, stands

open in its shame. "O my Lord, send, I pray Thee, by the hand of him whom Thou wilt send."

Then, but not till then, the anger of the Lord was kindled; and Moses may learn, in Aaron's sharing the burden and the honour with him, what unbelief had not cost him.

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## **A Practical Difference.**

(Joshua v. 12.)

**W**HEN the old corn of the land was eaten, manna ceased; that is, we enjoy redemption in quite a new way. The principle of the difference lies here. At the beginning we thought of our sins and of Christ; this is the door by which we must enter. We must be humbled, and enter by Christ. But afterwards, knowing that God loves us as He loves Christ, and that His favour rests on us; and knowing all the bearing of redemption accomplished by Jesus, we begin to estimate the love of Jesus as God estimates it; to have the same thoughts as He in this respect. Then we see Christ in quite another way than before; we are nourished with Him in a way entirely new. It is no longer a mere question of being sheltered only [by the blood of Jesus], but we are united to Christ Himself. We contemplate all the perfection of the Lamb who is there; and when we think of all the abasement He submitted to on the cross, how He annihilated Himself to make good the character of God, in order that God might be just without giving up love, and that He might act according to love without giving up righteousness, **THEN WE ADORE CHRIST.**

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# WORDS OF TRUTH

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

Christ a Sweet Saviour Offering.

"Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."—Eph. v. 2.

JESUS was both the Offerer and the Offering. He offered Himself without spot to God. He not only on the cross "gave Himself for our sins," but was also there "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."

To man, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ brought forgiveness of sins and title to glory; but to God it was that which was infinitely glorifying to Him; that in which He found a savour of rest, as well as a righteous ground for carrying out all His counsels and purposes of grace in holiness and in truth. In "the death of the cross"

Jesus was the "burnt offering," as well as the "sin offering."

The Son of God, in His path through this world from the manger to the cross, "was without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter, i. 19.) In every part of His life on earth, His ways and words, His activities within and without, alone and with others, were wholly acceptable to God. While pure as "fine flour," without any unevenness, and mingled and anointed by the Spirit of God, He was from Bethlehem to Calvary as the fragrance of burning frankincense, "a sweet savour unto Jehovah." (Lev. ii. 2.)

As in the type the unblemished "burnt offering" was parted into its pieces, and the legs and inwards were washed, in order to prefigure our Lord's freedom from every taint of sin both within and in walk, so the more we meditate on what He was in the various parts of His ways and service, the more His infinite perfections and glory are apparent to the spiritual mind. (Lev. i.)

At the coming of the Son of God into this world, almost all classes of beings in heaven and on earth seem to have been set in motion. Nor is it surprising when we consider that He was God's only begotten Son, Immanuel, God manifested in the flesh. (1 Tim. iii. 16.) *Prophets* from Moses onward had repeatedly foretold of the coming of this Seed of the woman, the Son of Abraham, and the fruit of David's loins according to the flesh. *Some faithful and devoted saints* were on the earth looking for Messiah's coming and for redemption in Israel, according to the testimony of *the Holy Spirit* and of *the angel Gabriel*. *The star* seen in the East guided the *wise men* until they came to Jerusalem, when

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through *the scribes* they were instructed that Bethlehem would be the place of Messiah's birth; and thus they found Him, worshipped Him, and presented unto Him gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. *The angel of the Lord* announced Him to *shepherds*, saying, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord"; and then *a multitude of the heavenly host* were praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Nor is this all. By *the government of the Roman empire* a decree had been issued for taking the census, which brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, where God had said the Messiah should be born. (Micah v. 2.) *Faithful saints* welcomed Him with praise and thanksgiving to God. When the Child was eight days old, *Simeon*, led by the Spirit of God into the temple where He was, took Him up in his arms, the Lord's Christ, and blessed God, and said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for *mine eyes have seen Thy salvation*." Anna also spoke of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. *Herod the king* was greatly troubled, and *all Jerusalem* with him, at the mention of the birth of the King of the Jews. *The devil* also was busy at this time, and sought to devour the Man-child (no doubt by Herod's instrumentality) as soon as it was born. (Rev. xii. 4.) Still all was perfect in the Babe. The Child born, the Son given, was the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. (Isa. ix. 6.)

What wonder then that the intelligent beings of heaven and earth should be so moved, and that

Satan also should be in such activity at the entrance of the Son of God into this world! How could angels and saints be silent? But what grace and condescension that the High and Holy One by whom the worlds were made, the Word, Who was God, should become flesh, and dwell among us! (John i. 14.) Beginning, as He did, His course on earth as an infant born of a woman, He became experimentally acquainted with every stage of human existence up to perfect manhood, and was thus experimentally qualified to show sympathy and succour. No doubt also the flight into Egypt was to fulfil Scripture, and in order to take the place of Israel; only, in every instance, to tread the path perfectly as none other ever did, and be a sweet savour to God every step of the way. (Matt. ii. 15.) All that the Son of God thus passed through eminently fitted Him for priesthood both for His heavenly and His earthly people. To the former He is a succouring, sympathizing, merciful, and faithful High Priest; now after the Aaronic functions, and for ever after the Melchizedek order. To the latter people He will be the true Melchizedek, both King and Priest upon His throne. (Heb. vi. 20; vii. 25, 26; Zech. vi. 13.)

As a youth of twelve years we find Him intent on doing His Father's business; and the doctors in the temple, in the midst of whom He was sitting, were astonished at His understanding and answers, so perfect was He in every stage of His course. (Luke ii. 46-49.) Look at Him when arrived at manhood, after being tested in an evil world for thirty years, when His perfect purity was borne witness to by the Holy Spirit descending in a bodily shape like a dove upon

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Him, while the testimony of the Father from heaven was, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." (Luke iii. 22.) Consider Him also in the most trying temptations of the devil; whether as to exercising His own will in independence of Him who sent Him; or to possess by one act of disobedience all the kingdoms of the world; or to take one presumptuous step, and tempt God; and we behold His perfect obedience to the written word, and entire subjection to the will of Him that sent Him; so that He repelled every attack of the devil with "It is written." He resisted the devil with the written word of God, and he fled from Him. We find that, when the devil left Him, angels came and ministered unto Him. (Matt. iv. 11.) The *moral* glory of all this could not have been more perfect.

His weeping over the apostate city, and His tender utterance of, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" show plainly His compassionate love to His earthly people in their worst condition. His tears of sympathy with Martha and Mary in their bereavement, and His raising of Lazarus from the dead to the comfort of his sorrowing sisters; the raising also from the dead of the only son of a widow, and delivering him to his mother to assuage her grief, and give present joy to her breaking heart, show the putting forth of almighty power in acts of deepest pity and love. The way the Spirit narrates these things is touchingly perfect. At Bethany, it is said, "Jesus wept." "Jesus . . . cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And

he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot." Yes, it was Jesus, Jehovah, the Saviour, who wept, and brought Lazarus out of the grave. He is also spoken of as "the Lord" who in such "compassion" said to the distressed widow, "Weep not," and, touching the bier, said, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother." (Luke vii. 11-15.) What grace and tenderness we see in all this!

Behold Him also continually surrounded with those who hated Him without a cause; yet nothing checked Him for a moment from doing the will of Him that sent Him. When they would not receive Him in one city, He quietly went to another. Though He could have asked His Father, and He would presently have given Him more than twelve legions of angels, yet He deigned to accept the service of certain women who ministered unto Him of their substance. In controversy, His infinite wisdom was often manifested in putting His adversaries to silence by a question, or by a few words of Scripture. "What is written in the law?" "How readest thou?" "Have ye not read?" "Did ye never read in the Scriptures?" "Is it not written?" and such-like, were questions He was wont to ask, while emphatically declaring that "the Scripture cannot be broken." Thus with Him, who is "the Truth," the authority of Scripture was final and conclusive.

Is it astonishing that some said of Jesus, "Never man spake like this Man"? or that He should challenge His hearers by saying, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Even demons called Him "the Holy One of God." The dying thief

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declared, "This Man hath done nothing amiss." Pilate repeatedly said, "I find no fault in Him." His disciples worshipped Him. John the Baptist announced Him to be the Son of God and Lamb of God. An angel spoke of Him as "Christ the Lord." And Simeon knew by the revelation of the Holy Spirit that He was "the Lord's Christ." While the testimony of the Father when the heavens were opened unto Him was, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

All through His life on earth the Son of God was perfect. In all His ways He was the meat or meal offering, a sweet savour unto Jehovah; while in "the death of the cross" He was not only the sin offering, but also a sweet savour to God as perfect burnt offering and peace offering, "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."

In this aspect of "the death of the cross" we see His perfect surrender of Himself to the will of Him that sent Him, His perfect love to the Father, by whose commandment He laid down His life, His perfect obedience under the most adverse and trying circumstances, His perfect subjection to the Scriptures, His perfectly voluntary laying down of His life that He might take it again, and His perfect faith, expressed in the utterance of "My God," when forsaken. All was perfect, and in it all God was glorified. How different from the history of man, who began with positive disobedience, pursued his course in corrupting and spoiling everything with which he was entrusted, and at length hated and crucified the Lord of glory!

What a sight of perfection and moral glory for all the intelligent beings in heaven, and, above

all, for God to have beheld, when Jesus was thus hanging on the cross, and manifesting such infinite perfectness, connected too with eternal results! Surely He was an odour of a sweet smell, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. How happy for the believer to know that he has been perfected for ever by this one offering, and that his acceptance before God is in all the value of this sweet savour offering: "It shall be accepted for him." Thus the Son of God is not only our life and peace, but our righteousness before God; for "as He is, so are we in this world." (1 John iv. 17.)

Christian Self - Control.

THE word "temperance," in 2 Peter i. 6, means a great deal more than what is usually understood by that term. It is customary to apply the expression "temperance" to a habit of moderation in reference to eating and drinking. No doubt it fully involves this, but it involves very much more. Indeed, the Greek word used by the inspired apostle may, with strict propriety, be rendered "self-control." It gives the idea of one who has *self* habitually *well reined in*.

This is a rare and admirable grace, diffusing its hallowed influence over the entire course, character, and conduct. It not only bears directly upon one or two or twenty selfish *habits*, but upon *self*, in all the length and breadth of that comprehensive and most odious term. Many a one who would look, with proud disdain, upon a glutton or a drunkard, may himself fail every hour in exhibiting the grace

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of self-control. True it is that gluttony and drunkenness should be ranged with the very vilest and most demoralising forms of selfishness. They must be regarded as amongst the most bitter clusters that grow on that wide-spreading tree. But then, *self* is a tree, and not a mere branch of a tree, or a cluster on a branch; and we should not only *judge* self when it works, but *control* it that it may not work.

Some, however, may ask, "How can we control self?" The answer is blessedly simple: "I can do *all* things through Christ that strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv.) Have we not received salvation in Christ? Yes, blessed be God, we have. And what does this wondrous word include? Is it mere deliverance from "the wrath to come"? Is it merely the pardon of our sins, and the assurance of exemption from "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone"? It is far more than these, precious and priceless though they be. In a word, then, "salvation" implies a full and hearty acceptance of Christ as my "wisdom," to guide me out of folly's dark and devious paths, into paths of heavenly light and peace; as my "righteousness," to justify me in the sight of a holy God; as my "sanctification," to make me practically holy in all my ways; and as my "redemption," to give me final deliverance from all the power of death, and entrance into the eternal state of glory. (1 Cor. i. 30; 2 Tim. ii. 10.)

Hence, therefore, it is evident that "self-control" is included in the salvation which we have in Christ. It is a result of that practical sanctification with which divine grace has endowed us. We should carefully guard against the habit of taking a narrow view of salvation. We should seek to

enter into all its fulness. It is a word which stretches from everlasting to everlasting, and takes in, in mighty sweep, all the practical details of daily life. I have no right to talk of salvation, as regards my *soul*, in the *future*, while I refuse to know and exhibit its practical bearing upon my *conduct*, in the *present*. We are saved, not only from the guilt and condemnation of sin, but also, and as fully, from the power, the practice, and the love of it. These things should never be separated, nor will they by any one who has been divinely taught the meaning, the extent, and the power of that precious word "salvation."

Now, in presenting to my reader a few practical sentences on the subject of self-control, I shall contemplate it under the three following divisions; namely, the thoughts, the tongue, and the temper.

I. And, first, as to our thoughts, and the habitual government thereof. I suppose there are few Christians who have not suffered from evil thoughts; those troublesome intruders upon our most profound retirement; those constant disturbers of our mental repose, that so frequently darken the atmosphere around us, and prevent us from getting a full, clear view upward into the bright heaven above. The Psalmist could say, "I hate vain thoughts." (Ps. cxix. 113.) No wonder. They are truly hateful, and should be judged, condemned, and expelled. Some one, in speaking of the subject of evil thoughts, has said, "I cannot prevent birds from flying over me, but I can prevent their alighting upon me. In like manner, I cannot prevent evil thoughts being suggested to my mind, but I can refuse them a lodgment therein."

But how can we control our thoughts? No

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more than we could blot out our sins, or create a world. What are we to do? Look to Christ. This is the true secret of self-control. He can keep us, not only from the lodgment, but also from the suggestion of the evil thoughts. We could no more prevent the one than the other. He can prevent both. He can keep the vile intruders not only from getting in, but even from knocking at the door. When the divine life is in energy; when the current of spiritual thought and feeling is deep and rapid; when the heart's affections are intensely occupied with the Person of Christ, vain thoughts do not trouble us. It is only when spiritual indolence creeps over us that evil thoughts (vile and horrible progeny!) come in upon us like a flood; and then our *only* resource is to look straight to Jesus. We might as well attempt to cope with the marshalled hosts of hell as with a horde of evil thoughts. Our refuge is in Christ. He is made unto us "sanctification." We can do *all* things through Him. We have just to bring the name of Jesus to bear upon the flood of evil thoughts, and He will, most assuredly, give full and immediate deliverance.

However, the more excellent way is to be preserved from the suggestions of evil by the power of pre-occupation with good. When the channel of thought is decidedly upward, when it is deep and well formed, free from all curves and indentations, then the current of imagination and feeling, as it gushes up from the deep fountains of the soul, will naturally flow onward in the bed of that channel.

This, I repeat, is unquestionably the more excellent way. May we prove it in our own experience. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things

are true, whatsoever things are venerable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think* on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." (Phil. iv. 8, 9.) When the heart is fully engrossed with Christ, the living embodiment of all those things enumerated in verse 8, we enjoy profound peace, unruffled by evil thoughts. This is true self-control.

II. And now, as to the tongue, that influential member, so fruitful in good, so fruitful in evil, the instrument whereby we can either give forth accents of soft and soothing sympathy, or words of bitter sarcasm and burning indignation. How deeply important is the grace of self-control in its application to such a member! Mischief, which years cannot repair, may be done by the tongue in a moment. Words which we would give the world, if we had it, to recall, may be uttered by the tongue in an unguarded hour. Hear what the inspired apostle saith on this subject: "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and

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setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind; but the tongue can *no man* tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." (James iii. 2-8.)

Who, then, can control the tongue? "No man" can do it! but Christ can; and we have only to look to Him in simple faith, which implies at once the sense of our own utter helplessness and of His all-sufficiency. It is utterly impossible that we could control the tongue. As well might we attempt to stem the ocean's tide, the mountain torrent, or the Alpine avalanche. How often, when suffering under the effects of some egregious blunder of the tongue, have we resolved to command that unruly member somewhat better next time; but, alas! our resolution proved to be like the morning cloud that passeth away, and we had only to retire and weep over our lamentable failure in the matter of self-control. Now, why was this? Simply because we undertook the matter in our own strength, or, at least, without a sufficiently deep consciousness of our own weakness. This is the cause of constant failure. We must cling to Christ as the babe clings to its mother. Not that our clinging is of any value; still we must cling. Thus, and thus only, can we successfully bridle the tongue. And oh! let us remember, at all times, the solemn searching words of the same apostle James: "If *any one* [man, woman, or child] among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." (i. 26.) These are wholesome words for a day like the present, when there are so many unruly tongues abroad. May we have

grace to attend to these words! May their holy influence appear in our ways!

III. The last point to be considered is the temper, which is intimately connected with both the tongue and the thoughts. Indeed, all three are very closely linked. When the spring of *thought* is spiritual, and the current heavenly, the *tongue* is only the active agent for good, and the *temper* is calm and unruffled. Christ dwelling in the heart by faith regulates every thing. Without Him all is worse than worthless. I may possess and exhibit the self-command of a Franklin or a Socrates, and all the while be wholly ignorant of the "self-control" of 2 Peter i. 6. The latter is founded on "faith," the former on philosophy; two totally different things. We must remember that the word is "Add to your *faith*." This puts "faith" first, as the *only* link to connect the heart with Christ, the living source of all power. Having Christ, and abiding in Him, we are enabled to add courage, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity. Such are the precious fruits that flow from abiding in Christ. But I can no more control my temper than my tongue or my thoughts; and if I set about it, I shall be sure to break down every hour. A mere philosopher, without Christ, may exhibit more self-control as to tongue and temper than a Christian who abides not in Christ. This ought not to be, and would not be, if the Christian simply looked to Jesus. It is when he fails in this that the enemy gains the advantage. The philosopher, without Christ, *seems* to succeed in the great business of self-control, only that he may be the more effectually blinded as to the truth of his condition, and carried headlong to eternal ruin. But

Satan delights to make a Christian stumble and fall, only that he may thereby blaspheme the precious name of Christ.

Christian reader, let us remember these things. Let us look to Christ to control our thoughts, our tongue, and our temper. Let us "give *all* diligence." Let us think how much is involved. "If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." This is deeply solemn. How easy it is to drop into a state of spiritual blindness and forgetfulness! No amount of knowledge, either of doctrine or the letter of Scripture, will preserve the soul from this awful condition. Nothing but "the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" will avail; and this knowledge is to be increased in the soul by "giving all diligence to add to our faith" the various graces to which the apostle refers in the above eminently practical and soul-stirring passage. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

"Let each day upon its wing its allotted burden bring;

Load it not beside with sorrow that belongeth to to-morrow.

Strength is promised; strength is given, when the heart by God is riven;

But foredate the day of woe, and alone thou bear'st the blow."

Christ my Comfort.

IT is Christ's love, what I find in Christ, that comforts my heart. He is my portion truly, and a never-failing one. I look into the Word, and there I see it. Take a serve or two in Romans viii. : "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." God cannot be inconsistent with Himself: He justifies. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." Ah! I look at the cross. I see it was love that took Him there, the deepest, purest love. Will He condemn? "Yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." That same Jesus, who in weakness died, who in sorrow and in love gave up His life upon the tree, lives evermore (Oh! blessed truth), always thinking of His saints, ever caring for their welfare, their best, their highest interests. I see a type of Him in Joseph. How tender, how considerate is he for the comfort of those in whom his heart is interested! (Genesis xlv.) "Provision for the way" he makes, as well as rest, and honour, and abundance for the future. And will Jesus be less careful for His own? Oh no! He knows the wilderness, and what its wants and sorrows are; and every blessing, spiritual and temporal, that His saints may need He surely will supply. (Phil. iv. 19.) The comfort of His presence, the enjoyment of His love, is the soul's first and highest desire; all else is secondary. But He cares for the minutest thing, and that all the journey through. (Heb. vii. 24, 25.)

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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).

Christ the Sin Offering.

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Psalm. xxii. 1; Matt. xxvii. 46.)

JESUS was "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," all through His path on earth. (Isa. liii. 3.) From man, whom He came to save, He had hatred for His love; He suffered "for righteousness' sake." (1 Pet. iii. 14.) His sufferings from deep compassion and love to His ancient people, because of their wicked course, His tears and utterances plainly show; but who can describe His atoning sufferings when He poured out His soul unto death as a sacrifice for sin? when His sorrowing heart gave forth that bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

One apostle had betrayed Him, another had denied Him, and all His disciples had forsaken

Him, and fled; and now God had abandoned Him. Man had been mocking, deriding, spitting upon Him, and scourging Him, and had degraded Him to be numbered with malefactors. Then darkness covered the whole land for three hours, and the spotless, perfect Man Christ Jesus is forsaken of God, so that from His loving heart is wrung that sorrowful cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

There never was such a cry heard before, and there never will be again. It stands alone both in time and in eternity. No one now who could truly say, "My God," is ever forsaken of Him; and by-and-by, when the lost are for ever forsaken, cast out from the presence of God, no one there will be able truthfully to say, "My God."

The marvel in this cry on Calvary is, that the One who could say, in the perfectness of faith, and love, and truth, "My God," was forsaken by Him. But so it was; and Spirit-taught souls learn the precious lessons of divine grace which it teaches, bringing present peace, and hope of eternal glory, to all who believe on His name. (Rom. v. 1.)

Jesus could always say to Jehovah, "Thou art My God." Though equal with God, the only begotten Son, one with the Father, yet He took a servant's form, being found in fashion as a Man; and, as the perfect Servant, it was His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. (John iv. 34.) In life, He so abode in communion with the Father, that He could say, "Father . . . I knew that Thou hearest Me always"; but in "the death of the cross" it was, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

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David, by the Holy Ghost, wrote this cry, and thus predicted, a thousand years before its fulfilment, that Messiah in His suffering would say these words; and we find in the Gospels that they were the very utterance of the Saviour when hanging on the Cross. Nor does the psalm contemplate them as the expression of any other than of Him who "bare our sins in His own body on the tree." He said of Himself, what none other could say, "I was cast upon Thee from the womb; Thou art My God from My mother's belly." "Thou didst make me hope when I was upon My mother's breasts." (Ps. xxii. 10, 11.) Of what other babe than He could such be said, who was born in Bethlehem, of whom the angel Gabriel had said to Mary, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God"? (Luke i. 35.) Besides, as One who was specially connected with Israel, He said, "Our *fathers* trusted in Thee; they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them . . . But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." (Ps. xxii. 4, 6.) Thus He felt He had not the common privileges which those among the nation of Israel had been accustomed to have; for He cried, and was not heard. He was forsaken of God. When our sins were laid upon Him, God must abandon Him, for He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, hence Jesus adds, "But Thou art *holy*." (v. 3.)

The Son, in the bosom of the Father, when the fulness of time came, was sent forth, made of a woman. He "was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death . . . that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." (Heb. ii. 9.) He came to save, to redeem,

and therefore to die for the ungodly. He glorified the Father on the earth. He finished the work which the Father gave Him to do. His death as a sacrifice for sin was for the glory of God. The Good Shepherd laying down His life for the sheep was so infinitely perfect that it was a new motive for the Father's loving Him; hence He said, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again. . . . This commandment have I received of My Father." (John x. 17, 18.)

"The death of the cross" stands entirely alone. It never can be repeated, and, because of its eternal efficacy, will never need to be repeated. No creature can express the sorrows or describe the suffering of Golgotha, when Christ "bare the sins of many," when His soul was made an offering for sin. In that dreadful hour He was "full of troubles"; His strength was dried up like a potsherd; His tongue clave to His jaws; all His bones were out of joint; and His heart was like wax, melted in the midst of His bowels. But, oh! the deep sorrow of that unutterable agony when God, who sent His own Son, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, so that He cried out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? Why art Thou so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring? O My God, I cry in the day-time, but Thou hearest not, and in the night season, and am not silent." (Ps. xxii. 1, 2; lxxxviii. 3.) When reproach had broken His loving heart, and the Holy One had been smitten and scourged, His hands and feet pierced; when there was no angel sent to strengthen, no lover nor friend to cheer; when the sun was forbidden to light up the scene; when

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man was mocking and deriding, and Jehovah bruising Him, putting Him to grief, and forsaking Him; still, it was in the perfectness of faith He cried, "*My God, My God.*" He also justified Jehovah, saying, "But Thou art *holy*, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." (Ps. xxii. 3.)

The Son only could thus glorify God. No one but the Man that is the Fellow of Jehovah of hosts could thus sheath in His own heart the uplifted sword of divine vengeance. (Zech. xiii. 7.) No one but He who had infinite capacities could drink to the very dregs the cup of God's just judgment of sin. No one but the Rock of Ages could endure such waves and billows. (Ps. xlii. 7.) Only the Holy One of God could be made sin and a curse for us. The spotless Son of man only could be our "Surety." None but the Good Shepherd could die for the sheep. None but Jesus, the Son of God, could or would save us. And what a sacrifice! What infinite, what eternal blessedness must flow from the accomplished work of such a One as the Son of God "who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Gal. i. 4.) Well has it been said,

"Jesus bruised and put to shame,
Tells me all Jehovah's name:
God is love, I surely know,
By the Saviour's depths of woe."

How wonderful, that the Son, by whom the worlds were made, should bear our sins in His own body on the tree; that the "Prince of life" should be "killed"; that the "Just One" should be "numbered with the transgressors," and yet make "intercession for the transgressors";

that "the Son of the Highest" should go "into the lower parts of the earth"; that "the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father" should be "taken by wicked hands, crucified, and slain"; that "the Lord of glory" should be found here on earth nailed to a tree; that Jehovah's righteous Servant, His Elect, in whom His soul delighted, should be so abandoned in the extremity of bitterest anguish as to cause Him to cry out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" What infinite perfections are clustered together here! What profound lessons of grace, holiness, righteousness, truth, and peace are here given for our learning!

What distress, what pain, what ignominy, what woe, did our adorable Immanuel pass through, when He suffered for our sins under the righteous judgment of God! What man, or angel, could grasp or utter the full meaning of such unsearchable sorrow and suffering? No line is long enough to sound its depths. No created space could hold the deep waters that came into His soul. No finite mind can estimate what He must have passed through to satisfy for ever divine justice as to our sins. We are told that "He bare our sins," "once suffered for sins," and "died for our sins according to the Scriptures"; but what was involved in this sin-atonement work no creature ever will be able fully to describe, any more than what is finite can comprehend what is infinite. But we know for our comfort that the cup of full, unmingled judgment due to sin was then drunk; and if the anticipation of it caused Him to "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground," what must have been His grief and suffering when "it pleased

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Jehovah to bruise Him," and to "make His soul an offering for sin"? (1 Pet. ii. 24; iii. 18; 1 Cor. xv. 3; Luke xxii. 44; Isa. liii. 10.)

Again, we may inquire, What must have been the magnitude of the work of the cross, when we contemplate some of the results? Did He not love the Church, and give Himself for it? (Eph. v. 25.) Did He not die for the nation of Israel? (John xi. 51). Will not creation itself have its groanings hushed, and be brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God in virtue of His death on the cross? (Rom. viii. 21.) Did He not by Himself make peace through the blood of His cross, to reconcile all things unto Himself; whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven? (Col. i. 20.) And will not the new heaven and the new earth, in which righteousness will dwell, be the everlasting witness that Jesus was the Lamb of God who bore away the sin of the world? (Rev. xx. 1; 2 Pet. iii. 13; John i. 29.)

"The death of the cross" not only stands alone in its eternal efficacy, but it is matchless in the suffering, sorrow, and love which met there. No comforters to soothe are in attendance, no hand stretched out to assuage His bitterest grief, none to sympathise; and, as He said, "none to help." Not a drop of mercy is mingled with the cup of God's just judgment of sin. No compassionate friend relieved His sufferings. He knew all that should come upon Him. He endured the cross. He despised the shame. His whole heart's desire was that the Father might be glorified; for He loved the Father, and He also loved us. Wondrous *love*, yet unutterable *sorrow*! The stern sword of the Lord of hosts was lifted up with inflexible justice, and must be bathed in

blood! The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the floodgates of heaven were opened; deep called unto deep; the thunders of Sinai roared; and all the foaming waves of offended justice, all the righteous demands due to sin, rolled over the meek, and loving, and obedient Jesus. He is forsaken of God. He dies for the ungodly. The Lamb without spot is slain to perfect "for ever them that are sanctified," for God's eternal praise and glory!

And why was all this suffering? Because Jesus was the Sin-bearer. The glory of God demanded that our sins should be judged. Yes, God must judge sin. He has no other way of dealing with it; nor could He save us unless our sins were judged, for God is just. The righteous God loveth righteousness. Jesus only could bear our sins, because He was perfect Man, and without sin. God sent Him to save, and He willingly came, saying, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." (Heb. x. 9.) Having glorified God as Man on the earth for more than thirty years, the time came for Him, according to divine counsels and grace, to be a Sacrifice for sin; so God laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. Therefore "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities," that by His stripes we might be healed. This is why the holy and loving Saviour was forsaken of God, and this is why He died; for "the wages of sin is death," and He "died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." In this has God manifested His love toward us. But God in righteousness raised Him from among the dead, and set Him at His own right hand, where He now is, crowned with glory and honour.

How the contemplation of this unutterable suf-

fering melts our souls! We think of the love, the sorrow, the pain, the shame, the bruising, and the forsaking, in the riches of God's grace to us, until the language of the heart is,

“ In His spotless soul's distress
I perceive *my* guiltiness;
Oh! how vile *my* lost estate,
Since *my* ransom was so great.”

In “the death of the cross,” then, we see man's dreadful hatred to Christ, his enmity against God, and God's abundant grace to man. Sin is there beheld in all its dire malignity, meeting with the expression of God's perfect abhorrence of it in forsaking His perfect and well-beloved Son, because He was bearing our sins. The righteousness of God is there manifested, not, as it will be, in cutting off sinners in their sins, but in pouring out on His own spotless Son the just judgment they deserved. The truth of God is established, and all done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. There God was glorified. His holiness, righteousness, love, truth, majesty, all are seen in the cross in perfect and uncompromising excellence. Thus sins are purged, peace made, and man saved to God's eternal praise!

Dear reader, Is all this tale of unparalleled love and sorrow nothing to you? Is such grace to sinners of no moment? Does the cry of the sinner-loving Jesus, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” fail to melt your heart? What! Can you read and hear of such matchless love, and be unmoved? Do you not know, that if you refuse this precious Saviour and His atoning work upon the cross, you will have to be for ever forsaken of God, for ever banished from His blessed presence, for ever under the

wrath of God? Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? for He died to save sinners. He lives in glory, and receives and saves sinners. God waiteth to be gracious. He delighteth in mercy; and, in virtue of the blood of His Son, can righteously save; and will save every soul that comes to Him by Christ. Dear reader, why not come now, for He is a just God and a Saviour?

“The hope of righteousness” is not the hope of getting righteousness, but the hope of glory which belongs to righteousness. God says: You are my children; I have brought you to myself, and you are going to hear about the glory of Christ, and are joint-heirs with Him in it. When I think of the apostles to whom God revealed such things as these, I think how, with such power of God in them, they could go safely. But thus laden with Christ, they could go safely and steadily through the world; they were fully ballasted with Christ.

Have Christ in yourself. Christ everything *to* us enlarges the Christ *in* us, and then we can go steadily along. If I have a full Christ in myself, then I can look safely out. If I have Christ as the centre of glory in my heart, I can look out and see the glory all around.

Little as I am, I have a place in the heart of the Lord; and His mind is, that I should walk in circumstances here as one who has a place in His heart.

The Voice of An Ancient Ordinance.

Read Leviticus xxv. 1-25.

THE ordinances of God in the old time of the law will be found, in their materials, to have been very homely, such as had to do with the commonest transactions of human life; and yet, in their meaning, to have disclosed or shadowed forth the deepest mysteries of Christ: for instance, the ordinance of the servant with the bored ear. (Exod. xxi. 2-6). The material there was the common matter of hiring a domestic, a thing, we will allow, of the most homely nature; and yet in it was involved, and through it was shown forth, the mystery of the riches of the grace of Christ.

So in the scripture I am now looking at. The subject or material is the sale and purchase of land, the price at which such bargains shall be regulated, and the term of years for which such transfers of property shall continue. But the truths conveyed through this ordinance are some of the profoundest and most interesting parts of the ways of God. This quality in the divine institutions only sets them off to greater admiration, while conveying to the soul the knowledge of Christ. The more homely they are in their materials, the more serviceable they must be to us, and the more welcomed they ought to be by us. We should afresh honour the skill of the Master who can teach so profoundly with such a book. And we have another beautiful illustration of that truth, "To the poor the gospel is preached." (Luke vii. 22.)

The divine ceremonies are not ceremonial, if I may so speak. They are ceremonies, as being the due ways of the house. But they are not stiff and stately. They do not keep us at a distance, or require some special occasions for their display. The disciple learns them, and the worshipper observes them, in the midst of family or social life. Among these institutions or divine ordinances, I would now look a little more particularly at that enacted in this scripture, Leviticus xxv. 1-25. The great principles of the whole chapter will be found, I believe, in this portion of it; and therefore I look only at so much of it.

1. First, there is the principle of "earnest," a well-known principle, I may say, in the actings of God with us. The grapes of Eshcol were the earnest of Canaan to the camp of Israel while still in the wilderness or on the way. The Holy Ghost is now the "earnest" of the inheritance in the saint travelling on through "this present evil world" to the "rest" that "remaineth." (Eph. i. 14; Heb. iv. 9.) And the sabbath of the land, enacted in this scripture, was the earnest of the jubilee, while the term of forty-nine years, the age of the confusion and disorder of man's way, was still existing. It was a bunch of the fruit of the jubilean year brought into the midst of the wilderness again. This sabbath did not do the business of the jubilee, but still it savoured of it; it did not anticipate it, but it witnessed it. (*vv.* 1-7.)

2. In the next place, we find in this scripture the principles of redemption by purchase and redemption by power; and the gap or interval, which we know there is between the seasons of these two actions of the Church of God, is like-

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wise beautifully intimated. The kinsman, according to this ordinance, was to redeem the sold possession by paying the proper price of it to the stranger who had purchased it. This was to be done during the forty-nine years, the age of misrule and confusion, "man's day," as scripture would call it. But then also, in due season, or on the fiftieth year, the jubilee would, by its own native strength or virtue, restore every such sold possession, and with it every sold Israelite, to that place in the land and among the people appointed at the beginning by the Lord of the land and the people. Every man was then to return to his family and his possession. God's order, disturbed for forty-nine years by man's traffic, was then to be asserted and exhibited again.

These are some of the deep purposes of God in Christ. Paul speaks of "the earnest of the inheritance till the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph. i.), thus disclosing the very principles we discover in this beautiful ordinance, as we have seen: the earnest, the purchase, the full redemption or restoration, and the necessary interval between the purchase and the redemption. So again in Romans viii.; for there he speaks of "the firstfruits of the Spirit" in the saints, while they wait for "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." (v. 23.)*

And what (I pause for a moment to ask) is the living power of such mysteries in our own souls? Peace and hope dwelling there together with the

* Redemption by purchase through the blood of Christ, we know, is the title of redemption by strength by and by in the day of jubilee or kingdom of Christ; and so, in this ordinance, the connection of the two is shadowed by the trumpet sounding on the day of atonement.

taste or enjoyment of the Spirit's presence; the peace which the accomplished purchase by the blood speaks; the hope which the approaching jubilee or full redemption inspires; and the consolation of the indwelling Spirit who is the "seal" of the accomplished peace and the "earnest" of the expected inheritance. (Eph. i. 13.) When peace and hope dwell together in the soul, and the indwelling Spirit is enjoyed, we do, in living experiences, understand the mysteries of this fine scripture.

Further, however, still. This ordinance tells us that the Lord God (if I may so express myself) will not allow man to have the last word, or to take eternity into his hand, and dispose of it as he pleases. Man has a term of years granted him, in which it is left in his power to disturb God's order. But that licence is limited. It continues, as we have seen, only for forty-nine years. But "the land shall not be sold for ever," says the Lord, "the land is mine." (v. 23.) In the fiftieth year the Lord will assert His right, and restore all things according to His own mind. A time of "refreshing" that will be, a time for "the restitution of all things." (Acts iii. 19-21.)

What a bright and happy truth thus shines in this verse of our chapter! "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," is the fine proclamation of Psalm xxiv., as of this ordinance. And then the challenge goes forth, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" that is, Who shall take the government of this earth and its fulness? And the answer is made by another challenge to the city-gates, the seat of government, to lift up their heads to the King of glory, the Lord of hosts; a fervent style and form of

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words whereby to convey the truth that the Lord in strength and victory, the Lord as Redeemer and Avenger, the Lord alone shall have the government in the ages to come, when man, as the corrupter of the earth, shall have closed his career.

How does the voice of this ordinance thus join in concert with other words of the same Spirit! And I may again say, What bright and happy truth thus shines through this ordinance touching the common matter of buying and selling land! No material or subject, I may also again say, could be more homely; no mysteries more profound and blessed. We cannot but admire the wisdom which thus teaches, which finds, as people have aptly said, "sermons in stones and books in the running brooks"; which leaves the memorial of the Lord and His counsels in the midst of the occasions and circumstances of everyday life.

But further still. There are moral admonitions and principles of godly conduct here, as well as deep and precious mysteries. The Jew was taught by this ordinance to measure the value of his worldly possessions by the year of jubilee; for his sales and purchases were to be appreciated by either the distance or the nearness of that season. All his trading or worldly business therefore of necessity reminded him of the fiftieth year, or God's approaching kingdom. All his traffic in the land measured for him how near or how distant that season was.

What a consecration of all the business of life was this! What a constant sense of God did this maintain in the hearts of the children of Israel! Just as the Spirit, through the apostle, seeks to

maintain the same in us, saying, "The time is short; it remaineth that they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not." (1 Cor. vii. 29, 30.)

But I must speak still once more. This beautiful scripture exhibits the encouragements of the Lord in obedience, as well as the commandments or admonitions to it. For the Israelites are here animated in the observance of the sabbath of the land by a promise of great increase every sixth year.

How lovely this is as well as all the rest! And how significant of another well-known way of the Lord! For to this hour, in our own dispensation, encouragements of the highest character are given to the obedience of the saints. For to those who keep His words, the Lord says, "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John xiv. 23.)

Knowledge of God's will is connected with my spiritual state; if I could have it without being spiritual it would only be mischief. I increase in the knowledge of God's will by increasing in the knowledge of God in His nature.

There must be preparation of heart to apprehend the ways and thoughts of God. Walking in the path in which Christ sets us, we can see all things; walking with Christ we get the apprehension of the things belonging to us through Christ.

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WORDS OF TRUTH

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

## Three Chief Elements of Christian Life.

**T**HE opening paragraph of John xii. brings before us a scene of deepest interest, and full of most precious instruction. We feel we cannot do better than quote at full length the lovely record, for the spiritual benefit of the reader. There is nothing, after all, like the veritable language of Holy Scripture.

"Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and

the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

Here we have illustrated, in the most striking and forcible manner, the three grand features which ought to characterize every Christian and every Christian assembly; namely, calm, intelligent *communion*, as seen in Lazarus seated at the table: holy *worship*, as seen in Mary at the feet of her Lord; and loving *service*, as seen in Martha, in her activities about the house. All three go to make up the Christian character, and all three should be exhibited in every Christian assembly. We consider it a very great moral mistake to set any one of these features in opposition to the others, inasmuch as each, in its proper place, is lovely; and, we may add, each should find its place in all. We should all of us know what it is to sit at the table with our blessed Lord, in sweet communion. This will most assuredly lead to profound homage and adoration; and we may rest assured that, where there is the communion and the worship, there will not be lacking the loving activities of true service.

The reader will observe that, in the above beautiful scene, there is no record of any collision between Martha and Mary. Each had her place to fill. There was room for both. "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister," we are told, in John xi. 5. Here Martha is put first. In verse 1, we read of "Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha."

Looked at from a divine standpoint, there is no need why anyone should in the smallest degree collide with another. And, further, we may add, there is no necessity whatever for comparing the sphere of one with that of another. If Christ be

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our one absorbing object, there will be lovely harmony in action, though our line of things may vary.

Thus it was at Bethany. Lazarus was at the table, Mary at the Master's feet, and Martha was working about the house. All was in beautiful order, because Christ was the object of each. Lazarus would have been entirely out of his place had he set about preparing the supper; and if Martha had sat at the table, there would have been no supper prepared. But both were in their right places, and we may rest assured that both would rejoice in the odour of Mary's ointment as she poured it on the feet of their ever-loving and beloved Lord.

Is not all this conveyed to us in that one sentence, "There *they* made Him a supper"? It was not one more than another. All had part in the precious privilege of making supper for the one peerless object of their heart's affections; and, having Him in their midst, each fell naturally, simply, and effectively, into his and her proper place. Provided the beloved Master's heart was refreshed, it mattered not who did this, or who did that. Christ was the centre, and each moved round Him.

Thus it should be always in the assembly of Christians, and thus it would be, if odious self were judged and set aside, and each heart simply occupied with Christ Himself. But, alas! here is just where we so sadly fail. We are occupied with ourselves, and our little doings, and sayings, and thinkings. We attach importance to work, not in proportion to its bearing upon the glory of Christ, but its bearing upon our own reputation. If Christ were our one object (as He surely will be throughout eternity, and ought to be now),

we should not care the least who did the work, or who rendered the service, provided His name was glorified, and His heart refreshed. Hearken to the utterance of a truly devoted heart in reference to the very subject before us : "Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered [or poured out] upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me." (Philippians ii. 14-18.)

This is uncommonly fine. The blessed apostle presents in this exquisite passage a true sample of self-forgetting devotedness. He expresses himself as ready to be poured out as a drink-offering upon the sacrifice and service of his beloved Philippians, utterly regardless of himself. It mattered not to him who contributed the component parts of the sacrifice, provided only that the sacrifice was presented as a sweet odour to Christ.

There was none of that contemptible littleness and self-occupation about that beloved servant of Christ which so often, alas ! appear in us, and prevent our appreciation of another's service. We are all alive when any little service of our own happens to be on the *tapis*. We listen with intense interest to any one speaking or writing about our usefulness, or the result of our preachings or writings; but we hear with cold apathy and marked indifference the record of a brother's suc-



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cess. We are by no means ready to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of another's faith. We like to provide both meat-offering and drink offering ourselves. In a word, we are deplorably selfish, and assuredly never is self more thoroughly contemptible than when it dares to mix itself up with the service of God. Bustling self-importance in the work of Christ, or in the Church of God, is about the most hideously ugly thing in all this world. Self-occupation is the death-blow to fellowship and to all true service. Nor this only; it is also the fruitful source of strife and division in the Church of God.

Hence the deep need of those faithful and most wholesome words of the blessed apostle: "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and give Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that

every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians ii. 5-11.)

Here lies the grand remedy for the terrible malady of self-occupation in all its phases. It is having Christ before our hearts, and His lowly mind formed in us by the Holy Ghost. It is utterly impossible to drink into the spirit of Jesus, to breathe the atmosphere of His presence, and be occupied with self in any shape or form. The two things are in direct opposition. In proportion as Christ fills the heart, self and its belongings must be excluded; and if Christ occupies the heart, we shall rejoice to see His name magnified, His cause prospering, His people blessed, His gospel spread abroad; no matter who may be used as His instrument. We may rest assured that wherever there is envy, or jealousy, or strife, there self is uppermost in the heart. The blessed apostle could rejoice if Christ was preached, even though it was of contention. (Philippians i. 18.)

But to return to the family of Bethany. We wish the reader to notice particularly the three distinct phases of Christian life exemplified in Lazarus, Mary, and Martha; namely, communion, worship, and service.

Should we not, each one of us, seek to realize and exemplify all the three? Is it not interesting and important to observe that in John xii. there is no question raised between Martha and Mary? Is not this accounted for by the fact that in this beautiful passage we have the divine and heavenly side of the subject?

In Luke x. we have the human side. Here, alas! there is collision. Let us read the passage: "Now it came to pass, as they went, that He

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entered into a certain village: and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house." It was Martha's house, and of course she had to manage it. "And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word." Blessed, privileged place! "But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (vv. 38-42.)

Here we find that Martha's self-occupation marred her service, and drew forth words of reproof from the lips of her loving, yet faithful, Lord; words, we may safely say, which would never have fallen upon her ear had she not interfered with her sister Mary. Her service had its place and its value; and her Lord knew well how to appreciate it; but, blessed be His name, He will not allow any one to interfere with another. Each had her own place, her own line of things. Jesus loved Martha and her sister, but if Martha will complain of her sister, she must learn that there is something more to be thought of than preparing a supper. Had Martha gone quietly on with her work, having Christ as her object in all that she was doing, she would not have had a rebuff; but she was evidently in a wrong spirit. She was not in communion with the mind of Christ; had she been so, she never could have used such words to her Lord as, "Dost Thou not care?"

Surely He does care about us, and He is inter-

ested in all our little works and ways. The smallest service done to Him is precious to His loving heart, and will never be forgotten. But we must not interfere with another's service, or intrude in any way upon his domain. Our blessed Lord will not suffer it. Whatever He gives us to do, let it be done simply to Him. This is the grand point. There is not the slightest necessity for jostling one another. There is ample space for all; and the very highest sphere is open to all. We may all enjoy intimate communion; we may all worship; we may all serve; we may all be acceptable. But the moment we set about making invidious comparisons, we are clearly out of the current of the Master's mind.

Martha, no doubt, thought her sister rather deficient in action. She was mistaken. The best preparation for action is sitting at the Master's feet, to hear His word. Had Martha understood this, she would not have complained of her sister; but, inasmuch as she herself raised the question and gave occasion for comparison, she had to learn that a hearing ear and a worshipping heart are more precious by far than busy hands. Alas! our hands may be very busy, while the ear is heavy, and the heart far away! But if the heart be right, then the ear, the hands, the feet, yea, all will be right.

We do not mean to imply that Martha's heart was not right in the main. Far from it. We feel assured it was. But there was an element which needed correction, as there is in all of us. She was a little occupied with her service. "Dost Thou not care that my sister hath left *me* to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help *me*."

This was all wrong. She ought to have known

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that service was not confined to cooking; that there was something higher than meat and drink. Ten thousand might be got to prepare a supper for one that would break an alabaster box to do honour to Christ. Not that our Lord undervalued the supper; but what would that supper have been to Him without the anointing with the ointment, and the wiping with the hair? What is any act of service without the true and deep devotion of the heart? Nothing. But, on the other hand, where the heart is really engaged with Christ, the smallest act is precious to Him. "If there be *first* a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath." (2 Cor. viii. 12.)

Here lies the root of the whole matter. It is an easy thing to bustle about in so-called service, to run from house to house, and place to place, visiting and talking, and after all there may not be a single spark of genuine affection for Christ, but the mere worthless activity of a self-occupied mind, an unbroken will, the workings of a heart that has never known the constraining power of the love of Christ. The grand point is to find our place at the feet of our gracious Lord, in worship and adoration, and then we shall be ready for any sphere of action which He may see fit to open for us. If we make service our object, our service will become a snare and a hindrance. If Christ be our object, we shall be sure to do the right thing, without thinking about ourselves or our work.

Thus it was with Mary. She was occupied with her Lord, and not with herself or her alabaster box. She sought not to interfere with anyone else. She complained not of Lazarus at the table, nor of Martha with her household cares. She was

absorbed with Christ and His position at the moment. The true instincts of love led her to see what was fitting for the occasion, and grateful to His heart, and she did that, did it with all her heart.

Yes, and her Lord appreciated her act. And not only so, but when Martha complained of her, He very soon taught her her mistake; and when Judas, with ill-concealed covetousness, talked of her act as being a waste, he too got his answer. Heartless man! hiding his covetousness under a cloak of caring for the poor. No one can have a true heart for the poor who does not love Christ. Judas (professor, and apostle and all, as he was) loved money: alas! no uncommon love. He had no heart for Christ, although he may have preached and cast out devils in His blessed name. He could talk of selling the ointment for three hundred pence, and giving it to the poor; but, oh! the Holy Ghost, who measures everything by the one standard of the glory of Christ, lets us see the roots of things, and He it is who tells the full truth as to Judas: "This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."

How truly awful! To be outwardly so near the Lord; to profess His name; to be an apostle; to talk about giving to the poor; and all the while to be a thief, and a betrayer of the Son of God!

Dear Christian reader, let us ponder these things. Let us seek to live very near to Christ, not in mere profession, but in reality. May we find our place ever in the moral shelter of His holy presence; there to find our delight in Him; and thus be fitted to serve Him, and witness for His name!

## Christ Fulfilling Scripture.

Jesus said, "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me." — (Luke xxiv. 44.)

**T**HAT Jesus would make "intercession for the transgressors" was prophesied by Isaiah seven hundred years before its actual fulfilment; as also that He would be so despised and rejected as to be "numbered with the transgressors," when He "poured out His soul unto death."

His perfect patience and unfailing meekness were also foretold; for of Him, on whom Jehovah laid the iniquity of us all, it was said, "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth."

Nor was the prophetic testimony silent as to His trial at the judgment-seat of Pilate, His death, and burial; for it is written, "He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living; *for the transgression of My people was He stricken.* And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death." (Isa liii. 7-12.)

Men who preferred a robber, like Barabbas, to Jesus, so that they all cried out, "Not this man, but Barabbas," treated the Son of God as if He were a wicked man, in crucifying Him between two thieves; and the taking Him down from the cross, and burying Him that day, fulfilled the prophetic word that He was "with the rich

in His death"; for the body of Jesus was laid in the sepulchre of "a rich man," Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor, and a good man and a just. (Matt. xxvii. 57-66.)

Not only was it foretold that the Son of man should be crucified, that His hands and His feet should be pierced, but it was also declared that not one of His bones should be broken, though He would say, "All My bones are out of joint." (Ps. xxii. 14.) And centuries earlier, when God declared His mind by Moses about the paschal lamb, which was a striking type of the Lamb of God, He said, "Neither shall ye break a bone thereof." (Exod. xii. 46; Num. ix. 12.) Therefore it could not be, for "the scripture cannot be broken." (John x. 35.)

The exact fulfilment is thus recorded in John's Gospel. The Jews "besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. . . . For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced." (John xix. 31-37.)

Moses also wrote concerning His burial, and that He would be taken down from the tree on the same day as His crucifixion. Having been made a curse for us, "for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree," it was ordered that the body should be buried that same day; which we



know was in the case of our Lord literally fulfilled : though the reason assigned for so doing was the preparation of the sabbath, and that sabbath being a high day. The prophet said, "If a man . . . be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree : his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day." (Deut. xxi. 22, 23.)

John, in his Gospel, referring to this, says, "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day (for that sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate. . . . After this Joseph of Arimathæa . . . besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore and took the body of Jesus. . . . Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews' preparation day." (John xix. 31-42.)

It would be most interesting and profitable, did our limits admit of it, to trace in Scripture the prophecies concerning our Lord's person, the Virgin's Child, Immanuel; His birth at Bethlehem; His life of sorrow and grief; His miracles; His rejection, the Stone which the builders refused; His betrayal, for thirty pieces of silver, by one who had eaten bread with Him; His death by crucifixion, with transgressors, but as an offering for sin; His burial the same day, and laid in a rich man's grave; His resurrection on the first day of the week, "the morrow after the sabbath"; His glorification and session on the right hand of Jehovah; His priestly service; His coming again

in judgment, to restore Israel as His own nation, and His reigning on David's throne, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. xi. 9.) A consideration of Scripture on these points certainly shows how much it abounds with instruction concerning Christ; and the observation of the accuracy with which much has been already fulfilled, warrants us to expect that what remains will have its accomplishment with equal exactness.

In reference, however, to what is now more immediately before us, "the death of the cross," we shall find that the more we search the Written Word prayerfully, and in dependence on the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the more we shall be struck with the minute details it gives us. For instance, in Psalm xxii., it was predicted that the people who would treat Messiah with scorn and mockery when hanging on the tree, would say, "He trusted on Jehovah that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him." (v. 8.) And in the narration in the Gospel of the facts which occurred a thousand years after, we read that those who beheld Him on the cross, mocked Him, saying, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God." (Mat. xxvii. 43.) How truly Scripture is divine truth!

It is well to notice how the perfect fulfilment of what had been written concerning Jesus occupied His heart, notwithstanding all the intensity of the suffering and sorrow of "the death of the cross." There, in unutterable agony, He remembered that a verse in Psalm lxix. remained to have its fulfilment. We read, therefore, "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accom-

plished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth."

This seems to have completed the accomplishment of what had been written concerning Him, for we are then told, "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." (John xix. 28-30.)

Again, as we have before observed, He who was "numbered with the transgressors," and bare the sins of many, was to make "intercession for the transgressors." Turning then, to the Gospel by Luke, we read, "And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (xxiii. 33, 34.)

No doubt this was partly answered in the saving of so many Jews at Pentecost, and afterward; but we look for its full answer when "Israel [as a nation] shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isa. xxvii. 6.)

In "the death of the cross," the love of God was fully manifested. Types had faintly foreshadowed this love; prophets had alluded to it; Jesus Himself had preached it; but, in "the death of the cross," divine love to us came out in all its profound reality. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son the propitiation for our sins." (1 John iv. 9, 10.)

God's love to *the world* was thus completely manifested. He was no longer confining His dealings to the people of Israel, but bringing in that which would have a world-wide significance; and, in virtue of the work of propitiation, God could proclaim it to every one, and save any one through grace who avails himself of the Saviour's death as the ground of being reconciled.

The love of Christ to the Church was also manifested in all its suitability and perfectness; for "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." (Eph. v. 25.) Divine love thus came out; so that now "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) Happy indeed are those who "have known and believed the love that God hath to us"! (1 John iv. 16.)

How strange that any one, in the face of such a marvellous work as "the death of the cross," should contend for doing something of his own to make peace with God! How sad too, notwithstanding the clear testimony of the word of God to the infinite value of Christ's sin-atonement work, that men should imagine that they must add their own duties and religiousness to what Christ has done, in order to make their salvation more secure! If any of our readers talk of *doing* for salvation, we can only say that good works are the fruits of saving faith, and would bring before them a few words of God's truth: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. ii. 8,9.)

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# 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).

## The Believer Crucified with Christ.

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified  
with Him."

(Romans vi. 6.)

**T**HOSE who have tasted divine grace, and know, from the testimony of God's word, that their sins are forgiven, desire to live without sinning, and learn to hate every working of evil within. Though they have been comforted by the assurance of forgiveness of sins, they are painfully conscious of self-will, pride, and lust stirring within them, and threatening to come out, even if not, in unguarded moments, doing so. But while it may not have been manifest to others, they are painfully aware of unclean and unholy workings within; so that, at times, they

doubt whether they are children of God or not; and, like one of old, they cry out out in deep distress, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24). The soul longs for deliverance from the nature, "the old man," that produces sins."

Now, it is evident that this painful condition is not on account of sins committed, but on account of what he finds in himself; he does not therefore exclaim thus about his sins, but about himself; not about what he has done, but what he is. "O wretched *man* that *I am*, who shall deliver *me* from the body of this death?" Not, Who shall forgive me my sins? for they are forgiven; but, Who shall deliver me from "the body of this death?" or "this body of death." So loathsome is the evil nature to the child of God (and only those who are born of God have the consciousness of it), that it seems here to be likened to the ancient practice of chaining a dead body to the criminal, till, from putrefaction, it dropped off piece by piece. Besides, we do not speak of deliverance from our sins, but of "forgiveness of sins"; neither can we reasonably speak of an evil nature being forgiven, but of our being delivered from it; hence the cry, "Who shall *deliver me*?"

Many, then, who have *forgiveness of sins*, have not the comfort of *deliverance from* "the body of this death." This also is brought to us by the death of the cross, though consummated in resurrection. On the cross, He who knew no sin was *made sin* for us; there He was our Substitute before God; there having been made sin for us, God condemned *sin in the flesh*, condemned judicially that evil nature in us which did the sin; there *our old man* has been crucified with Him.

Precious grace to us! There, as before God, we died with Christ, and, in Him risen, God has given to us eternal life; hence we read, "Ye are dead [or have died], and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii. 3.) The believer, therefore, who feels the misery of having such an evil nature, looks out of himself in simple faith, and finds deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom He was identified in death. Thus distress is turned into thanksgiving; for he says, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vii. 25.) He has deliverance from the distress of being under the power of a corrupt and evil nature. He now knows that his old man has been crucified with Christ.

We say he "knows" it, for faith always sees things from God's stand-point; and he finds three things necessarily result.

First, that he has two natures; a new nature which is born of God, which cannot sin, but serves the law of God; this he calls, "I myself"; and he also carries about with him, as to fact, an evil and loathsome nature always ready to sin, and incapable of improvement, which he calls "the flesh," and knows it has been crucified with Christ.

Secondly, that there is given to him, by divine grace, a new standing in Christ; a new position, life in the Spirit; so that he is spoken of as "in the Spirit," or "in Christ Jesus."

Thirdly, that his old Adam standing is so gone to faith in the judgment of the cross that the Holy Ghost says, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." (See Rom. vii. 25; viii. 1-9.) This new standing is unchangeable, and recognized in Scripture as a present fact, so that many of the epistles

are addressed to those who are "in Christ Jesus."

It is, then, by death with Christ that we have *deliverance* from the nature which did the sins, as well as purgation of the sins themselves; because there, in the person of the Son of God, the judgment of sin and sins was fully borne, and the whole question for ever settled for the glory of God. Hence "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." (Heb. x. 26.) The sacrifice offered is so perfect, and the work so completely finished, that nothing more will ever be done to atone for sins, or to remove guilt from the conscience of the sinner who believes; for God declares that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John i. 7.)

It is well, then, to receive the divine testimony to the work of Jesus in "the death of the cross," not only as to His having borne our sins, suffered for sins, and died for our sins, but also that in His sacrifice offered to God, sin in the flesh has been condemned, our old man has been crucified, and, consequently, in His resurrection from the dead, we are associated in life with Him. We are told therefore, "In whom also ye are [or have been] circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh [not sins of] by the circumcision of Christ." Thus, as to *standing*, we are not in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus, our old man is crucified, and yet, as to *fact*, "the flesh" is in us, and we are enjoined not to obey sin in the lusts thereof, but to so judge of ourselves according to God, as to reckon ourselves "to be dead (or to have died) indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. vi. 11, 12.)

It is because we have died with Christ, have



been crucified with Him, that in the epistles man in the flesh is not addressed; neither are we told to crucify the flesh, or, to crucify ourselves, as is sometimes stated. We read that "they that are Christ's *have* crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. v. 24); that is, they are identified with Christ, in whose sacrifice sin in the flesh has been condemned. But though we are never instructed in the word of God to crucify the flesh, yet, because "the flesh" is in us, we are not only enjoined to have no confidence in it, not to obey its lusts, but to reckon ourselves to have died unto sin, and to mortify or put to death every activity from this evil source.

Because "the flesh" is in us, we are told to "walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." We are to "mortify [or put to death] our *members* which are upon earth," such as vile passions, evil lusts, etc., and through the Spirit to "mortify the *deeds* of the body." Peter (putting it in another form) speaks of "laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies," etc. (See Col. iii. 5; Rom. viii. 13; 1 Peter ii. 1.) It is well, then, whenever we look back, and remember "the death of the cross," to accept thankfully all that God has revealed concerning the marvellous way in which "perfect love" there met our need, in judging and setting aside for ever the nature that produced the sins, as well as the sins themselves; the corrupt tree, as well as its corrupt fruit. It is when a soul has received Christ as his Saviour, he is entitled to know that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set him free from the law of sin and death. (Rom. viii. 2.) This is true liberty, for through grace he is now set free from the *dominion* of sin, as well as the

*guilt* of it; he is in Christ Jesus, and by the Spirit he knows it. All is of divine grace. He has received power by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." (2 Cor. iii. 17.)

Again, it is by the "death of the cross" that the links which bound us to the world are for ever snapped. The world's hatred to Christ, manifested in His rejection, and its prevailing cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas," has disclosed its real state of man's enmity against God. We cannot now love that great system of men's and Satan's building called "the world," because men hated without a cause our best and dearest Friend; yea, a Friend that loveth at all times, and that sticketh closer than a brother. (Prov. xvii 17, xviii. 24.) The more the child of God meditates on the Lord's death, the more he enters into the truth of His utterances, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee": "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John xii. 31.) What a world it must be to have cast out, and cruelly and unjustly put to death the sinner-loving Son of God, its rightful Prince, and to have gone on constantly crying, "Peace and safety," "Progress and advancement," ever since, with such a prince as Satan! for, when Christ was wickedly rejected, Satan was rightly called "the prince of this world." And not only in this view of "the world" in relation to the Lord's death do we realize that we cannot love that which has so shamefully rejected and put to death our precious Saviour, but we know that it rejects those who have identified themselves and their interests with Him. Is it any wonder, then, that one like Paul should have so solemnly written,

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“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world?” (Gal. vi. 14.)

And further, it is also by “the death of the cross” that those who have been under the yoke of the law have died to it, and therefore have been delivered from it. Law has nothing to say to a dead man, but it has dominion over a man as long as he liveth. And however he may try to use it as he judges most agreeable or convenient to his own ideas, and call it a rule of life or anything else, it has nothing less to say to any transgressor than curse and death. Hence it is written, that as many “as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” (Gal. iii. 10.) As the law, then, brings in all who are of its works guilty of transgression, and under the curse, how can any be delivered from just judgment? A man cannot be to Christ sometimes and to the law at others, for it would be like a woman having two husbands, and thus being an adulteress. She must be delivered from the first by death, before she can really be in suitable association with the second husband.

But the law does not die. This is most true. Yet believers have died to it, and thus deliverance is wrought. By the death of the cross Christ has redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse *for them*. In the death of Christ, who is their life, they died, and thus are delivered from the law. As the apostle further says, “I, through the law am dead [*have died*] *to the law*, that I might live unto God.” (Gal. ii. 19.) The law is not dead, but the believer has died with Christ; and to return to the figure of two husbands, being thus freed from the first by

death, we can now be married to another. Who is that? Christ risen, One who is on the other side of death, outside the region of sin, and flesh, and the law, and the world. Hence we are sweetly taught, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Rom. vii. 4.)

How strange that in the face of such plain testimony of Scripture so many should think that Christ came to help them to save themselves, instead of to save them Himself completely and for ever with a great and eternal salvation! Many speak of making themselves better, instead of bowing to the divine verdict, that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Others speak of the world's progress and improvement, as if it were gradually becoming fit for God, instead of owning the righteous testimony of Jesus of its being under sentence of judgment; while not a few are flattering themselves that they keep some parts at least of the law, and thus merit something toward their everlasting salvation. May God deliver many from these delusions!

The Holy Spirit is the Testifier, the Glorifier, and the Remembrancer of the Son of God. We *remember* His death, we *see* Him crowned with glory and honour, and we *look for* His coming. In *His life*, He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. In *His death* for our sins we died with Him, and, through infinite mercy, peace was made by the blood of His Cross. In *His resurrection*, God, who had delivered Him for our offences, raised Him again for our justification. In *Christ ascended* we are accepted, made

nigh, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places; and He says, “Behold, I come quickly!” (Rev. xxii. 7, 12, 20.)

### “ Sin ” and “ Sins. ”

**I**T is of great importance to remark that Scripture nowhere teaches that Christ bore the sins of the world. Had He done so, then no one could ever be lost. It is utterly impossible that Christ could have borne the sins of anyone, and that one not be saved. In John i. 29, we read, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the *sin* [not *sins*] of the world.” So also, in 1 John ii. we read, “He is the propitiation for *our sins* [that is, of all believers]; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” The words “the sins of,” ought not to be inserted; they really teach the heresy of universal redemption. If Christ be the propitiation for the *sins* of the whole world, then every one must be saved, irrespective of the counsels of God, *and* of the work of the Holy Ghost producing repentance and faith in the soul.

We could not go up to an unconverted man in the street, and tell him that Christ bore his sins on the tree. We could tell him that He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; that the veil is rent; that God has been glorified as to sin by the atoning death of Christ; that the way to God is open; that the grace of God that bringeth salvation unto all men hath appeared; that whosoever will may take the water of life freely; that the glad tidings of salvation are announced to every creature under heaven; that none are excluded

from the range of the glorious gospel; that "God so loved *the world* that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (Heb. ix. 26; x. 20; John xiii. 31, 32; xiv. 6; Tit. ii. 11; Rev. xxii. 17; Col. i. 23; 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4; John iii. 16.)

All this we could freely and fully declare; and then, if through grace the man's heart was really affected, if by the power of the Spirit of God he was led to bow to the testimony, we could further teach him not only that his *sins* were borne by Jesus, but that his sinful nature came to its end on the cross; that his "old man" was crucified; that "the body of *sin*" was "destroyed," its power broken; its dominion gone for faith. (Rom. vi. 3-7; Gal. v. 24; Rom. vi. 14; viii. 1-4.)

If then it be asked, What is the meaning of John i. 29? What is the real force of the expression, "taketh away the sin of the world"? we reply that in order to see the full force of this precious statement, we believe we must look onward to that glorious time when every trace of sin shall be for ever obliterated from God's creation. (2 Pet. iii. 13; Rev. xxi. 1-4.) And, further, as to the present application of the passage, we rejoice to know that Christ has, by His precious sacrifice, laid the righteous foundation for God's acting in grace, mercy, goodness, kindness and patient forbearance toward the world as a whole, and toward each individual on the face of the earth, from the beginning to the end of time; that, in virtue of the cross, God sends His rain upon the just and on the unjust, and pours His sunbeams upon the evil and upon the good; that it is in virtue of the cross that the infidel and the atheist live and move, and have their being;

and finally, that it is on the ground of the atonement of Christ that the gospel is sent forth into all the world, and sounded in the ears of every creature under heaven.

In short, nothing can be more precise, and at the same time more comprehensive, than the testimony of Holy Scripture on this great question of “ sin ” and “ sins. ” It will invariably be found that Scripture accurately distinguishes between “ sin ” and “ sins ”; and when the latter term is used, it is always in reference to God’s people. “ Who gave Himself for *our sins*. ” “ Christ was once offered to bear the *sins* of *many*. ” He does not say “ the sins of *all*. ” “ Who His own self bare *our sins* in His own body on the tree ”; that is, the sins of His people, of all true believers. (Gal. i. 4; Heb. ix. 28; 1 Pet. ii. 24.)

The word of God carefully guards against the heresy of *universal redemption*, while at the same time it most clearly establishes the truth of *universal purchase*. Our Lord Christ has a purchased right to the whole universe, and to every man, woman, and child on the face of the earth. Hence we read in 2 Peter ii. of certain “ false teachers who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that *bought* them. ” He does not say “ that *redeemed* them. ” Christ has “ bought ” all. He *redeems* according to the eternal counsels of God. “ As Thou hast given Him power over *all flesh*, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. ” (John xvii. 2.)

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## **The Advocate or the Accuser: Whose Side do You Take?**

**T**HIS is a practical question for Christians in these days. It is not a question of whether we are Christians or not, though it may often test the fact. Happily, simple faith in the Person of the Son of God and His work settles that question. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts xvi. 31.) "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." (John iii. 36.) "We are justified by His blood" (Rom. v. 9), as well as numberless other passages. But the question is, as professedly saved ones, Do we take sides with the Advocate, or with the accuser of the brethren?

The advocacy of Christ is founded on His righteous Person and His perfect work. (1 John ii. 1, 2.) His blessed work clears us from all the guilt of our sins, and in His blessed Person we have entire deliverance from our Adam state, He Himself, the dead, risen, and ascended One, being our righteousness before God. It is on this ground that He intercedes, and does the work of an Advocate. If we sin (after our relationship with the Father as children to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, has been settled), then the advocacy of Christ applies. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we [children] have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John ii. 1, 2.) The office of the Advocate, then, is not to get righteousness for us, nor to put away our sins, nor to make us God's children. This is all settled in virtue of Christ's death and resur-



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rection, by faith in Him. "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool; for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 12-14.) He is Advocate to maintain us as children before the Father without sin, in face of the accuser of the brethren. (Rev. xii. 10.) When a child of God sins, communion\* is interrupted; the relationship remains, but the Father has no fellowship with the sin of His child. The Advocate pleads against Satan who accuses, the Father hears the pleadings of the Advocate, who thereon applies the word to our walk (John xiii. 4, 5), brings us to the confession of the sin, upon which the Father is faithful to the righteous Advocate who made propitiation, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John i. 9.) Thus communion is restored, and the child of God walks in the joy and light of his Father's countenance. Thus the Advocate is literally the Manager of our affairs in our Father's court, and has reference to His government of His children in this world. It reconciles the fact of a naughty child and of a holy Father.

The Advocate does two things. He pleads with the Father for us; He applies the word to us. The one maintains our cause, if we sin before the Father, against the accuser; the other brings up our practical state to our standing, which is always maintained without sin by the righteous Advocate

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\* Fellowship, or communion, means the association of two or more together, having common thoughts and feelings together.

who has made propitiation. The failure in our practical state is from the fact of our having the flesh still in us. Our actual state is that of having two natures in one person. "With the mind I myself serve the law of God, with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom. vii. 25.) By faith, and in Spirit we are no longer in the flesh, yet actually flesh is in us (though by faith we reckon ourselves dead); hence failure when we are careless, and let flesh act. There is no excuse, but the fact is that we do fail through unwatchfulness. Our standing as children ever remains the same (even though we may have sinned), owing to the righteous Advocate who has made propitiation. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate." But we have failed in our practical state, we are defiled. That our bodies are washed with pure water remains true (Heb. x. 22); we have had once the washing of regeneration (Tit. iii. 5); we are born again (John iii. 3), we need not then to be put in the bath over again.<sup>†</sup> But we have sinned, we have got our feet defiled in passing through this sin-defiling world. This will not do for the Father's presence. What does the Advocate then? He applies the word to us, washing our feet; the word judges us, leading us to confession and self-judgment. The remembrance of our Advocate who made propitiation brings us back on our knees to our Father, who forgives us, and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Thus the blessed work of the Advocate is, on the one hand, to plead for the children before the Father, if they sin; on the

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<sup>†</sup> (John xiii. 10.) Literally, "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all."

other hand, to wash their feet with the word, bringing their practical walk and state up to their standing before Him.

Satan, on the other hand, is the accuser of the brethren. He accuses them before God day and night. (Rev. xii. 10.) He is the author of divisions between the children of God, by accusing them one to the other. (Rom. xvi. 17-20.)

This is the accuser's wretched work. Those that follow Him are called false accusers, slanderers (literally devils, because doing the devil's work). He whispers in the ear of a minister's wife (1 Tim. iii. 11), a false story about some brother or sister in Christ. She spreads it about, and so the evil spreads, which perhaps may end in an assembly being broken up. Some aged sister sits leisurely at home (Tit. ii. 3), and, not having much to do, is ready to hear stories perhaps from some worldly person about some child of God. She spreads them about to others who come to see her. It is a slander, a lie, and so the devil does his work; and perhaps some child of God gets a wound or is hindered in the work of the Lord for years.

I would solemnly ask every child of God who reads this paper, On whose side are you working? When some slander is uttered about a child of God, do you plead for him, go home, and pray for him? If you know he has failed, do you go in love and humility, and take the word to him, and wash his feet? (John xiii. 14.) This is the blessed work of the Advocate.

Or do you listen to the story, go and spread it lightly to some one else, without knowing it is a fact or not? And if you are hurt by some brother, do you go in a pet to God, or pray in anger at him

at prayer-meetings (1 Tim. ii. 8), and so accuse him? This is to do the devil's work.

But how happy is it for us to be associated with the blessed Advocate; on the one hand, pleading for our brethren if they sin, and, on the other, carrying the word to them, and washing their feet! May the Lord grant His people increasingly by this grace, so that the saints may see their blessed privilege of love to cover sins (Prov. x. 12.), plead for their brethren if they sin, and act in faithfulness to them, in carrying the word to them, washing their feet, so that they might be cleansed from the defilement; these last, overcoming the accuser by the blood of the Lamb, on the one hand, if they sin, and, on the other hand, openly resisting him by the word of their testimony, like the blessed Lord Jesus Himself! He answered the devil, when tempting Him to sin, by "It is written"; and so should we. If we sin, thank God we can always answer Him by the blood of the Lamb, which is the balm for every wound. Thus the blood of the Lamb, and the word, the sword of the Spirit, are our instruments against the devil down here; whilst the Advocate maintains our cause before the Father up in heaven. Here in every case we are maintained, and are overcomers, nay, "more than conquerors, through Him that loved us." (Rom. viii. 37.)

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Scripture, divine truth, never is really received but in the measure in which the mind is formed into the spiritual state capable of apprehending it.

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# WORDS OF TRUTH

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

"Under The Sun."

IT is a common and a correct thought that the Book of Ecclesiastes is a writing, under the Holy Ghost, upon the vanity of all things "under the sun."

This is so, most surely. Solomon was lifted up, that he might be able, from his position and resources, to inspect and test the vanity of all human conditions. All that either business or pleasure could provide for him, all that wealth, or station, or learning commanded, was within his reach and at his disposal. And he challenged it all to say what it was worth.

He went through all the conditions of human life which carried with them a single promise to contribute anything to him. His search was complete. His inspection and testing left nothing improved. And each and all were equally vain and

unsatisfying. No one thing relieved the disappointment which another had produced. His journey was a wearying and vexatious pursuit of what was ever and equally eluding him. From everything the sense of vanity pressed on his spirit, and there was nothing to relieve or deliver him of all that was done or that was found "under the sun."

The principal business of this Book of Ecclesiastes is to tell us this. And a valuable as well as serious lesson it is. Well if we learn it; and the better for us the better we learn it.

We should not, however, fully honour the wisdom of God in this book, if we said that this was its only business. It is not so. It teaches us principally, it is true, the general vanity of all the scene around us, but it likewise lets us know that there is one outlet, one relief from the oppressive sense of the common, universal emptiness, and that is found in the service of God. This is its second lesson.

I may here call to mind how the apostle Paul teaches us, that there is but one outlet from the scene or condition of condemnation. He tells us that we are "shut up" to the faith of Jesus. Law and works, and all other provisions, fail and prove themselves vain; for all of us are concluded under sin, and no escape is there from such condition of death, but faith in the Lord Jesus now revealed to us. (Gal. iii., 23.)

This Book of Ecclesiastes reminds me of that. For in it I see one way, but one only, open to us as an escape from the condition and from the sense of a universal vanity. We are "shut up" to it. In these thoughts we know this analogy. Faith in Jesus, says the apostle, is the one only outlet

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from a state of condemnation : the living to Jesus, says the Book of Ecclesiastes, is the one only outlet from a state of vanity. And we may well rejoice in the simplicity of such relief from such heavy and grievous conditions.

“Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days.” (Eccles. xi. 1.)

Here there is found something solid, something abiding, something which does not partake of the common, universal vanity. The serving of Christ has the value of eternity in it. The bread cast on the waters is found after many days, or at a future hour.

Just the lesson which all the New Testament reads to us. For there we learn that there are bags which wax not old, and that it is service to Christ which fills them for us; that there is such a thing as being “rich toward God,” and such a treasure as “faileth not,” no thief approaching it, no moth corrupting it. And there also we learn, according to the whole bearing of this Book of Ecclesiastes, “the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (Luke xii. 21, 23; 1 John ii. 17.)

Happy, serious, simple lesson! The highest attainments or richest prosperity in things “under the sun” are all vanity; while the smallest service to the Lord, even the giving of a cup of cold water in His name, has the value of eternity in it. (Matt. x. 42.)

No testimony, no preaching, no teaching, even if the matter of it be all right, is right teaching, when the soul is not filled *for itself* first from God.

God's Dwelling-Place.

IN Exodus xxv. 8 the Lord gives instructions to Moses that the children of Israel should make Him a sanctuary, that He might dwell among them.

There is a great sense in such a word, I believe. The Lord had already spoken from the fiery hill, down to the which He had come in fire and earthquake. But He had not *rested* there. He had found no *dwelling-place* there; He could not. The law gave Him no occasion, no opportunity, to display Himself, or to do His proper business. He found fault with it, therefore (Heb. viii. 8), though it was perfect in its way, "holy, and just, and good." (Rom. vii. 12.)

How rapidly, in like manner, the Lord Jesus, in spirit, passes Mount Sinai in John viii., and reaches the sanctuary of life and peace!

The opening of this chapter (Exod. xxv.) shows that He made a rapid journey beyond it. And He desires a dwelling-place, a sanctuary, where mercy was to be seen rejoicing against judgment, and where a believing soul could meet Him. (James ii. 13.) This is full of comfort. Love, the divine nature, so to speak, rapidly passed Mount Sinai, and rested only in the place where a sinner could be *relieved* instead of being *destroyed*.

The sinner himself, once convicted, makes the same journey. Sinai does not suit him either. Conviction or conscience (through the spirit of faith) gives him wings to fly beyond it, to rest not till he reach the very spot where the Lord had gone before.

The journey of the Lord was only somewhat the more speedy and immediate. It is taken *at once*, taken under necessity of nature as I have said. The sinner *lingers round the fiery hill*, and leaves

it only on the discovery that it is the place of death to him.

So, at the creation, God gives witness *at once* that He could not rest in it, for even the garden of Eden tells of His counsel and purpose touching redemption.

All this has meaning for our comfort as sinners. If we reach the gospel by faith, we know that God is there before us. It is *His* gospel. (Rom. i. 1.) And as Israel here had to make a sanctuary or a dwelling-place for God, so it is saved sinners who now make a dwelling-place for Him. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and *God in him.*" (1 John iv. 16.)

Here is the sanctuary which the Israelite of this day, the lowly believing soul, builds for God. Faith rests in God, and then God rests in the soul that has this faith.

For we can repose in one that reposes in us, but in none else. A person may serve us, a person may admire and flatter us, and seek to imitate us, but all that will not do for the heart. He must *trust* in us, or we cannot commit ourselves to him.

So with God. Nothing builds a dwelling-place for Him but the faith which rests in His love; the faith which enjoys His acceptance and adoption of us in Christ Jesus. (Eph. i. 5, 6.)

What an argument with our hearts it should be that our happy confidence in Him as pardoned sinners is really the only way now to build Him a house !

But again. It is from this sanctuary God issues His commandments, from the place of enthroned mercy, mercy sustained and made effectual and glorious by the person and work of Christ : " And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark ;

and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I will give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." (vv. 21, 22.)

This is also very full of blessing; for when issuing commands to His people the Lord is still upon the throne of grace.

Paul, in New Testament form, gives this thought: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." (Rom. xii. 1.)

The earlier part of the Epistle to the Romans had been, as it were, constructing the mercy-seat, or raising the throne of grace in the sight of the congregation of the Lord, unfolding the gospel, "the law of liberty," the mystery of mercy rejoicing against judgment, or of grace abounding over sin; and now, entering on the detail of duties, the voice still breaks forth from the mercy-seat. (Rom. xii.)

Deeply precious is all this. Did the Lord return to Sinai, when delivering *commands*? No; He speaks from the sanctuary of peace.

Does commandment or precept come to our hearts invested with the fire and smoke of Sinai? Does it come bringing with it a spirit of fear, and thoughts of judgment? Do we listen to it as though life or death hung on the answer we gave it? This must not be. We are besought "by the mercies of God" to do so and so, in obedience, for His name's sake.

Such is the blessedness of this scripture in Exodus xxv. 1-22, I judge; according, at least, to

one's small measure in opening it. It tells us how the Lord passed the fiery hill, where the law delivered its words of righteousness; how He passed also the thick darkness, where the statutes of the realm were published. See Exodus xx.-xxiv.

In neither place could He rest. He found no dwelling-place there. But where does He? Either in the cloud which was on high above the hill and beyond the darkness, or in the sanctuary which faith, the faith of sinners, built for Him; that is, either in His own native glory (so to say), or in the bosom of a convicted and humbled, yet trustful, confiding, sinner. And where He dwells at peace with us, there He delivers His will and commands to us. (Rom. v. 1, 2.)

Who can tell it? *Heaven* has prepared Him a place, and so has *faith*! Faith does for Him the same work as His own all-perfect power and skill! "*He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation.*" (Exod. xv. 2.)

The Need of Christ's Death.

"So must the Son of man be lifted up."
(John iii. 14.)

A POINT never to be overlooked when contemplating "the death of the cross" is that *there* sin is seen in all its exceeding sinfulness.

In Eden we see something of the dreadful character of sin, or disobedience, in the holiness of God requiring that the man should be driven out of the garden, and not allowed to return. "So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming

sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." (Gen. iii. 14-24.)

Again, when six thousand years have well-nigh passed, and the working of sin, and the accumulation of experience, both in Satan and sinners during this long period, have grown into such colossal proportions, we become almost lost in the immensity of the ravages and growth of sin.

And further, if for a moment we take our stand as it were on the margin of "the lake of fire," which is "the second death," and think of the end of all such as have rejected the Saviour, and consider the eternal fulfilment of the words of divine testimony concerning those who will be there, we are led again to say, What a dreadful thing sin is! For "the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." (Rev. xxi. 8.)

But it is in the Saviour's sufferings, and the forsaking of God in "the death of the cross," and blood-shedding needed to cleanse from sin, that we see what sin really is, and God's hatred of it. No creature could satisfy God's holy requirements concerning it. Neither Gabriel, nor all the shining myriads of angelic beings around the throne of heaven, could make propitiation for the sins of the people. Were the vast universe, which was brought into existence by the word of God, to do its utmost, all could not clear man of one sin. Could it be that all of Adam's posterity could give themselves up to weeping and sorrow, still, as before God, it would be true that

THE NEED OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

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“ All for sin could not atone,
But the blood of Christ alone.”

No one but the only begotten Son of God *could* make atonement for sins. For that, as He said, the Son of man *must* be lifted up, for He only could accomplish the work, and so glorify God. Being Man, perfect Man, He only could be a fit substitute for man. Being sinless, He could be a fit sacrifice for the sinful; and being a divine Person as well as Man, He was competent to meet all the just requirements of God, and satisfy God's righteousness and holiness as to sin.

If, then, man sinned, Man also suffered for sins, and is the propitiation for sins. If by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead. (1 Cor. xv. 21.) If man was driven out of the garden because of sin, the Man Christ Jesus rose from the dead, and entered into heaven itself by His own blood. (Heb. ix. 12). Who but Jesus, the Son of the living God, could do this? How dreadful then sin must be, when we think that it needed One equal with God, as well as perfect Man, to put it out of God's sight. Though many bulls and goats had been offered as sacrifices for sin, God had no pleasure in them; they served to typify the great sacrifice for sin which was coming, but could not righteously remove sin from the eye of God; “ for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” (Heb. x. 4.)

It was in love to us, and for the glory of God, that He “ spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.” (Rom. viii. 32.) Being delivered for our offences, we see in the death of the cross what is the just judgment of sin; that sin calls for nothing less than being forsaken or

abandoned by God. Hence we find that though Jesus was perfect in obedience unto death, even "the death of the cross," yet He there cried out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46.) The holiness of God, and the demands of the righteous judgment of sin, could be satisfied with nothing else, therefore Jesus justified God by saying, "But Thou art *holy*, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." (Psalm xxi. 1-3.) No person but God's own Son was competent to be a propitiation for sins, and nothing less than "the death of the cross" could be a righteous basis for putting sin away for the glory of God. Out of all this we know He rose triumphant. What a dreadful thing sin is! What a victory Christ has accomplished for all who come to God by Him!

"Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. xv. 3.) This was necessary. Had He stopped a hair's-breadth short of actual death under the judgment of God for sin, no one could be saved. If He, the Corn of wheat, had not died, He must have been alone. (John xii. 24.) But He did die; He tasted death.

Concerning the precious mystery of His death, we are told that He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, and that He was taken by wicked hands, crucified, and slain. And yet He truly said, "No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father." (John x. 18.) Oh the matchless glory and mystery of "the death of the cross"!

The Patriarch Jacob's Closing Days.

IN spiritual conflicts, as one has said, not only is Satan defeated, but the tried saint learns fresh secrets about his own feebleness and the resources and grace of God.

So, I may add, in the wanderings of the heart, in departure from the power of faith and hope, not only is the soul chastened and exercised, but it learns, to God's glory, that it must come back to that posture in which the Lord first set it.

These thoughts may introduce us to the closing period of Jacob's history.

At the beginning Jacob had a title to the inheritance in the grace and sovereignty of God. "The elder shall serve the younger" had pronounced the decree of God in his favour. (Gen. xxv. 23.) The rights of nature in the person of Esau were not allowed to stand in his way. The purpose of the grace of God secured everything to him, his only but all-sufficient title, as it is ours. From simple confidence in this he departed. He sought to get his brother's seal to this title (Gen. xxv. 31), and then, in guile, to get his father's also. (Gen. xxvii.)

This was a fraud; and twenty years' exile endured in the midst of wrongs and oppressions was the divine discipline.

But this was also "confidence in the flesh." (Phil. iii. 2, 3.) It was Galatianism, a seeking to get our title to blessing, or to birthright, or to inheritance from God, sealed by some other hand than His. (Gal. iv. 21-31.)

In the end, however, his soul is found in the exercise of the simplest confidence. He is about to die, and the sons of Joseph, which he had by the Egyptian wife, are brought before him. He at

once adopts them. They had no title, at least none to the rights of the firstborn; but Jacob adopts them, and puts them in the place of the firstborn, giving them a double portion, treating them as though they had been Reuben and Simeon. (Gen. xlviii. 16.)

In all this there was the stern refusal to confer with flesh and blood. His own bowels might have pleaded for his own firstborn. But no; Reuben must give place to Joseph, who, in his sons Ephraim and Manasseh, shall have one portion above his brethren. (v. 22.) Grace shall prevail. Faith shall read its title to birthright, blessing, divine inheritance, and all things, to the full gain-saying of the claims of flesh and blood, or rights of nature.

But further, Manasseh the elder shall yield to Ephraim the younger, as Reuben the firstborn has been made to yield to Joseph the eleventh, and this, too, in despite of the most affecting pleadings and struggles of nature. In the bowels of a father, Joseph contends for the rights of Manasseh. Jacob feels for him in those yearnings. In answer to them he says, "I know it, my son, I know it." (v. 19.) But he must pass on till he get beyond the hearing of the cry of nature, and publish the purpose of God and the title of grace, setting Ephraim above Manasseh.

Thus is he brought to occupy the very ground where the hand of God had set him at the beginning, and from which, through confidence in the flesh, he departed. He now learns that those whom God blesses shall be blest; that His grace needs not the help of flesh, nor His promise the seal of man. Nay, but that rather, in spite of flesh, and in independence of man, God will make it good.

Had it been needful, to the securing the divine inheritance to him, to procure his dying father's blessing, Jacob now sees in his setting Ephraim above Manasseh, in spite of Joseph, that God could and would have brought it about. He had desired Isaac's own seal to his title under God; but now he learns that God can vindicate the title He confers, and make good the undertakings and promises of His grace, in spite, as it were, of even earth and hell, the reluctance of nature, or all the struggles of flesh and blood.

This was a striking witness of his soul recovering its early and right condition.

But there are others.

The call of God was to a resurrection-hope, or to an inheritance in the heavenly country. The patriarchs so apprehended it. (Heb. xi. 13-16.)

Abraham testified to this hope through his life and ways, failing though he did in some incidental matters; as in the denial of his wife before Pharaoh and Abimelech, and in the taking of Hagar.

So did Isaac, though failing also, and betraying the ways of nature.

Jacob, likewise, testified to it, dwelling with Abraham and Isaac in tents, as heirs of the same promises. (Heb. xi. 9.) But he departed more directly from this faith than they had done. He built a house at Succoth; he trafficked in land with the Shechemites; he carelessly allowed his sons to join in affinity with the daughters of Canaan; all these things betraying the departure of his heart from the call of God, and from the resurrection-hope in which his fathers had walked. The present world, in its possessions, occupations, and alliances, seems to have become an object with him. (Gen. xxxiii. 17-20, xxxvii.)

But in the end we have the witness of a beautiful recovery in his soul in this particular also.

This begins to manifest itself at Beersheba. (Gen. xlii. 1-4.) He pauses there, on his journey from Mamre, afraid to approach Egypt, as mindful of Abram in chapter xii., and of Isaac in chapter xxvi. 2, 3.

This was beautiful. It showed the sensitiveness of a freshly quickened soul, of one that was learning the lessons of God under a fresh impression of His Spirit. And the Lord immediately honours this by a visitation of His servant, such as he had not had since the day of Bethel in chapter xxxv. 9.

And this recovery of his soul is again manifested when he reaches Egypt, in his fine confession before the king. He talks of his pilgrimage, and yet, in blessing the king, assumes to be the better or superior. (Heb. vii. 7.) And all this tells us that his soul was exactly in the consciousness and element which the call of God had set it in; that he regarded himself as having nothing "in this present evil world" (Gal. i. 4), but a stranger's tent and a pilgrim's fare, but that he was anointed of God to a better inheritance than even that of the kings of the earth. (Gen. xlvii. 7-10.)

This is a beautiful witness of the health of the soul of this pilgrim-father. But the same is still further declared. He lives for seventeen years in Egypt; but there is nothing of building or trafficking there, as before at Succoth and at Shechem. And at last, in his dying hour, with great zeal he testifies his resurrection-hope according to the call of God. He requires a promise from Joseph that he would not bury him in Egypt, but take his body to the burying-place of his fathers in the land of Canaan. He makes him swear to this; and

again charges all his sons to do the same with him, describing to them particularly the very spot in Canaan where his bones were to lie, "as in sure and certain hope." (Gen. xlviii., xlix.) His whole soul seems engaged in this, that he might tell it out, that all his expectations were linked with the promise of God, with the hope of his fathers, with the objects and inheritance of faith, with the portion to which the call of God summons the soul, namely, the heavenly country beyond the grave.

These are different manifestations of the recovered and healthful condition of the patriarch's soul.

I will, however, notice another.

In earlier days he had been careless as to the ways of his children. When Reuben defiled his bed, no grief or shame on his part is recorded. When Levi and Simeon shed the blood of the Shechemites, it is only a sorrow to him as it endangered him with the people of the land. (Gen. xxxiv., xxxv.) But, at the end, a very different mind expresses itself in him.

In the course of his prophetic words upon his sons, now and again his own heart is allowed to utter itself, and such utterances are full of spiritual affection, expressing, as we may see, a very improved condition of soul.

Thus, Reuben's history is, it is most true, drawn by the hand of the Spirit; but in the midst of it the patriarch utters the horror of his own soul over the remembrance of Reuben's iniquity.

While awarding their several destinies to Simeon and Levi, his heart in like manner is given space to declare its abhorrence and full rejection of their sin and blood-guiltiness.

And so, in earlier days, he had been careless of the apostate ways of his children, marrying the daughters of Canaan; but now, in the course of the same prophetic words, contemplating the apostasy of Dan, in sickness of soul over such a sight, he breathes out a longing after the promise: "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord." (Gen. xlix.)

This, among the other witnesses, tells of the recovered, healthful, spiritual condition of the soul of Jacob while in Egypt, or in the closing period of his chequered and eventful life. Breaches which the world or the flesh had made are repaired, and by the hand of his Shepherd is he surely led in "paths of righteousness." (Psalm xxiii. 3.)

No matter how exact may have been the apparent fulfilment of certain prophecies, when we come to examine the details, we are sure to find features which clearly show that, when God was pleased to use the circumstances that were coming, or that were then before Him, He has always shown that He had other thoughts in view reaching on to the accomplishment of His full purposes and glory, of which the matter before Him served as a type.

Prophecy begins in the mind and counsels of God, and only ends in His own glory to be revealed and perfected and displayed in His Son; it links together two things, namely, the counsels of God and their accomplishment in Christ. We cannot, therefore, begin at a subsequent point, or stop at one prior to the end, without losing its great aim.

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WORDS OF TRUTH

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

## The Sentence of Death in Ourselves.

"We had the sentence of death in ourselves."  
(2 Corinthians i. 9.)

**W**E are at this moment between the cross  
and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We look back, and remember that  
He died for our sins; we look up, and see Him as  
our life and righteousness; we look forward, and  
hope for His coming to receive us unto Himself.

Christ is therefore our peace, our life, our right-  
eousness, and our hope.

Though all truth must be practical, yet  
nothing perhaps is more eminently practical than  
the death of Christ, as revealed in Scripture, in  
its variety of aspects, from Genesis to Revelation.

It is by God's wondrous grace in connection  
with the blood of the cross that we have remission

of sins, the comfort of a purged conscience, peace with God, and such consciousness of divine favour as enables us to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. v. 2.).

It is reconciliation to God by the death of His Son which removes fear of future judgment, and inspires us with confidence to live unto God. Being sanctified by the blood of Jesus, we are taught to walk through this world as those who are set apart by God for Himself, and perfected for ever by that one offering. (Heb. x. 14.)

It is by the blood of Jesus we have liberty at all times to be in the holiest, and to abide there, because He has entered into heaven itself by His own blood. It is because our old man is crucified with Christ that we have deliverance from ourselves, and are set free from the dominion of sin, as well as from its guilt and power. (Rom. vi. 14.)

This being so, how can it be otherwise than that we should have confidence in God, and the sentence of death in ourselves? How can we put confidence in that which God has judicially set aside? Hence the apostle Paul, when alluding to a special trial connected with his ministerial labours, speaks of being "pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. But *we had the sentence of death in ourselves*, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead : who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver : in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us." (2 Cor. i. 8-10.)

While doubtless the apostle is here referring to a particular trial in connection with his service in the gospel, yet the principle is the same as to every child of God, that because he has been

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judicially set aside in the cross of Christ as to his first Adam standing, he cannot now put confidence in that which God has thus judged. Taught also, by the Spirit of God, that in him (that is, in his flesh) dwelleth no good thing, and as crucified with Christ, accepting gladly in faith the judgment of God, how can he but have the sentence of death in himself? If we have believed God as to the reality of the truth that we have now no standing as in Adam before Him, that we are not "in the flesh," but "in Christ Jesus," who is risen and ascended, how can we but have "the sentence of death in ourselves"? Having died with Christ, and being alive in Him risen, how can we have confidence in the flesh, which has thus been judicially set aside by God in the death of His Son? (Rom. viii. 3.) How can we but trust in God, whose love to us is perfect? (John iv. 18.)

In this way we are delivered from self-confidence. This form of false reliance was the cause of Peter's denial of Christ. He meant well, no doubt, and was sincere when he said, "I will lay down my life for Thy sake"; but he did not know himself. He was trusting in himself, and had painfully to learn the folly of it, and its Christ-dishonouring result. It is perhaps one of the commonest causes of failure with Christians now.

It is evident that some who have accepted the truth of being lost sinners, and have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, have not accepted a further truth that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God," and therefore that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God"; they have not so learnt "the death of the cross" as to have the sentence of death in them-

selves, and therefore are not delivered from legalism and confidence in the flesh.

For the things of time and sense, no one questions the value of natural ability; but "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. ii. 11.) To bring in, therefore, human competency, education, or self-confidence in divine things, is to deny the setting aside of man in the flesh in the crucifixion of the Son of God; it is to get away from new creation ground as alive in Christ risen, and as having power by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Though few believers have been called to pass through such trials as the apostle Paul, yet all children of God are entitled to say that we have "the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead."

This lesson, then, of such deep practical importance, presented to us in the "death of the cross," teaches us to have "no confidence in the flesh," but to refuse the claims of self, and confide in Another; and this too not only on great occasions, as we say, but as the constant rule of our lives.

This has always been the way of faith, though not known so clearly and fully before the coming of the Holy Spirit, consequent upon the redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ. We read that Abraham "considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform." (Rom. iv. 19-21.) He simply relied upon the power of God. He judged God faithful who had promised, and there-



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fore he was honoured of God. Again, when offering up Isaac, we are told that he reckoned only on God, "accounting that God was able to raise him up from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." (Heb. xi. 19.)

Whether, then, the path of a child of God is rough or smooth, painful or pleasant; whether the matter in hand is great or small, his privilege is to connect God with all, and act in faith about all, according to His word, for His glory. The death and resurrection of Christ are thus to be constantly before our souls. In His death we learn, not only the divine estimate of our thorough good-for-nothingness as belonging to the first Adam, but we also see the manifestation of divine, perfect love; for even while "we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) The God of all grace loved us perfectly, even in our lowest and worst estate.

Jesus said to the Father, "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John xvii. 26.) Thus the love of the Father to the Son is the same as His love to us.

In the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from among the dead we see the greatness of His power which is to us-ward. The apostle prayed that the Ephesian saints might know "what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places," etc. (Eph. i. 19, 20.) Thus the two things to comfort our souls under all circumstances are, that the Father's love to

us is perfect; that it cannot be more so, and never will be less; and that the power of God which works for us and in us is almighty, the power which raised Christ from among the dead. We cannot be in circumstances beyond the circle of divine love, or where divine power cannot reach us. Having, then, "the sentence of death in ourselves," it only casts us upon that which is infinitely higher and better, even to trust "in God who raiseth the dead."

It is when studying the death of the cross that we learn to have a proper estimate of ourselves and of all things, according to the mind of God. There we see the history of the first man, man in the flesh, closed for faith. It tells us that when "last of all" God sent His Son, saying, "They will reverence My Son," men proved themselves to be so incorrigibly bad that they said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, and let us seize on His inheritance. And they caught Him, and cast Him out of the vineyard, and slew Him." (Matt. xxi. 37-39.)

But it also tells us of the aboundings of divine grace in not only in His death judicially setting aside the old man, and taking away our sins, but also in giving us eternal life in Him risen and ascended, creating us anew in Him, making us to stand in Him in divine favour, calling us too into the relationship of children, and enabling us, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. v. 2.)

The practical effect of "the death of the cross" seems to have had constant power on the apostle. Hence we find him again saying, "Always, bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest

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in our body." (2 Cor. iv. 10.) If the sentence of death within, leading saints not to trust in themselves, but in God which raiseth the dead, characterized their *state*, their *testimony* was, that, while in a mortal body, and passing through this sin-stricken world, they willingly took the place of rejection, by identifying themselves with Him whom the world despised, hated, and cruelly put to death. This they felt to be their true position, and this, not sometimes, but *always*, "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus"; never forgetting that He was once here, but is not here now.

Every day we have sorrowfully to feel that we are in a world where He was, and is not, and where He is still hated and despised. We may sometimes find a widow who makes us feel the sorrowful and lonely character of her path, without her alluding to it; for her ways and spirit show that her heart constantly thinks of one who was her all, who was here, but is not here now. We once heard of a son who could not return to the family mansion of the estate he inherited, because his father had been murdered in it.

But these illustrations fail to set forth the experience of those who are bearing about in their body the dying of Jesus. While one part of our testimony is with girded loins and trimmed lamps, waiting for God's Son from heaven, and faithfully occupying the place of service till He come, it certainly must be founded, not only on the knowledge of accomplished redemption, but in the consciousness of our being identified with Him whom men cast out and crucified.

This is the place, not for sharing the world's pleasures, but for bearing the dying of Jesus about

in our body. In the glory we shall be with Him and like Him, where there is no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; not so here, where divine judgment is coming because men showed hatred to Jesus for His love.

It is this identification with Christ in His interests which is so sweet to Him, and which brings us into suffering and reproach. Would that we knew it better ! It is a line of truth which is much lost sight of. When really adopted, it must lead us into a path of holy separation with Him. How can the death of Jesus, when known in power in our souls, lead us otherwise than in the path of fellowship with Him in His rejection? If He suffered "without the gate," how can the way of faith in this evil time be otherwise than going forth "unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach " ? (Heb. xiii. 13.)

May we have grace to faithfully serve the living and true God, and wait for His Son from heaven !

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The COMMANDMENTS of Christ, so frequently spoken of by the apostle John, must not be confounded with the commandments of the Law. They are entirely different. The Law was given to man in the flesh, with the promise of life if he kept it. The commandments of Jesus are His words, sayings, graciously given to the disciples for the direction of the new life which they possessed. Hence the unspeakable importance of attending continually to the words of Jesus. It is in this way that we dwell in His love.

## The New Creation.

**I**T is profoundly interesting to notice, in the third chapter of the Book of Genesis, that the first man who was called to stand amid the ruins of the old creation, was also the first to hear of, and rejoice in, the glories of the new Adam.

At first, like millions of his posterity, he tried what the old creation could do for him in the way of finding a hiding-place and a covering. He sewed fig-leaves together, as a covering, and when that failed to satisfy his conscience and hush his fears, he tried to find a covert behind the trees of the garden.

But neither was of any use. The old creation would never furnish a covert or a covering. And why? Because all that pertains to the old creation is under the power of the enemy. Do what you will with the old creation, and the old Adam nature, it must all prove valueless, inasmuch as it must all end in death. The grave is the only terminus for all that pertains to the old creation.

Men may labour and weary themselves in the vain attempt to obliterate the traces of death and the curse. They may seek to persuade themselves that this world is a fair and lovely spot, and they may enlist all their energies in the work of decking it out and gilding it over. But, ah! it is "all vanity and vexation of spirit." The ruin and wretchedness will make their appearance through the thickest gilding and the most elaborate decking.

The thorn and the thistle are there. Disease and death; sighs and tears; broken hearts and furrowed brows; blighted prospects and blasted hopes; poverty and misery; all these things arise up in terrific array, and proclaim the fruitlessness

of every effort to mend the old creation, or improve the old Adam nature.

Now, as we have already said, Adam was the first to hear of all this. "And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, 'Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.'" (Gen. iii. 17-19.)

So much for the old creation and the old Adamic nature. "Cursed is the ground"; and "dust thou art." Do what you will, you cannot alter either of these solemn declarations. Even though you could mend the world, you are only mending a cursed thing; and even though you could improve old Adamic nature, your improvements must go down to the dust. All, all must end in the tomb, the dark, silent tomb.

Let a man pursue the most brilliant career; let him wreath his brow with laurels; let him adorn his name with the highest titles; let him heap up untold wealth; let him live in luxury and splendour; let him reach the summit of human greatness and earthly glory; let literature and science combine all their powers to enlighten, to refine, and to elevate him; and after all, that prediction must stand out before his eye, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Thus it is with all. The prince and the peasant; the noble and the beggar; the hoary veteran whose

breast is adorned with medals of many splendid victories, and the raw recruit of yesterday; the tender and delicate lady who could not endure a single soil, and the poor creature whose days have been spent amidst the most squalid misery; all must go down to the grave, and mingle with the dust of the earth.

Oh! that men would think of this! It would surely tend to teach them the vanity of all the resources of the old creation, and all the efforts and all the attainments of the old Adam nature. It would prove an immense relief to thousands of earnest spirits who are, at this moment, honestly, but fruitlessly, seeking to prop up the tottering ruin of old Adamic nature upon the sandy foundation of a cursed earth. "Cursed is the ground . . . . . dust thou art." What a commentary! Faith alone can read it aright. "The natural man" cannot understand it. He *will* seek to mend the world, and improve himself. Indeed, one special point of difference between the way of faith and "the way of Cain" will be found in this, that the former has to do with the new creation, the latter with the old.

Adam took the first step in the way of faith, when he called his wife's name Eve, "the mother of all living." (Gen. iii. 20.) There was uncommon moral grandeur in this utterance. He had just heard the solemn declaration, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"; and one may ask, "Where was there aught of 'life' to be looked for amid the 'dust' of the old creation?" Surely nowhere; but Adam's faith looked up from all the ruin within and around him, and beheld visions of the new creation breaking forth in celestial brightness, to cheer the heart amid

the wreck of the old. There was something beyond the "dust" of death, and faith laid hold thereon. Adam judged that the promise concerning "the Seed of the woman" could only find its accomplishment in the new creation; and he judged rightly. His judgment was the judgment of faith.

But, be it remembered, it was from God's revelation that Adam learnt to look beyond himself and beyond the old creation for that life of which he spoke. Before the light of that revelation had shone upon him, he had tried all the resources of the old creation. Like millions of his descendants, he tried what his own efforts could produce, ere he received life, as "the gift of God," in the new creation. He had to learn, after his peculiar fashion, that,

\* "If human efforts are in vain,  
In Christ it is we stand."

All must learn this, in one way or another. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vi. 23.) All must take their stand with Adam amid the ruin and desolation of the old creation, and hearken to the solemn decree, "Dust thou art"; and, oh! thrice happy they who, while these accents are falling on their ear, can look up and with that certainty which faith finds in God's revelation, speak of life in the midst of death. Happy they who can, with faith's eagle gaze, look beyond "death's cold flood" to that fair scene of life and immortality which is found in the new creation.

Reader, this is a present reality. We should not be satisfied with merely saying, as so many do, "I know that dust I am, and unto dust must



I return; but I hope to get to heaven when I die."

This will never do. The grand point is to see *now* the end of the old creation, the death and burial of the old Adamic nature, and the new creation in Christ Jesus. This is a sublime truth. Let us seek to get hold of it in simple faith.

When Christ lay buried in the silent tomb, old Adam was proved a wreck, and the old creation a ruin. There was no hope from either the one or the other; and hence everything hinged upon this question, "Is there to be anything beyond that tomb? Shall there be any movement of life in yon silent chamber?"

Such was the grand question raised at the tomb of Jesus, while angels and principalities, above and below, waited to hear the reply, and see the issue. Nor had they long to wait. At the appointed moment, forth came the Conqueror in power and majesty, to set up, on the foundation of His accomplished atonement, the new creation of God. The old creation could furnish no such foundation. Men may dig, and dig for ages, in search of a foundation, but all in vain; for, as they penetrate from depth to depth, they meet just the one material, namely, "dust." There is nothing but dust, in the old creation, or in the Adamic nature.

Now, it is interesting and instructive to see that this great doctrine of new creation was revealed, in measure, to Adam at the very moment in which the old creation lay in ruins around him, and in which he saw himself a ruin in the midst of ruins. When he called his wife's name "Eve," he just stepped from the wreck of the old creation on to the imperishable and immovable rock of the new; and as he stood upon that rock, he could

calmly look on and see the wreck descending beneath the dark waters of death, knowing that these waters could never reach to where he stood, and that he should need yon wreck no more.

There was, I repeat it, uncommon moral grandeur in all this. Adam was able to let go the whole world as he passed, in the energy of an artless faith, into that new scene which God's word had introduced to his heart; and, moreover, he was sustained from day to day, from hour to hour, and from moment to moment, amid the "labour and sorrow" of the whole creation, by the power of that same precious principle; for he had to learn, after his own peculiar fashion, and in his measure, the meaning of that word, "The just shall *live* by faith." (Hab. ii. 4; Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11; Heb. x. 38.)

Nor was it merely *life* that Adam obtained, in the new creation, but righteousness likewise; for "unto Adam also, and to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." (Gen. iii. 21.) With the furnishing of this coat Adam had nothing whatever to do. Both the life and the righteousness belonged to the new creation. This one fact made them as free as they were permanent, and as permanent as they were free. Man could not *earn* them, but God *gave* them; and Satan could not *take* them. Man has to earn bread by the sweat of his face, in the old creation; but in the new creation he gets the best bread for nothing. All is free in the new creation. And, blessed be God, the hiss of the old serpent can never be heard throughout the wide and hallowed range of that new creation.

This gives great rest to the heart. Satan can never get into, and man can never be thrust out

from, the heavenly Paradise. The motto inscribed, by the hand of redeeming love, on the portal of that holy and happy enclosure is, "He shall go no more out." (Rev. iii. 12.) Precious motto! The bare idea that one could ever be put out would destroy all the happiness within. But all is sure, all is solid, all is eternal. The new creation shall endure for ever. It can never grow old, and all who belong to it partake of its eternal stability.

Well, beloved reader, if you are a believer in Jesus, the Son of God, you belong to this new creation *now*. Remember this. You have, in the Person of Christ, passed out of the old creation into the new. This precious truth is at once the basis of your eternal security and of your present separation from all that appertains to the old world. The morals of the Christian life take their tone and complexion from the sublime truth of the new creation.

The question is no longer to be, "What harm is there in this, that, or the other pursuit?" Such a question should never once be raised by one who belongs to the new creation. The grand and all-important inquiry for such a one is, "How can I best promote the glory of Him who has rescued me from the wreck of the old creation, and placed me on the rock of the new?"

Oh! that Christ were our absorbing object! Would that, losing sight of self, and all its thoughts, feelings, and interests; earth, and all pertaining thereto; human thoughts, opinions, and reasonings; we might be wholly taken up with the Person, the glory, and the cause of Christ! God grant it to us, in His abundant mercy!

There is nothing in the old creation worth living

for. "Dust thou art" is stamped upon everything. And yet, alas! though we know this upon divine authority, how little we live in the power of it! How prone we are to forget it in the midst of surrounding influences!

May God the Holy Ghost work in us a more earnest, influential, abiding faith in all that most precious truth which connects us with the new creation, so that we may pass along through this world as those who are dead to all below, and whose "life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii. 1.)

"We're not of the world that fadeth away,  
We're not of the night, but children of day;  
The chains that once bound us, by Jesus are  
riven;

We're strangers on earth, and our home is  
in heaven."

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In John xx. Mary illustrates the present relation of the Church with Christ. We do not know Him after the flesh. We are linked with Him, not as the Messiah on earth, but as a heavenly Christ. Thomas, on the other hand, represents the Jew who must see, in order to believe. In Matthew xxviii., which presents our Lord in His Jewish relations, we find the women holding Him by the feet, teaching us, in the most blessed manner, that He will yet resume His links with Israel, according to the promises made to the fathers. We must remember that the Church forms no part of the ways of God with Israel and the earth.

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# 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).

## The "Coming" and the "Appearing" of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**W**E need *all* Scripture. *All* is given for our profit. One of our dangers is, being taken up with certain parts of the Sacred Writings to the neglect of others. In nothing has this been more apparent of late years than the acceptance of our Lord's coming for us as our hope, without being exercised also about the Lord's reign and judgments at His appearing and kingdom. It is this latter line of things to which Peter refers when he says, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn." (2 Peter i. 19.)

No doubt the light of unfulfilled prophecy, when received in faith, casts its beams back on the path we are now treading, and thus clear guidance and

much blessing are vouchsafed to those who take heed to it. The apostle Paul, in writing to Titus, by the Spirit says, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Tit. ii. 13.) Here the Lord's coming and His appearing are connected, as being both looked for; not only "that blessed hope" of our Lord's coming to receive us unto Himself, but His also "appearing," after that, in manifested glory, and taking His rightful place *on earth* as "Heir of all things" and "Lord of all." (Heb. i. 2; Acts x. 36.)

It is not that many believers are not *intelligent* as to the events which will follow the Lord's coming for us, and able clearly to distinguish between that blissful moment and our subsequent following Him out of heaven, when "every eye shall see Him"; but for our *hearts* to be in conscious sympathy with our loving Lord Jesus in His present rejection, and to be therefore anticipating with joy, in deep fellowship with Himself, that glorious appearing, when He will have His rightful place of universal supremacy acknowledged by all intelligent beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, is quite another thing.

The fact is, that while some have been holding, and rightly contending for, the truth of "the Church [or assembly] of God," they seem to have let slip the truth of "the kingdom of God." The apostle Paul was emphatically a minister of the assembly; but he tells us also that he testified "the gospel of the grace of God," and preached "the kingdom of God." (Col. i. 24, 25; Acts xx. 24, 25.)

Such a prominent place in the apostle's public ministry had the reign of Christ and its kindred subjects that, though his visit to Thessalonica

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probably did not exceed three weeks, we are told that he suffered persecution for having preached "another *King*, one Jesus." We know too that during this brief visit he not only instructed the young converts there as to the hope of the Lord's coming, but that they received it as the truth of God, and "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." (1 Thess. i., 9, 10.) And in his second letter, when he referred to "the man of sin," and the Lord's destroying him "with the brightness of His coming," he said, "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" (2 Thess. ii. 5, 8.)

It is a mistake, we believe, to suppose that we learn prophetic truth for soul-profit by merely grouping events together as we would link together a series of political facts. It is easy for an active mind thus to occupy itself. But to have the *heart* and conscience so moved by the divinely given "word of prophecy," because it so sheds its light on our present path as to produce walk and conduct suited to it, is a very different thing.

For example, it is perfectly true that in a little while it will be said, "The kingdoms of this world are become [the kingdoms] of our Lord, and of His Christ." (Rev. xi. 15.) If, then, the Lord's interests are our interests, and we believe He will yet be manifested as Lord of all, how can we have any relish for the political excitement and party struggles of the day? Why not rather wait till "He shall come whose right it is"; and who said, when nearing the cross, "Now is the judgment of this world"? (Ezek. xxi. 27; John xii. 31.)

We are also told that "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

(2 Peter iii. 10.) Do we believe this? How then can we be hankering after the possession of what we know will by and by be under the Lord's judgment?

Again, if we hold that Jesus is "Lord of all," and that He is to reign till He has, for the glory of God, put down all rule and all authority and power, how can we desire to be now in the place of authority and power in a world that has rejected Him, and where Satan is its "god" and "prince"? (2 Cor. iv. 4; John xii. 31.) If we receive the word that the Father has committed all judgment unto the Son, and that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father, and that he that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him, we have certainly a plain path opened out before us, the path of honouring the Son till we see His face. (John v. 23, 24.)

And further, is it not quite clear that this country and other countries of Europe, commonly called "the ten kingdoms," form the conclusion of the development of Daniel's image, and that a "stone cut out without hands" is yet to smite it, and break it to pieces, which will be carried away, so that no place shall be found for them, and that this will have its solemn fulfilment when the Lord comes to reign and establish His kingdom in the earth? How then can we fall in with the common cry of "peace and safety" when we know that such judgment and destruction are at hand? (Daniel ii. 31-35.)

It is well known that when, some fifty or sixty [now eighty or ninety] years ago, the truth of the coming of the Lord was connected with such faithful testimony and unworldliness, that the "coming" and the "appearing" of our Lord were



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both firmly held. In fact, there was then little intelligence as to dividing between the "coming" of our Lord and His "appearing"; so that while hearts were lovingly looking for God's Son from heaven, there was also a solemn sense of the coming judgments and kingdom of God. God's truth as to these things was so believed that, with many, there was no other thought than dropping everything contrary to God's word, and getting *practically* ready for the Lord.

Surely our Lord's coming for us will be the crowning act of divine grace in giving us a body of glory like His own, and taking us to the Father's house; but, after this, we are to be manifested in glory with Him as His joint-heirs, and reign and share His inheritance with Him. How wonderful! "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? . . . know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.)

Suffering here *now* no doubt if we are faithful to our Lord, but *then* to share His glory. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him"; and again, "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." (2 Tim. ii. 12; Rom. viii. 17.) Formerly the truth of our Lord's coming, and also of His appearing and kingdom, were *believed*, and therefore had not a little *practical* power. It was a question of honouring the Lord at all costs, as His loved ones who would soon reign with Him.

The question has often been asked lately, "Why has not the truth of the Lord's coming more power now?"

The answer surely is, First, because the truth is more assented to intellectually than received into the *heart* as God's testimony; therefore there is

not the getting ready *practically* for our Lord's coming. And, secondly, because the *heart* is in little sympathy with the Lord in His present rejection, and therefore is little exercised as to His appearing. Truth is so common at this time, that it is often trifled with; or it may be accepted as reasonable and self-evident, without much exercise of heart and conscience before God.

The fact is that these truths are eminently sanctifying. How can they be otherwise? To suppose, therefore, that we can really hold them as divinely given doctrines, and go on in worldly and carnal associations, is to do the greatest violence to them. If we really believe that it is possible the Lord may come for us before midnight, could we go on with anything *to-day* which we knew would be displeasing to Him? Should we not rather choose to suffer for His sake, and do what we know would suit His mind? If we are truly waiting and watching for His return, could we spend a day without caring in some way or other for some of the members of His body? And is not caring for His household one of the special marks of a wise and faithful servant? (Matt. xxiv. 45.) Moreover, if we believe God's word, that the world lieth in the wicked one, and is under judgment, and the Judge soon coming in flaming fire to carry it out, and judge the quick and the dead, how can our hearts but rejoice at the thought of the once humbled Nazarene having His rightful place on this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords?

Do we really *love* His appearing? Do our hearts burn within us at the thought that in a little while He will be publicly manifested as "Lord of all"? We doubt not that the comfort of accomplished redemption, the consciousness of His present

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ministry and care of us while He is hid in the glory, and heartfelt sympathy with Him as to His present rejection, will accompany *loving* His appearing. How strange it must appear to the authorities and powers in heavenly places, who know by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, that we are so little moved and acted on by the prospect of the Saviour's appearing and reign! But when we are stirred in our inmost souls to be practically getting ready for His coming, then will the hope be known in brightness and power; and the more we ponder what He has told us about our reigning with Him, the more we shall realize His present rejection, and *love* His appearing. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. ii. 9-11.)

Does it not fill our hearts with joy to see Him now crowned with glory and honour? Are we not assured that His exaltation has been merited, for having glorified the Father on earth, and finished the work that He gave Him to do? And can we view Him there, where angels, authorities, and powers are all subject to Him, without delight springing up in our souls? Made "Lord and Christ" in ascension, He is surely "Lord of all"; though as to the earth He has not yet taken to Himself His great power and reigned.

Still, it is only a question of time, and the present long-suffering is salvation; but what will it be to see His face, and to be with Him, and like

Him for ever? What will it be to follow Him out of heaven, when He comes forth in power and great glory, wearing His many crowns, to judge first the living, and afterward the dead? (Rev. xix., xx.) No doubt "every eye shall see Him" then; the nations too will be angry, and all the tribes of the land shall wail because of Him. But come He will; for Jehovah has said unto Him, "Sit Thou on my right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool." And again we are told, "This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever [or in perpetuity] sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." (Heb. x. 12, 13.) How soon we may hear the shout!

May we meanwhile seek to serve and honour Him, in living "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing [or the appearing of the glory] of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus ii. 12-14.)

## **"Jesus Christ Come in the Flesh."**

THE ark and the camp were, in some sense, necessary to each other during Israel's journey through the wilderness. The ark, set in the tabernacle on which the cloud rested, had to guide the camp; and the camp, in its order, had to accompany and guard the ark and all connected with it. (Num. x. 33-36.)

This was the business of the camp. There was to be subjection to the will of Him who dwelt in the cloud; dependence on Him who led them

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daily; conscious liberty because of having left Egypt behind them, and hope because of having *Canaan before them*. Such a mind as this was to be in the camp; but its business was to conduct the mystic house of God onward to its rest, “the possession of the Gentiles.” (Acts vii. 45.)

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

The mind of the camp, of which I have spoken, might betray its weakness, or forget itself, and this might lead, as we know it did, to chastening again and again. But if its business, of which I have also spoken, were given up, there would be loss of everything.

And this did come to pass. The tabernacle of Moloch was taken up, instead of the ark of Jehovah; and the camp, therefore, had its road diverted to Damascus or Babylon, far away from the promised Canaan. (Amos v. 25; Acts vii. 13.)

And thus it is with ourselves. We are to maintain those truths or mysteries which the tabernacle and its furniture represented: and the apostle commits our entrance into Canaan to that. “If ye continue in the faith”; and again, “If ye keep in memory what I preached unto you.” (Col. i. 23; 1 Cor. xv. 2.) Our safety, our rest in the heavenly Canaan, depends on our keeping the truth.

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

This is to be much considered. Supposing, for a moment, that our own safety were not concerned

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

Title to entrance is confession to that doctrine, a confession of "Jesus Christ come in the flesh," a confession that involves or secures the glory of His person. A full confession to His work [only] will not do. The one outside may bring with him a sound faith as to the atonement, sovereignty of grace, and like truths; but all this is not a warrant for letting him in. There must be confession to the Person also. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son: if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is a partaker of his evil deeds."

Surely this is clear and decided. I believe that this is much to be considered. The truth touching Christ's person is to be maintained by us, even though our soul's safety were not involved in it.

I grant that our salvation is involved. But that is not all. He who owns not that truth is to be kept outside. It imparts tenderness as well as strength to see that the name of Jesus is thus entrusted to the guardianship of the saints. This is what we owe to Him if not to ourselves.\*

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\* The wall of partition is to be raised by the saints between them and Christ's dishonour.

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

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

In the thoughts of this epistle, “Jesus Christ” is always this divine One, so to speak, the Eternal Life manifested. With the apostle John, “Jesus Christ” is “the true God.” Jesus is the “He” and the “Him” in the argument of his first epistle; and this “He” and “Him” ever keeps before us One who is God, though in assumed relations and covenant dealings.

The confession, therefore, which is demanded by them is this: that it was God who was manifested, or who came in the flesh. (1 John iv. 2; 2 John 7.) For in these epistles, as we have now seen,

“ Jesus Christ ” is God. His name as God is Jesus Christ. And it is assumed or concluded that “ the true God ” is not known, if He who was in the flesh, Jesus Christ, be not understood as such ; and all this simply because He is God. Any other received as such is an idol. (1 John v. 20, 21.) The soul that abides not in this doctrine “ has not God,” but he who abides in it “ has both the Father and the Son ” (2 John 9.)

This, I judge, is the mind and import of the required confession that “ Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” I here speak of God under the name of Jesus Christ, and it is, therefore, the demand of a confession to the great mystery of “ God manifested in the flesh.” (1 Tim. iii. 16.)

The very adjunct (as another has written to me), “ come in the flesh ” throws strongly forward the deity of Christ ; because if He were [but] a man, or anything short of what He is, it would be no such wonder that He should come in the flesh. And verses 2 and 3 of chapter i. guide us to John’s thoughts in the use of the name “ Jesus Christ.” That which was from the beginning, the Eternal Life which was with the Father, was the Person he declared to them.

The words “ with the Father ” are important, making it evident that the Son was the Eternal One, the name of this eternal Son being Jesus Christ. And it is interesting to compare the close with the commencement of this epistle : “ This is the true God and the [with the article] eternal life.”

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